

**The Ministry of J.H.Jowett at Carrs Lane
Congregational Church ,
Birmingham, 1896-1911.**

by

Meegan Elizabeth Griffin

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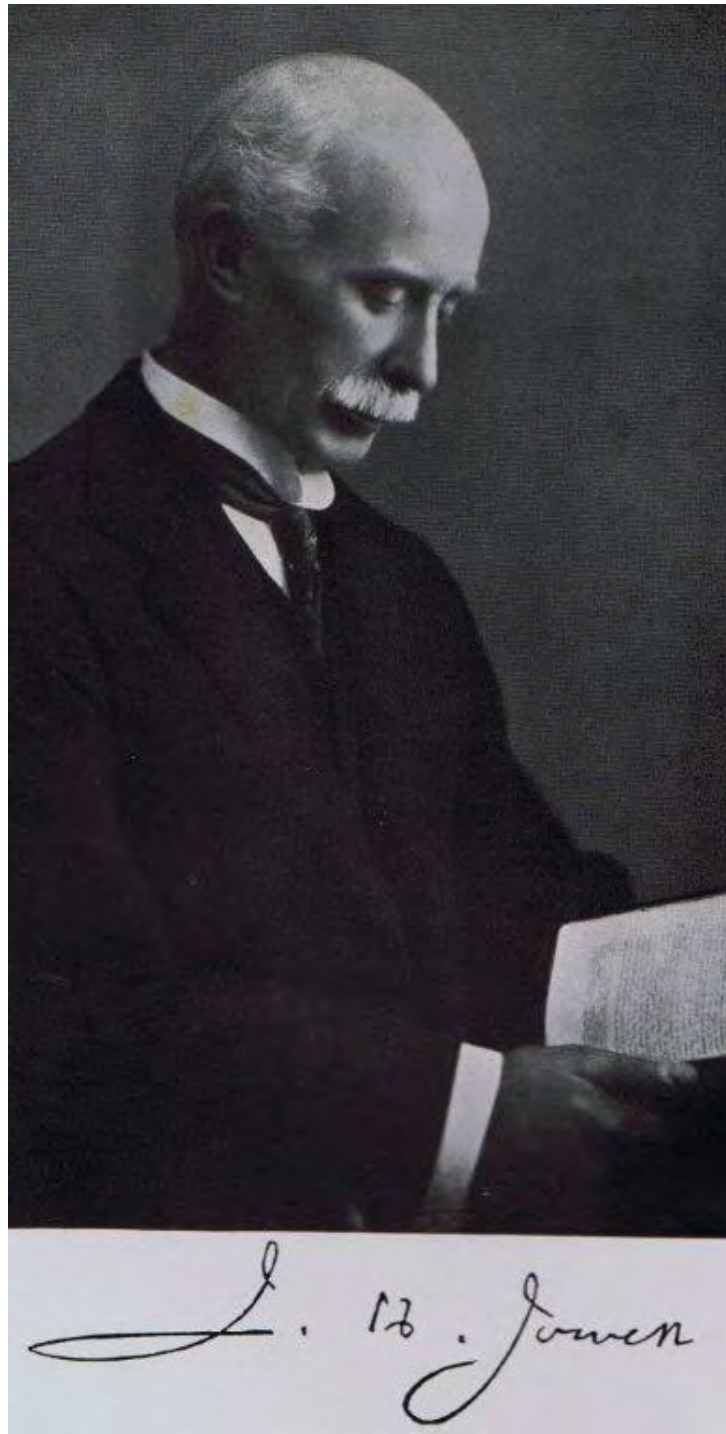
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Frontispiece: The Reverend J.H. Jowett, C.H., D.D.

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Notes

Conventions.

1. Due to the inconsistent use in all sources of the apostrophe in the spelling of Carr's or Carrs Lane the Church will be referred to by its modern usage as Carrs Lane throughout.
2. Similarly the Minute Books for the period 1896-1911 at Carrs Lane are all headed as Carrs Lane Church, even though traditionally Congregational Meeting places were referred to as chapels, so all references will be made as Church.

Other.

Reference 147, page 44 is made to my M.A. dissertation in West Midlands History, University of Birmingham, 2008, which dealt with the work of the Women's Total Abstinence Society at Carrs Lane from 1896-1911. Although it was a study of the temperance movement it concerned women's issues only, and no material is included in 'Temperance', Chapter 4 of this study

INTRODUCTION

In nineteenth-century Birmingham, Carrs Lane Congregational Church played an important part in the life of the city. It had achieved prominence through the preaching and works of two of its successive pastors, the Reverend John Angell James serving from 1805 to 1853 and Dr. Robert William Dale 1854 to 1895. They were acknowledged leaders not only of Congregationalism within the Midlands area, but also on the wider and international Nonconformist religious scene. Dr. R.W. Dale became a leading proponent of the civic gospel, which stressed the need for cooperation between religion and civic responsibility. When he stepped down due to failing health in 1895, the position of leader at Carrs Lane was unquestionably going to be a hard act to follow. The challenge was to be taken up by John Henry Jowett (1864-1923) and this study will examine his ministry at Carrs Lane Congregational Church from 1896 to 1911, and evaluate his time there.

Jowett came to Carrs Lane after a very successful pastorate of six years spent at St. James's Congregational Church, Newcastle. His reputation there had spread throughout his own denomination and among the Free Churches. Yet how would he as a young man of thirty-one years be received at Carrs Lane, and how would he adjust to the responsibility of taking on such a large ministerial and prestigious appointment? From Carrs Lane Church Records held at Birmingham Central Library, the period from 1896 to 1911 would appear to have been one of the most important and productive of Jowett's life. He was not only the leader of Carrs Lane, but also involved in the wider aspect of work within the Congregational Union of England and Wales, as well as supporting the Birmingham Federation of Evangelical Free Churches, and being a representative on the National Council of

Evangelical Free Churches. These aspects of his work will be considered in determining how effective he was as a preacher, a pastor in a leading Nonconformist church, and the influence he exerted in the changing world of Nonconformity at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Although a biography was written about Jowett following his death, it was written by Arthur Porritt a personal friend, and so is filled with adulation.¹ However, it does provide a useful chronology and helps to place Jowett in a social and cultural setting. Jowett described himself as an Evangelical, but what did this mean? In *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity 1825 -1925*, Dale Johnson shows how the theological outlook of evangelicalism changes throughout the nineteenth century to become a more diverse concept than that spurred by the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival.² At the beginning of the twentieth century the earlier systematic and logically precise evangelical theology of Calvinism within Nonconformity had changed to such a degree that it allowed for widely varying theological positions, which according to Richard Helmstadter resulted in the breakdown of the Nonconformist Conscience as a way of life.³ So how does Jowett's self-description fit in with this changed situation, what was his theology, and how was his Nonconformist way of life in which he associated conscience with the theory of evangelicalism expressed? David Bebbington has identified four common features within the tradition of evangelicalism which he systematically determines as *conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed, *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, *Biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible, and *activism*, the expression of the gospel in

¹ Porritt, Arthur, *John Henry Jowett, C.H. D.D.*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924).

² Johnson, Dale A., *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity*, (Oxford University Press, 1999).

³ Helmstadter, Richard, 'The Nonconformist Conscience' in Parsons, Gerald, ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain, IV, Interpretations*, (Manchester University Press, 1988), p.66.

effort.⁴ A straightforward analysis of Jowett's leadership would be to adopt Bebbington's methodology and equate them with Jowett's self-view. However, to confine study to this quadrilateral of qualities would not only deny Jowett the element of individualism which set him apart and gave him special recognition on the contemporary scene, but also the extent to which he was involved with an evolving evangelical situation.

Carrs Lane Church records for the period of Jowett's ministry provide a comprehensive account of the day to day workings and administration of what was a considerable undertaking, comparable to that of running a large successful business. They reveal the autonomous nature of Congregationalism as well as the multi-faceted aspects of church life, and show the practical skills required of a pastor in a large, inner city Congregational Church, and just how exhausting they were. Yet they are an inadequate representation of a minister's life because they show a *non-verbatim* record of proceedings, thus failing to reveal personal feelings or beliefs. It is from the sermons he delivered whilst at Carrs Lane that give a better understanding of Jowett's true nature and work. I propose therefore to use his sermons as a basis for this study, a great many of which fortunately can still be found in print. The church magazine reproduced one in every monthly issue from 1903 and these copies are readily available at the Special Collections Department of Birmingham Central Library as well as at Carrs Lane Church Library. Others were printed as special collections in books, some of which are also still available as hard copies at Libraries but more conveniently now to be found on-line at Internet Archive. His most important addresses to the Congregational Union and the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches are also to be found on-line as well as in their respective published Year Books.

⁴ Bebbington, D.W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), p.3.

These Year Books are a valuable resource in terms of comparing trends and opinions in Nonconformity which may have influenced Jowett's approach to the ministry. Newspaper items before 1900 are available on-line and although later coverage in the *Birmingham Daily News* is available on microfilm at Birmingham Central Library, specific items of interest which might mention Jowett and provide greater insight to his ministry are more difficult to pinpoint.

Whilst this study is focussed on the period of Jowett's ministry it is significant that whilst Carrs Lane Congregational Church was an Independent church, Jowett's work cannot be considered in isolation. Nonconformist historians of the period seem generally agreed that church attendance was in decline at the beginning of the twentieth century, a situation of which Jowett as an active member of the Congregational Union would have been well aware. Yet the membership figures for Carrs Lane show a steady yearly increase whilst he was there, so to what extent could this be attributed to his personal manner, his leadership qualities, or preaching, the so-called '*Pulpit Prince*' effect? Other churches may have seen their congregations dwindling but James Munson believes that the period from 1890 to 1914 was the hey-day of Nonconformist power and influence.⁵ Yet how was such power and influence being achieved, was Jowett skilfully using other available Nonconformist resources to enforce his position at Carrs Lane? Munson's explanation of the cultural influences on Nonconformity provides an indication of the ways and means that were available to Jowett to help achieve this.

In order to understand Jowett's theological approach Alan Sell's book *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century* is useful as a comprehensive explanation of the different

⁵ Munson, James, *The Nonconformists*, (London: SPCK, 1991), p.2.

stances that ministers could take.⁶ Yet despite the many years of theological college and university training that Jowett received, it will be shown that whilst theologically erudite he did not comment on matters of theological import or indulge in any Biblical criticism. In effect he reduced his theology to a simple faith in the Grace of God, which he wanted to share with everyone. The extent to which Jowett's theological position influenced his evangelical style of preaching and work ethic is observed in relation to Evangelical Nonconformists as described by David Bebbington in *The Nonconformist Conscience and Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*.⁷ Jowett did not compromise his evangelicalism by confusing his interests with his theology, and maintained a separation which becomes evident when looking at his commitment to the Evangelical Free Church movement. His political, social and temperance interests were all nurtured and satisfied by his involvement with the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. He was a staunch Liberal and maintained an avid interest in politics, but unlike Dr. Dale he never took an active part in the political life of Birmingham. He was deeply concerned with temperance and education issues, as well as standards of preaching, the role of women in the Church and family values. The extent of these interests is particularly noticeable in his sermons and can be put into greater perspective by reference to the study of *Free Church Unity* by E.K.H. Jordan.⁸ Under the auspices of Free Church policy Jowett was able to express his own opinions but does not appear to have ever used the pulpit as a political platform.

⁶ Sell, Alan, P.F., *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006).

⁷ Bebbington, D.W., *The Nonconformist Conscience*, (Herts.: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

⁸ Jordan, E.K.H., *Free Church Unity*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956).

The evidence from these sources should reveal Jowett's contribution to Carrs Lane, his capabilities and his individuality. This individuality set him apart from other pastors to a degree that he was invited to a State Dinner at Buckingham Palace by King George V before he left to take up the pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York in 1911.⁹ It was an individuality which had also allowed him to become acquainted with political and leading public figures both in England and America, thus widening his position on the wider international scene. This position was undoubtedly due in part to the years of experience he gained whilst ministering in Birmingham at Carrs Lane Congregational Church. This study of Jowett at Carrs Lane from 1896 to 1911 will show a comprehensive understanding of the man and his ministry and establish his place in the history of English Nonconformity.

⁹ Porritt, Arthur, *John Henry Jowett*, p.137.

1. THE PREACHER

*‘Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given,
To preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ’ – Ephesians.3.8.*

The reputation of the Reverend J.H.Jowett as a good preacher was established long before he accepted the pastorate of Carrs Lane Congregational Church. It was perhaps one of the reasons that had prompted R.W.Dale in his final years to recommend Jowett as a possible successor. Yet following Dale’s death, the deacons at Carrs Lane were not to be hurried in making any presumptuous appointment. Dr. Dale had long been acknowledged as one of the country’s best preachers so his were difficult shoes to fill. Representatives of the deacons paid several visits to hear Jowett speak and to interview him at his pastorate of St. James’s Congregational Church, Newcastle, before offering him the vacancy.¹⁰ He had however, already preached twice at Carrs Lane, so the church members knew of his skills as an orator and became markedly enthusiastic about the prospect of him being their pastor.¹¹ Jowett’s popularity as a preacher whilst at St. James’s, Newcastle, is described by his biographer Arthur Porritt as widespread, and consequently *‘he became in constant demand as a “special occasion” preacher’*.¹² Carrs Lane had a special preacher in Dr. Dale, who had established for them a tradition of scholarly preaching and secured for the church a history of influence and authority within Congregationalism. However, financially independent churches like Carrs Lane were effectively in the market-place, and the deacons would be well aware that its continuing reputation within Congregationalism needed a strong leader, and preferably one with good oratorical communication skills.

¹⁰ Birmingham City Archives, Central library, C.C.1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minutes Book, 1895-1903*, June 17th 1895.

¹¹ Porritt, Arthur, *John Henry Jowett*, p.65.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.64.

In his first sermon preached at Carrs Lane on 6 October 1895 Jowett paid tribute to Dr. Dale by acknowledging that he was following a man '*who moved with rare and reverent intimacy among the greatest truths of the Christian religion*'¹³. He was very much aware of the doctrinal import of Dr. Dale's sermons, something that the congregation of Carrs Lane had been used to for many years. When Dr. Dale was admonished by a friend that the congregation at Carrs Lane would not '*stand*' the length and doctrinal composition of his sermons, he had replied that '*They will have to stand it*'.¹⁴ However, Jowett had a very different preaching style, one by his own admission to a friend that was in danger of '*prettiness*'.¹⁵ He was certainly reminded of his shortcomings by a reporter of the '*Newcastle Weekly Courant*' who reported that Jowett's replacement at St. James's had preached on matters that were '*intellectually higher*'.¹⁶ One can only assume that this report was hiding the disappointment and regret of losing Dr. Jowett by trying to justify their new minister's appointment. St. James's was a city church with a large congregation, reportedly a very wealthy congregation according to a journalist who visited in 1881, when he described the chapel as '*suggestive of a large jewel box*'.¹⁷ The '*prettiness*' of Jowett's sermons may well have inadvertently been the consequential influence of this fashionable congregation of St. James's, who would have appreciated an erudite style of poetic presentation. Jowett acknowledged that following on the good work of Dr. Dale at Carrs Lane had been his deliverance from this '*prettiness*'.¹⁸ It is generally accepted that the wealthiest chapels were

¹³ Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, p.73.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.72.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.72.

