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BEING BAPTIST AND BEING CALVINIST: THE FOUR-FOLD IMPACT OF BEING BOTH ACCORDING TO THOMAS CHALMERS

While an answer to the question of where Baptists came from has yet to reach a widespread consensus among Baptist historians, few of them would be prepared to deny that the immediate origins of the three earliest groups of Baptists—the General Baptist, the Particular Baptists, and the Seventh-day Baptists—lie outside of the matrix of Puritanism. All three of these Baptist groups emerged from the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Puritans, a body of men and women who are remembered, among other things, for their passionate commitment to the doctrinal position known as Calvinism. And of these three groups, it was the Particular Baptists—so denominated because they upheld the Calvinistic assertion that Christ's death was solely for the elect—who turned out to be the most significant in passing on Baptist convictions. The General Baptists, who were the first Baptist group to emerge in 1609, mostly wandered off into the wasteland of Unitarianism in the eighteenth century,[1] while the Seventh-Day Baptists, who appeared in the 1650s and who worshipped on Saturday, were never that large a

[1] For the story of the General Baptists up to 1660, see B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (Rev. ed.; Didcot, Oxfordshire: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 15–58.

community.[2] The future of the Baptist cause lay with the Particular Baptists.[3]

The first Particular Baptist congregation was established in 1638. By 1644 there were seven such congregations, all of them located in the metropolis of London,[4] and, after fifteen years of aggressive evangelism on the basis of the *First London Confession of Faith*, a robust statement of confessional Calvinism, there were roughly 130 Particular Baptist churches throughout the British Isles.[5] From such beginnings and over the next two hundred years, Calvinistic Baptist churches were planted in other Anglophone cultures around the world, becoming particularly strong in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the United States, and Atlantic Canada.

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[2] On the Seventh-Day Baptists, see Bryan W. Ball, *The Seventh-day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

[3] J.H. Shakespeare, *Baptist and Congregational Pioneers* (London: National Council of Evangelical Free Churches/The Kingsgate Press, 1906), 179–180; Winthrop S. Hudson, "By Way of Perspective" in his ed., *Baptist Concepts of the Church. A Survey of the Historical and Theological Issues which Have Produced Changes in Church Order* (Chicago/Philadelphia/Los Angeles: Judson Press, 1959), 16–17.

In the essay that follows, I shall use the terms "Particular Baptist" and "Calvinistic Baptist" interchangeably. Both of these terms were used from the seventeenth century onwards. The term "Reformed Baptist" appears to be of more recent vintage, making its appearance in the mid- to late twentieth century.

[4] For the full story of the emergence of the Calvinistic Baptists from the Puritan matrix, see especially B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1983); Kenneth R. Manley, "Origins of the Baptists: The Case For Development from Puritanism-Separatism" in William H. Brackney with Ruby J. Burke, eds., *Faith, Life and Witness. The Papers of the Study and Research Division of The Baptist World Alliance 1986–1990* (Birmingham, Alabama: Sanford University Press, 1990), 56–69.

[5] On this growth and the convictions of the Calvinistic Baptists in this era, see, in particular, the following articles by B.R. White: "The Organisation of the Particular Baptists, 1644–1660", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 17 (1966), 209–226; "The Doctrine of the Church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644", *The Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., 19 (1968), 570–590; "Thomas Patient in Ireland", *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal*, 2 (1969-1970), 36–48, especially 40–41; B. R. White, "The Origins and Convictions of the First Calvinistic Baptists", *Baptist History and Heritage*, 25, No.4 (October, 1990), 39–47; as well as his *English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 59–94. For the *First London Confession*, see also Robert W. Oliver, "Baptist Confession Making 1644 and 1689" (Unpublished paper presented to the Strict Baptist Historical Society, 17 March 1989).

Something of the significance of their communities can be seen in the following quote from the pen of Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847), who was probably the leading Scottish Presbyterian divine of his day.[6] He is speaking specifically of the English Particular Baptists, but his remarks do have some validity for the entire worldwide Calvinistic Baptist communion:

> Let it never be forgotten of the Particular Baptists of England that they form the denomination of [Andrew] Fuller and [William] Carey and [John] Ryland [Jr.] and [Robert Hall [Jr.] and [John] Foster; that they have originated among the greatest of all missionary enterprises; that they have enriched the Christian literature of our country with authorship of the most exalted piety as well as of the first talent and the first eloquence; that they have waged a very noble and successful war with the hydra of Antinomianism; that perhaps there is not a more intellectual community of ministers in our island or who have put forth to their number a greater amount of mental power and mental activity in the defence and illustration of our common faith; and, what is better than all the triumph of genius or understanding, who, by their zeal and fidelity and pastoral labour among the congregations which they have reared, have done more to swell the lists of genuine discipleship in the walks of private society—and thus both to uphold and to extend the living Christianity of our nation.[7]

[6] For two overviews of Chalmers' life and ministry, see A.C. Cheyne, "Chalmers, Thomas" in Nigel M. de S. Cameron, ed., *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 158–161 and John Roxborogh, "The Legacy of Thomas Chalmers", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 23(1999), 173-176.

