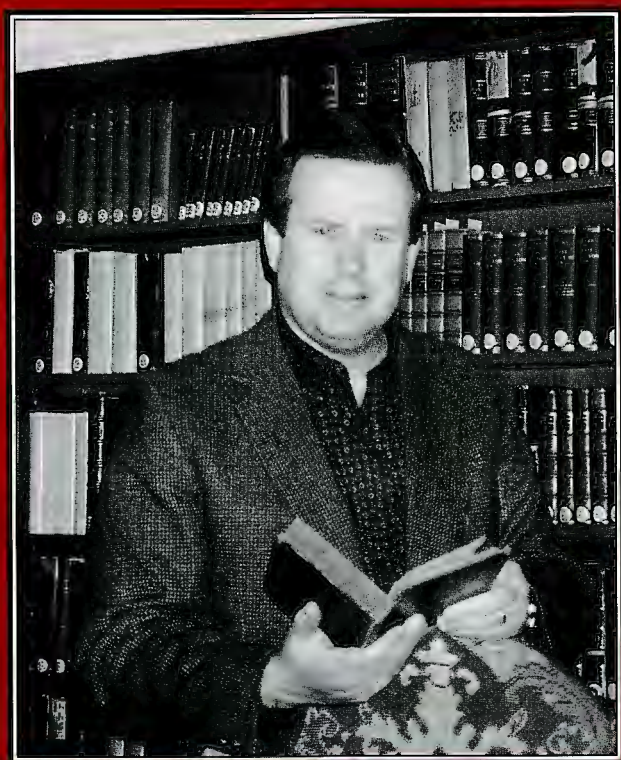
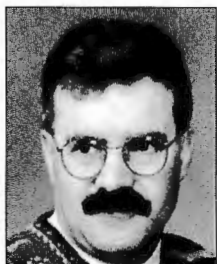

REFORMATION TODAY



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2000

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Michael Haykin

THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN PREPARED BY PROF Michael Haykin who has concentrated on our Reformed Baptist history. In particular he has written an inspiring biography of the Welsh Baptist Benjamin Francis. Prof Haykin is the author of *Kiffin, Knollys Keach—an account of our Reformed Baptist beginnings*—and *One Heart and One Soul* which tells the story of John Sutcliffe of Olney and his friends like William Carey who helped launch the modern missionary movement. Both these volumes are available from Evangelical Press. The article by the editor on Elijah in this issue is a reminder of the dark times in which we live. But as always God is not outwitted by those who oppose him. As we enter a new millennium we need to look back for inspiration as well as forward. This kind of review of the past, the present and the future is the theme of the forthcoming Carey Conference, January 11-14, 2000.

As we go to press we sorrow in the loss of two choice servants of the Lord. Tributes to both are planned for RT174.

Jim van Zyl

On 11th November at 9.15 pm Jim van Zyl slipped away to be with our Lord. He had suffered ill health over a long period but more particularly this year. His decease is attributed to heart failure. Our warm sympathy is expressed to Mary van Zyl and the family. Jim was the primary founder of the annual Evangelical and Reformed Conference at Skogheim in Kwazulu. He has been an associate editor of *Reformation Today* from the inception of the journal in 1970. His article *The Disciplined Habit of Meditation* appeared this year in RT 170.

David Straub

After a long time of illness David Straub, greatly esteemed for his work as Co-ordinator of Reformed Baptist Mission Services, entered the presence of the heavenly assembly on 17th November. We remember Sue Straub and their sons who have faithfully cared for David during this sad time.

Front cover: *This photo of Jim Eliff (see News) was taken in the Charles Haddon Spurgeon library now kept at the William Jewell College near Kansas City, USA.*

'The Clean Sea Breeze of the Centuries':

The benefits of reading Calvinistic Baptist History¹

Michael A G Haykin

In Jane Austen's early novel *Northanger Abbey*, one of the characters, Catherine Morland, states that history 'tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences in every page; the men are all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all – it is very tiresome.' How accurately this statement reflects modern western attitudes towards history! Generally speaking contemporary men and women in the West rarely think of going to history for wisdom or direction or encouragement. History, at best, contains interesting and entertaining bits of trivia. But wisdom? No, that's found by looking to the present and to the future. As Neil Postman has recently pointed out, one might ask the purveyors of this conventional wisdom what it is they want us to look at in the future, since the future has yet to take on any sort of definite shape.² So in order to look forward we have to look back.

Tragically this modern attitude towards history is also characteris-

tic of too many 21st-century Christians and Calvinistic Baptists. We have prided ourselves on being New Testament people who are not weighted down with the freight of church traditions. But we need an intimate knowledge of our history as Calvinistic Baptists. Why?

History has meaning

First, we need to note that men and women are historical beings, immersed in the flow of time. History, as the 1st-century B.C. Roman orator Cicero rightly observed, 'regulates our lives'. One cannot escape the effects of history. Even to think ahistorically for any length of time is a considerable task.

Not only is it important for the individual to realize his or her historical nature, but it is also essential for the community, especially the Christian community. For the Christian community, history is the stage on which the drama of redemption is being displayed. At the beginning

is the Fall, at the end is the Last Judgment. In between, the most crucial event of all, the entry of the Eternal God into time as a man, Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate. From the perspective of the New Testament, the incarnation is the culmination of the history of salvation sketched in the Old Testament.³ The incarnation has hallowed history, and initiated a history of salvation that embraces not only Israel, but the entire world.⁴

From the Christian perspective, God is undoubtedly active in history. We can affirm that he has been, and is, active in the history of Calvinistic Baptists. It is right and proper, therefore, to study that history for that reason alone. Though it is impossible to trace out his footsteps across the sands of time in detail, it is blasphemous to deny that he is at work. His work may often be hidden, but it is biblical to confess that he is providentially guiding history for the glory of his Name and the good of his people.

Building a sense of humility

We have noted that human beings are historical beings. Their lives are inextricably tied to the past, their own immediate past and that of other humans. As Gilbert Beers, a

past editor of *Christianity Today*, has noted, ‘We owe much to many whom we have never met.’⁵ Beers goes on: ‘We live in a throwaway society; we dispose of things we consider a burden. My concern is that we do not add our predecessors to the collection of throwaways, carelessly discarding those who have made us what we are.’ The study of Baptist History informs us about our predecessors in the faith – men and women like John Bunyan and Anne Steele, John Gill and Isaac Backus, Andrew Fuller and C H Spurgeon, J P Boyce and T T Shields – those who have helped shape our Christian communities for both good and ill and thus make us what we are. Such study builds humility and modesty into our lives, and so can exercise a sanctifying influence upon us.

Liberation from the tyranny of the present

The study of Baptist History also liberates us from the tyranny of present-day ideas, what C S Lewis calls ‘the idols of our marketplace’. Consider Charles H Spurgeon’s unhealthy habit of smoking cigars. When George F Pentecost, a visiting preacher from the United States, condemned smoking in Spurgeon’s very own pulpit, the great London Baptist stated unequivocally that he was not

ashamed of smoking and that he intended to continue 'to smoke to the glory of God'. Now, whether Spurgeon was right or wrong, this incident shows how Calvinistic Baptist History can call into question what we take for granted as an absolute, and possibly reveal it to be not as absolute as we might have supposed.

Again and again Calvinistic Baptist History, like Church History in general, confronts us with something that is foreign to our experience, with something that is different. And so it stretches our understanding as we seek to learn and challenges our assumptions – and in the long run, teaches us wisdom. In the words of American church historian George Marsden: 'History is of major importance in alerting us to the transitory character of many of the values of our own age and culture. Rather than unknowingly allowing our values to be conformed to passing contemporary standards, we can strive to evaluate our current cultural norms intelligently and to apply to them the transforming values of Christ.'⁶

can provide us with guidance for the Christian life. It is exhilarating to stand on the North American East Coast and watch the Atlantic surf, feel the tang of salt-water in the air and hear the pound of the waves. But this experience will be of absolutely no benefit in sailing across the Atlantic to England. For that, a map is needed. A map based upon the accumulated experience of thousands of voyagers. Similarly, we need such a map for the Christian life. Experiences are fine and good, but they will never serve as a substantial foundation for our lives in Christ.

