

John Fawcett

‘BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS’:
REMEMBERING JOHN FAWCETT
HIS TIMES, HIS LIFE, HIS HYMN

MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN

'Blest be the tie that binds':
Remembering John Fawcett
His Times, His Life, His Hymn

Michael A.G. Haykin

Andrew Fuller
CENTER *for* BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

'Blest be the tie that binds': Remembering John Fawcett—his times, his life, his hymn
Michael A.G. Haykin

Design and Layout by Dustin W. Bengé

© 2018
The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky
andrewfullercenter.org

CONTENTS

Remembering John Fawcett	7
Appendix	33
John Fawcett, 'Divine Goodness in the Day of Trouble'	



John Fawcett (1740–1817)



Remembering John Fawcett

One of the good gifts that God has given to human beings is that of memory and the facility to remember the past. Remembering our own personal past is absolutely vital to knowing who we are and having a sense of personal identity. We all know how diseases that ravage a person's memory destroy the ability of that person to function in any meaningful way in the present. The same holds true for communities and nations. When a community or nation forgets its past and where it has come from, it finds itself fundamentally disoriented. Not knowing where it has come from, it cannot chart a path to the future. Of course, like any good gift in our fallen world, this gift can be abused. It can bind a person, and even a community, to the past in hopeless regret, unforgiving bitterness or revengeful hatred.

Now, if it is true that knowledge of the past is vital to meaningful living in the present and the future, and I believe it is, then Western Christianity faces a very uncertain future for we are living in a day when knowledge of our past as Christians is abysmally low. Who were our forebears and what did they believe? What was their experience of God and how did that shape the churches they founded, churches which we have inherited? Far too many Western Christians neither know nor do they care. In this regard, they are actually indistinguishable from Western culture, which is passionately in love with the present, eagerly anticipating the future, and relatively disinterested in the past, or if nodding interest is shown about the past it is

in the context of escapist entertainment. There is no serious grappling with the past to derive wisdom for the present or future. Christian forgetfulness of the past is thus actually a species of worldliness.

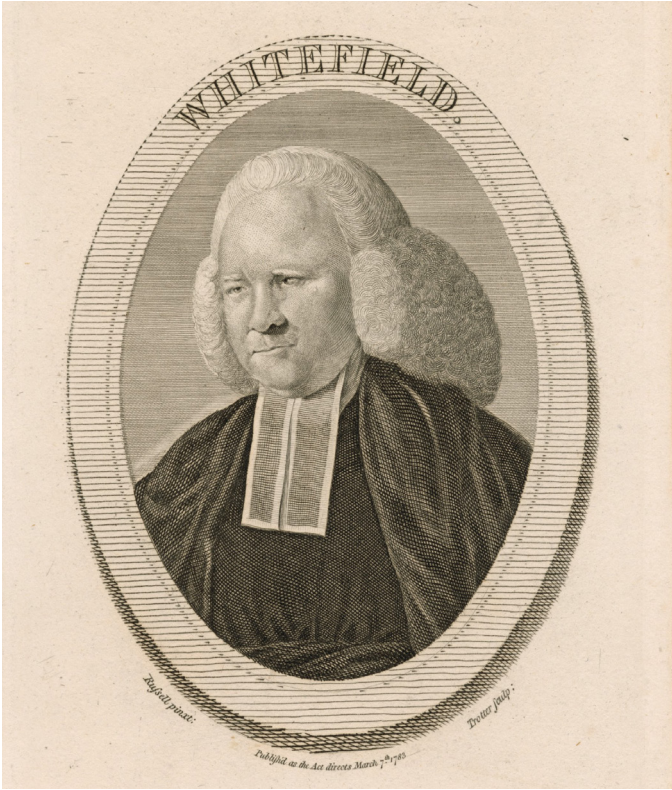
The Bible, on the other hand, makes much of remembering, and implies that Christians should follow suit. Here are a few of the many verses that call us to remember the past and those who lived then:¹

- 1 Chronicles 16:12/Psalm 105:5: ‘Remember the wondrous works that he [that is, the Lord] has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered.’
- Luke 17:32: ‘Remember Lot’s wife.’
- Deuteronomy 24:9: ‘Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way as you came out of Egypt.’
- Hebrews 13:7: ‘Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.’

Now, one of the great Christian leaders in northern England who deserves to be remembered far more than he has been is John Fawcett (1740–1817), who died exactly two hundred years ago in the summer of 1817.² Born in the winter of 1740, he witnessed first-hand some of the remarkable scenes of the Evangelical Revival and the preaching of men like George Whitefield (1714–1770) and John Wesley (1703–1791). Though raised within the Church of England, he joined himself to the Baptists after becoming a Christian through Whitefield’s preaching. In time, he became a minister, pastoring first at Wainsgate Chapel and then Ebenezer Chapel in Hebden

1 All Scripture references are from the ESV.

2 For the sketch that follows I am indebted to the following sources: the biography drawn up by his son, John Fawcett, Jr., *An Account of the Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett, D.D.* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy/Halifax: P.K. Holden, 1818); the anonymous ‘Memoir of the Author’ in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Late John Fawcett, D.D.* (London: W. Jones, 1824), 3–34; Ian Sellers, ‘Other Times, Other Ministries: John Fawcett and Alexander McLaren’, *The Baptist Quarterly*, 32 (1986–1987), 181–187; the anonymous ‘Dr. Fawcett, Pastor and Tutor’, *The Sword and the Trowel* (1879), 522–530; and the excellent study of his life and ministry by Anthony R. Cross, *Useful Learning: Neglected Means of Grace in the Reception of the Evangelical Revival among English Particular Baptists* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 182–234.



George Whitefield (1714–1770)

Bridge. Fawcett was vitally involved in theological education and the nurture and care of the various Baptist causes in Yorkshire and Lancashire, being the prime mover in the revitalization of the Baptist Association in these two northern counties.³ Finally, he was a prolific author and hymn-

3 For his care for the churches, see his *The Privileges and Duties of Gospel Churches considered, in a Circular Letter* (Circular letter of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association, 1787), and *idem*, *The Constitution and Order of a Gospel Church Considered* (Ewood Hall, Halifax, 1797). On his involvement in theological education, see below.

writer. One of his books, *An Essay on Anger*,⁴ deeply impressed the British monarch George III (1738–1820), and his most famous hymn, ‘Blest be the tie that binds’ is examined in detail later in this booklet. Before we look specifically at his life, it will be helpful to recall briefly the times and historical context in which he lived and pastored.

