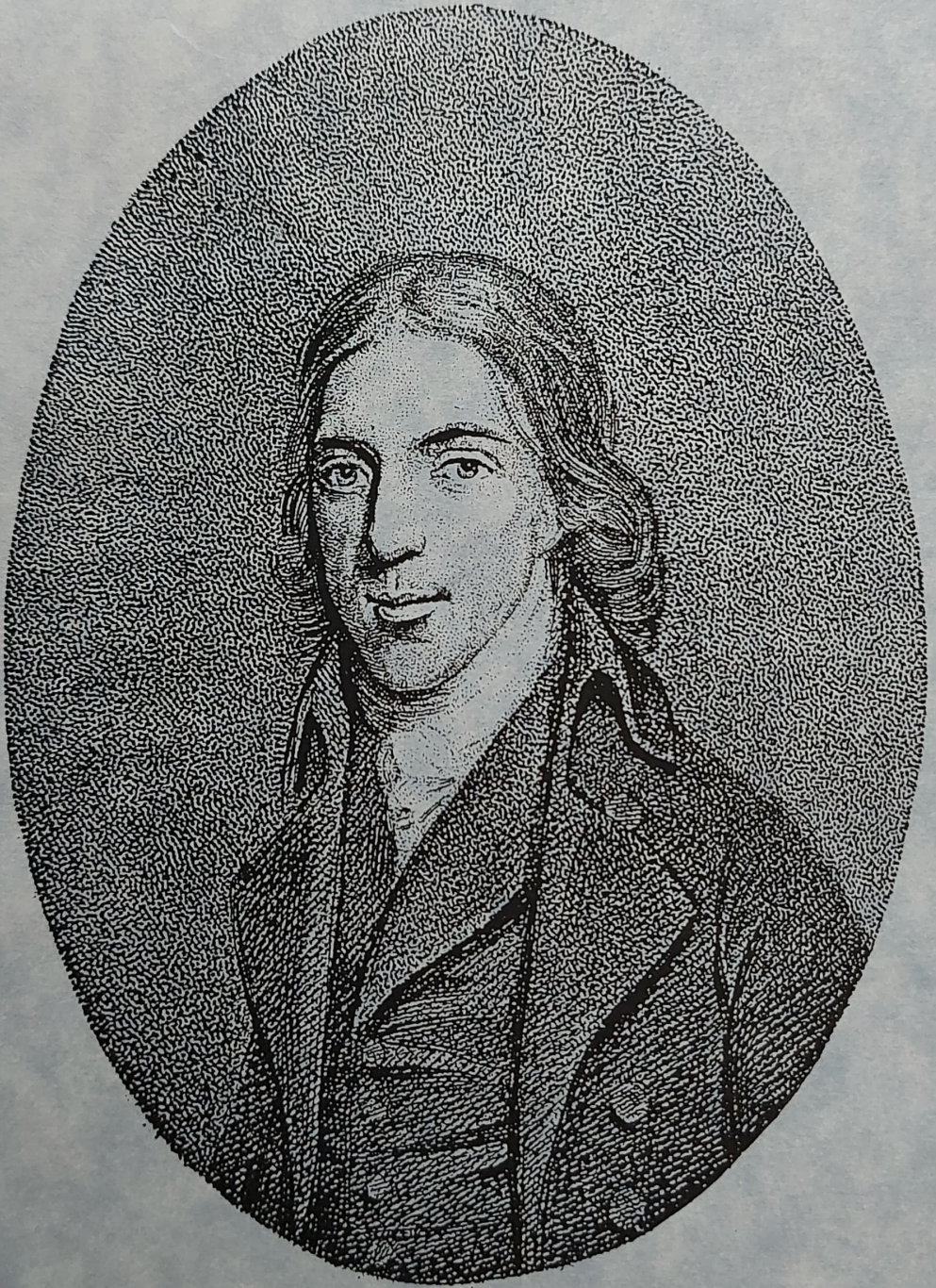


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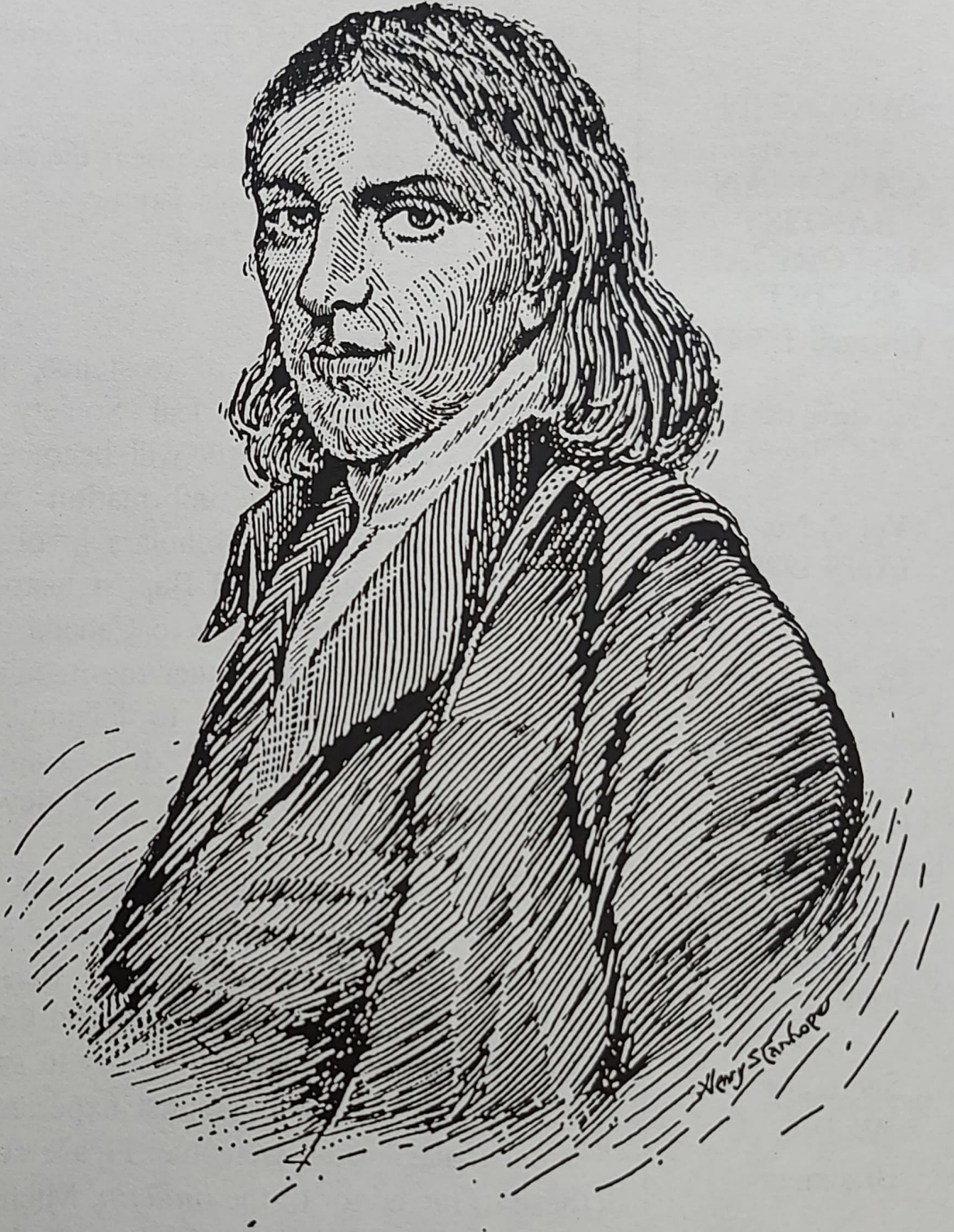
Editor of the
Bulletin:
Michael Haykin

"Every Christian ought to be a good historian"
(Caleb Evans)

"Sharpening our sense of the past is the only
way of meeting the future"
(Northrop Frye)

Now in its fifth year of existence, the Canadian Baptist Historical Society is hopeful that this *Bulletin* will become a substantial means of information and incentive for Canadian scholars involved in researching aspects of Baptist history, in particular those relating to Canada. As such it seeks to help further the mandate of the Society, which is to facilitate a better understanding of the Baptist heritage as it has taken root and developed in Canada.