Of course, the Bible provides the basic map of the Christian life. But the thought of other Baptists down through the ages can help illumine and illustrate what is contained in the Bible. The passage from Samuel Stennett's pen included in this issue, for instance, has rich wisdom regarding the marriage relationship. As Spurgeon once noted: 'It seems odd, that certain men who talk so much of what the Holy Spirit reveals to themselves, should think so little of what he has revealed to others.'⁷

Acquainting us with the wisdom of other Baptists

The study of Baptist History, especially that of Baptist theology,

Models for imitation

Calvinistic Baptist History can also provide us with models for imitation. Biblical warrant for this

can be found in Hebrews 11-12:2, where the writer uses the history of God's faithful people in the old covenant to encourage his readers to run the 'foot-race' of faith. He wants them to draw encouragement to press on in faith and obedience towards the final goal from the certainty of their being 'surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses'. His main point seems to be that encouragement needs to be drawn from what we see in these believers from the past, namely, their testimony to the nature and possibilities of faith. Donald Guthrie comments: 'Although the writer is not urging the readers to dwell in the past, he is deeply conscious of the influence of the example of other men' for good.

Permit me to mention one of my heroes – Samuel Pearce, the close friend of William Carey and Andrew Fuller. His spirituality and passion for the gospel makes so much of 21st century western Evangelicalism look like utter wimpishness!⁸ I love him because he challenges me to a fresh and radical commitment to Christ and his Kingdom.

The praise of God

Finally, the study of Calvinistic Baptist History should lead us to the praise of God and his adoration. We

study the history of this people of God to see what God has been doing in the world, and so praise him for his mighty acts, and trust him to display his power and glory afresh in our day. Our looking to the past then is not antiquarian. But we draw from the wells of the past to find inspiration and encouragement for the present. As we stand on the verge of the 21st century, may God give us grace to serve and glorify him in our day as we draw strength and encouragement from those who have gone before.

References

- 1 The title is partly drawn from a statement by C S Lewis, *Introduction to St. Athanasius: On the Incarnation* (1953 rev. ed.; Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1982), 5.
- 2 *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century. How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1999), 13-14.
- 3 See, for example, Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 1:1-2.
- 4 See Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.
- 5 *Christianity Today*, 26, No.19 (26 November 1982), 12.
- 6 "A Christian Perspective for the Teaching of History" in his and Frank Roberts, eds., *A Christian View of History* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1975), 33-34.
- 7 *Commenting and Commentaries* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876), 1.
- 8 On Pearce, see Michael A G Haykin, "The Spirituality of Samuel Pearce", *RT* 151 (May-June 1996), 16-24.

The Fire of Ardent Love:

The life and witness of Benjamin Francis¹ (1734-1799)

Michael A G Haykin



Benjamin Francis



At Wotton-under-Edge, seven miles from Horsley, Francis kept up a monthly lecture for 30 years, and preached there 394 times.

This photograph of the Wayside Pulpit points to the fact that the gospel testimony continues there today. The text sums up the life of Benjamin Francis

In the 17th century one of the most spiritually alive denominations in the British Isles were the Calvinistic Baptists. From the early 1640s, when there were only seven churches in England, they grew to the point, where, by 1689, there were close to three hundred congregations.

This rapid growth owed much to the zeal and spiritual maturity of pastors like John Bunyan (1628-1688), best known for his *Pilgrim's Progress*. Converted in the early 1650s Bunyan was soon bearing witness to his faith in small villages and hamlets tucked away in rural Bedfordshire, his home county. In his own account of his conversion and early Christian

experience, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), he tells us of his evangelistic zeal:

‘My great desire in fulfilling my Ministry, was, to get into the darkest places in the County, even amongst those people that were furthest off of profession; yet not because I could not endure the light (for I feared not to shew my Gospel to any) but because I found my spirit leaned most after awakening and converting Work, and the Word that I carried did lean itself most that way; Yes, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation (Rom 15.20). In my preaching I have really been in pain, and have as it were traveled [i.e. travailed] to bring forth Children to God; neither could I be satisfied unless some fruits did appear in my work: if I were fruitless it matter’d not who commended me; but if I were fruitful, I cared not who did condemn. ...It pleased me nothing to see people drink in Opinions if they seemed ignorant of Jesus Christ, and the worth of their own Salvation, sound conviction for Sin, especially for Unbelief, and an heart set on fire to be saved by Christ, with strong breathings after a truly sanctified Soul: that was it that delighted me; those were the souls I counted blessed.’²

Given Bunyan’s passion to reach sinners for Christ, it comes as no surprise to learn that when Bunyan preached on occasion in London, twelve hundred or so would regularly turn out to hear him on a weekday morning and no less than three thousand if he were there on a Sunday!

Now, it is vital to remember that Baptist growth during this period came in the midst of persecution. In the 1660s and early 1670s a series of laws were passed, known as the Clarendon Code, which made it illegal to worship in any other setting but that of the Established Church and which basically reduced any but Church of England members to second-class citizens. Between 1660 and 1688 Baptists who refused to go along with these laws often ended up paying substantial fines or experiencing life-threatening imprisonment. Calvinistic Baptist congregations during this period were churches under the cross!

Religious toleration finally came in 1689. The Baptists were now free to plant and build congregations, even though it was still illegal for them to evangelise outside of their church buildings. Yet, despite the advent of

toleration, the denomination as a whole began to plateau in its growth and, in some parts of England, it actually went into decline. In 1715 there were around 220 Calvinistic Baptist churches in England and Wales. By 1750 that number had dwindled even lower to about 150.

Various reasons for this decline can be cited - loss of evangelistic zeal, the development of Hyper-Calvinism, a firm belief that revival was intimately tied to Baptist polity are three of the reasons that could be cited. But it is vital to note that not all Calvinistic Baptist causes were in this state. In the West Country of England, for instance, there were a number of growing churches, among them the one pastored by Benjamin Francis in Horsley, Gloucestershire.

Life and ministry

Unknown to nearly all but a few historians today, Benjamin Francis was in many respects a remarkable individual. He was the youngest son of Enoch Francis (1688-1740), the most respected Welsh Baptist minister of his day and one who 'was extremely gifted in winning hearers'.³ Orphaned at the age of six, the younger Francis was later convinced that he personally experienced God's saving grace when he was but a boy. Baptised at Swansea when he was fifteen, Francis began to preach four years later.

Francis went for further training to the Bristol Baptist Academy where a vibrant evangelical Calvinism was not only preserved but also actively fostered.⁴ Due in part to this training at Bristol, Francis would eventually play a significant role in the renewal and revival that came to the Calvinistic Baptist cause later in the century. As British Baptist historian Raymond Brown has noted with regard to a number of the students who studied at Bristol:

'Many of...[the] Bristol students brought an outstanding contribution to the life of the churches in the second half of the eighteenth century. Men like John Ash (1724-79) of Pershore, Benjamin Beddome (1717-95) of Bourton-on-the-Water and Benjamin Francis of Horsley were content to serve their respective churches for between forty and fifty years, pouring their entire working ministry into the pastoral care of rural congregations,

faithful biblical preaching, the development of association life, the establishment of new causes and, in each case, the composition or publication of hymns. Their devotional hymnology, passion for associating, and evangelistic initiatives helped to divert many churches from high Calvinism and introduced them to these influences which were powerfully at work in the Evangelical Revival.⁵

Francis studied in Bristol from 1753 to 1756. When he first arrived in Bristol his knowledge of English was so slight that he could not even return thanks for his food in the language. Bernard Foskett (1685-1758), the principal of the Academy, was of the opinion that Francis should be sent back to Wales because of the language barrier. However, the younger tutor at the school, Hugh Evans (1713-1781), himself a Welshman and who had been converted under the preaching of Enoch Francis, pleaded that Benjamin be allowed to stay. By dint of study Francis eventually obtained a thorough knowledge of English so that he could preach with complete ease in either English or Welsh.