¹⁶ *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, June 6, 1896, Issue 11551.

¹⁷ Thorne, Susan, *Congregational Missions and The Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth Century England*, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.139.

¹⁸ Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, p.72.

typically in the mid-nineteenth century to be found in urban-industrial areas.¹⁹ Birmingham had always been a city which supported a multitude of trades and smaller industries so drew its congregations perhaps from a lesser level of opulence than the magnate cities of the North. However, Carrs Lane did have the most prestigious reputation, though Jowett would not have been daunted at the prospect of leading another city church irrespective of its congregation as he is later described as having had '*faith in himself*'.²⁰ That his self-assuredness can in no way be construed as indicative of a boastful manner, is made apparent by his wish not to have a recognition service which was usually given to ministers on their appointment to a new pastorate.²¹

Dr. Dale and the Rev. J. H. Jowett did not preach extempore but read their sermons from the pulpit. The reading of sermons became an issue that divided evangelicals who linked extemporaneous preaching with the earnestness of early evangelism rather than manuscript reading which was seen by later evangelistic preachers as more professional.²² It would seem that Dale still advised his students that extemporaneous was best,²³ but Jowett who was a graduate of Airedale College and Edinburgh University adopted what he considered the more intellectual approach. Although they read their sermons for different reasons, both Dale and Jowett shunned the dramatic hell, fire and brimstone approach reminiscent of enthusiastic revivalist preachers. From the pulpit their appearance was quite different, Dr. Dale described as having a '*swarthy complexion, crisp curly black hair, big*

¹⁹ Thorne, Susan, *Congregational Missions and The Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth Century England*, p.139.

²⁰ *The Quiver*, Issue 137, (1905:Jan.), p.1185.

²¹ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/13, *Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1890-1899*, Nov.28.1895.

²² Johnson, Dale A, *The Changing Shape of English Nonconformity, 1825-1925*, p.94.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.95.

*bushy beard and moustache*²⁴ whereas Jowett was ‘*tall, lean, balding with a full moustache, and always dressed fastidiously*’.²⁵ Neither assumed any formal mode of clerical dress.

Whilst Dale and Jowett carefully prepared their sermons, their style of presentation and content was very different. Jowett’s preaching style was always illustrative, and this perhaps is what appealed to his listeners. The impact of Dale’s sermons was according to Hugh McLeod achieved by his commanding presence, his forceful manner, compelling earnestness and power of argument,²⁶ a sharp contrast to the timorous yet impressive style of delivery by Jowett ‘*almost peculiar to himself*’.²⁷ Yet it would appear that Jowett quickly won over the congregation by this dissimilarity, displaying a characteristic which he often described as ‘wooling’²⁸. There can be no doubt that ‘*endowed with a superlatively fine voice*’²⁹ Jowett had acquired oratorical skills not normally associated with someone who is mostly described as a quiet, modest and gentle man. The gift of good rhetoric is often associated with theatrical performances and as Clyde Binfield suggests, preachers are comparable to actors when presenting their sermons.³⁰ Yet with Jowett it would appear that the attraction was to be found not in the visual presentation, but in the listening. His distinctive resonant voice together with his personal conviction of ardent faith, allowed him

²⁴ McLeod, Hugh, ‘The Power Of The Pulpit’ in ed. Binfield, Clyde, *The Cross And The City*, (Cambridge: Journal United Reformed Church History Society, 1999), Vol.6, Supplement no.2, p.47.

²⁵ Michael Watts, *John Henry Jowett (1863-1923)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, (Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁶ McLeod, Hugh, ‘The Power Of The Pulpit’ in ed. Binfield, Clyde, *The Cross And The City*, Vol.6, p.45.

²⁷ *The Quiver*, Issue 137, p.1187.

²⁸ Jowett, J. H. ‘Address to Free Church Congress, Cardiff, Wales, March 1901’, Printed as Chapter 20 in *Apostolic Optimism*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901).

²⁹ The Congregational Year Book, 1925, *Obituary, John Henry Jowett*, p.152.

³⁰ Binfield, Clyde, *So Down To Prayers*, (London: J.M.Dent and Sons, 1977), p.189.

to convey authority and inspiration that accentuated the evangelical message of his sermons. One particular auditor described his performance thus;

*At intervals he will proceed in deep and measured tones as if desirous of implanting his words in the minds of his hearers, then without the slightest indication he will raise his voice to clarion notes and almost electrify his audience by the quenchless fire and passion of his nature.*³¹

Such eloquence and the masterly use of language were therefore not only a source of spiritual delight to the listener, but also gave Jowett power as a preacher.

The care which Jowett took in preparing his sermons is revealed in his sermon given at Yale University in 1912, on *'The Preacher, His Life and Work'*, when he stated *'I have a conviction that no sermon is ready for preaching, not even for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal'*³². It was well known that he began writing his Sunday sermons on the Tuesday before they were to be given, and so they were very measured in their content. His manner of expression was certainly one that translated easily into print, and he was able to take advantage of this by having collections of his sermons published. His greatest output was undoubtedly whilst he was at Carrs Lane. His early writing style was poetic and might even be considered flowery or romantic by modern opinion, Jowett's own admitted *'prettiness'*. Yet he was able to maintain interest by introducing anecdotal items often taken from his own life, and by associating the text with everyday actions. His aim was always to reach out to the individual, a conversional hope

³¹ *The Quiver*, Issue 137, p.1187.

³² Jowett, J.H., *The Preacher, His Life and Work*, Yale Lecture 1V, 'The Preacher in His Study', (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1912), p.133.

which he stressed by practising what he preached, ‘*Our messages must be related to life, to lives, and we must make everybody feel that our key fits the lock of his own private door*’.³³

A collection of his early sermons published as ‘*Brooks by the Traveller’s Way*’³⁴ shows how he used figures of speech such as metaphors, ‘*the organ of conscience*’³⁵ and oxymora, ‘*the wealth of poverty*’³⁶, as a means of expression. His pastoral imagery is perhaps surprising as he mainly preached in densely urban situations, but its use is understandable as in the nineteenth century the dichotomy between town and country was measured in terms of rural areas being godlier than the irreligious towns. Their appeal was nostalgic, not only reaching out to a middle-class audience who would have been able to afford countryside excursions but also the lower classes who could only dream of them. Yet these sermons were purposeful in that they were designed to take the reader on a spiritual journey from conversion to the continuing need for faith and the overcoming of any doubts. They are relatively short sermons, but they do gradually introduce some difficult concepts for the ordinary man to understand, such as salvation by grace. Jowett in his later sermons seems to avoid direct mention of the Calvinistic theology that salvation is only attainable by the Elect, aware no doubt of contemporary Nonconformist theology. Leading theologians like W. F. Adeney and P.T. Forsyth had by the turn of the century considered the Calvinistic creed no longer compatible with modern ideas of humanitarianism³⁷.

³³ Jowett J.H., *The Preacher His Life and Work*, Yale Lecture 1V, ‘The Preacher in His Study’, p.137.

³⁴ Jowett, J.H., *Brooks by the Traveller’s Way*, (London: H.R.Allenson Ltd., 1902).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.29.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.17.

³⁷ Sell, Alan, P.F. *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*, (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), p.p.8/9.

Although his sermons were printed for general readership, they were initially directed to an audience of believers or would-be believers attending Carrs Lane Congregational church. His erudite references suggest that he was speaking to an audience whom he believed would fully understand the message he was trying to get across. This would seemingly be a literate middle-class audience, yet the surviving printed sermons can only be a fraction of the actual number, and the selectivity of the publishers could mean they are possibly not representative and show bias towards an educated reader. Yet Jowett addressed many different audiences not only associated with his own Congregational church but also those of other Nonconformist denominations. It was a specific pre-condition of his acceptance of the pastorate at Carrs Lane that the deacons would allow him to continue his custom of exchanging pulpits once a month with some other minister.³⁸ These were not necessarily from around Birmingham, as there are many reports of his visits to other areas in regional newspapers which reveal his popularity and renown as a preacher. According to his biographer it was not unusual for Jowett to receive up to thirty requests a day inviting him to preach.³⁹ A sermon given at Nether Chapel in Sheffield was described as ‘*delivered with the impressive solemnity of subdued earnestness which is so irresistible from a cultured preacher. His pictures were not overdrawn, his language was simple, but his sentences well turned and his metaphors refined*’.⁴⁰ Some members of the congregation took the themes of his sermons very seriously and even made notes as they listened. A copy of such a notebook by H.F.Keep a prominent deacon and office holder at Carrs Lane reveals the ardent faith of some members of the church.⁴¹ Mr. Keep born in 1864 was an export merchant at Keep Bros.⁴² and was present at nearly every sermon preached by Jowett at Carrs Lane from 1899

³⁸ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/13. *Church Minute Book 1890-99*, entry July 11th 1895.

³⁹ Porritt, *John Henry Jowett*, p.77.

⁴⁰ *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, February 24, 1896, Issue 12923, p.5.

⁴¹ Keep, H.F. *Thoughts from Dr. Jowett's Sermons*, (London, The Independent Press, 1927).

⁴² Census Return 1901, RG13/2815.

to 1911. The notebook consists mostly of biblical references referred to in each sermon, with the occasional short comment, but they are not strictly in chronological order. Others however were not so attentive to what Jowett had to say. A Northern newspaper reported with pride that church-goers of the North were better listeners than those of the Midlands, because the Rev. J.H. Jowett had printed in his local magazine: - *“Will the two ladies who sit in a rather conspicuous part of the chapel, and who so frequently engage in conversation during public worship, kindly remember that their conduct is a source of much annoyance to members of the congregation!”*⁴³

Jowett’s seemingly humble and unassuming manner belied his fervent evangelical conviction. His firm beliefs endowed him with an optimistic confidence which was revealed in his style of preaching. In his efforts to encourage and convert his listeners he placed emphasis on the gospel and adopted a conversational tone that stressed the love of God. He focussed his message not on the future but on the benefits of belief in the here and now. In effect he preached practical religion. The importance of this is that it defined his preaching style as one that, according to Alan Sell, marked the trend at the end of the nineteenth century from one that stressed salvation from eternal damnation to one that promoted the love and grace of the Fatherhood of God.⁴⁴ Jowett was therefore advocating a contemporary theology which offered reassurance rather than purported to guarantee salvation. It was a theology that Jowett admitted in his first lecture at Yale University in 1912 was his driving force, *‘I have had but one passion, and I have lived for it – the absorbingly arduous yet glorious work of*

⁴³ *The North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, July 11, 1896.

⁴⁴ Sell, Alan, *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*, pp.8/9.

proclaiming the grace and love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'.⁴⁵ This was his *raison d'être*, and from his youth it had fashioned who he was and what he was to become. In his address to the Free Church Council Congress in 1901, he asked his audience '*What is a Preacher?*', and then perhaps unknowingly described himself exactly when he stated that an ideal preacher was a *herald*, an *evangelist*, a *logician*, and a *conversationalist*. These sermons gave a different prescription from those given in church on Sundays which advocated a religious way of life as they were given to ministerial colleagues. In them they were urged to re-examine themselves and their preaching, and not become complacent about their compulsion, commitment or compassion. His own passion was expressed in his quotation from Corinthians 1.13, '*If men can feel that we know their very breathing, and that we thrill to the deepest and most secretive movements of their spirit, they will permit us to be their guides and friends*'.⁴⁶ These sentiments were still in evidence eleven years later in the Yale Lectures, but a younger audience demanded the additional practical directions required to achieve them.

Jowett was very conscious of his role as a preacher which he saw as instructive as well as evangelistic. He wanted his congregation to understand why the Protestantism practised at Carrs Lane was different from that of the Church of England. In his sermon on '*The Lord's supper*' – '*do this in remembrance of me*', he explains precisely what the Congregationalist stance is on the Eucharist.⁴⁷ The doctrines of consubstantiation and transubstantiation are firmly rejected when he questions the belief that '*some mystic*

⁴⁵ Jowett, J.H., *The Preacher, His Life and Work*, Yale Lecture 1, *The Call to be a Preacher*, p.9.

⁴⁶ Jowett, J. H., *Apostolic Optimism*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901), chapter 20, *The Secrets of Effective Preaching – Sin and Sympathy*.

⁴⁷ *Carr's Lane Chronicle*, Vol. 1, No.1, January 1903.

transformation’ is affected, and asserts that ‘*We believe that the bread remains bread, and that the wine remains wine, with no sort of addition to their content*’. He states that ‘*we reject the intrusion of the priest and his assumption of special and exclusive prerogative*’, and goes on to say that ‘*I believe that the ordinance of the Lord’s supper would be as blessed and the glory of the Lord would be as fully revealed in outpourings of enriching grace, if your mother or my mother were to conduct it*’. His belief in the importance and continuation of the ritual of the Lord’s Supper within Nonconformity is undiminished however as he sees it as a ‘*commemoration*’, ‘*communication*’, and a ‘*coronation*’, when ‘*we enter into a mystic union, the powers of the unseen and glorified humanity are communicated unto us, and we become incorporated with the Lord.*’⁴⁸ This touches on long-standing issues for Jowett as it underlies attacks on Nonconformity, and two years later he again defends Nonconformity against claims that ‘*Our churches are only unauthorized clubs, that our sacraments are insignificant, and that our whole existence is a gratuitous offence*’.⁴⁹ Such comments were extremely offensive to Jowett and he was determined that they should be countered by the continuing success of the Nonconformist tradition. With this in mind his advice to his fellow ministers on how to keep their congregations was to suggest what he termed as ‘*wooing*’, achieved by ‘*tenderness in our speech, the tones of love and of sensitive yearning*’, that would ‘*Constrain them to come in*’.⁵⁰ This concept of ‘*wooing*’ was furthered in the addresses he gave to the Congregational Union in 1906 and later in 1912 to the students of Yale. He particularly stressed that ministers should consider two particular aspects of the church service, the hymnody and the theme of their sermons, which will be examined in the following chapter on *The Ministry of a Transfigured Church*.

⁴⁸ *Carrs Lane Chronicle*, Vol.1.No.1, January 1903.