The *Bulletin* appears twice a year, in the spring and the fall. Research notes and notices, current projects and theses, publications, plans for meetings, and book notes that relate to Baptist history in general and the Canadian Baptist experience in particular are all welcome. Please send these to the editor of the *Bulletin*: Michael A. G. Haykin, Heritage Baptist College and Theological Seminary, 175 Holiday Inn Drive, Cambridge, Ontario, N3C 3T2; e-mail: Mghhistor@aol.com.



L Pearce

THE SPIRITUALITY OF SAMUEL PEARCE (1766-1799)

Michael A. G. Haykin
Heritage Theological Seminary,
Cambridge, Ontario

In the recent passion in Christian circles for books, articles, and conference papers on Christian “spirituality,” Baptists might well feel that they have little to contribute. After all, one major way of reading Baptists and their history has been to focus on their ecclesiological concerns. Yet, Baptists have had and do have a rich spirituality. A particularly fine example is offered by the life and witness of Samuel Pearce (1766-1799).¹

Scarcely known today, Samuel Pearce was in his own day well known for the anointing that attended his preaching and the depth of his spirituality. William Jay (1769-1853), who exercised an influential ministry in Bath for the first half of the nineteenth century, said of Pearce’s preaching: “When I have endeavoured to form an image of our Lord as a preacher, Pearce has oftener presented himself to my mind than any other I have been acquainted with.” He had, Jay went on, a “mildness and tenderness” in his style of preaching, and a “peculiar unction.” When Jay wrote these words it was many years after Pearce’s death, but still, he said, he could see Pearce’s appearance in his mind’s eye and feel the impression that he made upon his hearers as he preached. Ever one to appreciate the importance of having spiritual individuals as one’s friends, Jay has this comment about the the last time that he saw Pearce alive: “What a savour does communion with such a man leave upon the spirit.”²

¹ The main sources of Pearce’s life utilized in this paper are Andrew Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A. M.* (2nd. ed.; Clipstone: J. W. Morris, 1801) and S. Pearce Carey, *Samuel Pearce, M. A., The Baptist Brainerd* (3rd. ed.; London: The Carey Press, n.d.).

² *The Autobiography of William Jay*, eds. George Redford and John Angell James (1854 ed.; repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 372, 373.

Pearce was born in Plymouth on 20 July 1766 to devout Baptist parents. Despite a good upbringing by his godly father, William Pearce (d.1805), and an equally devout grandfather—his mother died when he was but an infant—it was not until 1782, his sixteenth year, that he experienced the joys of conversion. A year or so later, on the day when he celebrated his seventeenth birthday, he was baptized and joined the Plymouth congregation in which he had been raised. It was not long after his baptism that the church perceived that Pearce had been endowed with definite gifts that marked him out as one called to pastoral ministry. So, in November of 1785, when he was only nineteen years of age and serving as an apprentice to his father who was a silversmith, Pearce received a call from the church to enter into the ministry of the Word.

The church recommended that Pearce first pursue a course of study at the Bristol Baptist Academy. From August, 1786 to May, 1789 Pearce thus studied at what was then the sole Baptist institution in Great Britain for the training of ministers for the denomination of which Pearce's church was a part, the Particular, or Calvinistic, Baptists. The benefits afforded by this period of study were ones for which Pearce was ever grateful. There was, for example, the privilege of studying under the godly Caleb Evans (1737-1791), the Principal of the Academy, and Robert Hall, Jr. (1764-1831), a reputed genius who would become one of the great preachers in Great Britain during the early decades of the following century.

Early in 1789 Pearce received and accepted a call to serve for a year's probation as the pastor of Cannon Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. He had supplied the Birmingham pulpit the previous summer as well as over the Christmas vacation. Impressed by Pearce's evangelistic zeal—a number of people were converted on both occasions—along with his evident ability to strengthen God's people in their Christian walk, the church sent their request to him in early February 1789. Five weeks later Pearce wrote back consenting to their request, and by June, his studies finished, he was with them. The following year he was formally called to be the pastor of what would turn out to be his only pastoral charge.