After he graduated Francis preached for a while in Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire. Eventually, in 1757, he moved to Horsley, where the following year he was ordained at the age of twenty-four.⁶ Although the church there consisted of 66 members, most of them were poor artisans and cloth-workers and were unable to provide enough financially for his support. Francis once described the circumstances of most of the congregation as being 'extremely indigent'. And near the end of his life, he remarked that his congregation was for the most part 'poor, plain, and have not had the advantage of literature'.⁷ Thus, 'he was obliged to rear pigs, to grow his own fruit and vegetables, to keep a school, and to venture into the woollen trade (with disastrous financial consequences) in order to make ends meet'.⁸

Alongside these monetary problems, Francis also experienced a long series of domestic trials. In 1765, his first wife and three of their children all died within the space of three months. He married again a year later an Abigail Wallis. They had ten children, of whom they buried seven!⁹ In the midst of these deeply distressing circumstances Francis drew comfort from the piety that a number of his dying children exhibited. For instance, when one of the children from his second marriage, Hester, was dying at the age of

eleven in August, 1790, she told her mother: 'My soul is as full of joy as it can contain - the Lord is become my salvation - the gates of heaven are open to me, and I shall soon be there.' Her last words to her father were: 'I love you, but I love Christ more.'¹⁰

Despite these deep trials, Francis proved to be a tireless evangelist, one, we are told, who delighted in 'telling poor sinners the unsearchable riches of his compassionate Redeemer'.¹¹ During his time at Horsley Francis baptised nearly 450 persons who had been converted under his ministry. At the time of his death the number of members in his church was 252. The meeting-house was enlarged three times during Francis' ministry, so that by the early 19th century the church was one of the largest in the British Calvinistic Baptist community. Francis attributed much of the success that attended his preaching to the Sunday prayer meetings the church held at six o'clock in the morning and in the afternoon before the afternoon service. Fifty or sixty would come to the Sunday morning prayer meeting, while at the afternoon prayer meeting, the vestry would literally overflow with people.¹²

His indefatigable preaching and evangelism was not limited to Horsley, however. In the biographical sketch of Francis that his son-in-law Thomas Flint (d.1819) drew up within a few weeks of Francis' death in December 1799, we are told that:

'He was the first means of introducing evangelical religion into many dark towns and villages in all the neighbourhood round [Horsley]. For many years he made excursions monthly into the most uninstructed parts of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Wiltshire, besides visiting his brethren, and strengthening their hands in God. In the course of his route through Worcestershire, which he regularly attended from about 1772 to 1784, it appears he had preached in Cheltenham 130 sermons, at Tewkesbury 136, at Pershore 137, and at Upton-upon-Severn 180: his manner was to set out from home on Monday morning, and return on Friday evening, after taking a circuit of 90 miles, and preaching every evening. In Wiltshire, on the other side of Horsley, he established a monthly lecture at Malmesbury which he supplied from 1771 to 1799, so that he preached there 282 sermons, and for the latter part of the time he reached as far as Christian-Malford where he had preached 84 sermons.

He extended his journey frequently as far as Devizes, 30 miles from home, where he preached 56 times, and oftener to Melksham, Frome, Trowbridge, and Bradford at each of which four places he had preached 90 sermons. At Wotton-under-Edge, seven miles from Horsley, he kept up a monthly lecture for thirty years, and preached there 394 times. At Uley, five miles distant, he maintained another stated lecture for many years, and had preached 350 sermons there.’¹³

In addition to these extensive labours, he also regularly preached in places as far away as London and Dublin, Portsmouth and Plymouth, as well as undertaking repeated preaching tours of his native Wales. In a day when travel to a town but twenty miles away was a significant undertaking, this record of Francis’ itinerant ministry is positively amazing.

Literary links to the preacher

Little remains of his extensive preaching ministry by way of literary texts. We do have some of his poems, including a variety of polemical pieces, and a number of elegies, among them ones for John Gill (1697-1771), George Whitefield (1714-1770), and the ‘seraphic’ Samuel Pearce (1766-1799). There is also a two-volume collection of his hymns in Welsh entitled ‘Aleluia’. Only a few of these hymns have ever been translated into English.

It is disappointing that none of his sermons appear to have survived. Describing his preaching, Flint emphasises that Francis was always concerned to declare the whole counsel of God, even when he preached for other denominational bodies. Firm in expressing his doctrinal convictions, he was also a compassionate preacher, who often openly wept for his hearers.¹⁴ Possibly the closest we get to hearing his ‘melodious voice’¹⁵ is in the circular letters he drew up for the Western Association of Calvinistic Baptist Churches.

Associations of churches in geographical proximity had been a regular feature of Calvinistic Baptist life since the denomination’s 17th-century beginnings. By the last half of the 18th century these associations were holding annual meetings at which representatives of the churches in these

associations, usually the pastors and elders, were meeting for a couple of days. These annual meetings would be marked by times of corporate prayer, fellowship, and occasions for the public preaching of the Scriptures. One of Francis' poems, entitled 'The Association', sought to capture the ideals that informed these yearly gatherings.

Thee, bless'd assembly! Emblem of the throng
That praise the Lamb in one harmonious song
On Zion's hills where joys celestial flow,
The countless throng redeem'd from sin and woe;
Thee, bless'd assembly, have I oft survey'd,
With sweet complacence, charmingly array'd
In robes of truth, of sanctity and love,
Resembling saints and seraphim above....
The sacred page thy only rule and guide,
"Thus saith the Lord," shall thy debates decide;
While charity wide spreads her balmy wings
O'er different notions, in indifferent things,
And graceful order, walking hand in hand
With cheerful freedom, leads her willing band....
In thee, the guardians of the churches' weal,
Whose bosoms glow with unabating zeal,
With balmy counsel their disorders heal,
And truth and love and purity promote
Among the sheep, Immanuel's blood has bought.
In thee, impartial discipline maintains
Harmonious order, but aloud disclaims
All human force to rule the human mind,
Impose opinions and the conscience bind.¹⁶

To be sure, this is an idealistic rendition, yet it enables us to see what one 18th-century Baptist regarded as important about these annual assemblies. For Francis, they were times when sage advice could be sought and given, when God's people could be free to discuss in love and without rancour non-essential issues on which they disagreed, and when the sole binding force on the conscience was Scripture alone. Most significantly, Francis saw in these gatherings a visible token - in his words, an 'emblem' - of the unity and joy that fills the saints in heaven as they worship Christ the Lamb.

Each of the churches in the association was supposed to send a letter to the annual meeting informing their sister congregations of their state, newsworthy items and prayer concerns. And at some point in the two-day meeting one of the pastors would be chosen to write a letter to all of the churches in the association on behalf of the association itself. It would be ratified, printed after the annual meeting, and sent out as a circular letter. The Western Association, which had existed since 1653, gave Francis the privilege of writing this letter five times - in 1765, 1772, 1778, 1782, and 1796. Understandably he touches on a number of themes in these letters - the spiritual challenges associated with poverty and affluence, the dangers of a dead orthodoxy, faith and assurance, the need for heart religion, the disciplines of the Christian life, the unity of the local church. There is one theme, however, that comes up again and again - Christ alone, a central watchword of the Reformed tradition, and the passion that should be ours in serving him. In the final analysis, it was this passion for Christ and his glory that underlay all of Francis' evangelistic and pastoral labours.