Fawcett’s times

In the eighteenth century West Yorkshire had established itself as England’s leading cloth-producing region, a supremacy which remained unchallenged throughout the latter half of that century and which formed the foundation of its immense prosperity in that century’s final decades.⁵ Alongside this growing material prosperity during the eighteenth century, West Yorkshire also proved to be fertile ground for religious Nonconformity. Frank Baker, the historian of eighteenth-century Methodism, attributes this to what he calls the ‘compact self-sufficiency’ of the people of West Yorkshire and a decided reluctance to submit to external authorities.⁶ So it was that more than half of the Baptist causes—to take simply this one Nonconformist body as an example—that existed in Yorkshire in the mid-eighteenth century were in the West Riding. Some of these congregations went back to the opening years of the century when they had been planted through the itinerant evangelism of William Mitchel (1662–1705) and David Crosley (1669–1744), who, between 1688 and 1705, had evangelized towns and villages throughout east Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire with an unquenchable zeal from their base at Bacup in the Rosendale Valley.⁷ Others had more recent origins and were the fruit of the

4 John Fawcett, *An Essay on Anger* (Leeds: Thomas Wright, 1787).

5 For a discussion of this supremacy, see especially R. G. Wilson, “The Supremacy of the Yorkshire Cloth Industry in the Eighteenth Century” in N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting, ed., *Textile History and Economic History. Essays in Honour of Miss Julia de Lacy Mann* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 225–246.

6 Frank Baker, *William Grimshaw 1708–1763* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 28–29.

7 For further details, see W. E. Blomfield, ‘Yorkshire Baptist Churches in the 17th and 18th Centuries’ in *The Baptists of Yorkshire* (2nd ed.; Bradford/London: Wm. Byles & Sons Ltd./London: Kingsgate Press, 1912), 73–88; Ian Sellers, ed., *Our Heritage. The Baptists of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire* (Leeds: The Yorkshire Baptist Association/

Evangelical Revival of the 1740s, in which William Grimshaw (1708–1763) of Haworth, ‘the apostle of the north,’ figured large.⁸

William Grimshaw and the Baptists

In the mid-1730s, while Grimshaw was an Anglican chaplain at Todmorden, Yorkshire, he had passed through a long and severe spiritual struggle as he sought to find peace with God. One Sunday, for example, when Grimshaw was still in the midst of this search, he was leading the Todmorden congregation in worship. Suddenly he stopped for a few moments in the middle of the service and electrified the congregation by abruptly exclaiming, ‘My friends, we are all in a damnable state, and I scarcely know how we are to get out of it!’ For Grimshaw the way out eventually came through the agency of a man and a book. The man was an evangelical minister and appears to have been Benjamin Ingham (1712–1772), a friend of the Wesley brothers and an outstanding itinerant evangelist in both Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire.⁹ He frequently rebuked Grimshaw for a legalistic approach to salvation—the thinking that by good works he could earn the favour of God. ‘Mr. Grimshaw, you are a Jew’, he told him, ‘you are no believer in Jesus Christ, you are building on the sand’. Grimshaw tried his best to avoid him, but the man’s words would constantly tug at his conscience.

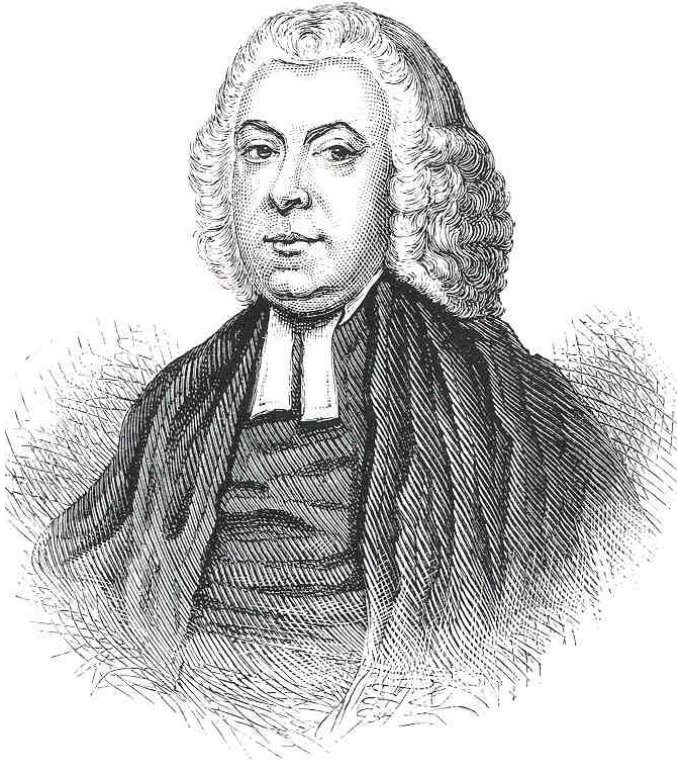
The book that impacted Grimshaw was *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (1677), written by the Puritan divine John Owen (1616–1683). Grimshaw’s encounter with this book can only be regarded as providential for it was

The Lancashire and Cheshire Baptist Association, 1987), 10–11; B. A. Ramsbottom, *The Puritan Samson. The Life of David Crosley 1669–1744* (Harpenden, Hertfordshire: Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 1991); Michael A.G. Haykin, *A Cloud of Witnesses: Calvinistic Baptists in the 18th century* (ET Perspectives, No.3; Darlington, [Co. Durham]: Evangelical Times, 2006), 27–32; Cross, *Useful Learning*, 176–179.

8 Esther Bennett, *Heavenly fire: The life and ministry of William Grimshaw of Haworth* (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2000), 18. The definitive life of Grimshaw is Frank Baker’s *William Grimshaw*. The following brief account of his life and ministry is chiefly drawn from this book. See also the excellent work by Faith Cook, *William Grimshaw of Haworth* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997) and more recently Fred Perry, *Travel with William Grimshaw: The man who saw God visit Haworth* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004).

9 On the life of Ingham, see the superb study of H. M. Pickles, *Benjamin Ingham: Preacher amongst the Dales of Yorkshire, The Forests of Lancashire, and the Fells of Cumbria* (Coventry, 1995).