[7] *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1844), 76. These lectures were delivered from September 1819 to November 1823 in the parish of St. John's, Glasgow. I am indebted to Mr. Jason Fowler, the Archives and Special Collections Librarian at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for this information.

Here Chalmers takes note of four ways in which the Calvinistic Baptist community in England had been a blessing to the larger Church in the British Isles—and he would not have erred if he had referred that blessing to the Church further afield. First, there was the area of missions. It was among this community that the Baptist Missionary Society had been formed in 1792 and William Carey (1761–1834) sent out to the Indian subcontinent. And it was Carey, more than any other figure, who was the exemplar of missions for the world of nineteenth-century Evangelicalism.[8] Second, Chalmers takes note of various books from Baptist authors that have been marked by both piety and literary excellence and that have blessed the people of God. Then, there is the way that Baptists had been used in the defence of the Christian faith against various theological errors, one of which he mentions specifically, namely Antinomianism. Chalmers may well have been especially thinking of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), whom he had mentioned by name earlier in the text,[9] but there were other fine Baptist apologists whom he could have had in mind. Finally, "better than all the triumph of genius or understanding," Chalmers is thankful for the faithful labours of

[8] See, for example, Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey, D.D.* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1836) and George Smith, *The Life of William Carey, D.D.* (London: John Murray, 1885). On the Baptist Missionary Society, see especially Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).

[9] On Fuller as an apologist, see Michael A.G. Haykin, ed., *'At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word': Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K./Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster Press, 2004). Fuller and Chalmers knew and deeply respected one another. After a visit to Chalmers, for example, Fuller told him, "I never think of my visit to you but with pleasure" [cited William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1850), I, 341–2].

Calvinistic Baptist pastors, which have produced so many godly followers of Christ.

The paper that follows takes these four area of Calvinistic Baptist life and looks at each of them in turn through the prism of individual Baptists so as to flesh out the way that Calvinism has impacted Baptist life.

- We shall look first at the area of apologetics and the defence of the doctrine of the Trinity by John Gill.
- Then, we will look at the heart of the missionary spirituality of Samuel Pearce, the close friend of William Carey.
- Third, we shall take William Fraser, a Scottish Baptist whose ministry was an important one in the early years of Baptist witness in Canada.
- Finally, as an example of Calvinistic Baptist piety we shall consider Scottish-Canadian Daniel Arthur McGregor and his hymn "Jesus, wondrous Saviour."

John Gill and defending the Trinity

When William Williams Pantycelyn (1717-1791), one of the central figures of eighteenth-century Welsh Calvinistic Methodism and the author of "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah," was dying in 1791, he

thanked God for the "true religion" that he had found particularly in the writings of "Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Owen, Dr. Gill, Marshall, Harvey, [and] Usher."[10] Four of these authors, are of course, Puritan figures—the two leading Independent theologians, Thomas Goodwin (1600–1679) and John Owen (1616–1683), the Anglo-Irish Episcopalian James Ussher (1581–1656), and the English Presbyterian Walter Marshall (1628–1680). "Harvey" is the Anglican Calvinist James Hervey (1714–1758), one of the members of the Wesleys' Oxford Holy Club and famous in his day for a defence of Calvinism, *Theron and Aspasio* (1755). Dr. Gill is none other than John Gill (1697–1771), the most significant Calvinistic Baptist divine of the mid-eighteenth century.[11]

That Gill should appear in the company of four Puritans says much about his way of doing theology as well as the form of his publications. In a day when brevity was highly prized as a literary quality, Gill's works read and definitely looked like the massive tomes of the baroque print culture of the Puritan era. In part, this may have had something to do with Gill's character. As his first biographer, John Rippon noted in

[10] Cited Eifion Evans, "William Williams of Pant Y Celyn", *The Evangelical Library Bulletin*, no.42 (Spring, 1969), 6.

[11] The standard biographical sketch of Gill is John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late Rev. John Gill, D.D.* (Repr. Harrisonburg, Virginia: Gano Books, 1992). For more recent studies of Gill and his theology, see Graham Harrison, *Dr. John Gill and His Teaching* (Annual Lecture of The Evangelical Library; London: The Evangelical Library, 1971); Tom Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory. A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 73–107, *passim*; George M. Ella, *John Gill and the Cause of God and Truth* (Eggleston, Co. Durham: Go Publications, 1995); Michael A.G. Haykin, ed., *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997); and Timothy George, "John Gill" in his and David S. Dockery, eds., *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition* (Rev. ed.; Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 11–33.

his memoir of Gill, "The Doctor considered not any subject superficially, or by halves. As deeply as human sagacity, enlightened by grace, could penetrate, he went to the bottom of everything he engaged in."[12] In part, it also reflected Gill's deep love for the Word of God and the very Puritan conviction that all of divine revelation needed to be taught to the people of God.

As to which specific writings of Gill were of benefit to William Williams, a number come to mind. There was, for instance, his youthful exposition of the Song of Songs (1728), which approached this portion of Holy Scripture from a vantage-point that it was an allegory of Christ and his church, a perspective that stretched all the way back to the patristic era, and which, according to Rippon, who succeeded him as pastor, "served very much to make Mr. Gill known."[13] Gill's robust defence of Calvinism in the late 1730s, *The Cause of God and Truth* (1735-1738), issued at a time when British Calvinism was very much a house in disarray, and then his commentary on the entire New Testament—his deeply learned *Exposition of the New Testament*, published in three folio volumes between 1746 and 1748—were two other key works that Williams would have known. There was also Gill's companion to his New Testament commentary, his four-volume

[12] Rippon, *Brief Memoir*, 137.
[13] Rippon, *Brief Memoir*, 24.