⁴⁹ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol. 111. No.4, April 1905.

⁵⁰ Jowett, J.H., ‘Free Church Congress Lecture, Cardiff, Wales, March 1901’, printed in *Apostolic Optimism*, Chapter 20.

To his contemporaries Jowett's sermons were a means of getting his message across, but to the historian they reveal much about the man and his ideas. In them he constantly stressed the values of family life, yet rarely mentioned specific members of his own family. He does however acknowledge the happiness of his childhood in Halifax with his father Josiah, mother Hannah, and four siblings.⁵¹ He married Lizzie A. Winpenny on 20 May 1890, the youngest daughter of Mr. Francis Winpenny who was an honoured figure in Northern Congregationalism at Barnard Castle Church.⁵² They has no children of their own but later adopted a daughter Monica who was with them from 1901.⁵³ Jowett's marriage ideal is exemplified in his statement '*I do not know of a better pattern of a home than Charles Kingsley's, but he brought his strength to its creation*'.⁵⁴ He was mindful that home life was something that had to be worked at, but he firmly believed that women were the key to sanctity in the home, '*A man can go happily through a hard day's work if everything is right at home*'.⁵⁵ It was a view that he explicitly confirmed in his second address to the Congregational Union's autumn assembly in 1906 entitled *The Ministry of a Transfigured Home*, in which he concentrates on home life and the sanctity of marriage.

Whilst we can learn much about Jowett from his sermons, there are some issues which we know he did not preach from the pulpit, even though they would have interested him greatly. He repeatedly advocated the primacy of Scripture in his sermons but he does not appear to have produced any work of biblical criticism. His was a practical religion and

⁵¹ Census Return, 1871, RG10/4425.

⁵² Porritt, p. 61.

⁵³ Census Return, 1901, RG13/2807.

⁵⁴ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol. 111, No 5, *Aquaintance*, May 1905.

⁵⁵ Jowett, J.H., *Brooks by the Traveller's Way*, p.38.

though he published a work on *The Epistles of Saint Peter*,⁵⁶ it was essentially a devotional and practical commentary. Outside of the pulpit he did comment on various topical issues, such as those of peace and war, education, licensing laws, even vivisection. Yet as his biographer pointed out ‘*Though keenly alive to all the hectic stirrings of thought in his time, Jowett very rarely digressed from his life work as a preacher*’.⁵⁷ He recognised that preaching was his *forte* and devoted his whole life’s work to the evangelical cause.

⁵⁶ Jowett, J.H., *The Epistles of Saint Peter*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1905).

⁵⁷ Porritt, p.294.

2. The Ministry of a Transfigured Church

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance..... And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together!

Acts.ii.1-4, 6.

The ministerial and lay delegates of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1905 elected Jowett by means of the ballot box to be the Chairman of the Union for the year 1906. At 42 years of age he was one of the youngest chairmen ever elected, although his early reputation was such that he had preached to the Autumn Assembly in 1900. For the two Union addresses which he gave from the chair at the Spring and Autumn assemblies in 1906, Jowett was to enjoy what had previously been described by Dr. Dale as ‘*The prerogative of perfect freedom of speech*’.⁵⁸ The significance of this was that the topics chosen were generally acknowledged as being close to the heart of the speaker as well as often revealing their innermost thoughts. Jowett chose two closely allied themes for these consecutive addresses, *The Ministry of a Transfigured Church*, and *The Ministry of a Transfigured Home*. His approach was to treat them in a practical manner, deliberately leaving out any doctrinal or denominational issues of controversy. These addresses were being given to fellow ministers and co-religionists, so his pronouncements as Dr. Dale surmised could be prescriptive as well as authoritative and indeed Jowett was not afraid to voice his concerns.

The tenor of his argument in *The Ministry of a Transfigured Church* was that the Church was losing its Pentecostal awe. This address was a carefully veiled warning that

⁵⁸ Porritt, p.95.

recognised the steady decline in church attendance at the beginning of the twentieth century, expressed by his words '*that we do not generate enough force to stop the drift, and that the surrounding multitude remains uninfluenced*'.⁵⁹ It recommended that delegates looked not only at the Congregational Church as an institution, but at the fabric of church life in their own particular churches. Jowett identified non-churchgoers as three distinct types, those who never consider religion and remain aloof, those who are indifferent and those who are totally opposed and resentful. His critical analysis of what was wrong led him to observe that the Church was exceedingly like '*the world*' as it had become commonplace and un-inspirational and was lacking in wonder. He reminded them of the gathering of the Early Church when '*the multitude came together*', an indirect reference to the principle of Congregationalism that a Church was established whenever and wherever groups of men and women met together in Christian fellowship, which was normally distinguished by a covenant. His remedy for the drift away from the Church and their lack of influence was the need for the return '*of the wonder, the arresting marvel of a transformed church, the phenomenon of a miraculous life*',⁶⁰ like that experienced by the first Christians at Pentecost.

Yet Jowett was not advocating religious revival, and stated that he had no confidence in the effectiveness of '*elaborately engineered revivals*'.⁶¹ Here he was not referring to traditional spontaneous and unstructured religious revivals, but the organised American Style revivals which began to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶² These meetings were planned, professional, and performed nationwide with the intention of rousing the hearer to

⁵⁹ J.H. Jowett, *The Transfigured Church*, (London & New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), p.9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶² Parsons, G. Ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain*, Vol.1, *Traditions*, (Manchester University Press, 1988) p.217.

accept Christ and thus gain salvation. Unlike old-style revivals which were compatible with the Calvinist theology that salvation was God's choice and decision, these newer organised revivals adopted an Arminian approach that anyone might be saved if they so chose.⁶³ It is interesting therefore that only three years after expressing his doubts on the efficacy of these later revivals that Jowett would be invited to America by the son of D.L.Moody,⁶⁴ who with Ira Sankey became one of the most successful revivalist preachers to come to Britain in the later nineteenth century. Moody and Sankey were more accepted than others as they avoided the deliberate arousal of emotional hysteria, and claimed only to convert in order to hand on to the local churches.⁶⁵ Perhaps his acceptance of this invitation was based on the affinity Jowett had with the Calvinist attitudes of Moody. The most important feature of this address is that it unwittingly reveals the theological stance of Jowett, and that whilst trying to modernise his outlook he still retained vital elements of Calvinist theology.

In 1901, W.F.Adeney the Principal of Lancashire Independent College, stated that '*Nonconformists have largely abandoned Calvinism*', attributing its demise to the humanitarian thinking following down from Rousseau and the French Revolution.⁶⁶ Congregationalists, who had a tradition of scholastic Calvinism, began from the mid-nineteenth century to find its emphasis on salvation only for the elect too restrictive, and along with other evangelicals moved towards acceptance of Arminian theology which stressed the salvation of individual souls.⁶⁷ Whilst Jowett was a self acknowledged evangelical, this address clearly shows the ambivalence of his situation in believing that the

⁶³ Parsons, G., *Religion in Victorian Britain, Traditions*, p.216.

⁶⁴ Porritt, p.127.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.219.

⁶⁶ Sell, Alan, P., *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*, pp.8/9.

⁶⁷ Parsons, G., *Religion in Victorian Britain, Traditions*, p.66.

Church would be stronger if it were '*impregnated with something of the bracing salts of Calvinism*'.⁶⁸ He was in effect echoing the sentiments of R.W.Dale, who had written in 1877 the '*our faith has lost a certain grandeur, solemnity and majesty which belonged to the Augustinian and Calvinistic theology. If we could have the Calvinistic spirit without the Calvinistic creed, it would be the regeneration of the church and the salvation of the world*'.⁶⁹ What Jowett was trying to emphasise was that without an awe-inspiring conception of an omnipotent God the Church lost its appeal, and thus was a contributory factor in the drift of congregations away from the Church.

Jowett condemned the practice of what he saw as picking and choosing elements of belief to suit our own tastes, and that in so doing we had lost our awareness of the true sense of sin. One of the most important tenets of Calvinism is the bondage of human free will through sin. It was a theme to which Jowett returned many times in his sermons, but to this particular audience it was not sin directly which concerned him, but the changing theological attitude away from the Atonement to the Incarnation. Although Jowett had a practical approach to his ministry he was obviously concerned about and critical of the newer emphasis that was being placed on the Fatherhood of God. Unlike W.F.Adeney in 1901 who had welcomed the way in which theology from 1880s had taken a more ethical turn, Jowett was of the opinion that the popular stress on Fatherhood took away the sovereignty of God to such a degree that instead of creating a '*powerful and athletic*' Church, it had resulted in '*a vague effeminate softness*'.⁷⁰ He was well aware that the Christian Church was subjected to attack by claims of effeminacy which presented an image that was contrary to maintaining

⁶⁸ Jowett, J.H., *The Transfigured Church*, p.20.

⁶⁹ Sell, Alan, P., *Nonconformist Theology in the Twentieth Century*, p.8.

⁷⁰ Parsons, Gerald, *Religion in Victorian Britain, Vol. 1V, Interpretations*, p.84.

public support. In order to belie such claims and for the church to maintain credibility, he believed it was vital to present a Church whose character was ‘*unspeakably masculine*’ and that was ‘*courageous in its aggressions and in its restraints, both in its confessions and its reserves, a Church that would rouse and impress the world*’.⁷¹

Jowett believed this ‘*impoverished conception of God*’ offered explanation for the loss of awe he was lamenting, and stressed the need for uplifting hymnody in services to engender feelings of awe and reverence.⁷² He considered many of the hymns in use as aweless and that ‘*they impair and impoverish our spiritual life*’.⁷³ It was something he thought passionately about as he continued this theme in his Yale Lecture, when he urged the students to consider hymns carefully. He told them that ‘*the hymns we sing are artificial, they are superficial and unreal. They frequently express desires that no one shares, and which no healthy, aspiring soul should ever want to share*’.⁷⁴ Jowett according to Porritt was punctilious to the last degree when making hymn choices in his services, ensuring that they would meet the varying moods and needs of his congregation.⁷⁵ His attachment to the importance of hymns was such that in January 1900 the deacons agreed to the issue of a weekly forecast of the meetings, hymns and anthems for the coming Sunday.⁷⁶ The uplifting experience of communal hymn singing was not appreciated by all however, as in November 1904 the deacons received a letter from a Mr. Sharratt protesting against ‘*amen*’ being sung at the close of hymns. Quite reasonably the deacons could see no way of enforcing the

⁷¹ *The Transfigured Church*, p.23.

⁷² Porritt, p. 97.

⁷³ *The Transfigured Church*, p.17.

⁷⁴ Jowett, J. H., *The Preacher, His Life and Work*, Yale Lecture 5. ‘The Preacher in His Pulpit’, p.162.

⁷⁵ Porritt, p.79.

⁷⁶ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minutes, Jan.3. 1900*.

discontinuance of this practice by members of the congregation.⁷⁷ For all Jowett's insistence that fellowship was part of the uplifting experience of church life, it is surprising that he introduced measures that limited the participation of the congregation in services. In 1908 he got the deacons to agree that the Lord's Prayer should not be repeated audibly by the congregation at the morning service.⁷⁸ No reason was given for this action, but it drew protest from 'A member' in the church magazine who requested the immediate re-instatement of audibly taking part in the Lord's Prayer at services.⁷⁹ There is no entry in the Deacons Minutes during Jowett's ministry to suggest that this was ever acted upon. The introduction of the individual communion cup in 1906, in spite of opposition from some church members whose reasons are unknown, is yet another example of Jowett asserting his authority in Carrs Lane practices.⁸⁰

The important value of hymns was acknowledged by most evangelicals as they were considered as being didactic in that they 'transmit doctrine to their singers'.⁸¹ Such was Jowett's concern of their importance that in 1908 he revised the *English Hymn Book* that had been compiled by Dr. Dale in 1874 which was still used at Carrs Lane and introduced *The Carr's Lane Hymn Book*. Although he claimed that in Dr. Dale's hymnal 'that nowhere else can I find the broad perspective of his theology and his primary help-meets in devotional life as I find them there',⁸² Jowett found the hymns of Dr. Dale to be too individual and rigid in their theology to meet the needs of the changed society of the early twentieth century, although Dr. Dale acknowledged that 'people want to sing not what they think, but what they

⁷⁷ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minutes*, Nov.29. 1904.

⁷⁸ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/26, *Deacons Meetings Minutes*, Mar.30.1908.

⁷⁹ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol.V11.1 Jan 1909.

⁸⁰ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/26, *Deacons Meeting Minutes*, May 29.1906.

⁸¹ Bebbington, D.W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 68.

⁸² Jowett, J.H. *Apostolic Optimism*, p.16.

feel'.⁸³ Jowett's ideal was hymns that expressed the joy and fellowship of Christian living,⁸⁴ and his advice to ministers in a '*depressing and complaining frame of mind*' was that '*we should resort to the service of song. We must sing away our depressions and melancholies before we preach the evangel of grace*'.⁸⁵ His ideal was obviously shared by the deacons who had suggested and supported the revision of Dale's hymnal, but Carrs Lane was quite individual in having its own hymn book as most Congregational churches used the standard *Congregational Church Hymnal* (1887).

Whilst Jowett chose the themes of his sermons with great care, he was obviously unhappy that sermons were being preached elsewhere that he did not agree with. His argument was that these sermons were detracting from the Christian mission because they were going away from religion to deal with '*topics- the consideration of some passing crisis, or of some local combination of circumstances, or of some incidence which is exciting the interest of the local press*'.⁸⁶ He felt that preachers were being diverted into the realms of political and social economics, something which he never allowed himself to do and it is very noticeable that Jowett avoided political comment in his sermons even though we know that he had keen political interests. The areas of most concern to him were religious education and temperance, and on these issues he campaigned outside of the pulpit giving several public addresses at various meetings.

⁸³ Bebbington, D.W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 174.

⁸⁴ Porritt p.79

⁸⁵ Jowett, J.H. *The Passion for Souls*, (London, New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), p.66.

⁸⁶ Jowett, J.H. *The Preacher, His Life and Work*, Yale Lecture, 3, 'The Preachers Themes', p.78.

Jowett also had very firm ideas on church music, and reported in December 1902 that no musical committee was to be appointed for 1903 as he thought it desirable that all matters pertaining to public worship should be under the control of the pastor and deacons.⁸⁷ This was a perfectly acceptable situation as the experience of hymn singing is acknowledged as a product of the tune as well as the words⁸⁸, but this may well have been an expedient measure in the light of what followed. The Actions Committee were called to deal with dissatisfaction with the organist Mr. Davies in October 1903 but he refused to resign. The situation was still not resolved when in December Davies was given the choice of three months notice or three months' salary in lieu of notice; he took the money yet still refused to resign. Eventually at the end of March 1904 a new organist was appointed.⁸⁹ The importance of the organ in Nonconformist church worship cannot be underestimated as its use had steadily increased towards the end of the nineteenth century as attitudes towards church life created a desire for greater dignity and order.⁹⁰ This search for greater decorum in services, often attributed to a desire to emulate the more sober liturgy of the Church of England, meant that the proficiency of the organist and the standard of the choir at Carrs Lane would have been like many other leading churches under constant scrutiny.