REMEMBERING JOHN FAWCETT



William Grimshaw (1708–1763)

aimed at men and women in Grimshaw's exact spiritual plight. As the Puritan theologian assured his readers in the preface to the book: 'I have had no other design but only to inquire diligently into the divine revelation of that way, and those means, with the causes of them, whereby the conscience of a distressed sinner may attain assured peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'¹⁰ In the actual treatise of about 30,000 words Owen argued that it was not through 'our faith and repentance, the renovation

¹⁰ John Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith* (*The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold [1850–1853 ed.; repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965], V, 3).

of our natures, inherent habits of grace, and actual works of righteousness which we have done, or may do' that salvation and peace with God are found. Rather, as Owen convincingly demonstrated from the Scriptures, sinful men and women have but one hope of being absolved from their sins, namely, through God's 'effectual grant and donation of a true, real, perfect righteousness, even that of Christ himself, unto all that do believe'.¹¹ Grimshaw pored over Owen's treatise till he came to the point where, in his words, 'I was now willing to renounce myself, every degree of fancied merit and ability, and to embrace Christ only for my all in all. O what light and comfort did I now enjoy in my own soul, and what a taste of the pardoning love of God!'¹²

When Grimshaw left Todmorden in 1742 for the curacy of Haworth in the West Riding of Yorkshire, he was a changed man and had fully embraced the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which lay at the heart of the Evangelical Revival then beginning to impact many areas of the British Isles and North America. Not long after Grimshaw's arrival in Haworth, the Anglican parish there experienced a profound revival. From a mere dozen communicants at the Lord's Table when Grimshaw first conducted the quarterly communion service, there were soon 400 to 500 in the winter and as many as 1,200 in the summer. The impact and ferment of this revival can be well seen in a description by Joseph Williams (1692–1755), a Nonconformist merchant from Kidderminster, of a talk he had had with a woman in Halifax: 'She told me she went about Midsummer to spend a Sabbath with Mr. G[rimshaw], found a crouded [*sic*] church, which will at least contain a thousand and almost as many without, for whom there was no room within the walls. He spent two hours in expounding the Lord's Prayer that morning, and his word came with power'.¹³

Grimshaw, unlike many of his fellow ministers in the Church of England, regularly preached without notes and in language easily comprehensible by his congregation—'market language', his critics called it. He was not afraid of using colloquial words in the pulpit or of even coining new ones. Filled with pithy phrases and striking images his style of preaching

11 Owen, *Doctrine of Justification* (Works, V, 9 and 173).

12 Cited Baker, *William Grimshaw*, 46.

13 Cited Baker, *William Grimshaw*, 65.

was well suited to drive home the gospel to the hearts of rough and ready Yorkshire men and women. William Crabtree (1720–1811), the future Baptist minister of Bradford, was arrested through one such statement: ‘One sin,’ he heard Grimshaw say during a sermon on the parable of the prodigal son, ‘will damn a soul as well as a thousand!’ Crabtree noted that this statement ‘struck me to the heart’ and subsequently he took every opportunity he could to hear Grimshaw preach.¹⁴

Crabtree was not the only future Baptist among those converted in the early years of the Haworth revival. A goodly number of Grimshaw’s converts became Baptists, including such prominent Baptist leaders as Richard Smith (1710–1764) of Wainsgate, James Hartley (1722–1780) of Haworth, and John Parker (1725–1793) of Barnoldswick.¹⁵ Grimshaw, though, took this all in his stride and was even able to joke about it, saying, ‘so many of my chickens turn ducks!’¹⁶ Nor was Grimshaw’s influence on Baptist life and witness in Yorkshire limited to those directly converted through his preaching, for among those whom he impacted was the subject of this booklet, John Fawcett.

Being John Fawcett

John Fawcett was born on January 6, 1740 (New Style), at Lidget Green, a small village near Bradford in the West Riding of Yorkshire. The death of his father, Stephen Fawcett (c.1705–c.1751), when he was but eleven and to whom he was greatly attached, made a profound impression upon him. For some time afterwards he was ‘deeply agitated by fears’ concerning his father’s final state and he prayed much about it.¹⁷ Reinforcing this early openness to spiritual matters was Fawcett’s ardent reading of the Bible and

14 Isaac Mann, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Wm. Crabtree* (London: Button and Son, 1815), 15–16. On Crabtree, see also Cross, *Useful Learning*, 145–153.

15 For details on Smith and Hartley, see Robin Greenwood, ‘The Evangelical Revival Among Particular Baptists: The Early History of West lane and Hall Green Baptist Chapels in Haworth, during the Involvement of the Greenwood Family’ (Unpublished ms., 2000), 18–29. For Parker, see John Fawcett, ‘A Sketch of the Life and Character of The late Mr. John Parker’ in John Parker, *Letters to his Friends* (Leeds, 1794), 3–48. For details on all three, see also Cross, *Useful Learning*, 139–145, 153–162.

16 Cited Baker, *William Grimshaw*, 243.

17 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 6–7.

a variety of Puritan classics, including the bestseller *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan (1628–1688), *A Call to the Unconverted to Turn and Live* by Richard Baxter (1615–1691), *An Alarm to the Unconverted* by Joseph Alleine (1634–1668), and the works of John Flavel (c.1630–1691). It was not until September, 1755, however, that Fawcett understood and owned as his own the Bible's way of salvation by 'a God reconciled through the atonement of a suffering Saviour.'¹⁸ The key influence at this point was not another author from the Puritan era, but one who has been rightly described as a 'revived Puritan', namely George Whitefield.¹⁹ According to Fawcett's son, the impact of Whitefield's preaching upon Fawcett 'was indescribably great, and remained unabated to the close of [Fawcett's] life.' After his conversion under Whitefield's preaching in September 1755, Fawcett kept a portrait of the Anglican evangelist in his study and 'the very mention of his name inspired the warmest emotions of grateful remembrance.'²⁰

It was through Whitefield that Fawcett was introduced to the ministry of Grimshaw, and so for two years, Fawcett often used to trudge the nine or so miles over the moors from Bradford where he was living at the time to Haworth in order to hear God's Word through the voice of this remarkable minister of the gospel.²¹ After a brief period when Fawcett attended a Congregationalist chapel, he embraced Baptist convictions and was baptized as a believer by William Crabtree on March 11, 1758.²² Fawcett's commitment to Baptist principles derived both from his reading of the Bible and also from his friendship with three of Grimshaw's converts: William Crabtree, of whose congregation in Bradford he was a member for six years following his baptism; James Hartley, pastor of the revitalized Baptist cause in Haworth; and Richard Smith, whom Fawcett succeeded in 1764 as pastor of the Baptist church in Wainsgate, which is a couple of miles northeast of Hebden

18 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 16.

19 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 15–17. On Whitefield's Puritan-minded spirituality, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *The revived Puritan: The spirituality of George Whitefield* (Dundas, ON: Joshua Press, 2000).

20 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 15.

21 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 30–31.

22 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 40–41.

