

# 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](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php)

however, the most lively cooperative Christian witness is given by groups related to the charismatic revival. In accordance with the Law of Religious Liberty the Finnish Baptist Union has been registered as "a Religious Community". (The Lutheran State Church belongs to the same group.) The Swedish Baptist Union has preferred to be listed as "an Association", called the Swedish Baptist Conference in Finland.

ERIK RUDEN.

---

## Ecumenical Pioneering at Selly Oak

THE Selly Oak Colleges have probably become the most comprehensive ecumenical centre for training Christian leaders in any part of the world. They are ecumenical in the ecclesiastical sense of the word, with almost all the major Christian traditions cooperating in a common educational programme: Quakers, Baptists, Reformed, Methodists, Lutherans, Anglicans and Roman Catholics. All are represented in the teaching staff and in the student body. The Orthodox alone are not officially involved, though students from this tradition and from a number of different patriarchates participate in courses from time to time.

But the colleges are also ecumenical in the broader sense of "the whole inhabited world". There are never less than about fifty countries represented on the campus in any one term and some of the colleges now have a preponderance of students whose first language is other than English. They come from Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Australasia and the South Pacific. Not all of them are Christians. There are a good many Muslims, adherents of the other world religions, humanists and Marxists who help to ensure that the campus is open to the challenge of conflicting beliefs and ideologies which characterizes the modern world. Situated four miles from the centre of the city of Birmingham, with its multi-cultural urban population, the colleges are strategically placed to grapple with the major problems that confront everyone today.

All the same, the foundation is explicitly Christian, with Evangelicals and Catholics living and working together in mutual respect for their differing insights and convictions. Ecumenical cooperation has

not proved to involve syncretism or the watering down of distinctive beliefs. On the contrary, when recognition is given to the integrity of others, growth in understanding becomes possible.

There are eight colleges altogether, each with its principal, staff and student body, collaborating in common programmes organized centrally in four major departments. In 1922 the late Edward Cadbury, seeing the possibility of federal relationships, established the Selly Oak Colleges Trust, giving land, buildings and endowments to the colleges corporately, then five in number. A board of trustees and a central council were appointed to which the Senatus (dealing with academic concerns) and the Finance and General Purposes Committees are responsible. This central organization, under the leadership of two distinguished educationalists, Sir Robert Birley as Chairman and Dr. A. G. Ogston, former President of Trinity College, Oxford as Vice-Chairman, appoints the central staff of lecturers and has at its disposal a fine set of modern buildings: a library of over 60,000 volumes (including the famous Mingana collection of oriental manuscripts and the Rendel Harris collection of papyri), the George Cadbury Hall seating 500, with a fully equipped stage house for major musical and dramatic productions, a social centre with a swimming pool and squash courts, and a main administrative and teaching block, comprising lecture and seminar rooms, teaching offices, language laboratory and closed-circuit television studio. Below the George Cadbury Hall there is a communications unit, with two full-time staff members, offering courses primarily for those preparing to work in Third World countries. Thus the structure resembles that of the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, with autonomous colleges linked together in a common educational enterprise. Just as these universities have assumed more importance in the provision made for students in all the colleges without affecting their autonomy as communities of learning, so in Selly Oak the centre has taken increasing initiative in fostering cooperation and introducing new courses.

There are eight colleges altogether. Four of them were founded and are sponsored by British missionary societies and churches: the College of the Ascension by the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel; Kingsmead by the Methodist Church Overseas Division; Crowther Hall by the Church Missionary Society; St. Andrew's Hall (an amalgamation of the former Carey Hall and St. Andrew's College) by the Baptist Missionary Society, the Council for World Mission (formerly the London Missionary Society), and the United Reformed Church. While the sponsoring bodies send their students to the college for which they are responsible, the composition of most of the college communities is a very mixed one. In the cases of the College of the Ascension, Kingsmead and St. Andrew's Hall, more than half the students are centrally recruited and are supported by a wide variety of agencies in different parts of the world. Some are Christian Aid scholars; others come from church and mission organizations in Scandinavia, Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Canada, to

mention only the principal sending agencies involved; others again are sponsored by British and overseas government departments. Crowther Hall alone of these four colleges reserves most of its places for its own mission students and has recently added Leasow House as a centre for returned missionaries on furlough.

The oldest college is Woodbrooke, founded in 1903 by the late George Cadbury as a centre for Quaker studies, to which members of the Society of Friends look from all over the world. It is, therefore, a very international community, though enrolment is not restricted to practising Quakers. Students of other confessions are welcomed, including a number who are centrally recruited and placed there with the agreement of the Wardens.

Westhill is the largest of all the colleges, with an average enrolment of approximately 500, as compared with fifty to eighty in the other communities. It began by pioneering the training of Sunday school teachers for the British Free Churches before the first World War. In 1960 it became a recognized College of Education, ultimately diversified into four sections: teachers for the state system, youth and community students, teachers of the mentally handicapped and those involved in church education. The last of these groups enabled the original purpose of Westhill to be continued, though in recent years the courses have principally catered for overseas students financed by World Council scholarships. With the recent government reorganization of colleges, the emphasis of Westhill has been even more focused on religious education, and the establishment of a resources centre for the in-service training of teachers from all over the Midlands and North of England has contributed to its designation as a centre of excellence in this field. In partnership with the federation of the Selly Oak Colleges and drawing on the wider resources of the campus, Westhill is poised to set the pace for Christian education in the years ahead.