Exposition of the Old Testament (1763-1766), and his *magnum opus*, *The Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (1769-1770).

At the foundation of Gill's literary corpus was an insatiable desire for learning. Born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, at the end of the Puritan era in 1697, Gill's early schooling was at a local grammar school. This came to an abrupt end in 1708, though, when the school's headmaster demanded that all of his pupils attend Anglican morning prayer. Gill's parents were decided Dissenters and consequently withdrew their son from the school. Due to the fact that his parents had limited financial resources—Gill's father Edward was a woolen merchant—they could not afford to send their son to a Dissenting Academy and so Gill's formal education was over. But this did not check their son's hunger for learning.

Gill had acquired a good foundation in Latin and Greek before leaving school, and by the time that he was nineteen he was not only adept in both of these languages, but he was also well on the way to becoming proficient in Hebrew. Knowledge of these three languages gave him ready access to a wealth of Scriptural and theological knowledge, which he used to great advantage in the years that followed as he pastored Goat Yard Chapel, Southwark (later Carter Lane Baptist Church) in London

from 1719 to 1771 and became the celebrated theological author that Williams read during his lifetime.

With such a passion for learning, it is not surprising that Gill acquired a substantial library. His books filled several rooms in the upstairs of his home, and one of his nieces, a Jane Blason, who was later in the employ of an aristocrat, commented that she never saw a comparable library in all of the great houses she visited. In fact, on one occasion Gill narrowly escaped death in this library. Only nine months or so before he met Davies, a hurricane ripped through London and, among other damage that it wrought, it brought a chimney stack crashing through the roof of Gill's house right into his study, shattering his writing table into smithereens. If the learned doctor had been at the desk—he had left but a short while before for a preaching engagement—he would surely have been killed.[14] Gill, ever the upholder of sovereign, abounding grace, later rightly observed to a friend that "a man may come to danger and harm in his closet, as well as on the highway, if not protected by the special care of God's providence."[15]

Now, one key area of writing that Williams may have had in mind when he made the above-cited remark about Gill was Gill's defence of the doctrine of the Trinity. The eighteenth century is often described as the

[14] Robert W. Oliver, "John Gill (1697-1771): His life and ministry" in Haykin, ed., ed., *The Life and Thought of John Gill*, 44.
[15] Cited Rippon, *Memoir*, 65.

Age of Reason for the basic reason that many of the intellegentsia of Europe viewed their day as one of unparalleled advances in the realms of science, worldview, and philosophical thought. Although the term "Enlightenment" did not come into vogue until the following century, they regularly invoked the image of light when speaking of their age. The Anglo-Irish philosopher George Berkeley (1685–1753), for instance, spoke of "that ocean of light, which has broke in and made his way, in spite of slavery and superstition."[16] The English poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744), thinking of the revolutionary contributions that Isaac Newton (1642–1727) had made to the understanding of the universe, proudly declared:

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.
> God said, let Newton be! and all was light.[17]

Despite the biblical allusion of this couplet, the light in which Pope and other Enlightenment advocates reveled was the light cast by human reason after it had been freed from what they considered the murk of religious dogma, superstition, and tradition. This naïve trust in the "omnicompetence of human reason"[18] is clearly antithetical to an orthodox Christianity that affirms the ultimacy of divine revelation. And

[16] Cited Ulrich Im Hof, *The Enlightenment*, trans. William E. Yuill (Oxford/Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1994), 4.

[17] Cited Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (1968 ed.; repr. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982), 38.

[18] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology. An Introduction* (Oxford/Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1994), 81.

not surprisingly this era saw the beginning of a concerted critique of the verities of the Christian faith, among which the doctrine of the Trinity received the most criticism during the early decades of the eighteenth century.

A succession of theologians, whose thought had been moulded more by the spirit of the age than by the Spirit of Truth, insisted that the Scriptures be interpreted in accord with what they regarded as sound reason. And through this hermeneutical principle, a number of denominational bodies—for instance, the English Presbyterians, the General Baptists, and large tracts of Anglicanism—were utterly unable to retain a firm grasp of Trinitarian orthodoxy. In the face of this massive apostasy in England, the Calvinistic Baptists, along with the Congregationalists,[19] stood firm. Ultimately, it was the grace of God they enabled the Calvinistic Baptists to remain orthodox. But God uses means, and in this case it was the London pastor and theologian John Gill.