“ *London, Sept. 1, 1766.*

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I have been so often imposed upon by letters from strangers, that it is high time to be a little more cautious. Besides, bodily weakness prevents my writing as formerly: but your letters seem to evidence simplicity of heart. If truly called to the glorious work of the ministry, of which I can be no judge at this distance, I wish you much prosperity in the name of the Lord. The language of my soul is, ‘ Would to God that all the Lord’s servants were prophets!’ A clear head, and an honest, upright, disinterested, warm heart, with a good elocution, and a moderate degree of

learning, will carry you through all, and enable you to do wonders. You will not fail to pray for a decayed, but, thanks be to God, not a disbanded soldier. Oh that the last glimmerings of an expiring taper may be blessed to guide some wandering souls to Jesus Christ! As yet ‘ the shout of a King is heard amongst us.’ Whether I shall ever visit Yorkshire again, is only known to Him ‘ who holdeth the stars in his right hand.’ Kind remembrances to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Brethren, pray for us. I retain my old name, ‘ Less than the least of all saints;’ but for Jesus Christ’s sake,

“ Yours in our common Lord,
G. WHITEFIELD.”

The letter of George Whitefield to John Fawcett, September 1, 1766 (from John Fawcett, Jr., ‘Memoirs of Dr. Fawcett’, *The Baptist Magazine*, 11 [1819]: 101).

Bridge in the South Pennines.²³

Not only were the first two pastors of Wainsgate powerfully influenced by Grimshaw, but many of the early members of the church had come to Christ under this Anglican preacher’s ministry. Fawcett’s church, located but five or six miles from Haworth, was thus in many ways a direct result of the Evangelical Revival. But when Fawcett came to the church, he found it in a state of disarray, wracked by controversy over the theological speculations of a Liverpool Baptist pastor by the name of John Johnson (1706–1791), who had a penchant for theological polemic and was the founder of an obscure sect of baptized believers known as the Johnsonians.²⁴ Johnson

23 Baker, *William Grimshaw*, 271.

24 On Johnson and the Johnsonians, see Robert Dawbarn, *History of a Forgotten Sect*

maintained, among other things, that ‘original sin’ was ‘invented by wicked men’ and that faith cannot be regarded as an obligation, a key aspect of the theological position known as ‘Hyper-Calvinism’, which also frowned upon evangelism. Johnson’s theological oddities and his overall pugnaciousness influenced many in northern England, though most did not follow him in all of his peculiarities. He also seemed to veer towards a modalist understanding of the Godhead in which the three persons of the Godhead—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—were actually one and the same person.²⁵ Controversy within the Wainsgate church had arisen during the final months of Richard Smith’s pastorate, when Smith, a dying man, had been incapable of preaching and leading the church. Fawcett, however, had great personal tact and was a very irenic individual—according to his son, he had ‘an utter aversion’ to controversy.²⁶ As Fawcett himself said on one occasion: ‘my soul is grieved to think, that any thing like a spirit of intolerance and persecution should be cherished in the minds of good men,’ for ‘severity is not the proper method of enlightening the minds of men.’ To Fawcett, persecuting others who differed with you on religious matters was not only ‘inhuman, but... odious and ridiculous.’²⁷ Fawcett was thus able to calm the waters and resolve the conflict within the Wainsgate church.

By the close of the 1760s, the church was experiencing rich blessings, and the building had to be expanded to accommodate all who came to hear Fawcett preach.²⁸ He normally preached about 200 times a year.²⁹ Eventually, the need for even larger premises and better facilities for a school that he had founded led Fawcett to move into Hebden Bridge in the Calder Valley

of Baptised Believers heretofore known as “Johnsonians” (London/Wisbech, Cambridgeshire: Balding & Mansell, n.d.); Ian Sellers, *A History of Liverpool Baptists. Vol. II: The Minor Churches* (Typescript ms., 35 pages, 1962), 14–20; Cross, *Useful Learning*, 142–143.

25 Dawbarn, *History of a Forgotten Sect of Baptised Believers*, 44; Sellers, *History of Liverpool Baptists*, II, 16.

26 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 107.

27 John Fawcett, *The Life of the Rev. Oliver Heywood* (Ewood Hall, Halifax, c.1798), 5–6.

28 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 149.

29 John A. Hargreaves, ‘Fawcett, John (1740–1817)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v.

in 1777 and build what became Ebenezer Chapel.³⁰ In 1793, Fawcett was invited to assume the leadership of Bristol Baptist Academy, the sole theological seminary at that point for training Baptist ministers in England. Fawcett had decided not to leave his congregation twenty years earlier when offered a London pastorate, and this presumably made the decision to turn down the offer of the Bristol Academy an easy one.³¹

Fawcett's theology and ministry

John Fawcett's dislike of controversy did not prevent him from indicating clearly where he stood theologically, especially with regard to the sort of notions that John Johnson had promoted and that had influenced many in the north of England. Fawcett had seen first-hand in the Bradford church where he had been baptized the way that Hyper-Calvinism could foster an atmosphere of morbid introspection and cramp evangelistic outreach. Furthermore, reading widely in such Puritan authors as John Flavel, Matthew Henry (1662–1714), and especially Oliver Heywood (1629–1702), who preached and evangelized in northern England, made him aware of a biblical alternative to Hyper-Calvinism, namely a robust evangelical Calvinism. In Baptist circles, this position was later called 'Fullerism' after its leading eighteenth-century exponent, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815). This perspective exalted the sovereignty of God in salvation but also insisted upon preaching the gospel to all and sundry and maintained the responsibility of sinners to obey the divine summons in the gospel to repent and believe.³² Moreover, the experience of having heard Whitefield's evangelistic preaching had left an indelible impression on Fawcett's mind that laid down the lines upon which he was to pursue his own preaching ministry.³³

30 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 228–230.

31 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 271–272. For the incident in 1772 when Fawcett turned down an offer to go south to pastor, see below.

32 Sellers, 'Other Times, Other Ministries', 182–183. On Andrew Fuller and his thought, see especially Paul Brewster, *Andrew Fuller: Model Pastor-Theologian* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010) and Peter J. Modern, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015).

33 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 15, 107; Sellers, 'Other Times, Other Ministries', 183.