As Munson explains, this search for dignity by Nonconformists in the later decades of the nineteenth century began to be realised particularly in their new and improved church buildings. Although Jowett did not mention the importance of church building specifically, by associating entry into the church with men passing '*from the world into our precincts as*

⁸⁷ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/14, *Church Minutes*, December 30, 1902.

⁸⁸ Parsons, G., *Religion in Victorian Britain, Culture and Empire*, p.78.

⁸⁹ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/26, *Deacons Meeting Minutes*, Oct.21, Dec. 1, Dec. 16, Dec. 29, 1903, Mar. 29, 1904.

⁹⁰ Munson, James, *The Nonconformists*, (London: SPCK, 1991), p. 129.

insensible of any difference as though they had passed from one side of the street to the other’,⁹¹ he was obviously aware of the contribution they could make to engender feelings of reverence and awe. Carrs Lane was a large, impressive building which required high maintenance but was also continually being updated. The minute books show several recommendations and alterations being made to the premises, with a complete overhaul being taken whilst Jowett was away. A significant alteration was made when Jowett mentioned the very inconvenient access to the platform in the chapel on the occasion of marriages.⁹² It was a common feature in the design of Nonconformist churches not to have a central aisle, so that worshippers could see and hear the preacher. A most telling example of the Congregational search for dignity was revealed in the minutes of the Association of Birmingham Congregational Churches when consideration was being given to the prospect of a new church on the fringes of the prestigious and expensive Calthorpe Estate, ‘*Of course any chapel erected in this district must be of a more ornate and expensive character than any of the other districts in demand*’.⁹³

In *The Ministry of a Transfigured Church*, Jowett blamed the ‘*comparative poverty and enfeeblement*’ of corporate church life partly on a lack of ‘*height*’, and partly on a lack of ‘*breadth*’.⁹⁴ The former referred to Divine fellowship and the latter to human fellowship. In order to illustrate his point on fellowship he used the Greek word *Koivwvia* anglicised as *Koinonia*, a word he repeated four times which would only be understood by those familiar with Biblical teaching. It refers to the idealised state of fellowship and community like that

⁹¹ *The Transfigured Church*, p.14.

⁹² Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minute Book*, July 1, 1902.

⁹³ Birmingham City Archives, C.B.2, *Association of Birmingham Congregational Churches, Executive Minute Book, 1894-1905*, Dec.10.1895.

⁹⁴ *The Transfigured Church*, p.23.

experienced by members of the Early Christian Church at communion. He explained that he did not wish to ignore the mystic and individual experience of such fellowship, but that there was a neglected aspect of this apostolic fellowship which was the socialising fellowship of intelligence and experience, plus that of individual testimony of witness. He expressed dismay at the failure to realise '*the social basis of the Church's life*', a reference to mutual friendship not activity. He stressed the need for continuing fellowship stating that '*Christian fellowship comprehends not only a meeting at a common altar, but a meeting at a family hearth, for the reverent and familiar inter-change of our experiences with God*'. He was in fact telling them that, because the '*Church goes out to confront the world in the poverty of a starved individualism rather than the rich and full-blooded vigour of her communistic strength*', a wonderful opportunity was being missed.⁹⁵ It was a criticism, but also embraced a call for cooperation not only between Congregationalists but also other Christian churches. Jowett gave of his time freely in this respect and certainly practised what he preached. Porritt notes that Jowett drew no denominational distinction in accepting invitations to preach all over the country, and in particular was ever ready to respond to calls made upon him by Birmingham churches.⁹⁶

It was Dr. Dale who called for a Birmingham Congregational Union to be set up at a special conference held at Carrs Lane in 1892 and by 1898 there were twenty-one churches in the resulting Association. Jowett became involved and was enthusiastic right from the start of his ministry, and presided at the United Communion Service for the members of the associated churches on 9 January 1896 at Carrs Lane. Whilst many of the meetings were held

⁹⁵ *The Transfigured Church*, p.p.25/26.

⁹⁶ *Porritt*, p.77.

at Carrs Lane there is no evidence to suggest that Carrs Lane assumed the role of a mother church within the Association. Although it was the largest and held a prestigious position within Congregationalism, records show that the aim was to see meetings evenly distributed between churches though obviously the city centre ones were more convenient. It is significant however that the Council Minute Book was held at Carrs Lane and is filed amongst the papers of the church at Birmingham Central Library. The Association was made up of a council representing the ministers of affiliated churches, ministers without pastoral charge, deacons and appointed female church workers referred to as deaconesses, Sunday School superintendents, mission representatives and two delegates elected from each member church.⁹⁷ At a meeting in June 1896 Jowett spoke of the need of creating a sense of individual responsibility not only to Congregationalism but to Christ, stating that '*our first duty is not to India or Africa, however important, our first duty is to our countrymen, if as Congregationalist we were more patriotic we should be more cosmopolitan*'.⁹⁸ Here Jowett was showing his attachment to his chosen denomination, believing that by adhering to its principles it would present an image of sophistication and professionalism that would add to its appeal. Yet again he is expressing the desire for Nonconformity to be accepted on a par with the Church of England. One aim of the Association was that there should be available throughout the area an evenly distributed provision of Congregational mission, just one aspect of Jowett's idea of the *breadth* of human fellowship. The Executive Committee Books 1894-1913 show a constant and dedicated cooperation by the associated churches in their

⁹⁷ Birmingham City Archives, C.B.2/1, *Association Birmingham Congregational Churches Council Minute Book, 1892-1901*.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* June 23. 1896.

expansion programme, their support and funding for both new and existing churches, as well as a lively exchange of ideas.⁹⁹

Whilst membership of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and local associations provided a practical social means of extending the breadth of fellowship that Jowett was asking for, it was between like-minded individuals and was not really what Jowett intended. His focus was on the individual but with the aim of conversion or integration into church life, and his notion of fellowship was based on sharing a common belief. As he had made abundantly clear, his emphasis was on Home Mission work, but his message to them was not concerned with the Church's conduct, but what it represented. Yet the importance of this work underlay everything he was advocating for the Church, that its strength and energy would be recognised and that her true purpose would be reclaimed. Carrs Lane was involved in extensive mission work in nearby centres in the city at Fazeley Street, Sherborn Road, Rea Street and Cattell Road. The aim was to reach those living in the poorer areas who self consciously would not attend the main church. The success of mission is debateable however, as the Minute Book has entered for Sherborn Road, '*The neighbourhood I fear is very stony ground to a great extent and other influences are actively operating not for good*' yet by '*visiting, good music and interesting services interest is maintained.*' This particular Mission blamed low attendance on the character of the entrance, buildings and approach to the rooms which it hoped to remedy by using a '*sandwich man*' to draw attention to the premises.¹⁰⁰ Missions also ran the Sunday Schools, had sick visitors, Bible women, and even employed a

⁹⁹ Birmingham City Archives, C.B.2/2, & C.B.2/3, *Association Birmingham Congregational Churches, Executive Committee Books*, from 1894-1913.

¹⁰⁰ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/78, *Carrs Lane Town Mission Minute Book, No. 6, 1893-1907*, Feb.7.1900.

qualified nurse for work in the Moseley Road District.¹⁰¹ Whilst they provided social activities as enticement, their success in conversion terms is impossible to measure, and much truth was probably conveyed in the statement that '*Boys especially seem to vanish when they become too old to be seen at a Children's meeting and are lost to the Mission and perhaps in many cases to religious influences altogether.*'¹⁰² It could be argued however, that any religious participation for whatever length of time was effective in that it formed the basis for the promotion and continuation of a form of diffusive Christianity.

Porritt states that Jowett had an eager and receptive audience for this address to the Congregational Union, yet it was essentially an attack on them in both theological and actual terms. Delegates must have been in some confusion as Jowett offered no practical demonstration of the compatibility of his notion of the fellowship of the Divine which the individual experiences with the Human fellowship between Christians. Jowett's own evangelical pursuit of fellowship was certainly widespread, and he worked tirelessly for the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of which he served as President for the year March 1910 to March 1911. His belief in the power of fellowship was such that he optimistically saw it as an attraction to the Church, and reassured his audience that '*The alienation of the people is not fundamental and ultimate*'.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Feb.17.1904.

¹⁰² Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1.78, *Carrs Lane Town Mission Minute Book*, No.6, 1893-1907, Feb.7.1900.

¹⁰³ *The Transfigured Church*, p.30.

3. The Ministry of a Transfigured Home.

“And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Ephesians.6.4.

At the annual autumn meeting of the Congregational Union held on October 6, 1906 at Wolverhampton, Jowett took the opportunity of addressing the delegates on *The Ministry of a Transfigured Home* stressing the importance of home life and in particular children's religious education therein.¹⁰⁴ For many years there had been tensions between the Church of England and Nonconformity concerning denominational instruction in schools. This controversy was brought to a head when the government decided to rationalise the elementary school system, and introduced the Education Act of 1902, which abolished the old school board system and gave local authorities control of education by means of education committees. Whilst Nonconformists accepted state control of schools they were not agreeable to any denominational teaching advantage being given to the State Church, particularly in rural areas where there was no choice of elementary school and it was feared that children would be indoctrinated in creeds against the wishes of their parents. Another objection was also that they would be required to pay rates towards the support of these schools, and some oppositionists went to the extreme length of refusal to pay the education rate. This course of action was known as passive resistance and resulted in summonses, the auction of distrained goods and even imprisonment.

¹⁰⁴ Wolverhampton Record Office, Ref.DX-125/54, *The Ministry of A Transfigured Home*, Congregational Union Meeting Wolverhampton October 1906. NB. No page numbers.

It was a divisive issue with some like G.H.R.Garcia of Union Church, Sunderland approximating it to a revolutionary act.¹⁰⁵ Jowett was an ardent supporter of opposition to the Bill, demonstrated by a report in 1902 that ‘*The Rev. J. H. Jowett, MA., who roused the assembly to a pitch of enthusiasm by his strong denunciation of the Education Bill, and his declaration that Free Churchmen had not sought the conflict, but being in it, would fight to the end*’.¹⁰⁶ This statement from someone usually described as a quiet man becomes even more surprising when it is revealed that in 1904 Jowett was one of four Nonconformist ministers to appear before King’s Heath Police Court, Birmingham, and was issued with a distress warrant for non-payment of the education rate. He acted a spokesman for the group which included eighteen other passive resisters, citing political invasion of the sanctities of individual life as the reason for with-holding payment.¹⁰⁷ It is difficult to know what his congregation thought of his actions, whether or not they were in sympathy with his views. However, the deacons of Carrs Lane had on a previous occasion refused Jowett’s suggestion that a special meeting should be held at the church to discuss the Education Bill.¹⁰⁸ I can find no mention in the church records of this summons or even if it were ever repeated, but it must have caused some consternation amongst the deacons. Nonconformist ministers were in the ambiguous position of being leaders and paid agents, and as Bebbington states there were limits on what ministers could do outside the pulpit.¹⁰⁹ Jowett’s views were apparently still unchanged in 1906 when he attended a demonstration held at the Temperance Hall as part of the Birmingham Education Campaign. The only report of the proceedings states that ‘*Harris, Horne and Jowett submitted the Education Act to severe criticism*’.¹¹⁰ Although Jowett held

¹⁰⁵ Bebbington, David, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁶ *The Midland Free Churchman*, 1902, p.179.

¹⁰⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, Sept 10, 1904, p.4.

¹⁰⁸ Birmingham City Archive, C.C.1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minute Book 1895-1903*, entry 480.

¹⁰⁹ Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p.7.

¹¹⁰ *Free Church Year Book*, 1906, Report 5 March, Birmingham Central Hall.

strong political views and was an avowed Liberal he does not appear to have ever spoken from the pulpit directly about the Education Act. In this address to his co-religionists in the same year, he dropped any political stance and redirected his argument to the moral obligations of religious education as being the duty of parents. He emphatically stated that ‘*The natural and appointed place for children to make the acquaintance of God is in their home*’.¹¹¹

This abrupt change of emphasis is surprising when Jowett had campaigned so vociferously against the 1902 Bill. Perhaps the failure of an amended 1906 Bill brought about the recognition by Jowett and many other Nonconformists that their actions were becoming non-effective and their goal would not be achieved. This realisation was obviously brought to Jowett when he stated that the primary aim of the issues had been obscured by an emphasis on the dignity and prerogatives of the Church of England, the interests of the sects and by exalting the position of the schools.¹¹² Yet he commended the work of the day schools even though they were a ‘*stage removed from the sacred liberties of the home*’, and cited his own childhood experience of their potential influence.¹¹³ During his ministry at Newcastle Jowett is reported by his biographer as having served for a time on the Newcastle School Board. It was perhaps a natural progression for a minister who had spent four years as a pupil teacher at Victoria Street Board School with the initial intention of making teaching his career. Yet when he came to Birmingham there does not seem to be any evidence that he was asked to join the Birmingham School Board, although the strong Unionist representation of politics in Birmingham was definitely not to his liking.

¹¹¹ *The Ministry of A Transfigured Home*.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

Jowett was invited to become a Co-opted Governor of the King Edward's School Foundation in Birmingham in 1899 for the usual period of seven years. Their records show that he was member of the Schools Committee but this position does not seem to have been as fulfilling as Jowett possibly hoped. His record of attendance was poor, less than half of all the meetings called. He retired after a period of four years citing ill-health as the reason '*I am advised it is necessary to confine myself to the really essential work of my own calling*'.¹¹⁴ It was certainly true that the demands of his pastorate and his involvement with the Congregation Union and Free Church Council were time-consuming, but this retirement from what was considered a prestigious appointment suggests that it lacked any real interest for him. The Foundation was well established and the records show that it was run with a precision that allowed little room for innovative change. It was a fee-paying institution which was selective, taking the brightest and best pupils regardless of denomination, so there was little opportunity for Jowett to have any particular influence over the religious policy of the schools. Other Board members possibly had strong religious affiliations, and the Rev.A.J.Robinson of St. Martins, Church of England was also a Schools Committee member. His time as a school governor would however have given him an insight as to just how difficult the teaching of religious education in schools was, and possibly furthered his conviction that it could only be successful if initiated at home. Jowett is reported as always expressing an interest in young people, and it was certainly true that he was discerning enough to realise that continuing contact with them was vital in bringing them into the Church on adulthood. Whilst a Governor of King Edward's Foundation he was involved with a Day Training College for Elementary Teachers set up at the University of Birmingham in 1900.¹¹⁵ In 1905 he reported to the Deacons that he had invited 150 young men from the

¹¹⁴ King Edwards Schools Foundation Archives, *Governors Reports 1899-1904*, 28 June 1899.