Gill's *The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated* (1731; 2nd ed., 1752) proved to be an effective defence of the fact that there is "but one God; that there is a plurality in the Godhead; that there are three divine Persons in it; that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit

[19] Even the leading Congregationalist author Isaac Watts (1674–1748) wrestled with the doctrine of the Trinity in the last twenty years of his life. See Arthur Paul Davis, *Isaac Watts: His Life and Works* (N.p., 1943),

God; that these are distinct in Personality, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."[20] The heart of this treatise was incorporated into Gill's *Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (1769) which became for many Baptist pastors their major theological resource. Rippon, Gill's early biographer and his pastoral successor, bore this testimony to Gill's faithfulness as a Trinitarian theologian:

> The Doctor not only watched over his *people*, "with great affection, fidelity, and love;" but he also watched his *pulpit* also. He would not, if he knew it, admit any one to preach for him, who was either cold-hearted to the doctrine of the Trinity; or who *denied* the divine filiation of the Son of God; or who *objected* to conclude his prayers with the usual *doxology* to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as three equal Persons in the one Jehovah. Sabellians, Arians, and Socinians, he considered as real enemies of the cross of Christ. They *dared* not ask him to preach, nor *could* he in conscience, permit them to officiate for him. He conceived that, by this uniformity of conduct, he adorned the pastoral office.[21]

He did more than "adorn the pastoral office." Through the written word he helped shepherd the English Calvinistic Baptist community—and others, like William Williams—in the pathways of orthodoxy. Well did Martyn Lloyd-Jones remark that "John Gill was a man, not only of great importance in his own century, but a man who is still of great importance to all of us."[22]

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[20] *The Doctrine of the Trinity Stated and Vindicated* (2nd ed.; London, 1752), 166–7.
[21] Rippon, *Memoir*, 127–8.
[22] Harrison, *Dr. John Gill and His Teaching*, 31.

Samuel Pearce and the spirituality of missions

When nineteenth-century authors came to write about the origins of the modern missionary movement, many of them were so bedazzled by the historic nature of William Carey's missionary endeavour that they unwittingly minimized or overlooked the indispensable role played by his co-workers, both at home in England and on the field in India. When Carey's contemporaries, though, spoke the name of William Carey, it was inseparable from six others: Joshua Marshman (1768-1837) and William Ward (1769-1823)—Carey's colleagues in India, who with Carey formed what has come to be known as the "Serampore Trio"—and then Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliff (1752-1814), John Ryland, Jr. (1753-1825)—mentioned above in the Chalmers quote—and Samuel Pearce (1766-1799)—the first three of whom have sometimes been dubbed the "Home Trio." In fact, when this latter group of friends were contemplating the mission that sent Carey to India in 1793, one of the images that came to their minds was that of a gold mine. As Fuller later recalled: "we saw there was a gold mine in India, but it seemed almost as deep as the centre of the earth." Who would venture down to explore it? "I will venture to go down," Carey said, but, he stipulated, Fuller, Sutcliff, Ryland and Pearce "must hold the ropes" while he descended. Their response was whole-hearted, earnest, and undertaken out of a fervent passion for God's glory and a deep love for Carey. "We solemnly

engaged to him to do so," Fuller stated, "nor while we live shall we desert him."[23] The commitment of these men to one another is well summed up in the words that Samuel Pearce wrote in the front of a Greek New Testament that he sent to Carey in India in the autumn of 1797. In choosing these particular words, Pearce was obviously seeking to remind Carey what lay behind all that God had done for them. They were in Greek and were drawn from Acts 4:32: "one heart and one soul."[24]

One of the key ways that Pearce supported Carey was through his speaking at various churches throughout England encouraging his hearers to pray for and give to the cause of missions.[25] One of the meetings at which Pearce preached was the one that saw William Ward—later to be one of the most invaluable of Carey's co-workers in India—accepted as a missionary with the Baptist Missionary Society. Those attending the meeting, which took place at Kettering on October 16, 1798, were deeply stirred by Pearce's passion and concern for the advance of the gospel. He preached "like an Apostle," Fuller later wrote

[23] J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London, 1816), 101.

[24] John Taylor, comp., *Biographical and Literary Notices of William Carey, D.D.* (Northampton: Dryden Press, Taylor & Son/London: Alexander & Shepheard, 1886), 27.

[25] For the life and ministry of Pearce, see especially Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce. A.M.* (3rd ed.; Dunstable: J.W. Morris, 1808). For a reprint of this memoir, see Andrew Fuller, *A Heart for Missions. The Classic Memoir of Samuel Pearce* (Birmingham, Alabama: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2006). For more recent studies, see also S. Pearce Carey, *Samuel Pearce, M.A., The Baptist Brainerd* (3rd ed.; London: The Carey Press, n.d.); Michael A.G. Haykin, "Calvinistic Piety illustrated: A study of the piety of Samuel Pearce on the bicentennial of the death of his wife Sarah", *Eusebeia*, 2 (Spring 2004), 5–27; *idem*, "An "Eminently Christian Spirit": The Missionary Spirituality of Samuel Pearce", *Journal of the Irish Baptist Historical Society*, 11, NS (2004–2005), 25–46.

to Carey. And when Ward wrote to Carey, he told his future colleague that Pearce "set the whole meeting in a flame. Had missionaries been needed, we might have had a cargo immediately."[26]

Returning back to his home in Birmingham from this meeting Pearce was caught in a heavy downpour of rain, drenched to the skin, and subsequently developed a severe chill. Neglecting to rest and foolishly thinking what he called "pulpit sweats" would effect a cure, he continued a rigorous schedule of preaching at the Cannon Street Baptist Church, where he was the minister, as well as in outlying villages around Birmingham. His lungs became so inflamed that Pearce was necessitated to ask Ward to supply the Cannon Street pulpit for a few months during the winter of 1798-1799.