Oliver Heywood (1629–1702)

Shaped by these various influences, Fawcett's pastoral ministry at Wainsgate, and then later at Ebenezer Chapel, was distinguished by an untrammelled proclamation of the gospel. In fact, as Ian Sellers has noted, Fawcett was convinced of the truths of what would later be called Fullerism a good number of years before Andrew Fuller publicly declared his views in *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (1785).³⁴ Here is an excellent example of Fawcett's emphasis on Christ's free offer of salvation. It comes from a sermon that he preached in 1799:

34 Sellers, 'Other Times, Other Ministries', 183.

Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Though we have all destroyed ourselves, there is help for us in him. He has honoured our nature by assuming it, the law by fulfilling it, and divine justice by satisfying all its demands; and he now invites every one that will, to come and to partake of the blessings of his salvation. An interest in this glorious Redeemer is the only antidote of death. Nothing less, nothing else will take away its sting. Regeneration, by the powerful operations of the divine Spirit; repentance towards God; faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and a ready obedience to his holy will, are the certain effects and sure proofs of your part in this salvation of God.³⁵

Not surprisingly, Fawcett was an ardent advocate of the Baptist Missionary Society when it was formed in 1792. In the following year, when this society sent William Carey (1761–1834) to India in 1793, Fawcett argued in a tract on this subject: ‘above four hundred millions of the inhabitants of the world, are destitute of the light of the gospel,’ whose souls are all ‘equally precious’. Can those who ‘enjoy the blessings of [Christian] salvation... not ardently desire, that the most miserable of mankind may also be partakers of them?’³⁶

Fawcett was also firmly committed to the importance of theological education. Amongst the steady stream of ministerial candidates whom he mentored in his two homes, Brearley Hall (where he lived for twenty years from 1776 to 1796), and Ewood Hall (his residence from 1796–1805, when he moved to Machpelah, after retiring from teaching),³⁷ were, for instance: John Sutcliff (1752–1814) of Olney,³⁸ a close friend of Andrew Fuller and

35 John Fawcett, *Divine Mercy, The Refuge of Sinners in Distress* (Ewood Hall, Halifax, 1799), 49.

36 See John Fawcett *Considerations relative to the Sending of Missionaries to Propagate the Gospel among the Heathens* (Leeds: Thomas Wright, 1793), 3–5. See also George G. Cragg, *Grimshaw of Haworth: A Study in Eighteenth Century Evangelicalism* (London/Edinburgh: Canterbury Press, 1947), 102–103 on Fawcett’s support of the Baptist Missionary Society.

37 I am indebted to Diana Monahan, Secretary of Hebden Bridge Local History Society, for this information.

38 For the life of Sutcliff, see Michael A.G. Haykin, *One heart and one soul: John*



Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)
(stain glass representation, Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering)

William Carey; William Ward (1769–1823), Carey’s distinguished colleague in the Baptist mission at Serampore, India; and the famous essayist John Foster (1770–1843). Fawcett’s efforts in this regard paved the way for the formation of the Northern Education Society in 1804 and the establishment of Horton Academy at Bradford a year later in a converted warehouse.³⁹

Sutcliff of Olney, his friends, and his times (Darlington, Co. Durham: Evangelical Press, 1994).

³⁹ See also Sellers, ‘Other Times, Other Ministries’, 184, and Cross, *Useful Learning*, 225–232, for overviews of Fawcett’s contributions in this regard.

REMEMBERING JOHN FAWCETT

CHRIST PRECIOUS.

TO

THOSE THAT BELIEVE,

A

PRACTICAL TREATISE

ON

FAITH AND LOVE.

By JOHN FAWCETT, A. M.

Whom having not seen ye LOVE: in whom, though now ye see him not, yet
BELIEVING ye rejoice. PETER.

Talk 'they of MORALS? O thou bleeding Love!
Thou Maker of NEW Morals to Mankind!
The grand Morality is Love of Thee. YOUNG.

Printed and fold at

Ewood Hall, near Halifax.

Sold also by WILLS, Stationers' Court, Ludgate-Street; JOHNSON, St. Paul's
Church Yard; BUTTON, Paternoster-Row; KNOTT, Lombard-Street; MARTIN,
No. 27, Great Ruffel-Street, Bloomsbury, LONDON; by EDWARDS, HOLDEN,
&c. Halifax; SMITH, Sheffield; JONES, Liverpool; DUNN and BIGGS,
Nottingham; and RAWSON, Hull.

1799.

Title page of *Christ is Precious to Those that Believe, A Practical
Treatise on Faith and Love* by John Fawcett

Finally, a brief mention needs to be made of his writing ministry. He was a prolific author, and as noted earlier, his essay on anger deeply impressed George III. One of his later books, *Christ Precious to Those That Believe, A Practical Treatise on Faith and Love* (1799) is a minor spiritual classic of the eighteenth century that deserves to be better known.⁴⁰ Fawcett explores the way that ‘love is the parent and promoter of every thing excellent and amiable in the Christian character’, a love that is, first and foremost, a love for the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴¹

‘Blest be the tie that binds’: The historical context of Fawcett’s hymn

Fawcett’s contribution to the realm of hymnody especially bears remembering on this 200th anniversary of his death. Ian Sellers has noted that the best of Fawcett’s hymns bear comparison with those of the two other major Baptist hymnwriters of his era, namely, Benjamin Beddome (1718–1795) and Anne Steele (1717–1778).⁴² And of Fawcett’s hymns, none is better known than ‘Blest be the tie that binds.’ This hymn is sometimes used today when churches receive new members.⁴³ It is also sometimes sung at the time of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Both of these usages preserve something of Fawcett’s original intent for the hymn, for in his *Hymns: Adapted to the Circumstances of Public Worship, and Private Devotion* (1782), where it first appeared, he entitled it ‘Brotherly love.’⁴⁴ ‘Blest be the tie that binds’ has proven to be a very popular hymn—the

40 John Fawcett, *Christ Precious to Those That Believe, A Practical Treatise on Faith and Love* (Leeds: Ewood Hall, Halifax, 1799).

41 Fawcett, *Christ Precious to Those That Believe*, 3–12. Cf. Fawcett’s mini-exploration of this thought twelve years earlier in his *Privileges and Duties of Gospel Churches*, 7–9.

42 Sellers, ‘Other Times, Other Ministries’, 186.

43 One church of which the writer was a member for a number of years, Trinity Baptist Church in Burlington, Ontario, customarily used this hymn at the time of the reception of new members. Recently, on October 21, 2017, it was used at a wedding in Broadus Chapel on the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

Of this hymn, Alan P.F. Sell has stated that it is ‘one of the strongest expressions of the relationship of pastor and people’ (‘The Message of the Erskines for Today’, *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 60 [1988]: 311).

44 *Hymns: Adapted to the Circumstances of Public Worship, and Private Devotion* (Leeds: G. Wright and Son, 1782), 188–189.

thirteenth most-frequently printed hymn in Protestant hymnals over the past two and a half centuries, to be precise.⁴⁵

Now, the common story about this hymn's origin is that it was written in 1771 after Fawcett had accepted a call to pastor the Baptist work in Carter Lane, London, where the renowned Bible scholar John Gill (1697–1771) had been the pastor. The day to head south to London came and the wagons were loaded with the Fawcett family's worldly goods. His tearful people gathered to say farewell, but Fawcett and his wife, Susannah, née Skirrow, (1735–1810), were so overcome with love for the Wainsgate flock that the wagons were unloaded and the journey never made.⁴⁶ It makes for a great story, but is the link between this incident and the hymn historically verifiable?