¹¹⁵ King Edwards Schools Foundation Archives, *Governors Report*, 27 July 1900.

large business houses in the city to meet Mrs Jowett and himself at a social gathering.¹¹⁶ He also started an annual service at Carrs Lane for students and staff of the University in 1909.¹¹⁷ As a local notable he was asked to speak to the boys of George Dixon Secondary School in the city in 1910, when he stressed that it was not necessary for them to become fine scholars but to turn out fine men. He recommended they adhere to four points which would help them, and these were 1) be true in everything, don't lie, sneak or cheat, 2) show pluck, 3) stand up for the weak and 4) work like a Trojan as idleness was contemptible. Mrs. Jowett presented the prizes.¹¹⁸

In Jowett's opinion even Sunday Schools were a '*maimed and enfeebled substitute*' for home instruction, but he expressed his unfailing gratitude and admiration for their teachers.¹¹⁹ As pastor of Carrs Lane he had overall supervision of the Sunday Schools in its association, which in 1903 had 2,714 scholars, and 150 teachers.¹²⁰ This was a sizeable administrative responsibility in itself, but the various School Committee Reports suggest that it was one in which Jowett took an active interest. He started a Sunday School Teachers' preparation class which was according to Porritt, extremely popular and well attended. As expected these lessons were carefully prepared with a type-written syllabus as well as blackboard illustration.¹²¹ The same attention to detail was also given to the Anniversary Sunday address which was held every year at Birmingham Town Hall, and described as a red-letter day in the annual calendar of Carrs Lane. Again Jowett would start preparation

¹¹⁶ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/ 26, *Deacons Minute Book 1903-1907*, entry 272.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, C.C.1/27, *Deacons Minute Book 1907-1910*, entry 602.

¹¹⁸ Birmingham Central Library, *Local Studies Report*, Ref. A1, 226770.

¹¹⁹ *The Ministry of A Transfigured Home*.

¹²⁰ *The Congregational Year Book*, 1903.

¹²¹ *Porritt*, p.80.

months beforehand, and usually selected an appropriate object with which to illustrate the message.¹²² From the very start of his pastorate it would appear that Jowett made a good impression at the anniversary service ‘*The preacher morning and evening was our beloved pastor*’.¹²³ One of the first things he did on his arrival at Carrs Lane was to attend the quarterly teachers meeting with Mrs. Jowett, where he expressed a desire to get to know each of the teachers personally. He also stated his intention to hold a weekly class for children and have a Sunday morning service in the chapel once every six weeks devoted entirely to the little ones.¹²⁴ It is unclear whether he ever actually achieved this aim, and in view of his increasing workload it seems an unrealistic ideal. Most of the Sunday School children never saw the inside of Carrs Lane Church, and it raises the argument of the middle-class nature of the congregation, as only those children whose parents were Church members or regular members of the congregation would ever have been likely to have this privilege.

As Chairman of the Congregational Union Jowett was keen to inspire leadership amongst the delegates and thus involve Congregational churches to take the initiative in dealing with the problem of what he considered to be the evasion of parental duty. His first recommendation was that they should look at the homes and parents of their own communion, even suggesting that they start some form of a revival. His understanding of the spiritual receptiveness of children began when they were very young which gave parents the ‘*superlative privilege*’ and opportunity of instructing them. He believed that ‘*Parental piety must be more than a vaguely diffusive influence, an energy interpenetrating the common life but never emerging in visible, audible and definite expression*’. He asserted that ‘*In tens of*

¹²² Porritt, p.80.

¹²³ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/ 57, *Carrs Lane Schools Minutes 1895-1912*, 28 June 1896.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, C.C.1/ 60, *Carrs Lane Sunday School, United Teachers Minute Book, 1895-1907*, 15 July 1895.

thousands of Christian homes the apostolic duties of religion do not come within the recognised scope of parental responsibility’, that they are delegated to the school or State, forgotten or ignored.¹²⁵ Jowett was in fact advocating a change of direction in the churches’ practical approach on the matter of children’s religious education, which was away from the political and institutional dimension towards the personal piety of parents. In doing so, he was adding to the responsibilities of the ministers he was addressing by asking them to take on the task of ensuring that parents were being suitably conscientious about their children’s religious knowledge.

His answer to the problem of how ministers were to approach parents to remind them of their responsibilities was to suggest that greater use should be made of the usual services and church gatherings already in place to impart sound principles. He complained that he *‘was amazed at the diffused triviality of many of our meetings’*, and in particular he cited mothers’ meetings which missed the opportunity of their learning how to impart spiritual knowledge to their children. He may well have been thinking of the very popular Pleasant Monday Evening meetings for women at Carrs Lane which were started in his ministry, and of which his wife was a committee member. Jowett was not just advocating that total responsibility be delegated to women, as he hoped that similar meetings for fathers which were serious, pertinent and informative would also teach them how to discharge their parental duty. Yet none of this could be attained without a competent ministry to teach parents how to instruct their children. He questioned the adequacy of what was being taught in schools and colleges concerning their understanding of children, and thought that many children’s addresses were frequently indiscriminating, sometimes childish and often irrelevant. His call

¹²⁵ *The Ministry of A Transfigured Home.*

to the colleges was to adopt a more professional approach and have a definite system of child study as well as the teaching of a more lucid and compact moral philosophy, together with a more practical and pastoral theology. Interestingly, he used the example of Catholic devotional books for children to illustrate that irrespective of actual philosophy their composition was usually correlated and complete.

Jowett expressed the opinion that the evasion of parental duty could be fundamentally attributed in many cases to attitudes concerning marriage. It was for him a profound undertaking and not to be likened to the multitudes of marriages *which 'are the hasty issues of blind sentiment and un-illuminated impulse, and they are devoid of all deep seriousness in approach and covenant'*. He did however acknowledge the mysticism of love, a wise move in view of his own marital status.¹²⁶ Yet his assertion that for some marriage was entered upon as though *'life were a jaunty picnic'* was surprisingly seized upon by the *Eastern Daily Mail* in Singapore which reported the conference on 5 January 1907 with the headline *'Modern marriage viewed as a "Jaunty Picnic"'*¹²⁷ Jowett's main concern was that marriage was losing its spiritual significance and becoming a secular institution, and he was very much against the growing trend for registry office weddings. Surprisingly he attributed this increasing secular attitude towards marriage as the fault of current popular literature. This is an interesting attribution and it is one that historian Callum Brown pursues in his post-modernist analysis of secularisation.¹²⁸ Jowett believed that newspapers and magazines were responsible for changing attitudes within the home, with the result that parents abnegated

¹²⁶ *The Ministry of A Transfigured Home*.

¹²⁷ [http://newspapers.nl.sg/DigitisedPage/eastern daily 190701015.1.4.aspx](http://newspapers.nl.sg/DigitisedPage/eastern%20daily%20190701015.1.4.aspx). *Eastern Daily Mail and Straits Morning Advertiser*, 5 January 1907, p.4.

¹²⁸ Brown, Callum, *The Death of Christian Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2nd.Ed.2009).

their religious duty and responsibility in ensuring that their children received a proper religious education.

Yet was Jowett being unrealistic in this marriage ideal, could he really understand the pressures and hardships experienced by very many couples? His own marriage was given an added gentility just by his income alone. The report of his marriage states that he gave wedding gifts of diamond and pearl brooches to the bridesmaids and a gold and pearl necklace to his bride.¹²⁹ Although Jowett referred to his humble beginnings there was no sign of real poverty in his childhood being one of five children living with their parents in an eight-roomed town house.¹³⁰ His father had his own tailoring business and employed four other people.¹³¹ Jowett is reported as going through life chanting the praises of his mother, and stating that “*I was blessed with the great privilege of a Christian home*”.¹³² The emphasis that Jowett placed on the role of women suggests that he held to the view of a previous minister of Carrs Lane, John Angell James (1785-1859), whose concept of women was that they should be like ‘*The Angel in the House*’, the namesake of Coventry Patmore’s poem written in 1854. This ideal he certainly attributed to his mother and also his own wife, even though attitudes at that time particularly for the middle class were changing and women were becoming increasingly accepted in the workplace. In 1901 the Jowett household included three servants (a cook, a housemaid and a nursemaid for their adopted one year old daughter Monica).¹³³ However, Jowett was fully prepared to accept and acknowledge any unpaid work women did in the name of Christianity, even though ironically this took women out of their

¹²⁹ *The Leeds Mercury*, May 21, 1890.

¹³⁰ *Porritt*, p.4.

¹³¹ Census Return, 1881, RG 11/4421.

¹³² *Porritt*, p.4.

¹³³ Census Return, 1901, RG 13/2807.

homes and in some instances for such long periods that were detrimental to their own families. It is evident from Carrs Lane Church records that women played a major part in the work of the Church, and significantly in 1902 female members were rewarded for their efforts by their inclusion in a new Trust Deed which gave them a vote in the election of future ministers.¹³⁴ Women church workers undertaking specific social duties and Bible women's work at Carrs Lane, appear to have been constantly in demand, especially as representatives on mission and social committees. They were known as deaconesses, but they were not involved in any liturgical duties, financial policy, or decision making deemed to be the preserve of the deacons.

There is a sense of urgency about this address which suggests that Jowett was seriously concerned about decreasing church membership and increasing secularisation. Carrs Lane Church was somehow against the odds managing to increase membership levels, which stood at 900 in 1896¹³⁵ reaching 1,366 in 1911¹³⁶, but Jowett would be well aware that there were many other Congregational churches that were not. This address was a call to the Congregational Union that unless they looked to the membership of tomorrow they could not expect to fill their churches. Yet his approach was not entirely pragmatic, he was an evangelical preacher who firmly believed that the Christian way of life was the only way to live. His firm conviction that this way depended upon the continuing reaffirmation of its values was fundamental to his evangelicalism. In his address he affirmed his belief that '*A ministry makes its finest contribution to any city or empire when it lifts and sanctifies the*

¹³⁴ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/14, *Carrs Lane Church Minutes. 1900-1906*, July 22.1902.

¹³⁵ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/13, *Carrs Lane Church Minutes, 1890-1899*, Feb. 4.1987.

¹³⁶ *Congregational Year Book*, 1911.

common conception of fatherhood and motherhood, and when it seeks the creation of homes in which the light of parental obligation shines both night and day'.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *The Ministry of A Transfigured Home.*

4. TEMPERANCE.

The Abomination of the City

“And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst Of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” – Ezekiel ix., 4.

In his sermon *The Abomination of the City* Jowett identified Birmingham as the modern equivalent to old Jerusalem, a city full of sin. He voiced concerns that people were complacent in their recognition of these abominations and that they had become apathetic. What is significant is that he attributed wholeheartedly the underlying cause of this abomination to intemperance, and showed contempt for the public house ‘*At every corner*’ which he considered ‘*an idol*’ and ‘*representative of an unclean god*’.¹³⁸ Arthur Porritt in his biography stated that Jowett from the very beginning of his ministry had proclaimed strong convictions on the temperance question,¹³⁹ which he repeatedly reaffirmed in many of his sermons. He expressed the belief that drink was ‘*at the very heart of most of our social and industrial problems*’,¹⁴⁰ an interesting statement to make when it was becoming increasingly recognised that poverty and poor housing were major influences on the life style of the labouring classes. Whilst the social gospel preached in the nineteenth century had resulted in corporate improvement of cities, increasingly attention was turning to the needs of the individual in respect of education, public health, working and home conditions. The state was undertaking more of a personal role in the lives of its citizens, and many philanthropists like Joseph Rowntree and George Cadbury were making considerable efforts to improve the lives of many in their housing schemes. Yet in this sermon, Jowett appealed to the individual’s

¹³⁸ *Carrs Lane Missionary Chronicle*, Vol.111. No 12, December 1905, ‘The Abomination of the City’.

¹³⁹ *Porritt*, p.60.

¹⁴⁰ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol 111, No 3, March 1905, p.4.

conscience to recognise, help and support the means of overcoming these abominations caused by drink. The wealthy Congregational hosiery manufacturer Samuel Morley stated in the early 1860s that '*the Temperance cause lay at the root of all social and political progress in the country*'.¹⁴¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century progress for the temperance cause was seen by Jowett as needing individual, community and state support.

Jowett was not alone in this conclusion. According to Helmstadter the evolution of policy within the temperance movement had inevitably led to a general shift within Nonconformity of attitude towards social reform.¹⁴² The early nineteenth-century reformers had been dependent on *moral suasion* as a means of dealing with intemperance, appealing to the conscience of individual drinkers. The ineffectiveness of this manner of evangelism was to lead to calls for total abstinence and political intervention to legislate towards prohibition. Like many other Liberal temperance supporters Jowett had hoped for political reform as a solution to the abominations of the city, yet repeatedly Licensing Act Amendment Bills presented in Parliament in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were rejected by the House of Lords. Even though the Liberals were returned to power in 1906, they had extreme difficulty with passing legislation through the House of Lords, which was still dominated by the Conservatives who were acknowledged as having a long tradition of cooperation with the brewers. Jowett unceasingly tried to rally support for political reform which he saw as hampered by the '*vast and ubiquitous*' electoral power of the public houses and brewers¹⁴³. It is quite significant that he was at his most vociferous in the temperance

¹⁴¹ Helmstadter, Richard, 'The Nonconformist conscience' in ed. Parsons, Gerald, *Religion in Victorian Britain, 1V Interpretations*, (Manchester University press, 1988), p.82.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.82.

¹⁴³ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol.111.No3. March 1905. p.4.

cause in 1905, the year before the General Election in which the Liberals who favoured Licensing legislation were returned to power. He still believed that if England could get legislation like that of the Ten o'clock Closing Bill in Scotland it would '*tremendously alter the emphasis in the comparative interests of drunkenness and sobriety*'.¹⁴⁴ Wales already had separate legislation, the Sunday Closing Act 1881 which prevented public houses from opening on the Sabbath.¹⁴⁵ Jowett stated that he was informed that most hospital emergencies after eight o'clock at night involved patients "*in drink*".¹⁴⁶

The reduction in drinking hours was not the only legislative means he sought as he was also a keen advocate of what was known as *Local Option*. This concerned the granting of licenses for the sale of liquor which could be opposed by residents if they did not wish to have the nuisance of a public house in their vicinity. Jowett was fortunate in that the chairman of Birmingham Licensing Magistrates was Arthur Chamberlain, the brother of the Birmingham politician Joseph Chamberlain. At odds with his brother, Arthur Chamberlain favoured the closing of '*excess*' public houses without compensation contrary to government policy.¹⁴⁷ He was supportive of the temperance cause, and every year allowed the reception of a temperance deputation before the annual meeting of the licensing justices at Victoria Law Courts. This deputation of some eighteen different temperance organisations and societies was led in 1900 by Jowett, who called for a '*more uncompromising antagonism to all appeals for new licenses, that the existing law should be more strenuously enforced and*

¹⁴⁴ *Carrs Lane Missionary Chronicle*, Vol.111, No 12. December 1905, *The Abomination of The City*, p.3.