His ministry at Cannon Street occupied ten all-too-brief years; yet they were ones of great fruitfulness. No less than 335 individuals were baptized during his ministry and received into the membership of Cannon Street. This figure does not include those converted under his preaching who, for one reason or another, did not join themselves to the Birmingham cause. A Sunday school was started in 1795 and soon grew to the point that some 1200 scholars were enrolled in it.

At the heart of his spirituality was that key-note of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism, the sovereign mercy of God displayed in the cross of Christ.³ Writing one Sunday afternoon to William Summers, a friend then residing in London, Pearce told him that he had for his sermon that evening “the best subject of all in the Bible. Eph. i.7—Redemption! how welcome to the captive! Forgiveness! how delightful to the guilty! Grace! how pleasant to the heart of a saved sinner!” Christ’s atoning death for sinners, he went on to say, is “the leading truth in the N.T., ... a doctrine I cannot but venerate; and to the Author of such a redemption my whole soul labours to exhaust itself in praise.” And in his final letter to his congregation, written on 31 May 1799, he reminded them that the gospel which he had preached among them for ten years and in which he urged them to stand fast was “the gospel of the grace of God; the gospel of free, full, everlasting salvation, founded on the sufferings and death of God manifest in the flesh.”

A second prominent feature of his spirituality was his passion for the salvation of his fellow human beings. This passion is strikingly revealed in an incident that took place when he was asked to preach at the opening of a Baptist meeting-house in Guilsborough, Northamptonshire, in May, 1794. Pearce had spoken in the morning on Psalm 76:10 (“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain”). Later that day, during the midday meal, it was quite evident from the conversation

³ For crucicentrism as a distinctive characteristic of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism, see David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989 ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 14-17.

that was going on at the dinner tables that Pearce's sermon had been warmly appreciated. It was thus no surprise when Pearce was asked if he would be willing to preach again the following morning. "If you will find a congregation," Pearce responded, "I will find a sermon." It was agreed to have the sermon at 5 a.m. so that a number of farm labourers could come who wanted to hear Pearce preach and who would have to be at their tasks early in the morning.

After Pearce had preached the second time, and he was sitting at breakfast with a few others, including the great English Baptist theologian Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), the latter remarked to Pearce how pleased he had been with the content of his friend's sermon. But, he went on to say, it seemed to him that Pearce's sermon was poorly structured. "I thought," Fuller told his friend, "you did not seem to close when you had really finished. I wondered that, contrary to what is usual with you, you seemed, as it were, to begin again at the end—how was it?" Pearce's response was terse: "It was so; but I had my reason." "Well then, come, let us have it," Fuller jovially responded. Pearce was quite reluctant to divulge the reason, but after a further entreaty from Fuller, he consented and said:

Well, my brother, you shall have the secret, if it must be so. Just at the moment I was about to resume my seat, thinking I had finished, the door opened, and I saw a poor man enter, of the working class; and from the sweat on his brow, and the symptoms of his fatigue, I conjectured that he had walked some miles to this early service, but that he had been unable to reach the place till the close. A momentary thought glanced through my mind—here may be a man who never heard the gospel, or it may be he is one that regards it as a feast of fat things; in either case, the effort on his part demands one on mine. So with the hope of doing him good, I resolved at once to forget all else, and, in despite of criticism,

and the apprehension of being thought tedious, to give him a quarter of an hour.⁴

As Fuller and the others present at the breakfast table listened to this simple explanation, they were deeply impressed by Pearce's evident love for souls. Not afraid to appear as one lacking in preaching skill, especially in the eyes of his fellow pastors, Pearce's zeal for the spiritual health of *all* his hearers had led him to minister as best he could to this "poor man" who had arrived late.

