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THE CALVINISTIC BAPTISTS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

'The Most High sent the glorious King William the Third, and saved us.'¹ Such was the way that Benjamin Wallin (1711-1782), pastor of Maze Pond Particular Baptist Church in London, gave voice to what was the almost unanimous perspective of eighteenth-century Calvinistic Baptists on the accession of William III to the English throne in 1688. For nearly thirty years prior to William's coming to power the Baptists, along with fellow dissenters, had been subject to intense, though intermittent, state persecution. The passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689 at the behest of William, a convinced Calvinist, gave them, and the other dissenting bodies, a genuine measure of religious freedom, and they entertained bright hopes for the future. Instead of growth, however, the attainment of toleration marked the beginning of a slow decline for the Calvinistic Baptists.

Earlier Baptist historiography fixed the blame for this declension on the High Calvinism of such influential theologians as John Gill (1697-1771) and John Brine (1703-1765). For instance, John Ryland, Jr (1753-1825), writing in 1816, stated that through the influence of both Gill and Brine the opinion 'spread pretty much among ministers of the Baptist denomination' that 'it is not the duty of the unregenerate to believe in Christ.'² Thus, Baptist preachers 'were too much restrained from imitating our Lord and his apostles, in calling on sinners to "repent and believe the gospel".'³ Recently, though, Thomas J. Nettles has called into question the use of the term 'High Calvinism' as an accurate description of Gill's theology.⁴ Nettles argues that Gill did indeed affirm that 'it was the duty of all men to repent of sin and the duty of all who heard the gospel to believe it.' While Gill thought that the phrase 'to offer Christ' lacked biblical foundation, he had no objections to encouraging sinners to come to Christ. Nettles thus concludes his study: 'Rather than imputing blame upon Gill for the leanness of the times, he should be credited with preserving gospel-purity, which eventuated in the efforts to use means for the conversion of the heathen.'⁵ By standing firm against the trinitarian errors of his day, Gill helped his Baptist contemporaries to maintain their hold on orthodoxy and so have the capacity to receive the fire of revival later in the century.⁶ Nettles appears, however, to have overstated his case, for a judicious examination of Gill's writings still supports the traditional view that he was a High Calvinist.⁷ Nevertheless, Nettles is correct to criticize the standard portrayal of Gill's ministry, well illustrated by Ryland, which regards him and Brine as the chief culprits for the spiritual leanness of many of the Calvinistic Baptist churches of the time. Such a view is an over-simplification.⁸ Russell E. Richey, for instance, points out that there were ongoing legal restrictions, which effectively confined Baptist preaching to the meeting house.⁹ Deryck W. Lovegrove, on the other hand, locates the real problem of Baptists during this period in the matter of their isolation: 'The very strength of independency, the internal cohesion of the gathered church, became its weakness as geographical remoteness conspired with autonomy and lack of common purpose to foster numerical decline.'¹⁰ And Isabel Rivers sees a loss of identity as a key factor in the decline of Baptists. Speaking about

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the dissenters in general, she states: 'The experience of . . . persecution and heroic leadership must have given a sense of identity and commitment to the nonconformists not shared by the succeeding generations of dissenters.'¹¹ In short, the decline of the Baptists during the early 1700s cannot be simply attributed to one cause.¹² As the studies of Richey, Lovegrove and Rivers indicate, there were a variety of factors at work: political and sociological, as well as theological.

Now, evidence for this declension can be culled from a variety of sources. Calvinistic Baptist pastors who laboured in the middle of the eighteenth century were not reticent to remark on the decline evident in their midst. Gill himself could state in 1750 in his funeral sermon for Samuel Wilson (1702-1750), pastor of Prescott Street Baptist Church, London:

The harvest is great, and faithful and painful ministers are few. There are scarcely any that naturally care for the estate and souls of men, and who are heartily concerned for their spiritual welfare . . . And what adds to the sorrow is, that there are so few rising to fill the places of those that are removed; few that come forth with the same spirit, and are zealously attached to the truths of the everlasting gospel. Blessed be God, there is here and there one that promises usefulness, or otherwise the sorrow and grief at the loss of gospel ministers would be insupportable.¹³

Gill's younger contemporary, Benjamin Wallin, whose own congregation actually saw an increase in members during his pastorate from 1741 to 1782, frequently made mention of 'the universal complaints of the decay of practical and vital godliness.'¹⁴ Wallin was very conscious of living in a 'melancholy Day', a day of 'present Declensions' amongst Baptist churches.¹⁵ A somewhat less subjective indicator of decline is the statistics of Calvinistic Baptist congregations for the eighteenth century. For the first couple of decades of the 1700s the major source of statistical evidence is a list of nonconformist congregations drawn up by the Presbyterian minister, John Evans, between the years 1715 and 1718. While the list is reasonably accurate with regard to paedobaptist congregations, research by W. T. Whitley in this century turned up a good number of Calvinistic Baptist congregations not listed by Evans.¹⁶ On the basis of the Evans list and his own research, Whitley estimated that there were roughly 220 Calvinistic Baptist congregations in England and Wales around the years 1715 to 1718.¹⁷ For the determination of Calvinistic Baptist strength at the middle of the century, a survey of fellow Baptists by John C. Ryland (1723-1792) in 1753 is especially helpful. Ryland's survey is somewhat incomplete. However, an analysis of this survey by Arthur S. Langley has provided some additions to Ryland's figures and indicates that in the early 1750s the number of Calvinistic Baptist congregations had dropped to around 150.¹⁸ From the beginning of the century, therefore, there had been a decrease in the number of congregations by approximately one-third. While these figures are only estimates, they do reveal a pattern of decline in the Calvinistic Baptist community during the early decades of the century.¹⁹ Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), who was instrumental in the revitalization of the Baptists in the final decades of the century, summed up this situation in his own inimitable style when he declared: 'Had matters gone on but for a few years, the Baptists would have become a perfect dunghill in society.'²⁰

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

Not reticent to speak their minds regarding the declension of the Calvinistic Baptist cause, authors such as Gill and Wallin were also not hesitant to indicate how this situation should be rectified. For them the pathway to spiritual renewal lay first and foremost in an earnest commitment to upholding the distinctives of Calvinistic Baptist ecclesiology.²¹ Wallin, for instance, was insistent that as long as there was a neglect of believer's baptism and the principles of congregational church government, any attempt to revive the churches of Christ was 'essentially deficient.'²² For, he maintained:

They who neglect these divine Institutions on a Pretence that inward and spiritual Devotion is all God requires, are under a plain Delusion, since this is contrary to the Example of the Lord, as well as to express Exhortations to Scripture . . . More is required in Gospel-worship than barely to hear the Word in the Assemblies of the Faithful . . . We learn from the New Testament that they who received the Word, were soon baptized and joined the Disciples, who in every Place were with one Consent united in a Church-State, and communed together under their several Officers in the Ordinances of the Lord.²³

Genuine love to God and the desire for communion with him are inseparably yoked, in Wallin's mind, to a zeal for the preservation and consolidation of proper church order. Thus, preaching on Ephesians 2:22 on 13 January 1774, Wallin could state with regard to the congregation established on a strictly Baptist foundation: 'There is no greater honor in the apprehension of a penitent sinner, who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, than to be called into a fellowship so divine, and admitted to a place in that building which is an habitation of God through the Spirit.'²⁴ Little wonder then that Wallin, like many of his Calvinistic Baptist contemporaries, was intensely critical of the Evangelical Revival, where the emphasis lay not so much on the preservation of ecclesiological convictions as on the vigorous propagation of soteriological truths.²⁵

The downward trend of the Calvinistic Baptist community during the first half of the eighteenth century was reversed during the second half as this community underwent a profound revitalization. The causes for this revitalization are as various as the factors instrumental in the earlier decline. W. R. Ward has argued that an optimistic eschatology lay at the heart of this revitalization,²⁶ whereas L. G. Champion maintains that it was primarily the rediscovery of an evangelical Calvinism, best personified in the theology of Fuller, which led to a renewed vision for evangelism and the creation of organizations to fulfil this vision.²⁷ Lovegrove, however, has demonstrated that this latter change of theological perspective was only one aspect of a broader transformation of attitude: Baptists, along with other dissenters, 'became expansionist, outward looking and welcoming, turning away from [their] earlier exclusivity.'²⁸

The following study is of one, whose life and ministry are illustrative of this change in outlook and theology: John Sutcliff of Olney (1752-1814), one of Andrew Fuller's closest friends. It arose out of the growing realization that, although Sutcliff was a central figure in the revitalization of the Calvinistic Baptists, neither his ministry nor his thought has been the subject of extensive published research.²⁹ After a very brief examination of the theological and spiritual influences which shaped Sutcliff's

thought, the study is clustered around four texts. These texts display Sutcliff's lifelong commitment to seek revival, his willingness to learn from and associate with non-Baptist evangelicals, and his support of vigorous evangelism at home and abroad.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON SUTCLIFF'S THOUGHT

Sutcliff was converted as a teenager in 1769 through the ministry of John Fawcett (1740-1817), then pastor of Wainsgate Baptist Church, near Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire. Fawcett himself was a child of the Evangelical Revival, having been converted under the preaching of George Whitefield (1714-1770) and having been shaped as a young Christian by the Anglican evangelical, William Grimshaw (1708-1763).³⁰ According to his son, Fawcett kept a portrait of Whitefield in his study and 'the very mention of his name inspired the warmest emotions of grateful remembrance.'³¹ Baptized by Fawcett soon after his conversion, Sutcliff joined Wainsgate Baptist Church on 28 May 1769. For the next couple of years, Fawcett acted as Sutcliff's mentor, giving him both academic and spiritual instruction. Sutcliff thus received his earliest nurture in the Christian faith from one who was very appreciative of the Evangelical Revival.

An evident hunger for theological knowledge on the part of Sutcliff, coupled with a desire to put that knowledge into practice, prompted Fawcett and the Wainsgate Church to encourage Sutcliff to pursue formal study at the Bristol Baptist Academy, the sole institution in eighteenth-century Britain for training men for the Baptist ministry. The principal teachers at the Academy at that time were Hugh Evans (1713-1781) and his son, Caleb Evans (1737-1791), both of whom had a reputation for being evangelical Calvinists.³² Caleb Evans was also a fervent admirer of the writings of the New England theologian, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), whom he regarded as 'the most rational, scriptural divine, and the liveliest Christian, the world was ever blessed with',³³ and whose writings he strongly recommended to students at the Academy.³⁴ Evans was not the only Calvinistic Baptist of his day to be deeply impressed by Edwards. For instance, in his obituary for Joshua Wood (1734-1794), pastor at Salendine Nook near Huddersfield in Yorkshire, John Fawcett stated that Edwards was Wood's 'favourite author' and 'he read his works with constant attention, approbation, and delight.'³⁵ Fawcett himself first read Edwards' works in the 1760s and appears to have encouraged Sutcliff to do the same. Since any encouragement Sutcliff received in this regard from Fawcett would only have been reinforced in Bristol by Evans, it is no surprise to find that, after the Scriptures, Edwards' writings exercised the greatest influence in shaping Sutcliff's theological perspective. In fact, so great was the impact of Edwards on Sutcliff that after his death there were some who stated that 'if Sutcliff . . . had preached more of Christ, and less of Jonathan Edwards, [he] would have been more useful.'³⁶ To whom Fuller replied in defence of his departed friend, 'If those who talk thus, preached Christ half as much as Jonathan Edwards did, and were half as useful as he was, their usefulness would be double what it is.'³⁷ More than any other eighteenth-century author, Edwards showed Sutcliff, and fellow Baptists like Fawcett, Evans and Fuller, how to combine a commitment to Calvinism with a passion for revival, fervent evangelism and experimental religion.³⁸

A LETTER FROM JOHN RYLAND, JR (1774)

Upon leaving Bristol in May of 1774, Sutcliff spent six months ministering at the Baptist Church in Shrewsbury, and then another six at Cannon Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. A letter from his close friend, John Ryland, Jr, to him while he was at Shrewsbury reveals the thinking of Sutcliff and his circle of friends at this time. Sutcliff had evidently enquired after a revival that was taking place in the Baptist Church at Shepshed, Leicestershire. Ryland answers his request thus:

You ask if I have heard of a revival of Sheepshead - I have *seen* it. The instrument is Mr Guy . . . the plainest rough hewed preacher you ever saw or heard . . . 3 sabbaths back 24 gave in their Exp. there, the Church meeting lasted from 4 in the afternoon till 12 at night. The devil roars wofully there. Guy never spares him in the pulpit and he never spares Guy out of it - the poor man is often distressed almost to death about the greatness of the work, and generally goes up the pulpit stairs in chains, but God owns him abundantly - will you meet me at Sheepshead in a week or two or more?³⁹