¹⁴⁵ Wolfe, John, *God and Greater Britain*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.140.

¹⁴⁶ *Carrs Lane Missionary Chronicle*, 'The Abomination of the City', p.3.

¹⁴⁷ Ward, Roger, *City-State and Nation*, (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2005), p.168.

that all abuse of it should be met with the most stringent punishment'.¹⁴⁸ He asked that, with regard to the serving of children, licensees should lose their privilege and their licenses¹⁴⁹ be revoked. Mr Chamberlain explained that the brewers were fulfilling their promise of surrendering licenses, but the difficulty was with the so-called '*free houses*' which were standing in the way of clearance in certain areas. Jowett's disappointment at the lack of national legislation did not prevent his determination in using existing legal means available to secure temperance measures.

Jowett called on his congregation to help '*their stumbling fellows*', placing an obligation on them to lead by example and reminding them that '*as Christians we are pledged to aid in the redemption of our brethren by seeking the removal of all sin*'.¹⁵⁰ He saw informative education as one of the most important remedies for dealing with the deprivations caused by drink. He was in favour of an aggressive campaign that would alert drinkers of the dangers to their health. Such was his disgust at the problems of drink that he allowed one of the country's leading surgeons, Sir Frederick Treves (1853-1923), to speak at Carrs Lane about the physical effects of alcohol.¹⁵¹ It could be argued that such information was misdirected to a respectable church-going congregation, but Carrs Lane had a flourishing branch of the Women's Total Abstinence Society¹⁵² as well as a Men's Temperance Society who were in an ideal position at the various church meetings for the dissemination of medical opinion. In terms of education the speech left no doubt in the minds of the congregation that

¹⁴⁸ *Birmingham Daily Post*, September 1, 1900.

¹⁴⁹ NB. This article uses the spelling of the modern 'licence' as 'license' throughout.

¹⁵⁰ *Carrs Lane Chronicle*, Vol.1. No. 8, August, 1903.

¹⁵¹ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol.111. No.7, July 1905.

¹⁵² See Griffin, M., M.A. Dissertation, (University of Birmingham, 2008), *How does the work of women at Carr's Lane Congregational Church in Birmingham from 1896-1911, show the importance of women's role in the temperance movement?*

drink was a greater evil than mere social deprivation. Sir Frederick dispelled the myths that even small quantities were useful as appetisers, fortifiers or stimulants and described it as poison. Moreover he distanced the use of alcohol by the medical profession as now outdated, stating that for the past twenty-five years improving hospital drugs had taken its place. Yet this would disregard the plight of the poor for whom everyday ailments were a constant concern and for which alcohol provided cheap, much-needed relief as an antiseptic and analgesic. Women in child-birth at home were in a particularly vulnerable position. It could also be argued that there was biblical approval for alcohol taken in sickness, as when the apostle Paul told Timothy to ‘*use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities*’¹⁵³.

Jowett was of the opinion however, that the ‘*definite knowledge of the physical aspects of the destructiveness of alcoholic drink*’ should even be given to children in elementary schools.¹⁵⁴ Children attending Carrs Lane Sunday Schools would be made very much aware of the temperance issue, and their records show that the Band of Hope consisted mainly of the children from their afternoon sessions.¹⁵⁵ *Carrs Lane Journal* states that some 259 children attended the Band of Hope party on 16 January 1905. The Band of Hope usually met every Monday at 7.30 in the evening, and though admitting children from six to sixteen years it is likely that these meetings would be in the form of services attended mainly by older children. What is evident from the Journal however is that there was a full programme of activities arranged for them throughout the year, everything from flower services, garden

¹⁵³ The Bible, *First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy*, 5.23.

¹⁵⁴ *The Abomination of the City*, p.3.

¹⁵⁵ Birmingham City Archive, C.C.1/60, *Carrs Lane Sunday School, United Teachers Minute Book, 1895-1907, Yearly Report 1896*, Feb.1.1897.

parties, lantern lectures, hobby exhibitions, and excursions.¹⁵⁶ Jowett is recorded by his biographer as having an active association with the Band of Hope Union, and had been elected to its presidency whilst at Newcastle.¹⁵⁷ Yet it was not only children whom Jowett saw as in need of education, and he further suggested that town councils should appoint public health instructors to advise the community on the effects of alcoholic drinking, and called for posters and circulars to be distributed on this matter. Jowett veils his criticism of Birmingham City Council in his '*respectful urge*' that they should follow the example of other councils in Lancashire and Yorkshire and adopt such a policy.¹⁵⁸

Jowett recognised that the dissemination of knowledge and restrictive legislation would still not accomplish total sobriety. He had a Utopian vision of a '*healthy, wholesome, and alluring environment*' which gave men space to breathe. This was never going to be attainable in the overcrowded courts of the city, but his notion of providing for a '*saner and nobler use of leisure*', which would '*fringe the grey and sober garment of the daily work with pure and radiant recreation*' was something that was most certainly within the realms of possibility. It would appear that the seed of how this was to be achieved was already in his mind in 1905 when he pleaded '*All this we can do, and must do, and I hope and believe that in such a pure and elevating provision my own congregation will take a noble part*'.¹⁵⁹ His ambitious plan was to found an Institute that would fulfil this notion, and which would later become his legacy to the city of Birmingham, the Digbeth Institute which opened in 1908. Just as the Band of Hope provided activities for children, the Digbeth Institute provided

¹⁵⁶ *Carrs Lane Missionary Chronicle*, Vol.111, No 12, Dec.1905.p.3.

¹⁵⁷ *Porritt*, p.60.

¹⁵⁸ *The Abomination of the City*, p.4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

diversionary activities for adults, mostly men, in an effort to keep them away from the public house. The most remarkable feature of this undertaking was that Jowett raised the money for the building (£22,000) without using any funds of Carrs Lane Church and that it was paid for without any loan. The Institute was opened amidst congratulations to him for having carried the burden of raising the large sum of money required to realise the project of his inspiration.

¹⁶⁰ It was an impressively large building consisting of three blocks. At the front was a large café with recessed lounge, a reading room, and rooms for the minister, sisters and lady workers, with a large billiard room, a large room and ante-room for meetings, kitchen and caretakers accommodation. There was a large hall space for 1,400 people with pulpit, organ and choir gallery, which was used for services, bible and prayer meetings and even weddings. At the rear was a further assembly hall with collapsible partitioning intended for Sunday school purposes accommodating up to 600 persons. Although offering a variety of leisure activities, its main interior configuration still resembled that of a church. Below these halls was other accommodation which included a gymnasium and a boys' games room. There was also a kitchen, wood shed, engine room and band-master's room.¹⁶¹ It would appear that the Digbeth Institute had the potential to fulfil every criterion that Jowett hoped would resolve the abominations he saw in the darkest quarter of the city.

Yet the foundation of such Institutes was not without its critics. Jowett was aware of such criticism that in providing recreational facilities the church would be accused of being a social club and in danger of losing its spiritual purpose. There were also concerns that

¹⁶⁰ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/15, *Carrs Lane Church Minute Book 1907-1915*, January 28th 1908.

¹⁶¹ *The Congregational Year Book*, 1908, p.155.

Nonconformity would not be taken seriously if it became involved with such ventures. Yet, as early as 1866 Newman Hall had addressed the Congregational Union stating,

*‘We help the poor as regards food, raiment, medicine – may we not help them as regards recreation? As the public-house, with its auxiliary attractions, is the chief temptation to the working classes and to our young men, should we not do something to denounce the evil?’*¹⁶²

These were the sentiments that fostered Jowett’s vision of the Digbeth Institute, the combining of doctrine with diversity. This was not a new concept as recreational facilities and such institutes had begun to be adopted in the 1880s.¹⁶³ It is impossible to know what degree of success Digbeth Institute had in gaining converts to the faith or membership to Carrs Lane, but it was undoubtedly a success in social terms for a section of the surrounding community. In practical terms it provided a building that was able to house the multitude of church activities that were previously spread among different venues around the city, and in particular it consolidated the Sunday Schools and enabled the Church to vacate less cost-effective buildings. A year after it opened the Institute purchased a field for outdoor recreation at a cost of £710, of which £500 had already been promised by four friends of the church.¹⁶⁴ The Institute also acquired an allotment which they hoped to cultivate with tools given by Mr. John Manning.¹⁶⁵ Jowett’s hope of a healthier environment was certainly being realised but would those attending heed the advice he quoted from St. Paul to the Ephesians *‘And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit’*? It is also questionable as to whether the Institute really served the people it was intended for. Many of the activities it provided called for some contribution no matter how small, and there would

¹⁶² Erdozain, Dominic, *The Problem of Pleasure*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), p.146.

¹⁶³ Ibid. p.194.

¹⁶⁴ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/15, *Church Minute Book, 1907-15*, June 29.1909.

¹⁶⁵ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol.111.1. Jan.1909, p.3.

most certainly be a collection at any services which would exclude the very poor or those mismanaging their resources.

There is no biblical commandment that states *Thou shalt not drink*. Not only did this make the position of temperance reformers difficult, but also made it difficult for individuals to accept that it was sinful. Yet Jowett looked to the Bible to present his argument, and in particular repeatedly quoted ‘*Be sober*’ from the Epistle of St. Peter.¹⁶⁶ It could be argued that technically he was using this quotation in its narrowest form, although in his book, *The Epistle of Saint Peter*, described as a practical and devotional aid, he did expand on the notion of sober as inclusive of a sedate and rational lifestyle.¹⁶⁷ What Jowett accepted, was that to ‘*be sober*’ was for some an exceedingly difficult task in practice. With this in mind he made his congregation aware that ‘*as Christians we are pledged to aid in the redemption of our brethren by seeking the removal of all sin*’.¹⁶⁸ He reminded them of their Christian duty to help those who were stumbling, and to heed St. Paul’s advice that the way they could best help was to set the example of abstaining from the practice themselves, ‘*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth*’.¹⁶⁹ This quotation is interesting in that it refers to vegetarianism, and Jowett may well have been a vegetarian. He presided at a meeting of the Birmingham Branch of the National Anti-Vivisection Society at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, a cause which is closely associated with vegetarians. Although he admitted it was his first attendance he obviously supported the

¹⁶⁶ The Bible, *The First Epistle General of Saint Peter*, 4.13.

¹⁶⁷ Jowett, J.H. *The Epistle of Saint Peter*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1905).

¹⁶⁸ *Carrs Lane Chronicle*, Vol.1, No 8, August 1903, ‘Intemperance’, p.3.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

cause as it was reported that ‘*he had searched in the Word of God for sanction and had failed to find it*’.¹⁷⁰ Jowett strongly rejected the position of moderate drinkers as he believed they were unreasonable and unhelpful in demanding abstinence from a drunkard when they were not subscribing to any personal commitment themselves. His plea to his congregation was for total abstinence ‘*for the sake of your stumbling brother, and for your Saviour’s sake who died to redeem him*’.¹⁷¹

Not all evangelical Nonconformists were like Jowett; there were those who could not identify themselves with the teetotal cause. There were even members of his congregation who perhaps made a distinction between drink and drunkenness. In the early days of his pastorate the Church Minutes show that the pastor informed the Church in December 1896 that the deacons had decided that in future only unfermented wine would be used at the Lord’s Supper.¹⁷² Yet the Deacons Meeting Minute Book shows that there was an objection to this decision by Mr. W. Hilton on the grounds that the Church membership had not been consulted. A Mr. E. Hallam also contested that he was unsure whether the diaconate actually had power to take such a measure.¹⁷³ Nonconformists had traditionally put great stress on personal freedom, and for some, intervention in the lives of others was not their decision to make. The sentiments expressed by the philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) in his essay *On Liberty* were still upheld by some Nonconformists. Mill considered drinking to be a private matter and was not in favour of pressure groups which ignored the liberty of others and demanded legislation. He also believed that where there was no ‘*perceptible hurt to any*

¹⁷⁰ Birmingham Central Library, ref. LP.20.09, *Speeches at the National Anti-Vivisection Society*.

¹⁷¹ *Intemperance*, p.4.

¹⁷² Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/13, *Church Minute Book Jan.1. 1890- 1899*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, C.C.1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minute Book, 1895-1903, April.1.1987*.

individual except himself; the inconvenience is one which society can afford to bear, for the sake of the greater good of human freedom'¹⁷⁴ Jowett had no sympathy with such a view and would have been what Brian Harrison describes as a '*legislative compulsivist*'.¹⁷⁵

For Jowett, however, the positive actions of knowledge, legislation and alternative provision for leisure time would count for nothing unless accompanied by the individual's recognition that redemption was by the grace of God. He saw drink as a sin, and the only way to salvation was that they '*should be soundly converted and redeemed, and should nourish their souls on the wonderful bread of life*'.¹⁷⁶ For him then, it separated those who would be saved from those who would be damned. It is evident therefore that the temperance cause for Jowett underpinned his own evangelical religion. He admits to building his whole argument of intemperance on this foundation, and that '*As a Christian disciple, I cannot stand aloof from any social and national sin and say that it does not concern me! I am pledged to work and live for its removal*'.¹⁷⁷ His temperance work was his answer to dealing with the abominations of the city, and the means he sought to remedy this were essentially practical. Yet he remained exceedingly modest about his founding of the Digbeth Institute and never appears to have referred to it in any of his sermons. His true evangelicalism is revealed in the characteristic manner in which he approached the problem and which display the quadrilateral of evangelical characteristics as defined by Bebbington.¹⁷⁸ In his active support of the temperance cause, Jowett stressed the importance of bible teachings and the saving grace of Christ on the Cross with the aim of conversion for those wishing to lead a better life.

¹⁷⁴ Mill, John Stuart, *Essays on Politics and Society Part 1 (On Liberty)*, 1859, www.oll.libertyfund.org.

¹⁷⁵ Harrison, Brian, *Drink and The Victorians*, (Keele University Press, 1994), p.21.

¹⁷⁶ *The Abomination of the City*, p.4.