First, it is true that when John Gill fell ill in the spring of 1771 an invitation was extended to the Fawcett to preach in the London pastor's stead. And after Gill had died in the October of that year, Fawcett was asked to succeed him as pastor. Fawcett took the request seriously since his situation in Yorkshire was a difficult one financially. His income had never exceeded more than £25 a year and his house was far too small for his growing family. Some of those whom he asked for advice told him he should move. He agreed and preparations were made for him and his family to relocate to London. But when the actual moment of parting from his congregation came, his love for his people overcame him and he made the decision to stay.⁴⁷ It was a turning-point in Fawcett's life that he never regretted. Something of his thoughts at the time can be found in the texts he preached on the Lord's Day following his decision to stay. It was August 9, 1772, and he preached on Leviticus 10:3 ('Aaron held his peace') and

45 See Stephen A. Marini, 'American Protestant Hymns Project: A Ranked List of Most Frequently Printed Hymns, 1737–1960' in Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll, *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 2004), 253.

46 Thus James Edward Jones, *The Book of Common Praise* (Annotated ed.; Toronto/London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), 399–400; Chris Fenner, 'John Fawcett: Pastor, Poet, Patron, and Friend', *Towers*, 13, no.9 (May 2015): 20. See also Sell, 'Message of the Erskines', 311.

47 See the full account in Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 171–174.

Luke 12:15 ('A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth').⁴⁸

However, neither the biography written by his son nor any of Fawcett's own writings link the invitation to London with the writing of 'Blest be the tie that binds'.⁴⁹ John Julian (1839–1913), the Victorian historian of hymnody, nevertheless believed that though there was no hard evidence that confirmed a link between the London invitation and the hymn, 'internal evidence in the hymn itself lends countenance to the statement that it was composed' after Fawcett refused to make the trip south.⁵⁰

'Blest be the tie that binds': Reading Fawcett's hymn

The original hymn consisted of six stanzas, all written by Fawcett.

I

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

What is that brings Christians together and binds their 'hearts in Christian love'? It is a like-mindedness about those things that matter most in life, what Fawcett calls a 'fellowship of kindred minds.' This 'fellowship,' moreover, is a foretaste of the experience that Christians will have when they are one with Christ in glory, which he refers to by the phrase 'like to that above.' The idea of our hearts as believers being tied together in 'Christian love' is clearly drawn from Colossians 3:14, where Paul urges his readers, then and now, to 'put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony'.

II

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,

48 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 173–175.

49 John Julian, 'Blest be [is] the tie that binds' in his ed., *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (Repr. New York: Gordon Press, 1979), 1:148.

50 Julian, 'Blest be [is] the tie that binds' in his ed., *Dictionary of Hymnology*, 1:148.



H Y M N. CIV. S. M.

BROTHERLY LOVE.

I.

BLEST be the tie that binds
Our hearts in christian love ;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

II.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent pray'rs ;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

III.

We share our mutual woes ;
Our mutual burdens bear ;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

IV.

When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain ;
But we shall still be join'd in heart,
And hope to meet again.

V.

This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way ;
While each in expectation lives,
And longs to see the day.

VI.

From sorrow, toil and pain,
And sin we shall be free ;
And perfect love and friendship reign
Thro' all eternity.

'Blest be the tie that binds'
as it first appeared in Fawcett's hymnal.

Michael A.G. Haykin

Our comforts and our cares.

One key place where this ‘fellowship of kindred minds’ is experienced in this life is Christians praying together. This second stanza reflects what was a common Baptist conviction by the end of the eighteenth century, namely, the vital necessity of corporate prayer.⁵¹ In praying together—and Fawcett expects such praying to be ‘ardent’, motivated by a passion for the things of God—believers give voice to their unity as they speak to God their Father about what they fear, hope and aim to achieve.⁵²

III

We share our mutual woes;
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

The link between this third stanza and the previous one is through the phrase ‘our cares’ (stanza 2) and ‘our mutual woes’ (stanza 3). One of the ways in which the New Testament reminds believers of the vital importance of taking seriously their relationships to other believers is through the so-called ‘one another’ texts. For example, in Romans 12:10, Christians are admonished to ‘love one another’ and in Ephesians 4:32 to be ‘be kind to one another’. They are to ‘encourage one another and build one another up’ (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and ‘stir up one another to love and good works’ (Hebrews 10:24). And then there is Galatians 6:2—‘bear one another’s burdens’—the text that lies behind this stanza. In one version of this stanza, this biblical link is made clear by the change of the phrase ‘mutual’ to ‘each other’s’.

IV

When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be join’d in heart,

51 See Haykin, *One heart and one soul*, 153–171.

52 See, for example, the example of the early Christian praying together in Acts 4:23–30.

REMEMBERING JOHN FAWCETT

And hope to meet again.

Given the love that Christians experience in Christian fellowship, leaving such a fellowship is painful. In the fourth stanza, the ‘pain’ at saying goodbye to Christian brothers and sisters is highlighted, but then so is the comfort of knowing that geographical separation does not entail spiritual separation. For Christians are ‘one in heart,’ as Acts 4:32 puts it, or in the words of this stanza, ‘joined in heart.’ This stanza especially ties the hymn back to its accepted historical context when Fawcett was invited to leave his congregation to assume the pastorate of John Gill’s London church.

In the nineteenth century, it is interesting to note that this stanza would have been understood somewhat differently than we tend to read it today. During that era, it would have been read as a comfort in the face of death.⁵³ The ‘inward pain’ at the being parted ‘asunder’ is the pain experienced when a loved one who is a believer dies. The comfort in the face of this apparently most final of partings is that believers are, in Christ, ‘joined in heart’ and therefore can expect ‘to meet again.’ The changes made to this stanza in the course of the nineteenth century—as, for example, in the following version of the fourth stanza—certainly reflect this way of reading this stanza:

When for a while we part;
This thought will soothe our pain,
That we shall still be joined in heart
And one day meet again.

This way of reading the fourth stanza also ties in with the flow of the hymn, for in the stanza that follows, the fifth one, we read:

V
This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way;
While each in expectation lives,
And longs to see the day.

53 Jeffrey VanderWilt, ‘Singing about Death in American Protestant Hymnody’ in Mouw and Noll, ed., *Wonderful Words of Life*, 189.

In the face of the death of fellow believers our deepest comfort is the Christian hope of the resurrection. Death and such separation are not the final words about the Christian's experience. There is a day coming when the Lord Jesus will return and set up his kingdom, and his people will rise from the dead to be with him forever. This 'glorious hope' gives 'courage' along 'the way', that is, strength for the journey of the Christian life.