William Guy (1739-1783), the central figure in this text, had come to Shepshed Baptist Church in 1774. It was to be his only pastoral charge, but not long after his call to the church it experienced the revival described above. Preaching at Shepshed after Guy's death in 1783, Ryland stated that the deceased had had 'an alarming ministry', that is, a ministry greatly used by God to awaken the unsaved to their need of Christ.⁴⁰ The ongoing impact which this revival had upon Ryland, and presumably Sutcliff, is well seen from a remark Ryland made in a letter quite a number of years later. Writing in 1807 to John Williams (1767-1825), a Welsh Baptist pastor who had emigrated to America, Ryland stated:

We seldom seem to fish with a Net, as you have often done in America. It is very uncommon I mean for an awakening to seem to run th[rough a] town or a village. The most similar case to those I have read of, in your country, was the awakening at Sheepshead in Leicestershire near 30 yrs. ago, when my dear friend Guy was first settled there.⁴¹

Sutcliff's interest in revival, piqued by the writings of Edwards and stimulated by the events at Shepshed, became, as shall be seen, a lifelong passion.

Towards the end of his letter Ryland reflects further on the issue of revival. The context of Ryland's remarks is the mention of the fact that the eccentric Calvinistic Methodist evangelist, Rowland Hill (1744-1833) had, at Ryland's request, recently preached to thousands at Northampton.

Dear Rowland Hill was bless'd abundantly among us last year 12 alarm'd whereof 8 stand well - he has just been here again - thousands attended - I know but of 2 awaken'd yet - one of them had his skull fractur'd this week but hope he'll recover. Tis the wisdom as well as the duty of the dissenters to be friendly with the *orthodox* Methodists - as to the Weslytes both their Doctrin [*sic*] and Policy are inimical to the Dissenters and I think contrary to the Word of God.⁴²

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Despite Ryland's concluding qualification about the followers of the Wesleys, his preceding remarks display an openness and catholicity rarely found in Calvinistic Baptist circles prior to this date.⁴³ Ryland's sentiments were shared to the full by Sutcliff. Evidence that can be cited in this regard includes: Sutcliff's friendship with John Newton (1725-1807) during the latter's curacy at Olney,⁴⁴ and his even closer friendship with some of his successors, for instance, Christopher Stephenson;⁴⁵ an appreciative visit which he and Fuller made to see the Anglican evangelical, John Berridge (1716-1793), in the winter of 1790-91 and which Sutcliff later described in the interdenominational *Evangelical Magazine*,⁴⁶ and statements such as the following which Sutcliff made at the ordination of Thomas Morgan (1776-1857) in 1802:

Cheerfully we own that the established church is honoured with a noble list of worthies. Their names we love. Their memories we revere . . . Numbers in that connexion are zealous for truth and are patterns of holiness. For their usefulness we pray; and in their success, in turning sinners from darkness to light, we rejoice.⁴⁷

This respect for Anglican preachers and evangelists stands in marked contrast to the attitude of Baptists earlier in the century; for the latter, the Established Church 'represented the penultimate step toward Popery from Dissent.'⁴⁸

THE PRAYER CALL OF 1784

In 1775 Sutcliff came to the small town of Olney in Buckinghamshire for a ministry that would last until his death in 1814. The initial years of his ministry, however, were trying ones. Sutcliff's Edwardsean Calvinism deeply disturbed some of his congregation, who saw it as a departure from the canons of 'orthodoxy', and they began to absent themselves from the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper and from church meetings. But Sutcliff was not to be deterred from preaching what he regarded as biblical truth. Matters came to a head towards the end of 1780. At a church meeting on 7 December the dissidents declared that the reason for their conduct was their 'dissatisfaction with the Ministry.'⁴⁹ After a long debate, it was agreed to let the matter rest for four months, and if the dissidents took their places at the Lord's Table the matter was to be forgotten.⁵⁰ Although it took more than four months, Sutcliff, 'by patience, calmness, and prudent perseverance', eventually won over all of the dissidents.⁵¹

These years also saw Sutcliff's growing involvement in the affairs of the Northamptonshire Association of Baptist churches. The circular letter which the Association annually sent to its member churches was drawn up by him in 1779 on the subject of divine providence, as was that in 1786, which focused on the Lord's Day. And in 1784 he presented to the Association a proposal which was to have far-reaching implications. Earlier that year there had come into Sutcliff's hands Jonathan Edwards' treatise, *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*. In this treatise, first published in 1748, Edwards appealed for the establishment of regular prayer meetings where there could be fervent prayer that God 'would appear for the help of his church, and in mercy to mankind, and pour out his Spirit, revive his work, and advance his spiritual kingdom in the world.'⁵²

The treatise came to Sutcliff through John Erskine (1721-1803), who had corresponded with Edwards in his younger years and who was minister of the historic church of Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh. Erskine has been well described as 'the paradigm of Scottish evangelical missionary interest through the last half of the eighteenth century.'⁵³ From 1780 till his death in 1803 he regularly corresponded with John Ryland, Jr, sending him not only letters but also on occasion bundles of interesting publications which he happened to receive. So it was that in April 1784 Erskine dispatched to Ryland a copy of Edwards' *Humble Attempt*. Ryland in turn shared it with his friends, Sutcliff and Fuller. Sutcliff was so impressed by this treatise that at the next meeting of the Baptist churches of the Northamptonshire Association he proposed that monthly prayer meetings should be established to pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit and the revival of religion. This proposal was adopted by the representatives of the twenty or so churches of the Association, and attached to the circular letter sent out that year to the churches was a call for them 'to wrestle with God for the effusion of his Holy Spirit.'⁵⁴ Practical suggestions as to the way in which to implement these monthly meetings followed. It was recommended that there be corporate prayer for one hour on the first Monday evening of each month. The call then continued:

The grand object in prayer is to be, that the Holy Spirit may be poured down on our ministers and churches, that sinners may be converted, the saints edified, the interest of religion revived, and the name of God glorified. At the same time remember, we trust you will not confine your requests to your own societies [i.e. churches], or to your own immediate connection [i.e. denomination]; let the whole interest of the Redeemer be affectionately remembered, and the spread of the gospel be the object of your most fervent requests. We shall rejoice if *any other christian societies* of our own or other denominations will unite with us, and do now *invite them* most cordially to join heart and hand in the attempt.⁵⁵