¹⁷⁷ *Intemperance*, p.1.

¹⁷⁸ Bebbington, D.W. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p.3.

Jowett sought to make others aware of the physical, moral and social deprivation of those who were taken ‘*in drink*’ and reminded them of their moral obligation to help. His condemnation of drinkers appears to focus totally on the moral failure of participants rather than make any attribution to an economic climate in which unemployment and low wages were increasingly becoming recognised as equally to blame for poverty. Jowett’s avoidance of party politics in his preaching shows a determination to confine his pulpit pronouncements to religious ethics. However, in his sermon *The Abomination of the City*, he suggested three particular ways of remedying the situation which advocated a degree of political action as a means amongst many of addressing the drink problem. Firstly he called for their support in the education of the young against the dangers of drink and also in campaigning for municipal efforts to inform the general public. Secondly he appealed to their political affiliation for legislative reform, and thirdly he needed their community spirit to support practical Christian activity to improve the environment for the poor. What he stressed most of all however was that these measures against the abominations would only be effective by the grace of God.

5. FREE CHURCH UNITY

The Ministry of The Word

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Ephesians. 2.20.

From the 1890s greater cooperation between Nonconformist churches saw the growth of the Free Church Council movement which resulted in local representatives of the various denominations coming together to plan joint activities such as missions, temperance work, and lectures on matters involving Nonconformist principles. For an evangelical like Jowett this movement held a particular attraction, with his commitment to the extended fellowship that this would bring to his Nonconformist beliefs. Yet when Jowett came to Carrs Lane in 1895 the church was not a member of The Birmingham Free Church Council which had been inaugurated by George Cadbury on 27 November 1893.¹⁷⁹ Jowett's predecessor Dr. R.W.Dale had not shared the vision of such fellowship and refused to take any part in the movement. Dale emphatically stated at the first Birmingham conference on 20 February 1893, that churches were religious institutions established for religious purposes only and that such Councils would become partisan and politically involved.¹⁸⁰ He appears to have had the support of his deacons on this matter, so under his ministry Carrs Lane remained outside the organisation.

¹⁷⁹ Jordan, E.K.H. *Free Church Unity*, p.37.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.36.

Jowett however was an ardent supporter of the principles of the Council which were committed to the evangelization of the Christian Gospel. This did not mean that there was complete agreement between the Free Church denominations on all theological and ecclesiological issues, but it provided Nonconformists with a platform for their views to be heard. Jowett did not seek for Carrs Lane to become a member of the Council immediately on his appointment to the pastorate. In part this may have been out of deference to the opinion of Dr. Dale on the matter, but it also has to be remembered that the deacons would have been heavily influenced by Dr. Dale and Jowett may have had some opposition to overcome. Nonconformists in Birmingham were politically more divided than anywhere else between Unionism and Liberalism,¹⁸¹ so understandably following the Unionist views of Dr. Dale, the very Liberal J.H.Jowett needed to proceed with care. Carrs Lane did join The West Midland Federation of Evangelical Free Churches in December 1896,¹⁸² although Jowett attributed the change of heart not to the change in pastorate, but because fears of partisan political action were found to be groundless.¹⁸³ Carrs Lane as a member of the West Midland Federation thus became associated with the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches which had taken over from the Free Church Council in March 1896. The West Midland Federation of Evangelical Free Church Councils was particularly strong, due in part to the enthusiasm and money of George Cadbury. It boasted that it was the fortunate possessor of one of the finest theological libraries in the Midlands which contained some 2,500 carefully selected volumes, and spent £20 each year in keeping it up to date.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Bebbington, D.W. *The Nonconformist Conscience*, P.72.

¹⁸² Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/25, *Deacons Meeting Minute Book 1895-1903*, Dec.31.1896.

¹⁸³ *Midland Free Churchman*, Vol.1. No.2, Feb.1898, p.22.

¹⁸⁴ *Midland Free Churchman*, ref.B10 21, Dec. 1905, No.5.

Jowett's strong belief in Free Church unity was not something that he necessarily preached to his congregation, but his support was often preached to other Nonconformist ministers. His views on the need for fellowship between denominations were vividly expressed in his sermon *The Ministry of a Transfigured Church*, when he stressed that the individualism of the denominational churches resulted in the Christian Church not achieving its full potential.¹⁸⁵ He asked for more tolerance from everyone in their inter-denominational relationships, reminding them that '*The sectarian must sensitively interpret his brother sectarian who worships over the way, and the political partisan must seek an intelligent apprehension of the other partisan who sits on the opposite bench*'.¹⁸⁶ His own recognition of the work of the Salvation Army in this respect illustrates his views, as often this body was not acknowledged as a proper church because of its quasi-military style organisation and the fact that it rejected all the sacraments. His respect for the Salvation Army was twofold, based on their activism '*It is the Salvation Army which is principally engaged in the Ministry of redeeming our English Caliban*', and their humanitarianism in '*doing the rough gutter work*'. He defended them against criticism '*Shame on us if we ever cast upon them the fire of cynical and contemptuous regard*' and congratulated their success, '*I am amazed at their triumph*'.¹⁸⁷ These sentiments show his all-embracing respect and regard for all nonconforming Christian groups which formed the basis of his belief and work for the Council of Free Churches.

In 1899 Jowett is recorded as becoming a National Council Committee member, but there is surprisingly very little mention in the Free Church Year Books of his actual contribution, although he was known to have been a tireless worker and commended on

¹⁸⁵ *The Transfigured Church*, p.25.

¹⁸⁶ Jowett, J.H., *Brooks by the Traveller's Way*, p. 96.

¹⁸⁷ *Carrs Lane Chronicle*, Vol 1. No.5. May 1903.

several occasions for his work in the promotion of Free Church unity. It is easy to understand Jowett's attraction to an organisation whose priority was religious in its objective as it gave him the opportunity to expand the scope of his evangelism. The National Council met annually in March in a variety of cities for official sermons, addresses and conferences on a variety of subjects that covered religious, social, Nonconformist and political issues. Initially the avoidance of politics had been a pre-requisite of financial support which did not come from the denominations themselves but from wealthy individuals like George Cadbury and W.P.Hartley.¹⁸⁸ However, the sentiments of Dr. Dale were gradually realised as it proved impossible for the Council to refrain from political matters which affected social issues, and as Bebbington affirms was '*one of the most significant pressure groups of Edwardian England. It became the chief vehicle of the Nonconformist Conscience*'.¹⁸⁹ It would appear that Jowett did not wish to draw too much attention to his political activity even though his loyalties were well known, yet the National Council allowed him to express his political views under the umbrella of Free Church policy. He was able to comment and campaign under these auspices and in particular make vociferous denunciation of the Education Bill introduced in 1902. He never undertook any national leadership role in any campaign, and never appears to have preached directly on such issues from the pulpit. Unlike his predecessor R.W.Dale, Jowett did not become heavily involved in municipal affairs either. This may have been because such municipal activism known as the '*civic gospel*' was no longer appropriate by the time Jowett came to Birmingham. He did believe however that it was God's will to have morality in civic life, that '*He wants good men in town councils, on our School Boards, in all the different sphere of civic government and life*', and urged his

¹⁸⁸ Munson, James, *The Nonconformists*, p.172-5.

¹⁸⁹ Bebbington, David, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p.61.

congregation to lead a good life and respond accordingly.¹⁹⁰ He also asserted that ‘*we can no more separate the religious and the secular, and preserve their life, than we can preserve the life of flesh which is divorced from blood*’.¹⁹¹ Whilst acknowledging the importance of political undertakings for the common good, his focus was on the individual and self improvement.

Membership of the Free Church Council was doubly rewarding for Jowett, who was not only able to fulfil his boyhood interest in politics, but also to partake in the social and educational stimulus provided by Council and Congress meetings. Yet there was one matter on which according to Porritt he was unwilling to be drawn, and that concerned the furore in 1907 concerning ‘The New Theology’. The controversy raged around his particular friend the Congregationalist R.J. Campbell of the City Temple, who had introduced the theological concept that man and God were two expressions of divinity, and that sin was not so much wickedness as error.¹⁹² Jowett disliked the bitterness created by the argument which was taken up wholeheartedly by others, and quietly re-affirmed his own belief in Christ. An entry in the Church Minute Book reveals that he gave an interesting account at a church meeting, of a private conference in London consisting of ex-Chairmen of the Union and the principals of Congregational Colleges, who drew up a manifesto relating to the *New Theology* which was to be issued to all the Congregational churches in England and Wales.¹⁹³ Porritt records that Jowett later explained to the members of Carrs Lane that, ‘*People were mixing up Religion and Theology – Doctrine and Experience. The one remains: but the other develops*’.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Jowett, J.H., *Brooks by the Traveller’s Way*, p.47.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* p.130.

¹⁹² Parsons, Gerald, ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain, Interpretations 1V*, p. 85.

¹⁹³ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/15, *Carrs Lane Church Minute Book, 1907-1915*, Feb.25.1908.

¹⁹⁴ *Porritt.*, p.126.

Porritt states it was inevitable that Jowett should be elected to the Presidency of The National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, holding office from March 1910 to March 1911.¹⁹⁵ His address was entitled *The Ministry of the Word* in which he once again stressed the importance of preaching and the need for the ministry to improve. He advised them to avoid a *fierce sensationalism*, a *cold officialism* and the *peril of dictatorialism*.¹⁹⁶ Yet this was not only to be just another lecture on one of his favourite themes, for Jowett saw it as an opportunity to launch an active revival of spiritual religion. His idea was to mount an aggressive campaign of evangelism, and consequently he resolved to devote his presidential year to a systematic and well thought out effort to that end. His hope was to stimulate the spiritual life within churches which he believed was urgent and essential before any organised effort to reach the non-church-goer was undertaken. This he intended to do by holding a series of conventions in various provincial centres. As expected of Jowett, he lavished care and thought on the preparation of these so called Reconsecration Conventions which took place in Yarmouth, Bournemouth, Llandrindod Wells, Swansea, Newport, Scarborough, Newcastle upon Tyne, Blackpool, Plymouth and Leicester.¹⁹⁷ This concept was somewhat reminiscent of the Simultaneous Mission to London that the Free Church Council had organised in 1901, which was followed in major towns and cities by Mission in the Provinces.

Jowett played an active role in these 1901 missions which were a combination of prayer meetings, the distribution of religious literature and intensive home visitation. These missions were not to be considered as outlets of social goodwill, but missions of spirituality

¹⁹⁵ Porritt, p.107.

¹⁹⁶ *Free Church Year Book*, 1911, p.p.10-12.

¹⁹⁷ Porritt, p.110.

based on theology, and aimed at conversion.¹⁹⁸ Birmingham ran a particularly successful mission with Gipsy Smith and Dr. John Clifford as the chief missionaries. The police testified that they had never contended with such crowds before, with Birmingham Town Hall filled every night and overflow meetings having to be held at Carrs Lane and the Central Hall.¹⁹⁹ This could have been in part due to the appearance of Rodney (Gipsy) Smith, a romantic figure because of his Romany background with a revivalist style of preaching. Although meetings were well attended, and visitation was carried out in 150 Free Church parishes, their success at winning converts to the Christian faith proved immeasurable. The Mission generally appears to have been mainly supported by the usual church-going community and made little impact on drawing in those from the nonchurchgoing public for whom it was initially intended. Their success however was measured in re-affirming the faith of those already converted, and the strengthening of the relationship between the ministers and missionaries of the Free Churches who participated in the exercise.²⁰⁰ More importantly it silenced those who thought of the Free Church Council as being a purely social and political organization.

However, the growing acceptance and respect for the Free Church Councils was not the only reason for the attraction of the Simultaneous Mission, which started in London only a few days after the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901. The last decades of Victoria's reign had seen a growing enthusiasm for the monarchy as a result of increasingly royal ceremonial occasions which were used to engender national unity and patriotism. These ceremonials according to Wolffe were capable of being interpreted as solemn Christian

¹⁹⁸ Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, p.67.

¹⁹⁹ Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, p.69.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.68.

observances, or affirmation of general religiosity, or quasi-religious celebrations of national solidarity.²⁰¹ The mood of the country was therefore one of reverence and dignity, an ideal time for spiritual reflection. Jowett had professed himself an unabashed admirer of the Queen frequently referring to her religiosity in his sermons and holding her up as an example to her subjects. In his sermon *The Beauty of the Heights* he extols her virtues as ‘*she reverently recognised God*’ and that ‘*the Grace of God was the empowering energy in her long and beneficent career*’.²⁰² He seems to find it surprising that a sovereign should find lowliness, as he believes power usually makes for pride and thus creates a spirit of exclusiveness, yet he used her example to illustrate that the evangelical message is for rich and poor. Jowett also had a keen admiration for King Edward VII, a regard that was borne out of the King giving recognition to English Nonconformists by insisting that they were present at every great national function.²⁰³ In May 1910 Jowett as President of the National Council of the Evangelical Free churches was amongst those privileged to be invited to the King’s Funeral.²⁰⁴

It would not be true to think of the Free Church Councils purely as commentators or a political pressure group. As early as 1893 the notion of Free Church Parishes had been considered, and in Birmingham a house-to-house visitation scheme was devised which divided the city into 161 areas. In March 1900 Jowett refers to the work still being done at Carrs Lane under this plan, for which he took no credit, but it involved visits paid every month to 3,000 homes by a band of faithful and devoted workers. It is difficult to ascertain

²⁰¹ Wolfe., *God and Greater Britain*, p.157.

²⁰² Jowett, J. H., *Brooks by The Travellers Way*, p.88.

²⁰³ Jordan, *Free Church Unity*, p.88.

²⁰⁴ *Carrs Lane Journal*, Vol.1111. No.6, June 1910.

the actual degree of co-ordination and co-operation between the different denominations in undertaking this work as its primary aim was conversion. However, this does not appear to be the only reason for visitation as Jowett described them in more practical terms as targeting the poor in the hope that by encouraging self improvement in their home conditions, they would be led towards a Christian way of life. He explained that these visits had revealed three areas of shortcomings: the need of the Gospel, the need for cleaner homes, and better cooked food. He described how in Birmingham the Baths Committee of the City Council were approached and asked to issue special one penny tickets made for those who needed them. The deacons at Carrs Lane had provided a cooking stove so that ladies of the church could teach women to cook, and a lady doctor gave instruction in home nursing. Even a spectacle club was made available for those who could only afford to pay for them on easy terms. Other Free Churches also gave examples of the work they were doing, described by Alderman Hart as '*practical Christianity*'.²⁰⁵ The social aspect of this visitation scheme appears to have been at odds with or even overtaken the initial purpose of gaining converts to Christ.