Given his ardour for the advance of the gospel it is only to be expected that Pearce would be vitally involved in the formation in 1792 of what would eventually be termed the Baptist Missionary Society, the womb of the modern missionary movement. In fact, by 1794 Pearce was so deeply gripped by the cause of missions that he had arrived at the conviction that he should offer his services to the Society and go out to India to join the first missionary team the Society had sent out, namely, William Carey (1761-1834), John Thomas (1757-1801), and their respective families. For an entire month preceding the meeting of the Society's administrative committee at which Pearce's offer would be evaluated, the Birmingham Baptist set apart one day in every week to secret prayer and fasting for direction. He also kept a diary of his experiences during this period, which Fuller later inserted verbatim into his *Memoirs* of Pearce and which admirably displays what Fuller described as his friend's "singular submissiveness to the will of God."

The decision of the Society as to Pearce's status, however, was ultimately a negative one. Rightly or wrongly, when the executive committee of the Society met at Roade, Northamptonshire, on 12 November, it was of the opinion that Pearce could best serve the cause of missions at home in England.

Pearce's response to this decision is best seen in extracts from two letters. The first, written to his wife Sarah the day after he received the decision, stated: "I am disappointed, but not dismayed.

⁴ F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, from 1792 to 1842* (London: T. Ward & Co./G. J. Dyer, 1842), I, 52-53.

I ever wish to make my Saviour's will my own." The second, sent to William Carey in India over four months later, contains a similar desire to submit to the perfectly good and sovereign will of God.

Instead of a letter, you perhaps expected to have seen the writer; and had the will of God been so, he would by this time have been on his way to Mudnabatty [where Carey was living]: but it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Full of hope and expectation as I was, when I wrote you last, that I should be honoured with a mission to the poor heathen, and be an instrument of establishing the empire of my dear Lord in India, I must submit now to stand still, and see the salvation of God.

Pearce then told Carey some of the details of the November meeting at which the Society executive had made their decision regarding his going overseas.

I shall ever love my dear brethren the more for the tenderness with which they treated me, and the solemn prayer they repeatedly put up to God for me. At last, I withdrew for them to decide, and whilst I was apart from them, and engaged in prayer for divine direction, I felt all anxiety forsake me, and an entire resignation of will to the will of God, be it what it would, together with a satisfaction that so much praying breath would not be lost; but that He who hath promised to be found of all that seek him, would assuredly direct the hearts of my brethren to that which was most pleasing to himself, and most suitable to the interests of his kingdom in the world. Between two and three hours were they deliberating after which time a paper was put into my hands, of which the following is a copy.

"The brethren at this meeting are fully satisfied of the fitness of brother P[earce]'s qualifications, and greatly approve of the disinterestedness of his motives and the ardour of his mind. But another Missionary not having been requested, and not being in our view immediately necessary,

and brother P[earce] occupying already a post very important to the prosperity of the Mission itself, we are unanimously of opinion that at present, however, he should continue in the situation which he now occupies.”

In response to this decision, which dashed some of Pearce's deepest longings, he was, he said, “enabled cheerfully to reply, “The will of the Lord be done;” and receiving this answer as the voice of God, I have, for the most part, been easy since, though not without occasional pantings of spirit after the publishing of the gospel to the Pagans.”⁵

In the five remaining years of Pearce's earthly life, he expended much of his energy in raising support for the cause of foreign missions. For instance, Pearce was the preacher at the meeting which saw William Ward (1769-1823)—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 16 October 1798, were deeply stirred by Pearce's passion and concern for the advance of the gospel. He preached “like an Apostle,” Fuller later wrote 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.”⁶

Returning back to Birmingham from this meeting Pearce was caught in a heavy downpour of rain, drenched to the skin, and

⁵ Letter to William Carey, 27 March 1795 [*Missionary Correspondence: containing Extracts of Letters from the late Mr. Samuel Pearce, to the Missionaries in India, Between the Years 1794, and 1798; and from Mr. John Thomas, from 1798, to 1800* (London: T. Gardiner and Son, 1814), 26, 30-31].

⁶ 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]. In his memoirs of Pearce, Fuller wrote that Pearce's sermon was “full of a holy unction, and seemed to breathe an apostolical ardour” (*Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce*, 100).