Christ alone

In the circular letter of 1772 Francis encourages those of his readers 'who are sickly and feeble in the spiritual life' and who are become 'almost strangers to closet devotion, deep contrition for sin, earnest wrestling with the Lord in prayer, heavenly affections, and sensible communion with God' to ask themselves: 'Will you call this the religion of Jesus? Is this the fruit of his love and crucifixion?'¹⁷ Without a 'living faith in Jesus Christ', Francis reminds them, 'our orthodox notions', church attendance, and outward morality urges will ultimately avail for nothing. He thus urges upon them their need to have 'a spiritual sight of the awful perfections of God, of the adorable glories of Christ, and of the ineffable excellency of divine and eternal things'.¹⁸

Moreover, they need to beware of resting their salvation in their performance as Christians and their faithful attendance upon the various ordinances of the Christian life. 'Constantly rest in Christ alone,' Francis says, applying the Reformation truth, and so 'look for every blessing...in and thro' him the infinitely prevalent Mediator.'¹⁹ Building on this last point, Francis urges his readers to 'live daily on Christ as your spiritual food, and seek hourly communion with him as the beloved of your souls'.²⁰ It bears remembering that this counsel was being given to labourers and

shopkeepers, croppers and weavers, who spent much of their time simply 'getting by'. Yet, Francis rightly felt that such were capable of living out their daily lives as 'the sincere disciples and intimate friends of Jesus'.²¹

The 1778 circular letter, which is chiefly concerned with the nature of genuine, vital faith, sounds similar notes. In a section of the letter dealing with the differences between assurance and faith, Francis encourages his audience:

'Place then your entire confidence in Christ for the whole of salvation: Let the declarations and promises of the gospel be your only warrant for believing in him: and consider your purest principles, happiest frames, and holiest duties, not as the foundation, but the superstructure of faith: Let not your sweetest experiences, which are at best but shallow cisterns, but Christ alone be the source of your comfort, and constantly live upon that inexhaustible fountain.'²²

The final clause in this quote is, of course, an allusion to Jeremiah 2:13. There, the Lord upbraids his people for forsaking him, 'the fountain of living waters', and living instead on the water drawn from 'broken cisterns' of their own making. Inspired, no doubt, by New Testament passages such as John 4:10-13 and 7:37, where Christ states that he is the source of 'living water' that quenches spiritual thirst, Francis identifies the 'fountain' of Jeremiah 2 as Christ. For the believer, Christ alone is both the source of salvation and the strength for the Christian life.

I close with two further evidences of Francis' Christ-centred piety drawn from letters he wrote in his final years. Writing in October, 1796, to a close friend, Daniel Turner (1709-1798), pastor of the Calvinistic Baptist work in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, he said:

'O that my thoughts and affections were more as a well of living water, rising as high as the throne of God and the Lamb! What shall I do with this vain roving heart, which is my daily burden? When shall heaven prevail over earth, and bear away all the pollutions of my corrupt nature? I often think, whatever opinions others may entertain of me, that I am in myself a chaos of ignorance and a mass of deformity. I need the Holy Spirit to enlighten me, and the blood of Christ to cleanse me, and a lively faith in the atoning Lamb, now as much as ever.'²³

And in a letter to a friend dated November 6, 1798, he declares:

‘O that every sacrifice I offer were consumed with the fire of ardent love to Jesus. Reading, praying, studying and preaching are to me very cold exercises, if not warmed with the love of Christ. This, this is the quintessence of holiness, of happiness, of heaven. While many professors desire to know that Christ loves them, may it ever be my desire to know that I love him, by feeling his love mortifying in me the love of self, animating my whole soul to serve him, and, if called by his providence, to suffer even death for his sake.’²⁴

References

1. For the life of Francis, the following sources have been extremely helpful: Thomas Flint, *A Brief Narrative of the Life and Death of the Rev. Benjamin Francis, A.M.*, annexed to John Ryland, Jr., *The Presence of Christ the Source of eternal Bliss. A Funeral Discourse*, . . . occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Benjamin Francis, A. M. (Bristol, 1800), 33-76; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Questions and Answers: An Eighteenth-Century Correspondence", *The Baptist Quarterly*, 27 (1977-1978), 83-90; idem, "Letters by Benjamin Francis", *Trafodion* (1983), 4-8. I have also benefited from Gwyn Davies, "A Welsh Exile: Benjamin Francis (1734-99)" (Unpublished ms., 1999), 3 pages. The portrait of Francis on the front cover is taken from John Rippon, ed., *The Baptist Annual Register*, 2 (1794-1797), opposite page 327.
2. *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* 289-291.
3. Dafydd Densil James Morgan, "The Development of the Baptist Movement in Wales between 1714 and 1815 with particular reference to the Evangelical Revival" (Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford, 1986), 59. For further information on Enoch Francis, see Flint, *Brief Narrative*, 33-37; Morgan, "Development of the Baptist Movement in Wales", passim.
4. See Roger Hayden, "Evangelical Calvinism among eighteenth-century British Baptists with particular reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the Bristol Baptist Academy, 1690-1791" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele, 1991).
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7. Cited *ibid.*, 95; Nuttall, *Letters by Benjamin Francis*, 6. In one of the circular letters that Francis drew up for the Western Association, he mentions that some of his readers are 'sorely distressed with pressing indigence' [Circular Letter of the Western Association (1772), 3].
8. Davies, *Welsh Exile*, 2. On Francis' financial problems, see also Flint, *Brief Narrative*, 49.
9. Flint, *Brief Narrative*, 49-52.
10. Benjamin Francis, "Obituary: Miss Hester Francis" in John Rippon, ed., *The Baptist Annual Register*, 1 (1790-1793), 158-159.
11. Circular Letter of the Western Association (1800), 2.
12. "A List of the Particular Baptist Churches in England, 1798" in John Rippon, ed., *The Baptist Annual Register*, 3 (1798-1801), 14-15.
13. *Brief Narrative*, 45-46. The names of the towns and villages referred to by Flint have been modernized according to current spelling. On Francis's itinerant ministry, see further Brown, *English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 115, 122-3, 124.
14. *Brief Narrative*, 47.
15. A remark about his preaching that appeared after his death in the Circular Letter of the Western Association (1800), 2.
16. "The Association" in Rippon, ed., *Baptist Annual Register*, 1:17, 18, 20.
17. Circular Letter of the Western Association (1772), 3-4.
18. *Ibid.*, 4.
19. *Ibid.*, 5.
20. *Ibid.*, 5.
21. *Ibid.*, 5.
22. Circular Letter of the Western Association (1778), 3.
23. Flint, *Brief Narrative*, 56-57.
24. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

Encouragements from Elijah

Erroll Hulse

The very name Elijah is an instant encouragement for it means, 'My God is Yahweh'. It is like saying, 'My God is the eternal I AM', or 'My God is alive'. He is *the* God who always was and always is.

Elijah was perfectly named for he was Yahweh's chosen instrument to confront Ahab. Ahab son of Omri was the seventh king from Jeroboam in the northern kingdom of Israel. These kings were all wicked but Ahab, incited by Jezebel, was the worst of all. Ahab did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him (1 Kings 16:30-33). Baal worship was the state religion of Phoenicia from where Jezebel came. Whereas Ahab was ready to mix a little of Jehovah with Baal Jezebel was not. She was determined to kill off all the prophets of Jehovah, replace them with the priests of Baal and make Baal the state religion.

What was the religion of Baal? The Hebrew noun means master, possessor or husband. Yahweh was the husband of Israel so the name Baal denotes usurper. Baal was a religion of idolatry. Male prostitutes and homosexual perversions characterised the religion of Baal. By sexual orgies the worshippers of Baal believed that they would stimulate Baal to rain down fertility on the land. These practices date back to Sodom

and were the reason for the destruction of the Canaanites. This is the key to understanding why there was that three and a half year drought that came by the word of Elijah. Yahweh controlled the skies, not Baal.

The life of Elijah

Elijah appeared suddenly and dramatically on the stage of Israel's history. He seemed to come from nowhere just when he was needed. Suddenly this rough-looking hairy man, wearing a leather belt and a sheepskin mantle, confronted the evil Ahab with fire in his heart, in his words and in his eyes. Having announced the cessation of rain Elijah was told to hide himself at the brook Cherith on the east side of Jordan about twenty-five miles from Jezreel. There he was fed by ravens who brought him bread and meat morning and evening. When the brook dried up he was directed to travel a long distance to Zarephath far up the north coast in the heart of Jezebel's territory. There God had commanded a godly widow woman to supply Elijah with food. Eventually the time came when Elijah left Zarephath to confront Ahab. The subsequent contest between all the prophets of Baal and Elijah is described graphically in 1 Kings 18. After the execution of the prophets of

Baal in the Kishon valley Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel and prayed for rain to come. When Jezebel heard what Elijah had done she vowed to kill him. At that point Elijah's nerve failed. Perhaps he saw that his prayer for repentance in the hearts of the people was not answered. At any rate he fled for his life. I Kings 19 describes the nadir of Elijah's experience. Here we see that he was as human as we are.

Elijah rested under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am not better than my ancestors." However that is one prayer that the Lord did not answer! Elijah was recommissioned. His subsequent work is described in I Kings 22 and 2 Kings 1 and 2. When his work was complete the Lord sent a fiery chariot and horsemen and took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Along with Moses, Elijah was chosen to be with our Lord on the mount of transfiguration.