VI

From sorrow, toil, and pain,
And sin we shall be free;
And perfect love and friendship reign
Thro' all eternity.

The first of the four things from which we shall be freed in the life to come according to this final stanza is 'sorrow,' which closely connects this stanza with the previous one.⁵⁴ But life in the world to come will also bring freedom from 'toil, and pain, and sin'—a phrase that reflects the effects of the curse upon Adam and all of his descendants (see Genesis 3:15–19). That life will also be a time, unending time, when 'perfect love and friendship reign'. It is understandable that the world to come is one flooded with 'perfect love'. But friendship? Given the relative paucity of theological reflection in our own day on the human experience of friendship, Fawcett's words here are somewhat surprising. But Fawcett was well aware that one of the key reasons for the Baptist experience of revival and blessing in his day was God's use of the bonds of friendship between God's people.⁵⁵

54 Though, notice, in a common rendering of this stanza in later hymnals, the word 'sorrow' is removed and this link lost. This rendering of the first two lines of the last stanza loses the link with the fifth stanza:

'When from all toil and pain
And sin we shall be free'

55 Cross, *Useful Learning*, xiii.

Final labours

Around the beginning of November 1807 Fawcett began work on a massive literary project, a devotional commentary on the entire Bible. When he told Andrew Fuller of his plans, the latter commented with a degree of pessimism:

I hope your life and strength may be spared to go on with the Commentary, though there is not much probability of your living to finish it. I have somewhere met with the following expression: Jesus could say, It is finished, and then give up the ghost; but this is more than can be said of any one besides. Death generally finds us with a number of our unfinished works on our hands.⁵⁶

But in this case Fuller was wrong and Fawcett finished the commentary four years later, in August of 1811.⁵⁷ Of all his works, he was most desirous that this commentary would continue to be of value for God's people after his death.

He continued to preach until the close of February 1816 when he preached his final sermon. It was on Nahum 1:7 and a large section of it can be found as an appendix to this booklet. When Fawcett died in July of 1817, Thomas Langdon (1755–1824), the Baptist minister of Leeds, noted that Fawcett was 'an eminent Christian, a man of 'unaffected humility', whose ministry had had a great impact on so many because of his 'holy life'.⁵⁸ He is buried, with his wife, at Wainsgate Baptist Chapel.

56 Cited John Fawcett, Jr., 'Memoirs of Dr. Fawcett', *The Baptist Magazine*, 11 (1819): 101–102.

57 Fawcett, Jr., 'Memoirs of Dr. Fawcett', 104–105; Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 349. For details of the work see Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 350–355.

58 Fawcett, Jr., *Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett*, 375–376.



Wainsgate Chapel



Burial site of John Fawcett

APPENDIX

John Fawcett, 'Divine Goodness in the Day of Trouble'⁵⁹

'The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him' (Nahum 1:7).

The name of the penman of this prophecy signifies *consolation*. And though many parts of it chiefly relate to the overthrow of the Assyrian empire, and the destruction of Nineveh, its capital, yet these events, however calamitous in themselves, were encouraging to the Jews, because assurances were at the same time given them of their deliverance from the yoke of the Assyrians, their powerful and inveterate enemies.

It is very probable that Nahum was contemporary with King Hezekiah; and that he delivered this prophecy after the ten tribes were carried away captive by the King of Assyria. Josephus relates that he foretold the destruction of Nineveh more than 115 years before it took place. In the beginning of the chapter, the prophet sets forth the majesty of a jealous and sin-avenging God. He dwells upon the displays of His power, which is irresistible, in that He hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storms, where, to an eye of sense, all is confusion. He describes the methods of His providence, which to our view are awfully grand and unaccountable. And then, as in the words of the text, he exhibits the milder aspect which He wears, and the gentle attention which He shows to his people. 'The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.'

The same almighty power which is exerted in the destruction of the wicked is employed for the protection and defence of those who trust in him.

⁵⁹ From *The Miscellaneous Works of the Late John Fawcett, D.D.* (London: W. Jones, 1824), 299–310. This sermon was Fawcett's final sermon that was preached on February 26, 1816. The text has been lightly edited to modernize the spelling and punctuation. Two additions to the text for clarification have been added within square brackets.

This is the doctrine contained in the text, which naturally divides itself into three parts:

1. The Lord is good.
2. The Lord is a strong hold in the day of trouble.⁶⁰
3. He knoweth them that trust in him.

The Lord is good

Goodness is inseparable from the conceptions we have of God. Sometimes it intends or is intimately connected with His glory. Thus, when Moses desired to see the glory of the Lord, the Almighty tells him, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before thee.’⁶¹ God is sovereignly and infinitely good. His goodness comprehends all his relative perfections, all the acts of his grace and mercy. These are the expressions of His goodness, and they are distinguished by different names, according to the objects towards whom the goodness is exercised. When it supplies the indigent, it is *bounty*. When it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy*. When it bestows blessings on the unworthy, it is *grace*; and as the term in this acceptation is often applied to spiritual blessings, it is that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. When goodness imparts blessings according to what is promised, it may be denominated *truth* or *faithfulness*. Whatever comfort the glorious attributes of Deity afford to us, we are indebted for it to his goodness. When his *wisdom* contrives that which is for our *advantage*, it is his goodness. When his *power* is employed in our protection, it is his goodness. In short, his goodness renders all his other attributes subservient to our advantage.

We admire and adore the Almighty for his other perfections. But his goodness allures and draws our hearts to him. For this we love him. As the apostle says, ‘God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.’⁶² By this we are encouraged to make our addresses to him, and to ask help at his hand. His goodness emboldens us to come to him for all that we need (Hebrews 4:16).

That divine Being who is the object of our adoration, and whom we, as

60 This section has been omitted.

61 Exodus 33:19.

62 1 John 4:16.

Christians, delight to worship, is a good and gracious God. He is *essentially* good. In this sense there is none good but one, that is, God. There is none good in comparison with Him.

We might enlarge on His goodness as it is shown in *providence*, and then a large field would open to our view. In this sense the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. Ten thousand times ten thousand instances of His goodness are daily seen in His dealings with His creatures.

But let it be observed, that His goodness is most gloriously manifested through Christ. *Good-will* towards men was proclaimed at the Saviour's birth (Luke 2:14). O what astonishing goodness it was in the Father to give his only-begotten Son to sorrows, agonies, and death for us! This was no other than his goodness, under the appellation of love: 'God so *loved* the world.'⁶³ Herein the love or goodness of God was commended (Romans 5:8). It was infinite and unbounded goodness imparted through Christ alone, as the Mediator between an offended God and offending sinners. Does not this goodness shine most conspicuously in pardoning all our crimes? 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions.'⁶⁴ Is it not displayed [in the following ways]?