The remaining two colleges—Fircroft and Prospect Hall—are concerned with adult or further education on a residential basis. Fircroft is designed primarily for people from industry, offering a year's course in liberal studies to those coming straight from the shop floor. The whole field of industrial relations and trade union practice and policy is thus opened up not only to students in the college but right across the campus.

Prospect Hall is the latest to join the federation. Through a generous grant of £250,000 from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, supplemented by an approximately equal amount from public subscription, a purpose-built centre for the severely physically handicapped was opened by the Queen Mother in 1977, managed and financed by the Birmingham Social Services Committee. Approximately thirty resident and thirty day students, suffering from a wide range of physical handicaps, are given individual training to equip them for fuller participation in the life of the community. A major objective from the inception of the idea by Baroness Elliot of

Harwood, further inspired by courses for able-bodied and physically handicapped together (PHAB), has been to avoid the isolation of the disabled from those enjoying normal physical attributes. Hence the integration of Prospect Hall with the rest of the campus has been an important consideration from the outset, and increasingly social and other activities have been fostered to this end.

The central organization is divided into four departments: mission, social studies, Islam and English as a foreign language. The mission department combines the major interests of the four colleges referred to above. Under the leadership of Dr. Ian Fraser, the Dean, and Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, the Chairman, a flexible programme of training has been devised, taking mission on all six continents seriously. Originally concentrating on the preparation of candidates for overseas service in the Third World, the emphasis has markedly shifted to training for overseas church leaders, as well as clergy, ministers and lay people whose service will lie in their own countries. The courses, divided into terms of eleven weeks and even shorter modules, provide an opportunity for those who can spend varying periods of time to study major living issues connected with mission in the modern world.

The Social Studies department offers professional courses for social workers, financed by the Department of Health and Social Security, and in addition provides training for those similarly engaged in the Third World. Development Studies courses for administrators of the aid agencies, such as Oxfam and Christian Aid, have become fully internationalized, with recruits from European and North American organizations which increasingly recognize the need for professional training for those who administer vast sums of money and a wide range of projects in different parts of the world. More recently the department has organized courses in elementary administrative skills and social work for students from South West Africa, and at the time of writing an ambitious scheme of training in Namibia is being pioneered in cooperation with the Council of Churches in that troubled country.

The Selly Oak Colleges have a long tradition of work in Islamics. Over the last few years a more comprehensive centre on an international basis has been established for the study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations. The teaching staff now numbers four—two Christians and two Muslims—and undertakes all the work in Islamics and Arabic for the University of Birmingham from undergraduate courses to the preparation of candidates for the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. In addition, the centre is concerned with research and documentation on Islamic communities in Europe and a programme of extension for providing churches and other agencies in Britain with help to understand Christian-Muslim relations. It is probable that this partnership with representatives of both faiths, each respecting their full integrity and avoiding any suggestion of syncretism, is unique in the pioneering work that it is doing.

Finally, the department of English, with three full-time and eight

part-time instructors offers courses at ten levels for approximately eighty students from Europe and the Third World who need to have a fluent command of the English language for the work they intend to do.

All these departments, together with the special concerns of West-hill and the three colleges of adult education, interplay and cross-fertilize one another. It is difficult to describe this complex and unique federation to those who have not visited it and seen for themselves. Its future is open to the winds of change and no one can tell what developments the coming years may bring. But, as things stand today, the colleges are full to overflowing and new developments are on the horizon. The task of those with responsibility for leadership is to see that the campus retains its cohesion and flexibility in whatever lies ahead.

PAUL ROWNTREE CLIFFORD.

---

## John Bunyan and "Reprobation Asserted"

IN AN interesting article "John Bunyan and the Authorship of *Reprobation Asserted*"<sup>1</sup> Professor R. L. Greaves argues that there is a strong likelihood that that work is not by Bunyan. He first surveys the external evidence regarding authorship and concludes that "it neither proves nor disproves his authorship".<sup>2</sup> Yet he does seem to say that the external evidence together with doctrinal differences to be discussed presently point away from Bunyan being the author. In this connection Professor Greaves is in some danger of overstating his case, as when he says, summing up his findings, that there is a distinct possibility that the treatise was written by an (unknown) open-membership, open-communication Particular Baptist. One cannot, without begging the question, argue that Jones is not guilty of an action for which he is *prima facie* responsible because the facts of the crime are consistent with an unknown person who looked like Jones having committed the crime!

Turning to internal matters Professor Greaves argues that the style of the work is not Bunyan's, although he allows that "only when Bunyan was directly embroiled in a theological controversy did he tend to omit somewhat his popular phraseology, his direct appeal to the audience, and his use of colourful metaphors".<sup>3</sup> Such features are