From the life and ministry of Elijah I draw three encouragements:

1. God cares about justice

We might be tempted to think that the case for the northern kingdom was so bleak that it was futile to attempt to achieve reformation. Not so! The passion that shone out of Elijah was the zeal of our God who feels passionately about his name and about the people who are united to him by faith. Elijah's God felt passionately about the corruption

emanating from the court of Ahab and Jezebel. He sent Elijah to impede that wicked dominion and curb the prophets of Baal. Their blood was swept down the Kishon valley and then into the Mediterranean by the swirling waters of the deluge that came in answer to Elijah's prayer. Later Jezebel organised the murder of Naboth in order that Ahab could take possession of Naboth's vineyard. Did God care about that? He certainly did. Elijah was sent to confront Ahab over that and charge him with the murder of Naboth. Every word of God was fulfilled. The dogs licked the blood of Ahab from the chariot in which he was killed and the dogs ate the corpse of Jezebel in the city of Jezreel which she had corrupted.

We must not fret about the terrible crimes that are committed when the offenders seem to go free, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay' says the Lord. On an unprecedented scale appalling deeds, genocide, holocaust, slave labour camps, the persecution of Christians, have been committed in our century. Does our God notice? Does he care? Those who have been killed cry with a loud voice, 'How long, sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?'

The sudden appearance of Elijah with fire in his heart and fire in his eyes tells us that God cares. God does notice. He does act. He cares about his name and reputation. He cares about his promises and he cares about his cause on the earth. The very nations where his people are being

martyred are nations where the Church will be thriving in future generations.

2. God works through our prayers

Everything in Elijah's ministry was conducted through prayer. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

The intensity of Elijah's prayers is seen in the death of the son of the widow of Zarephath. Elijah was as distressed as the widow. Elijah cried out, 'O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?' Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, 'O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!' This is the first instance on record in Scripture of one being raised to life from the dead. Note the intensity and persistence of Elijah's prayers. He does not give up after the first attempt or the second. He continues to pray with passion. Surely there is a lesson for us here. Even though our prayers are feeble and faltering and sometimes formal, it is much better that we exercise lives of prayers and strive to improve our prayer lives than that we give up. From Elijah we learn the place of fervency and zeal in prayer.

Elijah's example is seen further in his prayer for rain. He withdrew to the top of Mount Carmel. The way he

prostrated himself shows his humility. He based his prayer on the Word and promise of God: 'I will send rain on the land' (1 Kings 18:1). He prayed expecting an immediate answer but he prayed perseveringly. Seven times he sends his servant to search the skies for a sign of rain. You can almost imagine Elijah becoming impatient with the servant in sending him to look over and over again - 'Is there something wrong with your eyes that you can see no sign?' Eventually his servant reports, 'A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea.' Certainly Elijah prayed with faith. That small cloud he took as the evidence that soon there would be torrential rain. It was urgent therefore to get back to Jezreel as soon as possible. At the pace of our best marathon runners today it would have taken Elijah 75 minutes to run the 16 miles back to Jezreel ahead of Ahab's chariot.

Prayer for the reviving of our churches and ministries is vital, as is united prayer for world-wide revival. Prayer is the means of grace by which the work of God is furthered and prospered round the world. Jonathan Edwards wrote a little book with a long title, 'An humble attempt to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth pursuant to the Scripture promises and prophecies concerning the last time.' Michael Haykin tells the story of how this work found its way from Scotland to England and how its implementation lay at the heart of the

second great awakening and the great missionary movement that started at the beginning of the nineteenth century (*One Heart and One Soul*, Evangelical Press, 1994). The time is ripe to take up that challenge again.

3. God cares tenderly for us

Wonderful is the care our Lord lavished on Elijah. There are rich lessons to be learned here. Supernatural means are employed three times. First the ravens, against their nature to feed only themselves, are directed to take bread and meat morning and evening to Elijah at the remote place where he was hiding in the Kerith ravine. Imagine the comfort and assurance felt by Elijah on every occasion of this supply. Where did the ravens find this food? We do not know. Perhaps they took the food from the kitchens of Ahab.

The daily filling of the jar of flour and the jug of oil is even more remarkable as this represents a miracle of creation. It is likely that the widow of Zarephath, knowing that their lives depended on this supply, shouted for joy every morning when she discovered that both jar and jug had been fully replenished with their needs. Reinforced here is the reality that we are intended to live by faith day by day - 'give us this day our daily bread!' We are intended to live by faith and look upward for our needs to be supplied each day.

A third surprising and very different way in which food was provided for Elijah is by the hands of an angel. So depressed was Elijah that it seems

that he showed no gratitude for this intervention. And is it not commonplace for us to take so much for granted? In countless ways we are provided for with loving kindness but the pressures of our lives prevent us from the joy and gratitude with which we should respond.

Conclusion

The parallel of Baal in our present society is seen in the religion of evolutionary humanism which ascribes life to the impersonal 'god' called 'nature' who supposedly has made all things by chance. The present equivalent is seen too in sexual promiscuity and the relentless crusade to normalise homosexual behaviour and pornography. 'Ahabism', the trend to synergism, the mixing of Christianity with other religions, is seen today in most of the main-line denominations whose leaders often disgrace Christianity with their compromise. The mass media have been captured and are controlled by modern counterparts of the Baal of old. The propaganda of promiscuity is churned out day by day. As we enter the new millennium it is important for us to plead with God to raise up leaders in public life who will be effective to stay corruption. We desperately need spokesmen like Elijah in the public arenas of the western world where Christianity is apostate.

We must pray earnestly for the provision of ministers who will preach repentance with the zeal of Elijah.

The Joys of Marriage

An early Baptist perspective

The following text is taken from Samuel Stennett's Discourses on Domestick Duties (London, 1783), pp142-145, 174-175, 177-178, and is but one of the marvellous resources that lie in our Calvinistic Baptist heritage. Stennett (1727-1795) is arguing against polygamy and seeking to demonstrate the affirmation that 'the conjugal relation can lawfully subsist between one man and one woman only'. Central to his argument is the biblical conviction that the main purpose of the married state is the mutual companionship and intimate friendship of the parties involved.

Michael Haykin

Samuel Stennett

God created man male and female, that is, one woman to a man. The conjugal relation, therefore, in the primitive and perfect state of human nature, did, and could only subsist between two persons. ...The ends of marriage...can only, in their full extent, be answered by its being confined to one man and one woman. These ends are two, the conservation and increase of the human species, and the mutual comfort and assistance of the parties united in this relation. As to the first, it would in all probability be better attained by an honourable and permanent connection between two persons, agreeable to the original dictate of nature, than by a multiplication of wives. But as to the latter, it is evident to a demonstration, that a departure from the primitive institution, in that idea of it for which we are contending, hath in innumerable instances totally defeated it.

Nothing can be more degrading to the



Samuel Stennett

female part of mankind, than to consider them as created merely for the purpose first mentioned. He that can admit the idea dishonours himself as well as them. The powers with which nature hath liberally endowed them render them capable both of enjoying, and contributing very largely to the refined pleasures of

friendship and society. Agreeably to this idea, if we may be allowed to advert to Scripture when we are reasoning from the law of nature, we hear the blessed God saying, when he had created our first progenitor, 'It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make an help-meet for him.'¹ As if he had said, 'It is fit that man whom I have made for society, should have one for his companion, with whom he may intimately converse, and who may assist him in the duties and be a sharer with him in the joys of life.' Nothing therefore can be clearer than that the woman was created, and given to man in marriage, not merely for propagating the species, but for that of promoting his and her own felicity.