There are at least three noteworthy points about this call to prayer, which Sutcliff had undoubtedly helped to write.⁵⁶ First, there is the conviction that reversing the downward trend of the Calvinistic Baptists could not be accomplished by mere human zeal, but must be effected by an outpouring of the Spirit of God. As Sutcliff later observed:

The outpouring of the divine Spirit . . . is the grand promise of the New Testament . . . His influences are the soul, the great animating soul of all religion. These withheld, divine ordinances are empty cisterns, and spiritual graces are withering flowers. These suspended, the greatest human abilities labour in vain, and the noblest efforts fail of success.⁵⁷

In both this text and that of the circular letter cited above there is evidence of what Richard Lovelace has called 'a theology of radical dependence on the Spirit',⁵⁸ a recognition that the Spirit is the true agent of renewal and revival.

Then there is the inclusive and catholic nature of the recommended praying. As the Calvinistic Baptists of the Northamptonshire Association gathered to pray together, they were urged to direct their thoughts beyond the confines of their own churches and denomination, and to embrace in prayer other Baptist churches and other denominations. In fact, churches of other denominations, along with those of other Baptist associations,

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were encouraged to join them in praying for revival. Third, there is the distinct evangelistic or missionary emphasis: the readers of this prayer call are encouraged to pray that the gospel be spread 'to the most distant parts of the habitable globe.' This emphasis is rarely found in earlier eighteenth-century Baptist authors like Wallin or Gill. On only one occasion, for instance, in Wallin's pastorate of over forty years, did he call a prayer meeting expressly with regard to revival or evangelism.⁵⁹

Two years later, near the beginning of the circular letter which Sutcliff wrote for the Northamptonshire Association on the subject of the Lord's Day, he gave the following progress report and exhortation concerning the prayer meetings that had hitherto been established:

The monthly meetings of prayer, for the general spread of the gospel, appear to be kept up with some degree of spirit. This, we hope, will yet be the case . . . We learn that many other churches, in different, and some in distant parts of the land, and some of different denominations, have voluntarily acceded to the plan. We communicate the above information for your encouragement. Once more we would invite all who love truth and holiness, into whose hands our letter may fall, to unite their help. Let societies, let families, let individuals, who are friends to the cause of Christ, unite with us, not only daily, but in a particular manner, at the appointed season.⁶⁰

Not only were Baptists and Christians of other denominations responding warmly to the monthly prayer meetings for revival, but also, as Sutcliff immediately goes on to indicate, God was answering their prayers by providing opportunities for evangelism.

With pleasure we were informed of an open door in many places, for the preaching of the gospel. We request it of our friends, that they would encourage the occasional ministry of the word in their respective villages and neighbourhoods, where they may be situated, to the utmost of their power. Be not backward to appear on God's side.⁶¹

In a later circular letter, which he wrote for the Northamptonshire Association in 1797, Sutcliff again links prayer and itinerant evangelism: 'A readiness to listen to the tidings of the Gospel, evidently exists in many dark, and, until of late, inaccessible villages. There is encouragement for prayer, and matter for praise.'⁶² Behind this emphasis on prayer and itinerant evangelism lies the firm conviction that it is the responsibility of believers to communicate the gospel to the unconverted. This task, however, involved far more than simply opening the doors of the Baptist chapel in the hope that outsiders might enter, be converted under the preaching of the gospel, and become members of what was an established congregation. The task, as envisaged by Sutcliff, required believers to take the gospel to prospective converts, and this might entail the formation of new congregations. Priority was being given to expansion, rather than consolidation, which is markedly different from the perspective of an earlier Baptist author like Wallin.⁶³

JEALOUSY FOR THE LORD OF HOSTS ILLUSTRATED (1791)

A final text which draws together these themes of prayer and evangelism is found in what appears to be Sutcliff's only extant sermon, *Jealousy for the Lord of Hosts*

illustrated, which was preached on 27 April 1791 to a gathering of the ministers of the Northamptonshire Association at Clipstone, Northamptonshire. The sermon was based on I Kings 19.10, in particular Elijah's statement, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts.' Sutcliff first explores the historical context surrounding Elijah's statement. He comes to the conclusion that while Elijah's statement contains a 'degree of impatience . . . and murmuring', his jealousy for God is commendable, because such jealousy 'enters deep into, and is integrated in the very soul of true Christianity.'⁶⁴ Sutcliff proceeds to detail the ways in which such a jealousy manifests itself. As he does so, two characteristics come to the fore. First, Sutcliff lays great stress on the vital importance of bringing the entirety of one's beliefs and life into conformity with the revealed will of God as found in the Scriptures. True jealousy for God is accompanied by a reverent obedience to God's Word.⁶⁵ Second, Sutcliff emphasizes the visible extension of 'the empire of Jesus.' True jealousy for God is revealed in a love for men which 'can embrace a globe' and which longs that 'the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.'⁶⁶ Such a longing is first expressed in: 'Fervent prayer for the outpouring of the divine Spirit . . . Anxious to see the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, you will give vent to your fervent desires by warm addresses at a throne of Grace.'⁶⁷ Then it is seen in an evangelistic lifestyle which takes seriously God's desire for his people to be the salt and light of the world. Reflecting on the calling of all of God's people, Sutcliff declares:

Are they not the *Salt* of the earth? It is not proper that the *Salt* should lie all in one heap. It should be scattered abroad. Are they not the *Light* of the world? These taken collectively should, like the Sun, endeavour to enlighten the whole earth. As all the rays, however, that each can emit, are limited in their extent, let them be dispersed, that thus the whole globe may be illuminated. Are they not *Witnesses* for God? It is necessary they be distributed upon every hill, and every mountain, in order that their sound may go into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.⁶⁸

In commending this balance of ardent prayer and vigorous evangelistic effort, Sutcliff was not only describing what he regarded as characteristics of genuine Christianity, but he was also outlining measures he considered essential for revival. When these marks of true jealousy for God are present, he concludes:

This will tend to promote the interests of religion in the world. The cause of Christ will prosper; he must increase; his kingdom shall come. But, though he is indebted to none, he kindly condescends to employ his people in accomplishing these glorious purposes . . . Under the divine smile, *Satan will fall before you like lightning from heaven*; his power be broken; his policy confounded: while the empire of Jesus shall advance; his kingdom arise; and the crown flourish upon his head.⁶⁹