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 Cannon Street 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 the spring of 1799 Pearce was desperately ill with pulmonary tuberculosis and dying. Leaving his wife and family, he went to the south of England from April to July in the hope that rest there might effect a cure. In mid-July, his wife Sarah helped him to slowly wind his way home to Birmingham. By his time Samuel's voice was so far gone that he could not even whisper without pain in his lungs. His suffering, though, seemed to act like a refiner's fire to draw him closer to Christ. "Blessed be his dear name," he said not long before his death, "who shed his blood for me. ... Now I see the value of the religion of the cross. It is a religion for a dying sinner. ... 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."

He fell asleep in Christ on Thursday, 10 October 1799. William Ward, who had been profoundly influenced by Pearce's zeal and spirituality, well summed up his 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."





Book Notes

Transatlantic Brethren: Rev. Samuel Jones (1735-1814) and His Friends. Baptists in Wales, Pennsylvania, and Beyond

Hywel M. Davies

(Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press/

London: Associated University Presses, 1995),

361 pages. ISBN: 0-934223-32-7.

This superbly crafted book seeks to recreate the "Baptist Atlantic" of the eighteenth century by means of the correspondence of Samuel Jones, a Baptist minister of Welsh extraction who lived near Philadelphia, with British Baptists. Jones, a leading figure in the Philadelphia Baptist Association, was widely respected throughout this transatlantic Baptist community for his scholarship, wisdom, and commitment to Calvinism. Meticulous research, both in printed sources and manuscript collections on both sides of the Atlantic, make this an important source for understanding the connections and influences that flowed between the United Kingdom and America.

"The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705: The Doctrine of the Church in the Second London Baptist Confession as Implemented in the Subscribing Churches"

James M. Renihan

(Ph.D. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995),

xxii+428 pages.

Available from: UMI Dissertation Services, 300 North Zeeb Road,
P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-1346.

This thesis seeks to heed B. R. White's 1968 call for "microscopic study of Baptist history" as a corrective to the "inaccuracies and inadequacies of the telescopic approach" (*The Baptist Quarterly*, 22:263). After a probing "microscopic" examination, Renihan finds

that early Particular Baptist communities were marked by a genuine catholicity (*pace* the claims of Landmarkist historians) and were closely tied to a detailed confessional theology (*pace* recent Baptist historiography that makes “soul liberty” the main *raison d’être* of Baptist life). He also demonstrates that ecclesiology, the distinguishing tenet of Particular Baptist communities, is seen to be rooted in a keen primitivistic impulse well expressed by the dictum of Tertullian, *Quod primum id optimum*. Hopefully, this thesis will find a publisher and a much wider audience.



Canadian Baptist Historical Society Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting of the Canadian Baptist Historical Society, held on March 15, 1997, at McMaster Divinity College, the following officers of the Society were elected: President, Theo T. Gibson; Vice-President, Kenneth Morgan; Secretary, William H. Brackney; Treasurer, John Irwin; Program Committee Chair, Grant Gordon; Membership Development Co-ordinator, C. Cameron; Editor of the *Newsletter*, Michael Haykin. After a number of items of business, two scholarly papers were given: Grant Gordon spoke on “The Life and Ministry of David George (1743-1810), First Black Baptist Pastor in the U.S., Canada and Africa” and William Brackney spoke on “Archibald Reekie—The Perils of a Pioneer.”

The next annual meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 18, 1998 @ 10:00 a.m. at McMaster Divinity College. Two papers are to be presented. Stan Fowler will speak on “The British Baptist Reformulation of a Sacramental Understanding of Baptism in the 20th. Century,” and Don Goertz will speak on “Alexander Maclaren (1826-1910): Preacher, Mystic, and Husband.” Luncheon will be served following around 12:15 p.m. All interested in the Society and its mandate are encouraged to attend.



Membership Matters

Membership dues for the Society are as follows: Life Membership—\$500.00; Full Membership—\$30.00 annually; Associate Membership—\$15.00 annually; Student Membership (for those registered in any seminary or theological institution)—\$5.00 annually. Membership fees can be sent to the Treasurer, Mr. John Irwin c/o McMaster Divinity College, 1280 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4K1. Cheques should be made payable to the “Canadian Baptist Historical Society.”