Jowett's address as President of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches emphasised '*The Ministry of the Word*' in the context of preaching as the means of conversion. He was concerned that the Free Churches had been accused by the Anglican Bishop, Dr. Charles Gore, of '*seeking refuge from the difficulties of thought in the opportunity of action*'. His message was that people needed to be reminded that religion was about theology, and that '*a skimmed theology will not produce a more intimate philanthropy*'.²⁰⁶ Dr. Gore was an old adversary of Jowett although Gore always maintained

²⁰⁵ *The Midland Free Churchman*, Vol.111.3, March 1900, p.50.

²⁰⁶ *Free Church Year Book*, 1911, Presidential Address 'The Ministry of the Word'.p.6.

that he had a good working relationship with both Dr. Dale and Jowett. At the meeting to welcome Dr. Gore as Bishop to the new diocese of Birmingham in 1905, Jowett spoke as the representative of Nonconformists in the city. Gore in his speech dealt with the idea of Christian reunion, but Jowett was later criticised for his response that firmly established his Nonconformist position. Yet Jowett was not directing any animosity towards Gore personally, he was merely defending Nonconformity against the historical privileges of the established Church of England. The 1851 religious census had shown that collectively attendance at Nonconformist churches was on a par with the Church of England, and so it was inevitable that Nonconformists desired recognition of this by means of having religious equality.

It is unlikely that Jowett ever envisaged Free Church unity in terms of an ecumenical integration that would involve all Protestant denominations as his views on episcopacy and the sacrament of the eucharist would have been a major stumbling block in this respect. He was also still calling for the disestablishment of the Church of England, and is known to have spoken at the Birmingham and Midland Branch of the Liberation Society in 1902, although I have found no record of him being an actual member. When Jowett took Carrs Lane into membership of the West Midland Federation of Free Churches he stated categorically that he still believed in denominationalism. In 1909 he wrote to the *Birmingham Daily Post* following his later controversy with Bishop Gore over the Anglican Canon Hensley Henson preaching at the Digbeth Institute anniversary service. Jowett's response was that as he grew older he was '*less concerned with the smaller matters of etiquette which so often strangle and suffocate the liberty of Christian communion*'.²⁰⁷ Whilst there was a close alliance between the Congregationalists, Baptists and Presbyterian faiths, Jowett believed that '*the true reality*

²⁰⁷ Porritt. P.119

of their Federation (that is the Free Churches) *was that it was a Federation of dissimilarities*'.²⁰⁸ From this statement one could deduce that Jowett saw a close alliance between Congregationalists, Baptists and Presbyterians as desirable but the ideal of full union was unattainable. The practical consideration that full unity could eradicate duplication and provide a more efficient deployment of both human and financial resources does not seem to have been on the agenda. In some ways this was a good thing, because it provided an accommodation of a variety of viewpoints that was acceptable to those who might otherwise have been lost to following the Christian faith.

There can be no doubt that the Re-consecration Mission undertaken by Jowett took its toll on his health. A sufferer from pernicious anaemia he had frequently had periods of ill health suffering from exhaustion throughout his ministry at Carrs Lane. The year of his presidency of The Free Church Council was to see a change in direction away from political lobbying of former years towards a concentration on spiritual unity and a fellowship in the broadest sense. Even at the height of the Education controversy in 1905, the Secretary of the Free Church Council, Thomas Law had acknowledged Jowett as a member who was outside of the '*fighting ranks*', and '*associated with the devotional life of the Church*'. In spite of this, Jowett would not accept that other Nonconformist ministers whilst seemingly political were any less religious than people like him who were more moderate.²⁰⁹ Jowett's concept of re-consecration was in essence how he saw the principles of the Evangelical Free Churches being acted upon. His enthusiasm for this cause never wavered, and on leaving Carrs Lane to

²⁰⁸ *The Midland Free Churchman*, Vol.111.3, March 1900.

²⁰⁹ *Porritt*, p.115.

accept the pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York, he fully embraced these principles.

CONCLUSION

Jowett responded to the challenges presented to him at Carrs Lane by conducting himself in a way that Bebbington would describe as Evangelical and undeniably in keeping with a life style that epitomised the Nonconformist ideal.²¹⁰ Yet how typical as a minister has this study shown Jowett to be? It has revealed a Nonconformist minister who was schooled in the traditions of religious Dissent having to face the realities of a changing world and adapt to the modernity of the twentieth century in a practical manner. He was able to do this by adhering to self imposed principles that were reflected in his preaching, and which allowed him to evangelise without being dogmatic. It was a remarkable discipline that ensured he maintained the support of his deacons and congregation throughout, and was achieved in three ways. First, he avoided the expression of any harsh or controversial theological doctrine, secondly he separated his private political views from any pulpit proclamation, and thirdly he concentrated on offering spiritual reassurance in his sermons to those in need of comfort. It was arguably a safe middle-of-the-road approach and perhaps in broader terms cost him recognition as a serious theologian even though he was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Edinburgh University in 1910. However, it proved no detriment to his career as it did not take away the acclaim that he was one of the finest preachers of his day, but it did prevent his name being readily called to mind by historians in discussion of notable Nonconformist ministers of the early twentieth century.

The avoidance of expressing explicit theological doctrine in his sermons did not mean that privately Jowett was any less of a theological thinker or commentator amongst his

²¹⁰ Bebbington, D.W. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p.4.

co-religionists. On occasions his sermons show nostalgia for the preaching of a more openly Calvinistic doctrine like that of the great preacher C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), yet like most of his contemporaries he accepted the evolving humanitarian concept of the Fatherhood of God. This more ethical theology encompassed a wide ranging viewpoint of beliefs both philanthropic and political, but according to Helmstadter it did not undermine the importance of individual conscience in Nonconformist evangelicalism.²¹¹ Jowett's success as a preacher was that he conveyed this sense of personal responsibility. He did not over-react or become embroiled in the preaching of worldly issues totally unconnected with spiritual matters but adhered to his principles. His focus was not to court controversy but bring people to a simple faith in God, and perhaps it was that which widened Jowett's popular appeal. In offering what might be described as a form of theological reduction and introducing an everyday practical approach he was fulfilling the needs of his congregation. Helmstadter argues that this thrust of evangelicalism towards the practical tended to de-emphasize the distinction between the ministry and the laity,²¹² so it was inevitable that the relationship between Jowett and his congregation would assume an intimacy that engendered trust in his leadership.

In establishing the Digbeth Institute Jowett was following the lead of contemporaries who had already established such Institutional Churches and saw them as a positive solution to the social problems around them. However, the fact that theological changes resulted in churches assuming a more social aspect did not escape criticism from both Nonconformists and in particular the Church of England hierarchy, which included Jowett's adversary Bishop Gore. The argument against the provision of leisure facilities was that by using diversionary

²¹¹ Helmstadter Richard, 'The Nonconformist Conscience' in Parsons, Gerald, Ed. *Religion in Victorian Britain*, 1V, *Interpretations*, P.70.

²¹² Helmstadter Richard, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, P.69.

tactics to try and get people into churches, it actually took people away from spiritual understanding and consequently away from the Church. A recent study by Dominic Erdozain sets out to prove that this was indeed the case, and attributes changes of attitude in the public mind towards the concept of religiosity as being the fundamental cause of increasing secularisation in the twentieth century.²¹³ He also claims that this concentration on the social aspect of church life which appealed to the working classes was at the expense of a spiritual regeneration that would have ensured continued church growth.²¹⁴ Yet arguably in towns and cities such Institutes were responding to the needs of demographic changes whereby the middle classes were moving into suburbia and leaving those who had greater need of such facilities. Jowett would have been well aware of the criticism levelled at the Institutional Church, so why did he continue with his own Digbeth Institute project? The Church records show his awareness of youths standing around the streets on a Sunday evening,²¹⁵ and concerned as he was with temperance it would have seemed for him an expedient solution. However, mindful of criticism he was keen to establish and achieved an identity for the Digbeth Institute that included a highly religious profile of use for the building. Whilst it operated under the administration and influence of Carrs Lane Church, it was in effect a consolidation of their former mission centres, and had little effect on the congregation or policy at Carrs Lane itself. Carrs Lane might have been in a unique position and certainly whilst Jowett was there church membership numbers continued to rise, but it is only with the benefit of hindsight that one can make assertions that perhaps so-called Institutional churches worked to the detriment of religiosity. Of greater importance is that such Institutes were part of a religious culture that historians like Jeffrey Cox in his study of Lambeth have termed as

²¹³ Erdozain, Dominic, *The Problem of Pleasure*, p.6.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

²¹⁵ Birmingham City Archives, C.C.1/26, *Deacons Meetings Minute Book 1903-1907*, Sept.26.1905.

producing a *diffusive* Christianity in everyday life.²¹⁶ This concept recognises the moral values which underpin our society today, even when faced with increasing secularisation and depleted church attendance. However, for Jowett and other ministers at this time, they were dealing with the here and now, unaware that the greatest challenge was yet to come, the First World War.

There was possibly another reason for Jowett wanting to pursue this venture which concerned the respectability and image of Nonconformity. These Institutional Churches were a visible and positive symbol of Nonconformity in the community, a statement of concern of physical as well as spiritual well-being. Retrospective argument that the foundation of such Institutes took away the initiative for earlier political intervention to deal with social problems therefore seems unjust. The acceptance of leisure activities by the churches also dispelled the dour image created by the earnestness of early Evangelicals whose seriousness was associated with a killjoy attitude.²¹⁷ Jowett describes himself as an optimist and reportedly had a quiet but good sense of humour. Yet this study has revealed his sensitivity to the issue on the respectability of Nonconformity in both corporate and personal representation. The emphasis he places on a temperate home life is totally in keeping with the morality of the evangelical *Nonconformist Conscience* as described by Bebbington.²¹⁸ The desire for Nonconformity to be considered and accepted on a par with the established Church of England was a constant force behind such activism. It is obvious that Jowett had hopes that such respectability would also be achieved through the unity of the Free Churches.

²¹⁶ Cox, Jeffrey, *The English Churches in a Secular Society, Lambeth: 1870-1930*, (Oxford University Press, 1982).

²¹⁷ Bebbington, D. W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p.130.

²¹⁸ Bebbington, D.W., *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p.11.

The importance of membership of the Free Churches Federation cannot be underestimated in the assessment of Jowett's ministry. Not only did it shape the direction of his leadership but it fashioned him into the pastor he was to be. It not only broadened his outlook but that of his congregation and made them receptive to the ideas he wanted to introduce. This wider membership fostered inclusivity so that they were confident in belonging to a religious group outside that of the Church of England, and consequently it gave them trust in him. For Jowett the beauty of being a member of the Free Church Council was that there was no official party line, so he could therefore participate in any actions or decisions to a degree which entirely suited his way of thinking, or withhold his support for anything he did not totally agree with. Jowett was not an innovator, and at times it seems that he was swept along in the enthusiasm of other members of the Council, notably John Clifford. It is questionable as to whether Jowett would have displayed such passion over the Education question had he not had the support of the Free Church Council although his enthusiasm can hardly be termed militant in comparison with men like Clifford. He was a man of moderate outlook, and though passionate about certain matters he was never fanatical or extreme.

It was perhaps the political profile of the Free Church Council together with social activism that gave Nonconformity a misrepresentative impression of success in the early twentieth century. Yet there was vibrancy within its ranks, and churches like Carrs Lane were certainly at the forefront in terms of public recognition. The perspective of church life for Jowett and his congregation was very different from the pessimistic overview of historians like R. Tudur Jones, who in his book on *Congregationalism in England 1662-1962* describes

the period from 1890 to 1930 as ‘The Beginning of Sorrows’.²¹⁹ It was as he states a time of bewilderment for Nonconformist leaders both theologically and politically, and therefore it is of particular interest in the history of Nonconformity. Yet historians tend to stress the activities of those ministers who identified themselves by their more extreme behaviour or thinking which stood in the way of the unity that preachers like Jowett strived for.²²⁰ Yet Jowett as an individual was able to negotiate these complexities not only by means of tact and diplomacy in his leadership, but more importantly by his simple belief in the Grace of God.

The role of the Nonconformist Minister was as Clyde Binfield suggests a most complex position that was in the world’s eye defined by the pulpit.²²¹ There were those who were dogmatic theologians, those who were more like politicians and those like Jowett who concentrated on spiritual matters. In 1907 the *British Weekly* conducted a survey to discover England’s most appealing preacher in which Jowett was ranked first.²²² It was as a preacher that he became distinguished and it was the rewards from preaching and publishing that support the acclaim of his being referred to as a ‘*Pulpit Prince*’. It is unfortunate that this term has now assumed pejorative connotations which associate such men with egotism, but Jowett’s personality was never egotistical. He was not flamboyant or gregarious, but a gentle man whose demeanour allowed him the upward mobility that Nonconformity offered to young men at the time, what Binfield refers to as ‘*a side entrance to gentility*’.²²³ His salary on his call to America in 1911 was reportedly the highest ever offered to a pastor by an American church, but Jowett insisted that his salary would remain the same £1000 per annum

²¹⁹ Tudur Jones, R., *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962*, (London, Independent Press, 1962), pp.314-388.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.334.

²²¹ Binfield, Clyde, *So Down to Prayers*, p.189.

²²² <http://www.preaching.com/resources/pastmasters11654464> ,*Preaching*.

²²³ Binfield, Clyde, *So Down to Prayers*, p.190.

as he was receiving from Carrs Lane.²²⁴ It is not surprising that, patriotic as he was, he only stayed in America until the end of the Great War and returned to England in 1918 when he took over the pastorate of Westminster Chapel, London. He then turned his attention to peace and ecumenical issues, for which he was honoured as a Companion of Honour by King George V in 1922.²²⁵

This study has given an insight into the life of a Nonconformist Minister in the early twentieth century which frequently historians overlook in their concentration on Nonconformist movements and trends. The individual perspective on the involvement and influence of changes which affected ministers like Jowett is therefore lost, but can still be reclaimed and understood by reading the expression of Jowett's thoughts in the sermons and addresses he gave. It has shown that within the framework of Nonconformity there was great diversity but as a moderate Jowett conforms to the general understanding of Nonconformist ministers in studies to date. It has not revealed any revisionist ideas but shown a man of integrity, devotion and dedication, and if one were to construct a profile of a perfect minister then Jowett would probably be the ideal. R.Tudur Jones states that Jowett was lionized as no other preacher of his generation, yet throughout he remained humble.²²⁶ This must surely give the Reverend J.H.Jowett a worthy place not only in the history of Congregationalism, but also in the history of Nonconformity.

²²⁴ *Porritt*, p. 293.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.188. & p.212.

²²⁶ Tudur Jones, R., *Congregationalism in England, 1662-1962*, p.371.

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