One cannot help but notice 'the mood of expansion and optimism'⁷⁰ which pervades this conclusion to Sutcliff's sermon, a mood that is present throughout much of the discourse. Little wonder then that this sermon was later recognized as a key step on

the road to the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in the following year.⁷¹ This same mood, though, also permeates the prayer call of 1784, as F. A. Cox (1783-1853) was quick to discern when, writing on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society, he stated:

The primary cause of the missionary excitement in [William] Carey's mind, and its diffusion among the Northamptonshire ministers [was] . . . the meeting of the association in 1784 . . . [when] it was resolved to set apart an hour on the first Monday evening of every month, 'for extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion, and for the extending of Christ's kingdom in the world.' This suggestion proceeded from the venerable Sutcliff. Its simplicity and appropriateness have since recommended it to universal adoption; and copious showers of blessings from on high have been poured forth upon the Churches.⁷²

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH FELLOWSHIP (1800)

Three years after Sutcliff's sermon at Clipstone, the London Baptist minister, John Rippon (1750-1836), printed a list of Calvinistic Baptist congregations and ministers in his *Baptist Annual Register*. Rippon calculated that there were at that time 326 churches in England and 56 in Wales,⁷³ more than double the number which were in existence forty years previously. In 1798 he issued another list, according to which there were then 361 churches in England and 84 in Wales.⁷⁴ Commenting on these statistics, Rippon stated: 'It is said, that more of our meeting houses have been enlarged, within the last five years, and more built within the last fifteen, than had been built and enlarged for thirty years before.'⁷⁵ This comment is no exaggeration. While there was a steady growth throughout the last forty or so years of the 1700s, the most rapid expansion of the denomination took place in the final decade of the century.⁷⁶ This rapid influx of converts, which continued unabated into the early decades of the nineteenth century, raised concerns regarding the integration of these new converts into existing congregations or their establishment in new ones. The presence of these concerns can be seen, for example, in the fact that most of the circular letters issued by the Northamptonshire Association during the last fifteen years of Sutcliff's life dealt with ecclesiological issues. Moreover, all four of the circular letters which Sutcliff wrote for the Association in this period are focused, to one degree or another, on such issues. *Qualifications for Church Fellowship*, written in the year 1800, is a good representative in this regard.

It is evident from the beginning of the tract that Sutcliff is not dealing with a merely theoretical issue. The churches in his Association are receiving new members. 'A pleasing business,' he remarks, but one that requires:

Caution, lest you be crowded with characters, who, instead of being a blessing among you, will be the bane of your societies . . . [and] tenderness, lest contrary to our Lord's example you break the bruised reed, or discourage the weaker part of his sincere disciples.⁷⁷

His readers especially need caution, for, in Sutcliff's opinion, 'many, once large and flourishing churches' are now in ruins because of 'a want of due attention to the character of such as they admitted into their communion.' The Holy Spirit was grieved and he

withdrew 'his divine influences from [their] sacred ordinances.'⁷⁸ Sutcliff does not specify the particular churches he has in mind here. Most likely it is those Nonconformist congregations which, during the course of the eighteenth century, had succumbed to either Arianism, Socinianism, or unitarianism.

Who then should be received into the membership of a local church? Although Sutcliff tackles this question from both the vantage-point of the prospective member and that of the congregation, the essence of his response in both cases is the classical Nonconformist answer, visible saints.

A christian society . . . is stiled [*sic*] a spiritual house; a holy priesthood; a holy temple; a habitation for God, through the Spirit . . . Those who are proper characters to be received into communion with a christian church, should be spiritual men; . . . men disposed to seek the good of the interest of Christ in general, and of that society to which they unite in particular; men devoted to God; men who hold fast the form of sound words; and who in their spirit and walk, adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.⁷⁹

Sutcliff proceeds to defend at length the practice of requiring prospective members to give an account of his or her personal religious experience. Mere acknowledgement of the truth of leading Christian doctrines is insufficient; a profession of 'personal experimental religion' is required. Referring to Jonathan Edwards' controversial *An Humble Inquiry into the Rules of the Word of God, concerning the Qualifications requisite to a Complete Standing and Full Communion in the Visible Church of God*, he says: 'That great writer has ably proved that nothing deserves the name of a christian profession where the thing professed is not genuine personal christianity.'⁸⁰ Along with such a profession there must be, Sutcliff insists, a demonstrable 'obedience to all the commandments of Jesus Christ.'⁸¹ Among such commandments Sutcliff, as a convinced Baptist, naturally includes believer's baptism.

Christ hath all power in heaven and earth, and has declared the terms of his discipleship to be, That we deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow him. He hath also required those who repent of their sins to be baptized in his name . . . If any man hesitate to comply with what the Lord hath manifestly required, whatever may be thought of his piety in other respects, we cannot consistently treat him as a member of the visible church of Christ, as herein in a great degree consists the visibility of Christianity.⁸²

The other ordinance of Calvinistic Baptist life, the Lord's Supper, receives a scant, though illuminating, mention near the end of the letter. In the midst of a catena of exhortations, Sutcliff admonishes his readers: 'be regular in taking your seat at the table of the Lord.'⁸³ When Sutcliff came to treat the subject of the Lord's Supper more fully in 1803, he emphasized in no uncertain terms that failure to partake regularly of the supper with one's church grieves the Spirit.⁸⁴

At first glance Sutcliff's commitment to congregational church government, and his firm insistence on believer's baptism and regular participation at the Lord's Supper seem to form 'an unbroken continuum'⁸⁵ with the ecclesiology of Baptist predecessors like Wallin and Gill. Upon closer examination, however, there have been significant shifts

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in values. Sutcliff's interest in preserving Baptist ecclesial distinctives is more than matched by his passion for revival and evangelism. *Qualifications for Church Fellowship* opens with a brief communication regarding revivals going on in the United States and the prayer that God, 'with whom is the residue of the Spirit, [may] extend these showers of blessings to our churches!' Indeed, Sutcliff continues:

By the letters from the churches, we are not without hope that some drops have already begun to fall upon us, and which we are willing to hope may be an earnest of still greater blessings in reserve. To this end, we earnestly recommend a spirit of *extraordinary prayer*, both to the churches and to individuals; and this not only at our monthly prayer-meetings but on other occasions.⁸⁶

Moreover, Sutcliff's commitment to Baptist distinctives was mollified by his deep appreciation for evangelical paedobaptist pastors and communities. A striking illustration of Sutcliff's view of other denominational bodies is the preface which he, along with Ryland and Fuller, wrote for the English publication of the memoirs of Susanna Anthony (1726-1791), a member of the Congregationalist church in Newport, Rhode Island, which the Edwardsean divine, Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), pastored. Speaking of her view of baptism, which differed from their own, Sutcliff and his two friends wrote:

In reading the lives of the most eminent christians, we shall perceive a considerable *variety*; owing not only to the diversity of constitution, and religious advantages, but even to God's different manner of working upon different persons. This may instruct us not to set up the form and order of the experience of any one, as a model by which to judge concerning those of others. We shall also perceive a degree of *contrariety* between the views and feelings of different persons whose christianity nevertheless we cannot justly call in question . . .

It is pleasant to add, that while we perceive not only varieties, but contrarieties in the views and feelings even of eminent christians, the former are but as the various features, and the latter as the accidental spots, in the human countenance. The great and essential principles of christianity are found in every christian, no less than the distinguishing properties of humanity are found in every man.⁸⁷

Sutcliff, Ryland and Fuller here reveal themselves to be true heirs of the Evangelical Revival, which was centred upon 'the great and essential principles' of the Christian faith, their vigorous propagation, and the bonds of fellowship that these principles established between all genuine believers. Obviously, as has been shown, Sutcliff's Baptist convictions were not thereby nullified,⁸⁸ but their priority for his own life and ministry were not what such convictions had been for many earlier eighteenth-century Baptists.

When Sutcliff lay dying in 1814, he remarked to Fuller: 'I wish I had prayed more.'⁸⁹ For some time after his friend's death, Fuller ruminated on this statement. He found it rather puzzling, coming as it did from a man who had been at the heart of a prayer movement which had been essential to the revitalization of the Baptist denomination. Eventually he came up with the following 'exegesis' and application of Sutcliff's words.

I wish that I had prayed more. I do not suppose that brother Sutcliffe meant that he wished he had prayed more frequently, but more *spiritually*. I wish I had prayed more for the influences of the Holy Spirit, I might have enjoyed more of the power of vital godliness. I wish I had prayed more for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in studying and preaching my sermons; I might have seen more of the blessing of God attending my ministry. I wish I had prayed more for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit to attend the labours of our friends in India; I might have witnessed more of the effects of their efforts in the conversion of the heathen.⁹⁰

Whether or not Fuller correctly interpreted Sutcliff's statement, his application certainly resonates with themes dear to Sutcliff's heart: personal renewal, the revival of the church, and Spirit-empowered witness.

NOTES

- 1 *The Joyful Sacrifice of a Prosperous Nation*, 1760, p.26.
- 2 *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope illustrated: in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, 1816, pp.5-8.
- 3 *ibid.*, p.8. Cf. the similar remarks in Benjamin Godwin, *Memoirs of Richard Morris*, 2nd edn., 1819, p.56: 'At the same time [i.e. the 1780s], among Calvinistic Dissenters there was an extreme jealousy of orthodoxy; so that any modification of the views of Dr Gill, who was then considered almost oracular, or any deviation from the usual terms in which those doctrines were expressed, which he so firmly maintained, and so ably advocated, was considered as a certain mark of heterodoxy.'
- 4 *By His Grace and for His Glory. A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace in Baptist Life*, Grand Rapids, 1986, pp.73-107. In his recent biographical sketch of Gill, Timothy George comes to a similar assessment: 'John Gill' in his and David S. Dockery, eds., *Baptist Theologians*, Nashville, Tennessee, 1990, pp.77-101.
- 5 *ibid.*, p.107. See also George, 'John Gill', pp.86, 95.
- 6 See the similar argumentation of Bernard L. Manning with respect to eighteenth-century Congregationalists, *Essays in Orthodox Dissent*, 1939, pp.185-194.
- 7 Curt D. Daniel, 'Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill', unpublished Edinburgh PhD dissertation, 1983; Robert W. Oliver, 'The Emergence of a Strict and Particular Baptist Community among the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1770-1850', unpublished PhD dissertation, London Bible College, 1986, pp.22-33; *idem*, 'By His Grace and for His Glory', *The Banner of Truth*, 284, May 1987, 30-32. For some of the unique aspects of Gill's High Calvinism, see R. Philip Roberts, *Continuity and Change. London Calvinistic Baptists and the Evangelical Revival, 1760-1820*, Wheaton, Illinois, 1989, pp.36-43.
- 8 Deryck W. Lovegrove, *Established Church, Sectarian People. Itinerancy and the Transformation of English Dissent, 1780-1830*, Cambridge 1988, p.7; Roberts, *op.cit.*, pp.41-43; B. R. White, 'Reviews: H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four centuries of Baptist witness*', *BQ* 32, 1987-8, 256.
- 9 'Effects of Toleration on Eighteenth-Century Dissent', *Journal of Religious History* 8, 1974-5, 350-363. There were some exceptions, of course. Between 1688 and 1705 William Mitchel (1662-1705) and David Crosley (1669-1744) evangelized towns and villages throughout east Lancashire and West Yorkshire from their base at Rossendale; see W. E. Blomfield, 'Yorkshire Baptist Churches in the 17th and 18th Centuries', in *the Baptists of Yorkshire*, 2nd edn., 1912, pp.73-88; Ian Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage. The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire*, Leeds 1987, pp.10-11. Benjamin Francis (1734-1799), pastor of Shortwood Baptist Church, Gloucestershire, regularly itinerated up to 90 miles into neighbouring Worcestershire and Wiltshire; see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Questions and Answers: an Eighteenth-century correspondence', *BQ* 27, 1977-8, 83-90; Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, pp.22-33; Albion M. Urdank, *Religion and Society in a Cotswold Vale: Nailsworth, Gloucestershire 1780-1865*,

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- Berkeley, California, 1990, pp.93-5.
- 10 Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, p.7.
- 11 *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment. A study of the language of religion and ethics in England, 1660-1780*, Cambridge, 1991, I, 169.
- 12 B. R. White, Letter to author, 6 May 1991.
- 13 Cited Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, 1823, III, 277.
- 14 *The Christian Life. In Divers of its Branches, Described and Recommended*, 1746, II, ix. See also his *A Humble Address to the Churches of Christ*, 1750, p.1; *The Christian Salutation*, 1766, p.iv; *The Scripture-Doctrine of Christ's Sonship*, 1771, pp.v-vi. On the growth of Wallin's own congregation at Maze Pond, see Roberts, *op.cit.*, p.71.
- 15 *Exhortations, Relating to Prayer and the Lord's Supper*, 1752, pp.viii,x. See also his *Humble Address*, pp.16, 18; *The Redeemer's Charge Against his Declining Churches. Exemplified in the Case of the Church of Ephesus: And applied to the State of Religion in the Present Time*, 1748, p.25.
- 16 'The Baptist Interest under George I', *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society (TBHS)*, 2, 1910-11, 95-109.
- 17 *ibid.*, p.108. See also the meticulous analysis of the Evans list and other relevant sources by Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, Oxford 1978, pp.267-71, 491-510, who concurs with Whitley's estimate.
- 18 'Baptist Ministers in England about 1750 A.D.', *TBHS* 6, 1918-19, 138-157. See also Alan D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England. Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914*, 1976, pp.35, 37.
- 19 See also C. E. Fryer, 'The Numerical Decline of Dissent in England Previous to the Industrial Revolution', *The American Journal of Theology*, 17, 1913, 232-9; Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, p.38.
- 20 Cited Simon Valentine, 'A wrestler who fought the Devil', *Baptist Times* 7297, 1 March 1990, 6.
- 21 See the excellent discussion of this point by Roberts, *op.cit.* pp.55-85, *passim*.
- 22 *The Folly of Neglecting Divine Institutions*, 1758, p.v.
- 23 *ibid.*, p.iv, v. In a letter written in 1773 to the American Baptist, James Manning (1738-1791), Wallin takes note of what he regards as the two leading threats to the Calvinistic Baptist cause. One is the growth of anti-trinitarian sentiment. The other is a popular ignorance of the authority of Christ, in particular church fellowship, which some are bold enough to put on the footing of prudence and convenience among the disciples of Jesus. The one strikes at the doctrine, the other at the discipline of the gospel. But Zion is insured against the gates of hell.' [Cited Reuben Aldridge Gould, *Life, Times and Correspondence of James Manning*, Boston, Mass., 1864, p.213].
- 24 *The Church an Habitation of God, through the Spirit*, 1774, p.23.
- 25 Roberts, *op.cit.*, pp.57-8.
- 26 'The Baptists and the Transformation of the Church, 1780-1830', *BQ* 25, 1973-4, 167-184.
- 27 'Evangelical Calvinism and the Structures of Baptist Church Life', *BQ* 28, 1979-80, 196-208. See also the similar perspective of Watts, *Dissenters*, pp.456-461, who emphasizes the important role played by the writings of Jonathan Edwards in the revival of the Calvinistic Baptists.
- 28 Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, p.30.
- 29 There is an early biographical sketch by Fuller attached to his funeral sermon for Sutcliff: 'The Principles and Prospects of a Servant of Christ', in Andrew Gunton Fuller, ed., *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, revised Joseph Belcher, 1845 edn., Harrisonburg, Va, 1988, I, 342-356. The most substantial published piece on Sutcliff is Thomas Wright, *The Town of Cowper*, 1886, pp.150-167. Unfortunately, 'Wright does not enjoy an impeccable reputation as an historian' [Kenneth W. H. Howard, Letter to author, 7 August 1987]. In unpublished material there is Maurice F. Hewett, 'Sutcliff: The Meeting and the Man', unpublished typescript, Bristol Baptist College Library, n.d., pp.44-112. Page references are from a copy by K. W. H. Howard in 1951 now in this author's possession. According to Howard, Hewett was 'a very careful historian' but 'certainly not a sharer of Sutcliff's "Edwardsean" Calvinism' [letter to author, 7 August 1987]. Howard, who was pastor of Sutcliff Baptist Church in Olney, 1949-54, collected much material on Sutcliff, both primary and secondary sources, in the hope of writing a biography. However, he only wrote the small, but fine, biographical sketch: 'John Sutcliff of Olney', *BQ* 14, 1951-2, 304-309.
- 30 For Whitefield's influence on Fawcett, see [John Fawcett, Jr], *An Account of the Life, Ministry and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett D.D.*, 1818, pp.15-19. For that of Grimshaw on Fawcett, see Blomfield, 'Yorkshire Baptist Churches', p.99; Frank Baker, *William Grimshaw, 1708-1763*, 1963, p.271. On Whitefield's influence on the Baptists in general, see esp. Olin C. Robinson, 'The Particular Baptists in England, 1760-

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- 1820', unpublished Oxford DPhil dissertation, 1963, pp.145-153; Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, 1986, pp.76-82; Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, pp.16, 69.
- 31 *Life, Ministry and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, p.15.
- 32 Roberts, *op.cit.*, pp.127-8.
- 33 *A Catalogue of a few useful Books for a young Minister*, [in John Rippon, ed., *The Baptist Annual Register*, 1793, 1:255].
- 34 In his *Catalogue*, which Evans had drawn up in 1773, four of Edwards' works were recommended, including *A Careful and Strict Enquiry into the modern prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will and A Treatise concerning Religious Affections* [Rippon, *op.cit.*, 1:255].
- 35 'Obituary for 1794. Rev. Joshua Wood' [in John Rippon, ed. *Baptist Annual Register*, 1797, 2:226].
- 36 John Ryland, *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ no Security against corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life*, 1815, p.34.
- 37 *ibid.*, p.34.
- 38 'The most decisive Evangelical influence on the Particular Baptists was that of Jonathan Edwards' [Watts, *op.cit.*, p.456]. For further discussion of Edwards' influence on English Calvinistic Baptists, see esp. E. A. Payne, 'The Evangelical Revival and the Beginning of the Modern Missionary Movement', *Congregational Quarterly*, 21 (1943), 223-236; Robison, 'Particular Baptists', pp.162-170; Watts, *op.cit.*, pp.456-461.
- 29 Letter to John Sutcliff, 26 August 1774 (American Baptist Historical Society Library, Rochester, New York).
- 40 *Seasonable Hints to a bereaved Church: And the Blessedness of the Dead, who die in the Lord*, Northampton 1783, p.57. For a brief sketch of Guy's life and ministry, see *ibid.*, pp.i-iii. Author used microfilm copy of original in Angus Library, Oxford.
- 41 Letter to John Williams, 28 August 1807 (American Baptist Historical Society Library).
- 42 Letter to John Sutcliff, 26 August 1774. For further details of Ryland's relationship to Hill, see Michael A. G. Haykin, 'Rowland Hill: Some Anecdotes', *Banner of Truth*, 317, February 1990, 19-20.
- 43 Roberts, *op.cit.*, p.142.
- 44 Hewett, *op.cit.*, pp.59-62, *passim*; Howard, *op.cit.*, p.306.
- 45 Hewett, *op.cit.*, pp.93-4; Kenneth W. H. Howard, 'John Sutcliff - and the Home of His Married Years' unpublished manuscript, 19 August 1952, p.ii; Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, p.35.
- 46 'An Interview with the Late Mr Berridge', *Evangelical Magazine*, 2, 1794, 73-6. See also Ryland, *Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, p.225.
- 47 'Introductory Discourse' in *The Difficulties of the Christian Ministry, and the Means of surmounting them; with the Obedience of Churches to the Pastors explained and enforced*, Birmingham 1802, p.5.
- 48 Roberts, *op.cit.*, p.81.
- 49 'Baptist Meeting at Olney Minutes', 7 December 1780.
- 50 *ibid.*
- 51 Fuller, 'Principles and Prospects of a Servant of Christ', *Works I*, 350.
- 52 *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 1834 edn., 2:281; reprinted Edinburgh 1974.
- 53 J. A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea. Millenial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640-1810*, Kampen, Netherlands, 1970, p.166.
- 54 John Ryland, Jr, *The Nature, Evidences and Advantages of Humility*, 1784, p.12.
- 55 *ibid.*, p.12. For a detailed study of this influential call to prayer, see esp. Ernest A. Payne, *The Prayer Call of 1784*, 1941.
- 56 Payne, *Prayer Call of 1784*, p.2.
- 57 *Jealousy for the Lord of Hosts illustrated*, 1791, p.12. See also his *The Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's Day. Explained and Enforced*, 1786, p.8: 'Be earnest with God for the gift of his HOLY SPIRIT, in an abundant measure. Seek his divine influences, to furnish you with spiritual ability, in order that you may be found in the discharge of that which is your indispensable duty. Highly prize his sacred operations. These are the real excellency of all religious duties. Brilliant parts and abilities, natural or acquired, can never supply their place.'
- 58 'Pneumatological Issues in American Presbyterianism', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 31, 1986, 345-6.
- 59 Roberts, *op.cit.*, p.131 and n.23.
- 60 *Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's Day*, pp.1-2.
- 61 *ibid.*, p.2.
- 62 *The Divinity of the Christian Religion*, Northampton 1797, p.3.
- 63 Gilbert, *Religion and society*, p.55; Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, p.21. Robert Hall (1766-1831), in a sketch of Sutcliff's character which he wrote shortly after Sutcliff's death, could state: 'Few men took a deeper interest than our deceased brother in the general state of the church and the propagation of the gospel abroad. The future glory of the kingdom of Christ and the

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- best means of promoting it were his favourite topics, and usurped a large part of his thoughts and his prayers; nor was he ever more in his element than when he was exerting his powers in devising plans for its extensio’, ‘Character of the Rev. John Sutcliff’, *Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.*, eds. Olinthus Gregory and Joseph Belcher, New York 1854, II, 389.
- 64 *Jealousy for the Lord of Hosts*, p.2.
 65 *ibid.*, pp.5-6.
 66 *ibid.*, p.8.
 67 *ibid.*, p.12.
 68 *ibid.*, pp.14-15.
 69 *ibid.*, pp.15-16.
 70 The phrase is Lovegrove’s: *op.cit.*, p.19.
 71 Ryland, *Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, pp.149-50; Eustace Carey, *Memoir of William Carey DD*, 1836, p.62; Mary Drewery, *William Carey. A Biography*, 1978 edn., pp.35-6. See also letter by Brian Barker, ‘BMS bicentenary’, *Baptist Times* 7355, 18 April 1991, 15, which describes the meeting at Clipstone as a ‘watershed’ in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society.
 72 *History of the Baptist Missionary Society. From 1792 to 1842*, 1842, I, 10-11.
 73 *Baptist Annual Register*, 2:16,23.
 74 *Baptist Annual Register*, 1801, 3:40,42.
 75 *ibid.*, 3:40.
 76 Lovegrove, *op.cit.*, p.38.
 77 *Qualifications for Church Fellowship*, Clipstone 1800, p.2.
 78 *ibid.* pp.2-3.
 79 *ibid.* pp.4,6.
 80 *ibid.*, pp.7-8.
 81 *ibid.*, p.7.
 82 *ibid.*, pp.8-9.
 83 *ibid.*, p.11.
 84 *The Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper considered*, Dunstable 1803, p.6.
 85 Roberts, *op.cit.*, p.250.
 86 *Qualifications*, p.2.
 87 *Memoirs of Miss Susanna Anthony*, Clipstone 1802, pp.vi-viii, *passim*.
 88 The continuing strength of Sutcliff’s Baptist convictions are amply illustrated by a story conveyed to Thomas Wright by a woman who had known Sutcliff and had attended his funeral. According to her, ‘One Independent minister of high standing came from Newport [Pagnell], five miles distant, on purpose to consult him. Having given his opinion with customary freedom and kindness, to the great satisfaction and pleasure of the visitor, Mr Sutcliff went to the door with him, and opened it; thereupon the latter, taking his hand, shook it heartily, and said, “I do love you, brother John, but should love you much better if you were not a Baptist.” Mr Sutcliff cleared his throat and replied very deliberately and quietly, “Should you not love Jesus Christ much better if He were not a Baptist? Good morning, sir,” and shut the door to.’ *Town of Cowper*, pp.166-7.
 89 J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 1816, p.443.
 90 *ibid.*, p.443.

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ACADEMIC AWARDS

We congratulate two of our members who have recently been awarded higher degrees:

The Revd Geoffrey Breed has an MA for his work on *Strict Communion Organizations amongst the Baptists in Victorian England*

The Revd Roger Hayden, Secretary of the Baptist Historical Society, has a PhD for his work on *Evangelical Calvinism amongst Eighteenth-Century British Baptists with particular reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans, and the Bristol Baptist Academy 1690-1791*