Student Memberships

The low cost of a student membership—still at \$5.00 a year—is meant to be an incentive to you who are students to seriously consider joining the Society. The future of Canadian Baptist studies in many respects lies in your hands. What better way to ensure that future than by participating in this academic society which is specifically designed to explore and transmit the rich heritage of our Baptist forebears.



Papers of the XII Believers' Church Conference, 1996

The papers of the XII Believers' Church Conference, held in the fall of 1996 at McMaster Divinity College are to be published by Pandora Press of Kitchener, Ontario, this spring. This is to be the first volume in a series entitled “Studies in Anabaptist and Baptist Tradition,” part of a joint venture between McMaster Divinity College and Conrad Grebel College.



New American Baptist Historical Society Library Dedicated

On October 11, 1997, the new library facilities of the American Baptist Historical Society at the Colgate Rochester Divinity School campus were formally dedicated. Edwin S. Gaustad, professor emeritus of the University of California, gave the major address at a dinner that followed. His topic was "History: Opportunities, Responsibilities."



Canadian Baptist Archives

As of January 1, 1998, McMaster Divinity College assumed full responsibility for the administration of the Canadian Baptist Archives. A new memorandum of agreement was drawn up which involves all of the programmes, collections and staff of the Archives. The College is firmly committed to maintaining a high-quality programme for the Archives. Ms. Elaine Poproski, Archival Assistant, is available to respond to inquiries and visiting researchers.



The Canadian Baptist History Conference, November, 1998

Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, in conjunction with the Hayward Lectures, is pleased to host the seventh Canadian Baptist History Conference on November 12-14, 1998. The focus of the Conference will be on the ways that various Baptist distinctives and theological issues have shaped aspects of Canadian Baptist History. For further information about the Conference,

write: Dr. Bob Wilson, Director of Continuing Education, Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia B0P 1X0. Fax: 902-542-7527; e-mail: robert.wilson@acadiau.ca.



The Baptist Review of Theology

In the most recent issue of *The Baptist Review of Theology*—vol. 7, nos. 1-2 (Spring/Fall 1997)—there is a fine article by Dr. James M. Renihan on “Henry Danvers’ *A Treatise of Baptism: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Baptist Historiography*.” Danvers is a relatively neglected seventeenth-century English Baptist pioneer, who fought in the Parliamentary Army during the English Civil War and who later was implicated in the Monmouth rebellion. The paper explores a perennial issue in Baptist history, namely, the question of Baptist origins. Dr. Renihan has just recently been appointed to the Chair of Reformed Baptist Studies at Westminster Seminary West, Escondido, California. Copies of this issue are each \$10.00 and available from Heritage Baptist College and Theological Seminary, 175 Holiday Inn Drive, Cambridge, Ontario, N3C 3T2. Annual subscription for the journal, which appears twice a year, is currently \$20.00.



Two new books

Congratulations are extended to William Brackney on the appearance of a new book on Archibald Reekie that he has edited, *Bridging Cultures and Hemispheres: The Legacy of Archibald Reekie and Canadian Baptists in Bolivia* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1997); and to Michael Haykin on the appearance of his ed., *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997).



International Conference on Baptist Studies
Regent's Park College, Oxford
13-16 August, 1997

For some time the late Dr. George Rawlyk, of Queen's University, Kingston, and Dr. David Bebbington of the University of Stirling, Scotland, contemplated the possibility of an International Conference on Baptist Studies. Despite Dr. Rawlyk's untimely death in November 1995 more detailed plans were already being framed. This conference was the fruition of those plans. Two members of the CBHS gave papers. William Brackney spoke on "Hands across the Waters: Transatlantic Interrelationships in the Emerging Community of Baptists, 1626-1927" and Michael Haykin spoke on "Particular Redemption in the Transatlantic Baptist Community, 1640-1890." Dr. Bebbington is editing the conference papers for a book that Oxford University Press will publish in the near future.

A second International Conference on Baptist Studies will be held in July, 2000, at Wake Forest University, North Carolina.