By mid-December, 1798, Pearce could not converse for more than a few minutes without losing his breath. Yet still he was thinking of the salvation of the lost. Writing to Carey around this time, he told him of a plan to take the gospel to France that he had been mulling over in his mind. At that time Great Britain and France were locked in a titanic war, the Napoleonic War, which would last into the middle of the second decade of the next century. This war was the final and climactic episode in a struggle that had dominated the eighteenth century. Not

[26] Andrew Fuller, Letter to William Carey, 18 April 1799 (Letters of Andrew Fuller, typescript transcript, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford); William Ward, Letter to William Carey, October 1798 [cited S. Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, ed. Peter Masters (London: Wakeman Trust, 1993), 172].

surprisingly, there was little love lost between the British and the French. Samuel Carter Hall (1800-1889), a literary figure, for example, recalled one of his earliest memories as a young boy when his father would put him on his knee and tell him, "Be a good boy, love your mother, and hate the French"![27]

But Pearce was gripped by a far different passion than this that gripped many in Britain and France—his was the priority of the kingdom of Christ. In one of the last sermons that he ever preached, on a day of public thanksgiving for Horatio Nelson's victorious annihilation of the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile (1798) and the repulse of a French invasion fleet off the coast of Ireland in the fall of 1799, Pearce pointedly said:

> Should any one expect that I shall introduce the *destruction* of our foes, by the late victories gained off the coasts of Egypt and Ireland, as the object of pleasure and gratitude, he will be disappointed. The man who can take pleasure at the destruction of his fellow men, is a cannibal at heart;…but to the heart of him who calls himself a disciple of the merciful Jesus, let such pleasure be an everlasting stranger. Since in that sacred volume, which I revere as the fair gift of heaven to man, I am taught, that "of one blood God hath made all nations," [Acts 17:26] it is impossible for me not to regard every man as my brother, and to consider, that national differences ought not to excite personal animosities.[28]

[27] *Retrospect of a Long Life: From 1815 to 1883* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1883), 45.
[28] *Motives to Gratitude* (Birmingham: James Belcher, 1798), 18-19.

A few months later—when he was desperately ill—he wrote a letter to Carey telling him of his plans for a missionary journey to France. "I have been endeavouring for some years," he told Carey, "to get five of our Ministers to agree that they will apply themselves to the French language,…then we [for he was obviously intending to be one of the five] might spend two months annually in that Country, and at least satisfy ourselves that Christianity was not lost in France for want of a fair experiment in its favour: and who can tell what God might do!"[29] God would use British evangelicals, notably Pearce's Calvinistic Baptist contemporary Robert Haldane (1764-1842), to play a key role in taking the gospel to Francophones on the Continent when peace eventually came, but Pearce's anointed preaching would play no part in that great work. Yet his ardent prayers on behalf of the French could not have been without some effect—"praying breath" is never lost.

Not long before his death on October 10, 1799, Pearce wrote to a friend:

> Blessed be his dear name, who shed his blood for me. He helps me to rejoice at times with "joy unspeakable" [1 Peter 1:8]. Now I see the value of the religion of the cross. It is a religion for a dying sinner. It is all the most guilty and the most wretched can desire. Yes, I taste its sweetness, and enjoy its fulness, with all the gloom of a dying-bed before me; and far rather would I be the poor emaciated and emaciating creature that I am, than be an emperor with every earthly good about him—but without a God.[30]

[29] Cited Carey, *Samuel Pearce*, 189.
[30] Fuller, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce*, 176-177.

William Ward, who was profoundly impacted by Pearce's zeal for the salvation of the lost, well summed up Pearce's character when he wrote not long before the latter's death:

> Oh, how does personal religion shine in Pearce! What a soul! What ardour for the glory of God! …you see in him a mind wholly given up to God; a sacred lustre shines in his conversation: always tranquil, always cheerful. …I have seen more of God in him than in any other person I ever met."[31]

William Fraser and being a faithful pastor

While Baptist congregations could be found in most parts of England and Wales by the beginning of the eighteenth century, there were virtually none in Scotland until the last few decades of that century. The national church which was Presbyterian had become so fused with what it meant to be Scottish that Baptist principles seemed completely alien to the Scottish mind. When solid Calvinistic Baptist churches did begin to emerge in Scotland between 1790 and 1810, many of them were the product of the preaching of two wealthy brothers James Haldane (1768-1851) and his older brother Robert (1764-1842), who have been romantically described by one historian as "the Wesley and Whitefield

[31] Cited Carey, *Samuel Pearce*, 188.

of Scotland.".[32] Of the forty-one Baptist churches in existence in Scotland by 1810, twenty-three of them were linked to the Haldanes.[33]

Now among those impacted by the ministry of the Haldanes was a man named William Fraser (1801–1883), who came from the Scottish Highlands and who emigrated to Canada in 1831 to serve a congregation of Gaelic-speaking Calvinistic Baptists in a settlement in the Ottawa Valley called Breadalbane.[34]

Fraser arrived at Breadalbane in the summer and preached his first sermon from the phrase "Escape for thy life" in Genesis 19:17, drawing spiritual truth from the fact that Lot and his family were told to flee the city of Sodom and not to look back.[35] Though well received by the congregation, the early years of Fraser's ministry at Breadalbane were not easy ones. Since the congregation was not in a position to pay their

[32] The standard life of the Haldanes is that of James' son, Alexander Haldane, *The Lives of Robert and James Haldane* (1852 ed.; repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990). For more recent studies, see D. B. Murray and D. E. Meek, "The Early Nineteenth Century" in D. W. Bebbington, ed., *The Baptists in Scotland. A History* (Glasgow: The Baptist Union of Scotland, 1988), 30-32; Deryck W. Lovegrove, "Unity and Separation: Contrasting Elements in the Thought and Practice of Robert and James Alexander Haldane" in Keith Robbins, ed., *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c.1750-c.1950. Essays in Honour of W. R. Ward* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 153-177; Kenneth J. Stewart, "Restoring the Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the 'Reveil' at Geneva 1816-1849" (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1991), 59-66, 126-169; Deryck Lovegrove, "Haldane, James Alexander" in Donald M. Lewis, ed., *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860* (Oxford/Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995), I, 501; Kenneth J. Stewart, "Haldane, Robert" in Lewis, ed., *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, I, 501-502.

[33] Murray and Meek, "Early Nineteenth Century", 32; D. E. Meek, "The Highlands" in Bebbington, ed., *Baptists in Scotland*, 284-285.

[34] For the life and ministry of Fraser, see Michael A.G. Haykin, "Voluntarism in the Life and Ministry of William Fraser (1801-1883)" in William H. Brackney, ed., *The Believers Church: A Voluntary Church. Papers of the Twelfth Believers Church Conference held at McMaster Divinity College, October 17-19, 1996* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 1998), 25-50.

[35] *Breadalbane Baptist Church History 1816-1991* ([Dalkeith: Breadalbane Baptist Church], 1991), 6.

pastor an adequate salary, Fraser had to teach school for a year or so. He purchased a farm, on which the present church building stands, but since it took some time to clear the land the farm was of little value for a number of years. Thus, Fraser was forced to seek assistance from the New York Baptist Missionary Society.

These financial difficulties were not the worst of his problems, however. What Fraser felt most keenly was the fact that his ministerial labours seemed to be bearing little fruit. Converts were few and the spiritual life of the church seemed to be ebbing away. In Fraser's own words, "the congregation appeared in a most careless, hardened, and desperate stage."[36] He supposed, he wrote many years later, that "probably all the election of grace were found" in the Breadalbane area and that he "might as well go and seek them on other mountains."[37] In this frame of mind he actually left Breadalbane for a period of time, travelling close to a thousand miles over to Lake Huron and back.[38] By the time that he returned he was convinced he was where God wanted him to be, but this conviction appears to have done little to alleviate his state of despondency.

[36] Letter, October 24, 1834 [cited *The Baptist Magazine*, 27 (1835), 147]. Although this letter is said to be from a "Mr. John Fraser," everything in the letter indicates that William Fraser is its author.

[37] "Sketches of Canadian Baptist Churches. II", *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, 4 (1878), 28.

[38] "Sketches of Canadian Baptist Churches", 28.

A fellow Scotsman, John Gilmour (1792-1869), who had came to Montreal in 1830 and organized the first Baptist work there,[39] visited him in the summer of 1834 and sought to encourage his fellow Scotsman. He soon became cognizant, however, that Fraser seemed to have imbibed the notion that praying and preaching for spiritual renewal were utterly useless since this was a sovereign work of God. There must be fire in the pulpit, Gilmour admonished his friend, before there will be a blaze among the congregation. Fraser evidently took this admonition to heart. In his words:

> I betook myself to humiliation, prayer, and fasting; and by solemn inquiry, was astonished to find how full the whole Bible made success depend on God's grace. But not as the Antinomian would have it, and go *to rest*; but would have the true labourer go to work, depending on the Master and His promise for success, as any farmer ever did in his own field, and much more. How evident that God is the life and working power of all the great men of antiquity—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses and Joshua; David, Daniel, and all the prophets; and surely the Apostles, under a far more favourable ministration of the Spirit. Now, all this saving power and converting power of God's Spirit is placed in Christ Jesus, as a granary for the supply of the life and labour of the church, and will be given to every sincere seeker; and surely His own faithful ministers will not seek it in vain, while they are eminently "co-workers with God" in the work of saving souls: a work which never was meant to be begun or carried on by mere human power.[40]

[39] On Gilmour, see Paul R. Dekar, "The Gilmours: Four Generations of Baptist Service" in his and Murray J. S. Ford, eds., *Celebrating the Canadian Baptist Heritage: Three Hundred Years of God's Providence* (Hamilton, Ontario: McMaster University Divinity College, [1985]), 42-46; *idem*, "Gilmour, John" in Lewis, ed., *Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, I, 444.

[40] "Sketches of Canadian Baptist Churches", 28.

This text reflects strongly the standpoint of evangelical Calvinism, which had been diffused throughout the nineteenth-century transatlantic Baptist community by the writings of Andrew Fuller. From the vantage-point of this theological system, there are two major errors to be avoided with regard to the Christian life. The first is that of Antinomianism, in which divine grace and Christian freedom are so emphasized that the need for the Christian to follow earnestly after sanctification and to be engaged heartily in evangelism are neglected. The other is moralism, in which the Christian life is viewed primarily as a matter of human will-power and obedience. Rather, Fraser asserts, God's Spirit works in and with Christians, not without them, and thus truly makes them his "co-workers."

Equipped with "these keenly felt convictions" Fraser threw himself back into the work at Breadlabane. His sermons to the unconverted, undergirded by the prayers of the congregation, it is reported, now "fell on their ears and on their hearts with life and power." That autumn and winter there was a large-scale awakening throughout the region around Breadalbane. Similar to the revivals that had swept transatlantic British society in the previous century, the central vehicle in this awakening in the Ottawa Valley was the pulpit. Those who were as "hardened as the flinty rock," to quote what Fraser wrote at the time,

> were made to weep over their sins as little children; almost every house [in the community] has one or more in distress, or rejoicing in the cross of Christ, and the people seem to be smitten with a kind of holy awe, and a respect for divine things. The Lord God of Jacob have all the glory![41]

Between August and December, 1834, Fraser baptized fifty-eight new converts.[42] By the fall of 1835 over one hundred had been converted and brought into the membership of the Breadalbane church.[43] It should be noted that the Breadalbane revival was part of a larger work of the Spirit in the Ottawa Valley. All told some 365 individuals were added to the six Baptist churches of this part of Ontario between August, 1834 and December 1835.[44]

In the Breadalbane church itself Sunday services were held in both Gaelic and English, the services following each other with only a few minutes' interval. We are told that it was not infrequent for many who heard Fraser preach during this period to be reduced to tears as Fraser warned them of what it meant to be outside of Christ.[45] Many years later E. R. Fitch would recall Fraser as "a powerful evangelist," whose preaching centred "upon the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the judgments

[41] Letter, October 24, 1834 (cited *Baptist Magazine*, 148).
[42] John Edwards, Letter, January 5, 1835 [cited *The Baptist Magazine*, 27 (1835), 233].
[43] John Edwards, Letter to J. Neave, January 3, 1836 [cited *The Baptist Magazine*, 28 (1836), 403]; Fraser, "Sketches of Canadian Baptist Churches", 28.
[44] *Ibid.* (*Baptist Magazine*, 403).
[45] *The Canada Baptist Magazine, and Missionary Register*, 2, No. 10 (March 1839), 223; 3, No.8 (February 1840), 188.

of God and the terrors of the law."[46] For an evangelical Calvinist like Fraser, however, such themes were not an end in themselves. Rather, to quote some remarks made recently about that quintessential evangelical Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), preaching on these topics was "part of a larger campaign to turn sinners from their disastrous path and to the rightful object of their affections, Jesus Christ."[47]

Daniel Arthur McGregor and Calvinistic Baptist piety

The final figure I wish to look at is Daniel Arthur McGregor (1847-1890), whose roots were in the Scottish Baptist churches of the Ottawa Valley, planted by men like William Fraser. Both of his parents, Alexander and Clementine, were converted in Canada through the ministry of John Gilmour during the long-remembered revival in the Ottawa Valley in the mid-1830s that was noted above.[48]

Daniel was born in 1847, the younger of twins and the fifth child of the family. He grew up in a rural environment where he had virtually no opportunities for formal schooling after the age of 12. But he had a keen interest for reading, which did him in good stead during these years. Led to Christ in June, 1867, by his eldest brother, Malcolm, he joined the Osgoode Baptist Church in the Ottawa Valley. This church was a

[46] *The Baptists of Canada: A History of their Progress and Achievements* (Toronto: The Standard Publishing Co., Ltd., 1911), 105, 171.

[47] John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, "Editor's Introduction" in their eds., *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1995), xviii.

[48] *Memoir of Daniel Arthur McGregor* (2nd ed.; Toronto: The Alumni Association of Toronto Baptist College, 1891), 12-14.

remarkable work, famous for the piety of its members and their knowledge of the Scriptures. Of the families in the church it was said that "every dinner table was a theological class" with the Bible "the arbiter of the daily discussion." As one prominent Ontario Baptist E.W. Dadson put it late in the nineteenth century: "There was no escaping God and the Bible in that community."[49] It is no surprise that McGregor "was familiar with deep theological questions from his early youth."[50]

Three years after his conversion, with the cordial recommendation of his home church in Osgoode, he left to study at the Canadian Literary Institute in Woodstock, a school that would lead eventually to the formation of McMaster University. In all, MacGregor studied at Woodstock for eight years and graduated in 1878. Over the next two years he pastored Baptist churches in Whitby and Brooklin, while studying for his B.A. at University of Toronto. He obtained this degree in 1881, the same year that he moved to Stratford to pastor the Baptist work there.

The five or so years of his ministry at Stratford were extremely fruitful. Some 121 persons were received into the church by baptism during his pastorate, for example, which led other churches to sound him out regarding a possible move. But he turned a deaf ear to these offers, for

[49] *Memoir of Daniel Arthur McGregor*, 24.
[50] *Memoir of Daniel Arthur McGregor*, 26.

he did not believe his work at Stratford was finished. In June of 1886, though, Toronto Baptist College—the divinity wing of the Canadian Literary Institute that had relocated to Toronto in 1881—offered the professorship in homiletics to him. Recognizing God's call, he resigned the pastorate and moved to Toronto.

Although homiletics was not the field he would have chosen if he had had a choice, he cheerfully undertook the work. In 1888 he took on teaching apologetics and that same year he was requested to take the department of systematic theology. During this whole time of time of teaching, he preached almost as much as if he had been a pastor. Though warned against subjecting himself to such severe and constant strain, he neglected to heed those who warned him. Every lecture that he delivered cost him many hours of close study and application. He was convinced that he should never go before his students with anything but the most careful preparation. A former student thus said of his teaching:

> He not only thought out the…doctrines upon which he lectured, but he felt their power, and falling tears often evinced his emotion while he spoke of some particular aspect of the truth. This made us all feel that we had before us not only a theological professor but also a Christian man whose life was swayed by the great principles about which he spoke. I find it hard to estimate the value of such a view of Christian doctrines. He must be a brilliant botanist who can not only give to his students a strictly accurate knowledge of flowers, but can also inspire in them an enthusiastic admiration for

> their aesthetic beauty. This was what Professor McGregor succeeded in doing. He not only made us see the truth, but he made us feet its power and perceive its beauty.[51]

In the spring of 1889, Dr. John H. Castle, the first Principal of the school and the pastor of Jarvis Street, had to resign due to ill health. McGregor was chosen as his successor. He was in office only a year before he succumbed to a disease called Pott's disease, a tubercular disease of the spinal column. McGregor had wrenched his back severely in 1886 when he was helping to move a piano into his Toronto residence. Physicians at the time thought this might have contributed to the onset of the disease. Symptoms of the disease showed themselves in June of 1889, when McGregor began to complain of a "peculiar pain in his back." By August he was completely paralysed in the lower half of his body. Eventually, he underwent an operation in New York Hospital on April 16, 1890, but complications set in and he died on April 25, 1890.

During his confinement to his bed during the autumn months of 1889 he composed a hymn "expressive of adoring love and ardent longing for the Saviour."[52] Known as the McMaster Hymn, "Jesus, Wondrous Saviour" is a marvellous expression of nineteenth-century Calvinistic Baptist piety that permeated Baptist churches in Ontario at the time.

[51] *Memoir of Daniel Arthur McGregor*, 80-81.
[52] *Memoir of Daniel Arthur McGregor*, 101-102.

1 Jesus, wondrous Saviour! Christ, of kings the King![53] Angels fall before Thee Prostrate, worshipping.[54] Fairest they confess Thee In the Heavens above, We would sing Thee fairest Here in hymns of love.	**4** All earth's flowing pleasures Were a wintry sea; Heaven itself without Thee Dark as night would be. Lamb of God! Thy glory[55] Is the light above. Lamb of God! Thy glory Is the life of love.
2 Fairer far than sunlight Unto eyes that wait Amid fear and darkness Till the morning break; Fairer than the day-dawn, Hills and dates among, When its tide of glory Wakes the tide of song;	**5** Life is death if severed From Thy throbbing heart. Death with life abundant At Thy touch would start. Worlds and men and angels All consist in Thee:[56] Yet Thou camest to us In humility.[57]
3 Sweeter far than music Quivering from keys That unbind all feeling With strange harmonies. Thou art more and dearer Than all minstrelsy; Only in Thy presence Can joy's fulness be.[58]	**6** Jesus! all perfections Rise and end in Thee; Brightness of God's glory[59] Thou, eternally. Favour'd beyond measure They Thy face who see; May we, gracious Saviour, Share this ecstasy.

[53] Revelation 17:14; 19:16.
[54] Revelation 5:14; 7:11; 5:8.
[55] John 1:29; Revelation 5:6; 21:23.
[56] Colossians 1:17. The motto of McMaster University was drawn from this verse.
[57] Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:7-8.
[58] Psalm 16:11.
[59] Hebrews 1:3.

Though written by a dying man this hymn is suffused with joy in Christ and the conviction that only in the glory of his presence can he, as a human being, know the height of human pleasure. In the face of death these verses became McGregor's personal affirmation of faith in a risen, glorified Saviour. But coming from a product of the Ontario Baptist community and one who was serving at the time as the principal of his denomination's theological seminary, they well sum up the way in which these Calvinistic Baptists at the end of the nineteenth century sought to intertwine piety and theology.

A concluding word

When McGregor died in 1890, though, his Calvinistic Baptist convictions were being increasingly seen by many of his fellow Baptists as antiquated views, not fit to negotiate the challenges of the modern world. That perspective held sway for decades in the twentieth century, leading to a massive loss of the rich, deep Calvinism most Baptists had held to between their advent in the seventeenth century and the close of the nineteenth century. It is a matter of profound thanksgiving to God, though, that the past forty years have seen a revival of Calvinistic Baptist perspective and we can hope that this branch of the Kingdom of God will continue to increase and flourish to the praise and glory of the Triune God.