...[I]ndeed how is it possible that a man should conceive a pleasing idea, not only of the external accomplishments of a woman, but of her understanding, disposition, and piety - so conceive of them as to persuade her, on the grounds of correspondent affections, to join hands with him in this most intimate relation, and not love her? And we may be sure a passion thus kindled in his breast will not languish and die away: it will rise into a steady, inextinguishable flame - a flame which the endearing intercourses of virtuous friendship will daily fan, and the most tempestuous storms of worldly adversity will not be able to put out. Her character he will esteem and honour, her interests civil and religious will lie near his heart, and to her person he will feel a firm and unalterable attachment. Partiality in her favour will ever

induce him to place her in such a light as shall secure to her, and of consequence to himself, respect from all his acquaintance and connections: for 'the woman is the glory of the man'.²

...[W]e must not pass on without remarking the very strong terms, by which the text marks the ardency of that affection it requires of the husband towards the wife. 'Let every one of you so love his wife even as himself.' And again, 'Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh: but nourisheth and cherisheth it.'³ Language this, which, if that latitude were admitted in the conjugal relation which some men have contended for, would lose all, or at least a great deal, of its propriety and force. The relation is very intimate. A man is to leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they twain are to be one flesh. It is not, therefore, general good-will, or friendly respect only, which this the most endearing of all connections demands. No. Considering her as part of himself - as one with himself, his heart, his soul, his affections ought to be indissolubly knit to her. So and so only will the salutary ends which divine benevolence has proposed by the marriage institution, be happily and effectually answered.

References

- 1 Genesis 2:18
- 2 1 Corinthians 11:7
- 3 Ephesians 5:28-29

Extending the Kingdom of Christ

in the World and in the Heart

Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) is one of the great heroes of the Calvinistic Baptist story. His devotion to Christ and to his Church, his lifelong endeavours for the advance of the gospel overseas, his defence of evangelical Calvinism and his devotion to his friends encourage imitation. This letter to Benjamin Francis reveals something of the depth of Fuller's spirituality. It was written when Fuller was becoming known as a Reformed theologian and Francis was a much experienced pastor.

Michael Haykin

Andrew Fuller

Dear Sir,
Kettering, July 13, 1788

When I was at your house you kindly requested a letter on my return. Excuse my not attending to your request before. I am slow at writing, not knowing how in general to write anything to purpose. I shall always remember my visit to Horsley with pleasure. I wish, in some future time, not far hence, you might be able to say the same of Kettering.

Since I saw you we have had two public meetings, one of which is our Annual Association. I think our churches have never been in so thriving a state, upon the whole, for several years. I have just received one of your Circular Letters; am glad to see things go on so well with you. Blessed be God for any appearances of Christ's kingdom being enlarged. My dear brother [John] Ryland, jun.,¹ preached us a sermon at our association from John 3:30, 'He must



Andrew Fuller

increase.' The very mention of the words did my heart good. I hope I could rejoice if I were to sink into obscurity, like [John] the Baptist, if by that means Christ's cause might but be enlarged. When I think what vast numbers are hastening the downward road, how few walk the narrow way, and, comparatively speaking, what little success attends our preaching, and what little ground

Christ gets in the world, my heart fails and is discouraged. But it did my heart good last night to read Isaiah 42:4, 'He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth!' I could not but reflect that Christ had infinitely more to discourage him than I can have to discourage me; and yet he persevered! But, methought, judgment is not yet set in the earth, except in a small degree. And what then! May I not take courage for that the promise has not yet spent its force? Christ has much more yet to do in the world, and, numerous as his enemies yet are and few his friends, his heart does not fail him; nor shall it, till he has spread salvation throughout the earth and leavened the whole lump!

Oh that my own soul was more leavened! My greatest difficulties arise from within. I am not what a servant of Christ should be. I want an unction from the Holy One. I have lately preached an ordination sermon or two, (that at Thorn, [Bedfordshire,] which is printed, for one²) in which I have endeavoured to come as home to the heart and conscience of my brethren as I knew how. But, oh, what shame covers my face when I turn my attention inward! I am the man who am too, too guilty of many of those things which I have cautioned them to avoid. I remember, in August last, when I came out of the pulpit at Carlton in Bedfordshire, after preaching an ordination sermon to my brother [Abraham] West from Ezra 7:10, Mr. [Thomas] Pilley of Luton, a dear and faithful servant of Christ, in

a tone of familiarity thus accosted me: 'Are not you ashamed of yourself?' I am,' said he. 'Yes,' said I, 'and so am I.' I find a perpetual proneness to read and study rather as a minister than as a Christian; more to find out something to say to the people than to edify my own soul.

How great a matter is Christian perseverance, to hold out to the end, and be saved! I have sometimes wondered at the grace in that astonishing gradation, Jude 24. What 'Him' must that be that is able to keep me from falling - and to present me - to present me faultless - faultless before the presence of his glory - and that with joy - yea, with exceeding joy! ...My kind and Christian love to Mrs. Francis. It is with pleasure I recollect her free and Christian behaviour. My kind love also to any of your friends who may remember me. Accept the same to yourself. I hope this will find you better of your complaints. ...

I am, dear Sir, your affectionate brother,

A. Fuller

References

- 1 Ryland was probably Fuller's closest friend. See Michael Haykin, 'On Friendship', *RT* 140 (July-Aug 1994), 26-30.
- 2 The sermon Fuller is referring to is 'The Qualifications and Encouragement of a Faithful Minister illustrated by the Character and Success of Barnabas', which he preached at the ordination of Robert Fawkner on October 31, 1787. For the text of the sermon, see *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1845 ed.; repr. Harrisonburg, Pennsylvania: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), I, 135-144.

News

USA

From Doug Nicholls

from Eric Michael, former missionary in Indonesia

Writing from the USA Eric Michael reports that it is estimated that there are presently about 25,000 Malaysians and Indonesians studying in America (two nationalities of a similar culture and language). In spite of predictions that the number of Indonesians coming to America would drop drastically, in fact this reduction is on average only 10%. Though government grants are about dried up, students with private funding, and those seeking to escape the economic chaos and social unrest are coming here in large numbers. The effect of the upheavals on those studying here is significant. Many are increasing their course loads in order to finish more quickly and thus save money. Even more are taking part-time jobs to supplement their devalued Indonesian rupiah funds. All are deeply concerned for families and loved ones back home who are in constant danger of violence. The result is an unprecedented level of stress and deep-rooted fear.

ACTION networks with Rainbows of Hope, a Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) mission ministry to children in crisis. Rainbows of Hope is directed by Phyllis Kilbourn, a WEC missionary formerly in Africa and now an advocate for street children world-wide. Rainbows gives the following statistics regarding children in crisis: 160 million street children world-wide, 300 million child labourers, 10 million children in the sex industry, and 10 million AIDS orphans. Please be in prayer with ACTION for additional missionaries to work with these needy children. Twenty-eight street and underprivileged children die every minute. That's 1,667 every hour! We need missionaries to help reach the masses of children in crisis with the gospel.

*Action International,
P O Box 398,
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043-
0398 USA.*

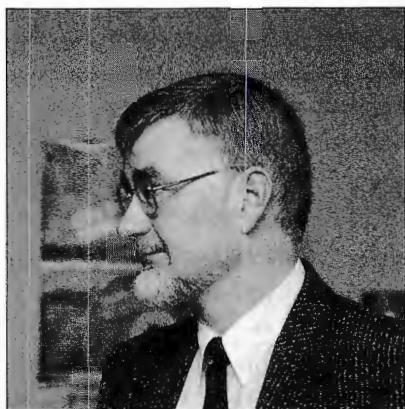
Canada

Pilgrim Baptist Fellowship – A report by Don Theobald

On Sunday, September 13, 1998 four families (19 people) met at the home of Alez and Louisa Dauphin for their first worship service in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada. They came together with a common concern to seek, by God's grace, to establish a church committed to historic orthodox Christianity and the Reformation heritage. Holding to the Baptist Confession of 1689, the group gradually grew. A constitution was drawn up and on February 14, 1999, Don Theobald was called to be Pilgrim's first pastor.

On Sunday, September 19, 1999 Pilgrim Baptist Fellowship celebrated its first anniversary. We rejoice in what God has been doing. Morning services average from 80-100, evening services range from 70-90, and prayer meetings are around 25. Since our beginning, we have had 2 baptismal services. Expository preaching, prayer, warm fellowship and a concern for both local evangelism and world missions are at the heart of Pilgrim's mandate.

Pray that we will be faithful and fearless in proclaiming and living



Don Theobald

the gospel of God's free grace in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ before our community. And pray that God will be pleased to plant other new works in Canada that are built upon the doctrines of grace.

Don Theobald

Blair Community Church – A report by David Robinson

On November 14 of this year the members of Blair Community Church, originally a daughter work of Trinity Baptist Church, Burlington, began to meet in a new location at Heritage Baptist College Chapel in Cambridge, Ontario. The encouragement is not so much the place as the reason for the move. Eight years previously this particular church had closed

down with only a few remaining members. It seemed as if there was little choice for they were without a pastor and had very few resources. While the decision seemed final on a human level, it did not receive the stamp of approval from the Head of the Church. That approval to leave the church building in Blair, a little hamlet just outside of Cambridge, would not come for another eight years and then under very different circumstances.

Pastor Ron Matthews heard that the church had closed and offered to come and minister to the small flock. The first few years brought many struggles and discouragements, but as time progressed, the Lord slowly began to add to their numbers. Four years passed and due to the age of Pastor Matthews, the church called David Robinson to pastor (Pastor Matthews remains an elder at Blair).

In these eight years God has done a tremendous work among us. From the few members in the early days (4-5), God has caused us to outgrow our present building which seats about 80 people. He has brought in many families with younger children (about 20 children under the age of 5) and recently balanced us out with a few older couples. The growth has not only been numerical but also

spiritual. It has been a challenging time for believers, and we have seen families grow close to God and have a passion to know him and live fully for his glory.

In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise his Name forever (Psalm 44.8).

Brazil

The 1999 FIEL Conference in Águas de Lindóia – report by Jim Elliff

I had heard of the FIEL Conference in Brazil for several years and knew that it was making a significant impact for good theology across the nation. Five hundred and sixty attended the conference October 4-8 in the inland resort town of Águas de Lindóia, State of São Paulo this year. Roger Ellsworth and I were invited to be the principal speakers. Roger is an author of six books and the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Benton, Illinois, USA

Past conference leaders have included many good friends and respected preachers. In the fifteen years of the conference the following men have spoken: Tom Ascol, Robert Selph, Bill Clark, Edgar Andrews, Tom Nettles, John

Blanchard, Erroll Hulse, Bill James, John Armstrong, John Piper, Tedd Tripp, John MacArthur, Mark Dever, Geoffrey Thomas, Andrew King, Michael Horton, and Conrad Mbewe. Next year Iain Murray and Wayne Mack will be the main preachers.

The conference was begun by the independent American missionary Richard Denham. Richard and his wife Pearl have been on the mission field for forty-seven years, beginning on the Amazon river in pioneer church planting. The FIEL ministries cover a range of activities but primary involvement is in publishing and distributing reformed literature. You may visit a web site for the ministry at www.editorafiel.com.br.

Through a plan called 'Adopt a Pastor Project', individuals and churches may provide a book each month to needy pastors along with the *Fé Para Hoje* (Faith for Today) publication which is similar to the Banner Magazine. In addition, the project gives assistance for the project recipients to attend the FIEL conference each year. Through the plan assistance may also go to pastors in the five other Portuguese-speaking countries of the world, Guinea Bissau, Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, and Macao. I left with a handful of

brochures on this project and a desire to encourage its support after having seen its impact firsthand.

Roger and I each spoke eight times. Roger's morning topic was 'The Grand and Precious Promises of God'. In the evening he spoke on 'The Perils of the Christian Ministry'. His messages were well-received and had a strong pastoral aspect to them. I spoke on 'Revival and the Unregenerate Church Member' in the morning series, using note-taking sheets to help them retain the information. In the evening the topic of 'The Marks of the Believer' was coordinated with my morning series and was designed not only to probe the listener, but to demonstrate one way this subject matter might be handled in the churches. In one session I was asked to sing a hymn which I had written followed by a translated version we all sang together, which was a great personal joy. Much of the Christian music in Brazil is imported. We should pray for a great hymnwriter to be raised up among the reformed camp.

Some pastors drove as many as 40 hours to attend, indicating the kind of support the conference has generated through the years as well as heart-felt appreciation of the

main organisers, Richard and Pearl Denham who celebrated their 49th wedding anniversary during the event. If health permits their work will continue. They are full of ideas for the future. But regardless of their presence, the impact of the truths gained by the books and conferences has no end.

Before leaving Brazil, I visited the Aparecida Cathedral during its holy days for celebrating the finding of a statue of Mary from the river in 1717. This is the largest cathedral dedicated to Mary in the world. There were pictures of those who believed they were healed by the statue. Thousands were there worshipping the idol, many walking on their knees in order to earn indulgences. Protestant theology has a notable place in Brazil, but the job is far from done.

For the work of Jim Elliff who is an elder of the North Pointe Baptist Church in Kansas City, consult www.toto.net/nphc.

South Africa

Pretoria – Report of church plant by Pastor Nico van der Walt

During the second half of 1997 Antipas Baptist Church in the Vaal

Triangle of South Africa (about 125 km to the south of Pretoria) decided in principle to go ahead with a church-planting outreach in Pretoria. Although this city has a few hundred thousand Afrikaans-speaking residents, there was no Afrikaans Reformed Baptist Church, and hardly a pulpit for that language group which could be characterised as evangelical, reformed and expository.

In January 1998 26,000 pamphlets were distributed and on 25 January the first evening service was held in a school hall. From the very beginning there was a lively interest, and the work has progressed to the present membership of 40, with attendances at Sunday services of about 70 in the mornings and 100-120 in the evenings. Several small groups meet during the week across the city.

At the beginning of this year Johannes de Koning (an ex-Dutch Reformed minister, and brother of Jacobus de Koning, who is engaged in RB church planting in Windhoek) accepted a call to Antipas. This made it possible for morning services to commence in Pretoria (14-3-99), and for Nico and Sonia van der Walt to move home in June 1999, becoming residents of the city known as the



Nico van der Walt



Paulos and Nelly Ntaka with their son Lunga

Jacaranda City on account of its beautiful purple flowered trees.

The Pretoria fellowship enjoys a wonderful spirit of enthusiasm and joy, and plans to appoint elders early in 2000. This will of course pave the way for full autonomy. We honour the Lord's goodness and his enabling grace. His hand of blessing is clearly resting on this outreach. To him be all the glory and praise!

Natal – Report from Pastor Jonathan Holdt

Paulos Ntaka, the pastor of Edamini Baptist Church, (see front cover picture RT 169) is involved in a wider outreach ministry in the rural towns and villages. During the funeral of his Christian

sister-in-law, a number of deep impressions were made on the unconverted who attended. This resulted in earnest calls being made to come and bring the gospel to them. With the use of a tent God had graciously provided, Paulos and some of his fellow Christian brothers began to preach the gospel in this rural village. There were some 30 baptisms as a result and a new fellowship was born in NdweNdwe. This new fellowship of believers continues to be ministered to as an outreach of Edamini Baptist Church. They have acquired a plot of land on which to build a church building in this needy area. Please pray for Paulos, his wife, Nellie and his son, Lunga who are witnessing for Christ in the rural areas of Kwazulu (Natal).

The Study of the 18th Century British Calvinistic Baptist Community:

Some recent resources

Michael A G Haykin

Martyn Lloyd-Jones often remarked that he found spiritual refreshment and revitalisation in reading the history of Evangelicalism in the 18th century. The Calvinistic Baptist story in that era — only one strand, albeit an important one, of the larger Evangelical fabric of that period — bears out Lloyd-Jones' remark. The history of the Calvinistic Baptists in this century is a fascinating story full of rich and powerful lessons for the present. Reading or studying it never fails to challenge and encourage. Unfortunately textual resources dealing with British Calvinistic Baptist history have tended to focus on the previous century, the crucial century of Calvinistic Baptist origins. There is nothing wrong with this, for we need accurate knowledge about that vital era. But, in the opinion of this writer, the 18th century is equally important.

Biographies

Again, it has been unfortunate that certain themes have gripped the imagination of later writers about the 18th-century Calvinistic Baptist community. The life of William Carey (1761-1834) is understandably a perennial favourite. His story has been told and re-told probably close to sixty times since his death. Among the best two or three of these accounts are S Pearce Carey, *William Carey*, ed. Peter Masters (1934 ed.; repr. London:

Wakeman Trust, 1993) and Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham, Alabama: New Hope, 1991), which has recently been reprinted in 1998 by the Christian History Institute as a companion edition to the new dramatic film of Carey's life, *'Candle in the Dark'*.

Amazingly, though, the lives of many of his co-workers have languished in obscurity. There is no biography, for instance, of John Ryland, Jr (1753-1825), pastor of Broadmead Baptist Church and principal of the Bristol Baptist College. Nor is there anything available on the other two key members of the Serampore Trio, Joshua Marshman (1768-1837) and William Ward (1769-1823). It should be noted that Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, the former librarian of the Carey Library at Serampore College, has written a very readable account of the life of Joshua's wife, Hannah Marshman (1767-1847): *Hannah Marshman. The first woman missionary in India* (Sheoraphuli, Hooghly, West Bengal: Sri Sunil Chatterjee, 1987). And what we have for Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), who provided the theological ballast beneath the entire missionary work of Carey and his co-workers in India, is pitiful in relation to his significance as a major evangelical theologian of this period. There is a good biographical sketch of Fuller in Timothy George and David S

Dockery, eds. *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1990). Written by Phil Roberts it provides a reliable introduction to Fuller's theology and life. But I stress the word 'introduction'. Given Fuller's standing he really needs a major theological biography.

There is also a significant amount of material on Fuller in Michael A G Haykin's *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliffe of Olney, his friends and his times* (Evangelical Press, Darlington UK 1994). But the major focus of this book is really Sutcliffe, another of Carey's close friends who played a vital role in the whole missionary enterprise that began in this era. Among other things Haykin's book establishes two key points. First, Carey's enterprise in India could never have taken place if it had not been for his circle of loyal friends at home in England and on the 'field' in India. And second, the revival that came to Calvinistic Baptist ranks at the close of the 18th century was intimately bound up with the theology of this circle of friends, a theology that has sometimes been called Fullerism after Andrew Fuller, its leading theological exponent.

The other great Calvinistic Baptist theologian of the 18th century is John Gill (1697-1771), and he has been recently well served by *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771). A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A G Haykin (Leiden: Brill, 1997). This collection of ten essays examines Gill's life and thought from such angles as his relationship to the Reformed tradition, his ecclesiology, exegesis and spirituality.

The biography of a much lesser known figure, the Welsh Calvinistic Baptist Samuel Jones (1735-1814), who emigrated to America when he was a child, is also of interest. Hywel M Davies' study of his life — *Transatlantic Brethren: Rev. Samuel Jones (1735-1814) and His Friends. Baptists in Wales, Pennsylvania and Beyond* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press/London: Associated University Presses, 1995) — is of importance in that it establishes in detail the existence of a 'Baptist Atlantic, or Baptist International' (p 14). Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic saw themselves as parts of one larger community. As Davies shows, the Welsh Baptists in America often turned to the British Baptists for theological wisdom and guidance, while the British Baptists took especial delight in the way God was blessing the American Baptist churches.

Essay-length biographical studies of various other leaders can be found in the first volume of *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910*, ed. Michael A G Haykin (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 1998). Two other volumes, due to appear next year, will contain further studies of other 18th-century Baptist figures.

Historical overviews

A couple of major treatments of the Baptist story have appeared in recent years. There is, for instance, H Leon McBeth's *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1987), a massive work of 850 pages. His treatment of the British Calvinistic Baptists in the 18th century is somewhat disappointing, however. Upon his reading of the evidence, this is

largely a time of decline for the Baptists. The fault for this decline he lays squarely at the feet of 'hyper-Calvinism', a system of theology he believes is best represented by John Gill (p.152, 172-183, *passim*). And yet, as B R White has noted in his review of McBeth's book, 'this seems to have been only part of the story' [The Baptist Quarterly, 32 (1987-1988), 256]. McBeth appears to know of other reasons for this decline — for instance, the problems attending pastoral formation (p 189) and the erection of specific places of worship (p 191) — but he never explicitly includes or develops these reasons in his discussion.

The problem facing any general study of a major Christian tradition is simply the mass of detail that has to be mastered. By and large McBeth has done well in producing a coherent and readable account of the Baptist tradition. Yet, as B R White wondered in his review of this book, 'perhaps, the next "universal" Baptist history should be done by a team of scholars' each of whom is able to investigate his or her particular area of speciality.

White himself has been involved in such a project, the four-volume *A History of the English Baptists*, published by the Baptist Historical Society. Three volumes have thus far appeared. It is the second volume, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* written by Raymond Brown (London, 1986), that covers the period under discussion here. It is a good study. For instance, on that important question of decline and revival among 18th-century Baptists, Brown displays an admirable sensitivity to the complexity of the issue. Not all British Baptist churches went into decline

before experiencing revival in the final quarter of the 18th century. He notes, for example, that a number of the students who studied at Bristol Baptist Academy brought an outstanding contribution to the life of the churches in the second half of the eighteenth century. Men like John Ash (1724-79) of Pershore, Benjamin Beddome (1717-95) of Bourton-on-the-Water and Benjamin Francis [1735-1799] of Horsley were content to serve their respective churches for between forty and fifty years, pouring their entire working ministry into the pastoral care of rural congregations, faithful biblical preaching, the development of association life, the establishment of new causes and, in each case, the composition or publication of hymns. Their devotional hymnology, passion for associating, and evangelistic initiatives helped to divert many churches from high Calvinism and introduced them to these influences which were powerfully at work in the Evangelical Revival (p 84-85).

On this issue of revival among 18th-century Baptists the following studies are also of genuine importance, four doctoral theses and three books.

Theses:

1. Robert W Oliver, 'The Emergence of a Strict and Particular Baptist Community Among the English Calvinistic Baptists 1770-1850' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Council for National Academic Awards, 1986);
2. Dafydd Densil James Morgan, 'The Development of the Baptist Movement in Wales between 1714 and 1815 with particular reference to the Evangelical Revival' (Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford, 1986);

3. Roger Hayden, 'Evangelical Calvinism among eighteenth-century British Baptists with particular reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the Bristol Baptist Academy, 1690-1791' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele, 1991);
4. Karen Smith, 'The Community and the Believer: a Study of Calvinistic Baptist Spirituality in . . . Hampshire . . . circa 1730-1830 (Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis, Oxford).

Books:

1. R Philip Roberts, *Continuity and Change: London Calvinistic Baptists and The Evangelical Revival 1760-1820* (Wheaton, Illinois: Richard Owen Roberts, 1989);
2. Peter Naylor, *Picking Up A Pin for the Lord: English Particular Baptists from 1688 to the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Grace Publications, 1992);
3. Deryck Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People: Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830* (Cambridge, C.U.P. 1988, see review in *RT119*).

Local church histories

It is a curious fact that for all the aplomb that Baptists show with regard to the local church, they have by and large not taken to heart the importance of writing solid, detailed histories of their local churches. There are some exceptions, of course. Malcolm Bonnington's *Chard Baptists* (Chard, Somerset: Forum Books, 1992) is a superb example of local history. Beautifully produced in a cloth edition it traces the ups and downs of a Baptist work that has its roots in the turbulent

1650s. Bonnington makes good use of the minute books of the church along with other documents to reconstruct the inner workings of this Baptist Church.¹

This reminds us of the value of the minute books of Baptist churches. A good example of these most valuable of Baptist records is the edited version of the earliest minute book of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge: L Aldicott, L G Champion, and K A C Parsons, eds., *Church Book: St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge 1720-1832* ([London]: Baptist Historical Society, 1991). Not only is there the edited and annotated text, but there is also a first-rate 'Introduction' by L Aldicott in which, among other things, he provides convincing arguments for regarding Robert Robinson (1735-1790) as fundamentally sound in his final days, and not a convinced Unitarian as he is often portrayed (p. viii-xviii).

This survey of recently-produced material dealing with the 18th-century Calvinistic Baptists is, of course, not an exhaustive bibliography. Its goal has been far more modest: to alert the reader to some of the resources that are available and to stimulate interest in writing Calvinistic Baptist History. If we, who regard these Baptist believers of the 18th century as kindred spirits and fellow pilgrims, do not do such writing, surely no one else will.

Note

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