- In raising us from a death in sin to a life of righteousness;
- In accepting us as righteous through the obedience of Christ;
- In answering our poor imperfect prayers;
- In directing and guiding us with his counsel;
- [In] supplying our temporal and spiritual wants;
- In keeping us by his power, through faith unto eternal salvation.

We might here remark, in the first place, that this goodness is *greatly diversified*. Its blessings are of various kinds. It is described as sparing, pitying, supporting, relieving, restoring, and consoling goodness. We may say of the blessings of God's goodness that they *cannot be reckoned up in order*. The language of the psalmist, Psalm 139, is applicable to them: 'If I would declare and speak of them, they are more in number than the sand. How precious are thy thoughts of love unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them—they

63 John 3:16.

64 Isaiah 43:25.

cannot be numbered.⁶⁵ Eternity itself will be too short to utter all Thy praise.

2. This goodness is, in its nature, *satisfying* to the soul. It is so abundant in measure that it replenishes and satisfies him who has an interest in it. Divine goodness gives the invitation to us; ‘Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.’⁶⁶ Eat, O friend! drink abundantly, O beloved! It is adequate to fill the most enlarged desires of the longing soul. He who is parched with thirst and fainting with hunger, when enabled to have recourse to these supplies, with joy draws water out of the wells of salvation, drinks of those refreshing streams which make glad the city of our God, and eats of that bread which cometh down from heaven. And thus it is that the divine Being even makes our cup to run over with goodness. Hence we find them using the following exulting language: ‘We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.’⁶⁷

3. It is *great* goodness. And in this respect it is like Himself: correspondent with the dignity of His character. It is great beyond all expression, beyond all comparison, beyond all comprehension: Psalm 31:19: ‘O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.’ The apostle Paul seems unable to find out words sufficiently strong to set forth its greatness: ‘God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he hath loved us.’⁶⁸ It is goodness which passeth knowledge. It bestows the greatest and best of blessings on the greatest of sinners.

4. It is *free, undeserved* goodness; hence the Almighty declares, ‘I will love them *freely*’.

5. It is goodness which *exactly answers our needs*. It removes all our sins and all our miseries, supplies all our necessities, lightens our burdens, and makes the path of duty our delight. So super-eminently excellent is it, that it is life, nay better than life. Hence the psalmist uses this enraptured language: ‘O

65 Psalm 139:17, 18.

66 Psalm 81:10.

67 Psalm 65:4.

68 Ephesians 2:4.

taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are all they that put their trust in him.⁶⁹ God grant that the experience of those who now hear my voice may correspond with these animated views of divine goodness!

6. It is *continued* goodness: Psalm 52:1. The goodness of God endureth continually: in health, in sickness, in life, and in death itself, it is still the same. His mercy endureth for ever:

Good when he gives, supremely good,
Nor less when he denies;
E'en crosses from his sov'reign hand
All blessings in disguise.⁷⁰

This goodness heals our backslidings, and saves us with an everlasting salvation. It is laid up here for them that fear God, and shall be enjoyed through eternity itself:

O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness.⁷¹

The Lord knoweth them that trust in him

The...idea of God's being our *strong tower* implies a *betaking* ourselves to Him. And an important observation here presents itself, namely, that a strong *tower* is nothing to us, unless we fly to it for safety. It affords protection to none but those who are in it. This is highly necessary to be attended to. Hence the apostle speaks of 'flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us'.⁷² So of old the manslayer was not safe from the avenger of blood till he got within the city of refuge. He who is safe through our

69 Psalm 34:8.

70 This stanza is from James Hervey, *Reflections on a Flower-Garden. In a Letter to a Lady* (London: J. and J. Rivington, 1747), 72, n.*.

71 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 12, lines 469–473.

72 See Hebrews 6:18.

Lord Jesus Christ must be *personally interested* in him. This clause of the text therefore is very important. 'He knoweth them that trust in him.' Two things are here observable.

1. Their *trust* in the Lord, a term very often used in Holy Scriptures. This trust is so intimately connected with faith in the divine Word, that it seems inseparable from it. Hence the apostle Paul says, 'In whom ye also trusted after that ye believed.'⁷³ *Trust in the Lord* denotes a clear discovery of the insufficiency of every other defense. They who trust in him no longer go about to establish their own righteousness. It has *cost* them much to be brought off from every legal ground of hope. But they now '...willingly suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that they may win Christ, and be found in him.'⁷⁴ This *trust in Christ* arises from a spiritual and scriptural knowledge of him.

2. He *knows* them that trust in him. He knows them so as to distinguish them from all others, and so as to *approve* of them. 'The Lord knows them that are his.'⁷⁵ 'Who then shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again.'⁷⁶ He takes care of them in all times of danger, trouble, and distress. He *knows* them in adversity, as well as in prosperity, in the hour of death and at the day of judgment. 'They shall be mine, saith the Lord, when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.'⁷⁷ Thus we see the truth of what is here asserted confirmed by every part of scripture. 'The Lord *knoweth* them that *trust* in him.' Let us close with a word or two by way of use [or application].

Firstly, how deplorable is their case who have not the Lord for their refuge! They are exposed to the greatest danger from sin, from the curse of God and his law, and from their being exposed to his eternal displeasure, without any refuge to fly to. O sinners! That you did but know your danger: 'How shall

73 Ephesians 1:13.

74 Philippians 3:8.

75 2 Timothy 2:19.

76 Romans 8:33.

77 Malachi 3:17.

you escape if you neglect so great salvation?⁷⁸

Secondly, let us learn to betake ourselves to the ‘strong hold.’ Security is only to be found there. This refuge should be particularly fled to in the time of trouble. We are encouraged to trust in the Lord *at all* times. And happy, thrice happy, they who are enabled to devote their youth and the vigour of their days to the service of God. He will not forsake them when old and grey headed; in public trouble, domestic calamities, soul troubles, and all the disquietudes they may feel from *outward* temptation and the power of *indwelling* sin; in the day of personal affliction, and in the hour of death, he will not leave them destitute, ‘he will be a wall of fire about them, and the glory in the midst of them.’⁷⁹

Thirdly, how safe then are they who are in that strong hold referred to in the text: ‘The Lord is good, he is a strong hold in the day of trouble, he knoweth them that trust in him.’ ‘Who shall separate them from the love of Christ—shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.’⁸⁰

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, ‘be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord.’⁸¹

78 Hebrews 2:3.

79 Zechariah 2:5.

80 Romans 8:37.

81 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Michael A. G. Haykin is Professor of Church History & Biblical Spirituality and the Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, as well as a lecturer at Munster Bible College, Cork, Ireland.

Andrew Fuller
CENTER *for* BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY