

# English Calvinistic Baptists and Vocation in the Long Eighteenth Century, with Particular Reference to Anne Dutton's Calling as an Author<sup>1</sup>

MICHAEL A. G. HAYKIN

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**Michael A. G. Haykin** is Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also Adjunct Professor of Church History and Spirituality at Toronto Baptist Seminary in Ontario, Canada. Dr. Haykin is the author of many books, including “*At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word*”: *Andrew Fuller As an Apologist* (Paternoster Press, 2004), *Jonathan Edwards: The Holy Spirit in Revival* (Evangelical Press, 2005), *The God Who Draws Near: An Introduction to Biblical Spirituality* (Evangelical Press, 2007), *Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church* (Crossway, 2011), and *Patrick of Ireland: His Life and Impact* (Christian Focus, 2014).

Towards the close of his preaching ministry, the celebrated Victorian Baptist preacher C. H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) happened to reflect on his calling as a herald of the gospel in a sermon that he preached in 1889. He admitted to his congregation:

When some of you do not behave yourselves, and matters in our church get a little out of order, I say to myself, “I wish I could give this up, and turn to an

employment less responsible, and less wearing to the heart”; but then I think of Jonah, and what happened to him when he ran away to Tarshish; and I remember that whales are scarcer now than they were then, and I do not feel inclined to run that risk. I stick to my business, and keep to the message of my God; for one might not be brought to land quite so safely as the runaway prophet was. Indeed, I could not cease to preach the glad tidings unless I ceased to breathe. ...I had sooner be a preacher of the gospel than a possessor of the Indies. Remember how William Carey, speaking of one of his sons, says, “Poor Felix is shrivelled from a missionary to an ambassador.” He was a missionary once, and he was employed by the government as an ambassador; his father thought it no promotion, but said, “Felix has shrivelled into an ambassador.” It would be a descent indeed from bearing the burden of the Lord, if one were to be transformed into a member of Parliament, or a prime minister, or a king.<sup>2</sup>

Informing this rather humorous reference to Jonah is Spurgeon’s determination to be faithful to his calling as a gospel minister. The reference has added gravitas in view of the fact that Spurgeon had recently gone through what has come to be called the “Downgrade controversy,” in which the London Baptist found himself contending against fellow Baptists for some of the essentials of classical Christian orthodoxy. But the other reference, namely, the remark of the iconic missionary William Carey (1761–1834) about his son’s calling, is of a different order. Felix Carey (1786–1822), the eldest son of William Carey, had gone to Burma from Bengal as a missionary in 1808, but seven years later returned to Calcutta as the ambassador of the Burmese government.<sup>3</sup> His father, deeply grieved by his son’s decision to abandon his missionary calling, bluntly told his close friend John Ryland, Jr. (1753–1825) back in England that his son had “shrivelled from a missionary into an ambassador.”<sup>4</sup> Carey probably meant no disparagement of so-called “secular” callings per se—after all, he had served co-vocationally as the manager of an indigo factory in Mudnabati during the 1790s. But his remark, and Spurgeon’s later use of it, does indicate an approach to vocation that seems out of sync with the Reformation perspective of the fundamental equality of all legitimate callings. It is somewhat reminiscent of the medieval perspective that accorded a greater spirituality to what were viewed as “sacred” vocations.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, possible proof that service for God as a pastor or deacon was

deemed a more spiritual vocation than others in the long eighteenth-century English Baptist community can be found in a stray comment by John Gill (1697–1771), the doyen of London Baptists. Commenting on Proverbs 22:29, Gill observed:

Every good man has a work or business to do in a religious way; some in a higher sphere, as officers of churches, ministers and deacons; the work of the one lies in reading, study, meditation, and prayer, in the ministration of the word and ordinances, and other duties of their office; and the business of the others in taking care of the poor, and the secular affairs of the churches; others in a lower way, and common to all Christians, which lies in the exercise of grace, and performance of all good works, relative to themselves, their families, and the church of God.<sup>6</sup>

Gill here distinguished between the “higher sphere” of the calling of pastors and deacons and the “lower way” of other Christians, who had secular callings. While Gill did not explicitly call the former a more spiritual calling, his use of “higher” and “lower” leaves the reader with the impression that being a pastor or deacon was somehow a “better” calling than others.

### **“SETTING AN EXAMPLE OF DILIGENCE AND FIDELITY:” CO-VOCATIONAL PASTORS**

Gill was also convinced that pastors should be “exempt from all worldly business and employment,” since the ministry is “sufficient to engross all a man’s time and thoughts.”<sup>7</sup> Gill’s understanding of what is entailed in pastoral ministry obviously shaped this judgment. As he stated in an ordination sermon that he preached in 1734: “Time is precious, and ought to be redeemed, and diligently improved, by all sorts of men; but by none more than the ministers of the Gospel, who should spend it in frequent prayer, constant meditation, and in daily reading the Scriptures, and the writings of good men.”<sup>8</sup> Yet, most Baptist pastors in this era were co-vocational by necessity. As Faith and Brian Bowers have noted, “Few eighteenth-century ministers received an adequate income from church alone.”<sup>9</sup> For instance, the leading Baptist pastor in Southwark, London, at the beginning of the long eighteenth century was James Jones. He had trained as a tailor, but in Baptist tradition he has been known as the “coffee-man in Southwark.” He

was so named due to his ownership of a coffeehouse in the parish of St. Olave, Southwark, from which he sought to lead his congregation and to plant others in the 1670s and 1680s.<sup>10</sup> Further north, in Liverpool, the oldest Calvinistic Baptist congregation had been formed in the first decade of the eighteenth century, but struggled financially for a good number of decades. In 1714 the church called Peter Davenport, a tobacconist, as its pastor. He was succeeded by John Sedgefield, who soon left to take up farming because the congregation could not support him financially. By 1730 the congregation was meeting on Byrom Street and John Turner (d.1741), a pharmacist (then called an apothecary), was its pastor. Occasionally people would turn up on Sunday mornings seeking medical aid, and Turner would have to ask the congregation to sing and pray while he went to help his patients and then return to lead worship! When Turner died in 1741, the financially-feeble congregation of twenty or so members called the theological eccentric John Johnson (1706–1791), and he too had to supplement his meagre salary by engaging in business.<sup>11</sup>

When John Hirst (1736–1815), the superintendent of a woolen factory in the north of England, began to preach in the late 1760s, his work entailed him to be “at his post from Monday morning to Saturday night.” What little time he had for study he snatched from sleep so that he could prepare to preach throughout the Lord’s Day. His biographer James Hargreaves noted that although Hirst loved to preach, he was also conscious of his need to provide for his five children—his first wife had died by this point—and thus he was “diligent in business, . . . setting an example of diligence and fidelity to servants.”<sup>12</sup> Hirst was called to pastor the Baptist church in Bacup, Lancashire, in late 1772, but the church’s fifty-five members could not pay him an adequate salary. He thus engaged in a business venture, but by 1775 he had lost all of his investment. Some friends initially paid his debts, rescuing him thereby from debtor’s prison, and over the next few years his “diligence, frugality, and the blessing of God” enabled him to repay what he owed. He even worked at a loom in a factory till he got to the point that “ministry was his sole employment.”<sup>13</sup>

Or consider Benjamin Francis (1734–1799), who graduated from Bristol Baptist Academy in 1756 and preached for a while in Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire. Eventually, in 1757, he moved to Horsley, where the following year he was ordained at the age of twenty-four.<sup>14</sup> Although the church

there consisted of sixty-six members, most of them were poor artisans and clothworkers and were unable to provide enough financially for his support. Francis once described the circumstances of most of the congregation as being “extremely indigent.” And near the end of his life, he remarked that his congregation was for the most part “poor, plain, and have not had the advantage of literature.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, “he was obliged to rear pigs, to grow his own fruit and vegetables, to keep a school, and to venture into the woolen trade (with disastrous financial consequences) in order to make ends meet.”<sup>16</sup>

Other co-vocational ministers included Thomas Newcomen (1664–1729), an ironmonger in Dartmouth and the inventor of the first practical steam engine; Andrew Gifford, Jr. (1700–1784), the assistant librarian of the British Museum; Robert Parsons (1718–1790) in Bath, a widely-admired carver in stone and marble; the eccentric John Ryland, Sr. (1723–1792), a schoolteacher; and William Carey, also a schoolteacher and cobbler.<sup>17</sup> There were also a significant number of lay persons in the Calvinistic Baptist community who made notable contributions to the worlds of English art and trade, men like Emanuel Bowen (1693/4–1767), a Welsh Baptist who was cartographer to George II<sup>18</sup>; Robert Bowyer (1758–1834), a miniature painter to George III and publisher, who later became a lay preacher;<sup>19</sup> and William Burls (1763–1837), a wealthy London merchant who served as a deacon at Carter’s Lane Baptist Church in London and was the treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society for many years.<sup>20</sup> What these pastors and lay persons may have thought with regard to the various callings in which they were involved is largely speculative, however, since few of them left any substantial writing about their quotidian occupations. Possibly the best resource for examining Baptist thought about vocation in the long eighteenth century, therefore, are the various works of the voluminous autodidact John Gill, especially his critical commentaries on the entire Bible that enjoyed a wide circulation in the English Baptist community.<sup>21</sup> *An Exposition of the New Testament* appeared in 1748 and seventeen years later Gill began to issue *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, which was published over three years in a number of large folios.

#### “MAN WAS CREATED AN ACTIVE CREATURE:” JOHN GILL ON VOCATION

In Gill’s comment on 2 Thessalonians 3:11, for example, the Baptist exegete

observed that the refusal of some of the Thessalonians to work,

at their callings, trades, and businesses in which they were brought up... was walking disorderly indeed, even contrary to the order of things before the fall, when man was in a state of innocence; for before sin entered into the world, Adam was put into the garden of Eden to keep and dress it; man was created an active creature, and made for work and business; and to live without, is contrary to the order of creation, as well as to the order of civil societies, and of religious one, or churches, and even what irrational creatures do not.<sup>22</sup>

From the fact that God's design for Adam was for him to be a gardener in the paradise of Eden, Gill reasoned that human beings in general were "made for work and business" and so were to be "active" in creation. Adam's son Abel, though heir to one who was "the lord of the whole earth," was thus "a keeper of sheep" that he might not be idle but engaged in a "useful and laborious employment."<sup>23</sup> Possibly because the figure of a shepherd is employed in both Testaments for pastoring the people of God, Gill expressly cited the secular calling of shepherding as one that is "valiant, honourable, innocent, and useful."<sup>24</sup>

In fact, Gill argued from the phrase "to dress it, and to keep it" in Genesis 2:15 that even before the Fall from Eden, there was work:

[S]o ... it seems man was not to live an idle life, in a state of innocence; but this could not be attended with toil and labour, with fatigue and trouble, with sorrow and sweat, as after his fall; but was rather for his recreation and pleasure; though what by nature was left, to be improved by art; and what there was for Adam to do, is not easy to say: at present there needed no plowing, nor sowing, nor planting, nor watering, since God had made every tree pleasant to the sight, and good for food, to grow out of it; and a river ran through it to water it.<sup>25</sup>

Gill proceeded to cite a number of Jewish commentators who understood this primeval work of Adam to involve the study of and obedience to the law. Gill did not affirm this interpretation, but remained somewhat agnostic about what exactly Adam would have done before the entrance of sin into the Garden. What is noteworthy is his affirmation that the goal of Adam's primeval labours were "his recreation and pleasure."

Whatever calling is God's lot for a believer in life, it is to be pursued with "all diligence and industry."<sup>26</sup> Thus, when Christ had yet to pour out his Spirit and so initiate the commission to preach the Word throughout the world, Peter went back to fishing "partly that he might not live an idle life, and partly to obtain a livelihood."<sup>27</sup> A person is to be commended, therefore, if he or she is "constant" at their calling, namely, "swift, ready and expeditious at it; who industriously pursues it, cheerfully attends it, makes quick dispatch of it; does it off of hand, at once, and is not slothful in it." Gill obviously regarded all true vocations as important. They merited mindful attention and significant effort. At the same time, God's direction, "strength and assistance" in one's calling is to be sought by prayer, and glory given to him when such prayer is answered.<sup>28</sup>

Gill identified various reasons for being diligent at one's vocation. It was the God-given way to secure the finances needed for life's basic necessities for oneself and one's family.<sup>29</sup> It was also the means to provide for "the relief of the poor" as well as "the support of the Gospel, and the interest of Christ."<sup>30</sup> Gill thus included working in "honest lawful employment" under the rubric of the "good works" enjoined by Paul in Titus 3:14.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Gill was very aware of the dangers that attended success in one's vocation and the financial wealth that might accrue from such success, namely, the formation of "an immoderate care for, and pursuit after the world" and so becoming "inebriated with the world."<sup>32</sup> One central cause for such inebriation was a distinct failure to lay to heart "the power, providence, and faithfulness of God."<sup>33</sup> Alluding to a statement by the North African Latin author L. Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius (c.260–c.330) that "the highest good of man is in religion alone (*summum... hominis bonum in sola religione est*),"<sup>34</sup> Gill was adamant that man's true *summum bonum* was not to be found ultimately in being successful at one's calling but in the things of religion.<sup>35</sup>

### **"HIS HEART IS NOT IN HIS MASTER'S GOODS:" WISDOM FROM JOSHUA THOMAS**

An interesting reflection on a vocation in the world can be found in the archives of Bristol Baptist College in an unpublished manuscript that records the precious friendship of two Welsh pastors, Benjamin Francis, mentioned above, and Joshua Thomas (1719–1797), who for forty-three years was

the pastor of the Baptist cause in Leominster. The manuscript is actually a transcript, drawn up by Thomas, of letters that passed between him and Francis from 1758 to 1770.<sup>36</sup> The practice of Francis and Thomas appears to have been for one of them to mail two or three queries periodically to the other. Then, some months later the recipient mailed back his answers, together with fresh questions of his own. These answers were commented on, the new questions answered and both the comments and answers mailed back along with new queries, and so forth. All in all, there are sixty-eight questions and answers in two volumes—fifty-eight in the first volume, the remaining ten in Volume II. On only one occasion during these years from 1758 to 1770 was there a noticeable gap in correspondence. That was in 1765 when Francis lost his wife and his three youngest children. It is noteworthy that at the beginning of the correspondence the two friends sign their letters simply with their names or initials. However, as time passes, their mutual confidence and intimacy deepens, and they begin to write “yours endearingly” or “yours unfeignedly” and even “yours indefatigably” or “yours inexpressibly.” It was in October, 1762, that Thomas first signed himself “your cordial Brother Jonathan,” and the following February Francis replied with “your most affectionate David.” From this point on this is the way the two friends refer to each other.

The questions and their answers are extremely instructive as to the areas of personal theological interest among mid-eighteenth century Calvinistic Baptists. For example, there are queries about spiritual vitality, the eternal state of those who die in infancy, how best to understand the remarks in Revelation 20 about the millennium, and whether or not inoculation against that dreaded killer of the eighteenth century, smallpox, was right or wrong. And there is this question about vocation, asked by Francis in July of 1762 and answered by Thomas the following October:

Quer[y]: What is the difference between a lawful diligence in the world, and a criminal love of the world? Or wherein does the difference lie?

Sol[ution]: Ever since man became a living soul, it is his very nature to be active. Activity conduces much to his health etc. Before sin entered Adam was to dress the Garden, when then was all delight. After the fall, man is to eat his bread by labour, sweat etc. ...I would note, that the persons who love the world sinfully, differ in many particulars from those who are conscientiously diligent in it. I dare



say you can split the differences better than I am able to do it, but I must attempt. The good man considers often how he may adorn the gospel, glorify God, and serve his generation; and in order to do this, he finds it very necessary to read the Word often, to pray earnestly and frequently, and to attend on sanctuary seasons. He may, and often does, labour hard; but meditation upon the state of his soul, the nature of religion and salvation, the Saviour, the glory above etc., etc. is the means to maintain his strength, cordials to keep up his spirits, salve to heal his sores &c. This being the case, religion will be kept up, in the soul, in the closet, in the family, and in the Church; all conducing ... to help him through the world.

... But he that sinfully loves the world contrives how to be rich in this life: he does not want to serve his generation, but himself. His heart is so much upon what he calls lawful, that he cannot meditate as above noted. He has no time often for private prayer: and that in the family suits him but very indifferent; he is often hindered to meetings on weekdays, the excuse is at hand. He thinks it no great sin to contrive a good deal of the world in his mind, some in word, etc. on the Lord's Day. The greatest part of religion is a dead weight to him; a little of it will, and must do.

... Again, the piously diligent delights in his labour from a principle as so very different from the other, viz. because he knows it to be his duty, and that in his daily calling he serves Christ, Col. 3:22 etc. and he that rightly considers himself as a servant of Christ is excited and animated by the most excellent and noble motives. A servant may be very diligent, frugal etc. from a sense of duty, and the love he bears to his master, when his heart is not in his master's goods. The faithful servant will manage his affairs so as to keep his set hours and seasons to sit down and converse with his master, give account, receive further instructions and money to bear expenses, relate difficulties, and be honoured with a fresh testimony of his Lord's approbation etc. etc. But the criminal lover of the world is a kind of a proprietor; he is not fond of coming to his master; he pretends he is always busy for his master, he cannot ever have time; but he has time to go elsewhere. He seldom waits for instruction, looking upon himself to be wise enough. Let the difficulties be ever so many, he does not care to come to his master, he learns to love the master's possessions more than the owner. He looks upon his own approbation to be sufficient, and supposes, perhaps, that the master will pass by all this effrontery.

... What a world this! What confusion sin hath made! Yet all the confusion by sin, or order by grace here, is as nothing to that which will be hereafter. Vile sin! but glorious grace! Precious blood! Happy people!<sup>37</sup>

Thomas agreed with Gill that in the primeval state Adam was created for work, and that the first man would have found this labour “all delight.” Since the Fall, however, a deep disorder has entered into the human heart. There is now a sinful passion regnant that loves the world and the wealth that work creates more than the Master of this earth. And yet, due to God’s “glorious grace,” there are those who are learning to use this world and its goods aright. They seek to be diligent in their labours, but know the vital importance of spiritual disciplines to keep the heart in tune with God. They thus know that their work is a means of service to Christ and their generation, and will be used by God for his glory. The latter, Thomas deemed, to be truly “happy people.”

### **A “HEART BRIM-FULL OF JOY:” INTRODUCING ANNE DUTTON**

Yet another significant reflection on vocation in this era is from the pen of Anne Dutton (1692–1765), who was born Anne Williams to Congregationalist parents in Northampton in the East Midlands.<sup>38</sup> Her conversion had come at the age of thirteen after a serious illness.<sup>39</sup> Two years later, in 1707, she joined the Congregationalist church, although she wrestled with doubt and various fears as a young believer. Subsequently, though, she experienced a significant encounter with the Holy Spirit that she interpreted as the sealing of the Spirit—a phrase derived from such Pauline texts as Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30. As she later recalled the experience, the Holy Spirit used Philip-pians 4:4 (“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice,” KJV) in his sealing of her heart:

[This] word brake in ... upon my heart, with such a ray of glorious light, that directed my soul to the true and proper object of its joy, even the Lord himself. I was pointed thereto, as with a finger: In the Lord, not in your frames. In the Lord, not in what you enjoy from him, but in what you are in him. And the Lord seal’d my instruction, and fill’d my heart brim-full of joy, in the faith of my eternal interest, and unchangeable standing in him; and of his being an infinite fountain of blessedness, for me to rejoice in alway; even when the streams of sensible enjoyments fail’d. Thus the Blessed Spirit took me by the arms, and taught me to go.

...the Lord the Spirit went on to reveal Christ more and more to me, as the great foundation of my faith and joy. He shew’d me my everlasting standing

in his person, grace and righteousness: and gave me to see my security in his unchangeableness, under all the changes which pass'd over me. And then I began to rejoice in my dear Lord Jesus, as always the same, even when my frames alter'd.<sup>40</sup>

In other words, Dutton learned to put her faith in Christ alone, and not in her experience of him. Her beliefs about the sealing of the Spirit were probably derived from reading the works of the Puritan Thomas Goodwin (1600–1679).<sup>41</sup>

In 1710, she transferred her church affiliation to an open-membership Baptist church in Northampton, pastored at the time by John Moore (1662–1726).<sup>42</sup> There, in her words, she found “fat, green pastures,” for, as she went on to explain, “Mr. Moore was a great doctrinal preacher: and the special advantage I receiv'd under his ministry, was the establishment of my judgment in the doctrines of the gospel.”<sup>43</sup> It was in this congregation that she was baptized as a believer around 1713.<sup>44</sup> Two years later, when she was twenty-two, she married a Thomas Cattell and moved with her husband to London. While there she worshipped with the Calvinistic Baptist church that met at premises on Wood Street in the Cripplegate region.<sup>45</sup> Her pastor was John Skepp (d.1721), a one-time member of the Cambridge Congregationalist church of Joseph Hussey (1659–1726), who had been called as the pastor of this congregation in 1714.

Hussey is often seen as the father of Hyper-Calvinism, insomuch as he argued in his book *God's Operations of Grace: But no Offers of Grace* (1707) that offering Christ indiscriminately to sinners is something that smacks of “creature-co-operation and creature-concurrence” in the work of salvation.<sup>46</sup> Skepp published but one book, and that posthumously, which was entitled *Divine Energy: or The Efficacious Operations of the Spirit of God upon the Soul of Man* (1722). In it he appears to have followed Hussey's approach to evangelism. It is sometimes argued that Anne Dutton's exposure to Hyper-Calvinism at a young age shaped her thinking for the rest of her life. If so, it is curious to find her rejoicing in the ministry of free-offer preachers like George Whitefield (1714–1770) in later years. Dutton found Skepp to be an impressive preacher, owing in part to what Dutton called his “quickness of thought, aptness of expression, suitable affection, and a most agreeable delivery.”<sup>47</sup> Despite his refusal to freely offer the gospel to all and sundry, the overall trend in the church during his ministry was one of growth.

There were 179 members when he came as pastor in 1714. When he died in 1721, the church's membership had grown to 212.<sup>48</sup>

In the early months of 1719, Dutton's life underwent a deep trial as her husband of but five or six years died.<sup>49</sup> She returned to her family in Northampton, and found herself wrestling with spiritual depression. In her words, Dutton sought God "in his ordinances, in one place and another; but alas! I found him not."<sup>50</sup> She was not long single, however. A second marriage in the middle months of 1720 was to Benjamin Dutton (1691–1747), a clothier who had studied for vocational ministry in various places, among them Glasgow University. Anne and Benjamin had met in the final months of 1719 and within a year they were wed.<sup>51</sup>

Ministry took the couple to such towns as Whittlesey and Wisbech in Cambridgeshire, before leading them finally in 1731 to a Calvinistic Baptist congregation in Great Gransden, Huntingdonshire, in 1733.<sup>52</sup> It is noteworthy that prior to this call to Great Gransden, Benjamin Dutton had wrestled with alcoholism. But Benjamin found deliverance from this crippling addiction around the time of the move to Great Gransden. In his own words, he said that he now "stood not in need of wine, or strong drink. The Lord also, of his great goodness, took away my *inclination* thereto; so that I had no more inclination to it, or desire after it, than if I had never tasted any in my whole life."<sup>53</sup>

Under Benjamin Dutton's preaching the church flourished so that on any given Sunday the congregation numbered anywhere between 250 and 350, of whom roughly 50 were members. This growth led to the building of a new meeting-house, which can still be seen in the village. Benjamin decided to go to America to help raise funds to pay off the debt incurred in the building of the meeting-house but the ship on which he was returning foundered not far from the British coast in 1747, and Dutton was drowned. Thankfully, he had sent the money he had raised by means of another ship, so that at least was not lost.

### **"A TALENT OF WRITING": ANNE DUTTON'S VOCATION**

Widowed now for the second time, Anne Dutton was to live another eighteen years. During that time "the fame of her . . . piety," as Baptist historian Joseph Ivimey (1773–1834) once referred to her spirituality,<sup>54</sup> became known in Evangelical circles on both sides of the Atlantic and that through various

literary publications. Dutton had been writing for a number of years before her second husband's demise. After his death a steady stream of tracts and treatises, collections of selected correspondence, and poems poured forth from her pen.

Among her numerous correspondents were a number of key figures in the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival: the Welsh preacher Howel Harris (1714–1773), the redoubtable Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon (1707–1791), and George Whitefield.<sup>55</sup> Harris was convinced that the Lord had entrusted her “with a talent of writing for him.”<sup>56</sup> When William Seward (1711–1740), an early Methodist preacher who was killed by a mob in Wales, read a letter she had written to him in May, 1739, he found it “full of such comforts and direct answers to what I had been writing that it filled my eyes with tears of joy.”<sup>57</sup> And Whitefield, who helped promote and publish Dutton's writings, once said after a meeting with her: “her conversation is as weighty as her letters.”<sup>58</sup> By 1740 she had written seven books. Another fourteen followed between 1741 and 1743, and fourteen more by 1750.<sup>59</sup> And there were yet more, for she continued to write up until her death in 1765. She was clearly the most prolific female Baptist author of the eighteenth century. Her writings reveal eighteenth-century Calvinistic Baptist piety at its best—solidly Christ-centered and robustly crucicentric.

Consider, for example, her eucharistic treatise *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper* (1748). “Not a dram of new covenant-favour”, she wrote, “was to flow to the heirs of promise, but thro' the death of Jesus.” As she went on to exclaim: “O what a wondrous draught, what a life-giving draught, in his own most precious blood, doth God our Saviour, the Lord our lover, give to dying sinners, to his beloved ones in this glorious ordinance.”<sup>60</sup> Dutton devoted the first section of this sixty-page treatise on the Lord's Supper to outlining its nature. Dutton argued that the Supper has three essential purposes: as a “representation,” it is a powerful reminder of Christ's saving work; as a “confirmation,” it gives a sense of assurance; and as a “communication,” it is a vehicle for making the Risen Christ present with his people. With regard to the latter, Dutton noted: “As our Lord is spiritually present in his own ordinance, so he therein and thereby doth actually communicate, or give himself, his body broken, and his blood shed, with all the benefits of his death, to the worthy receivers.”<sup>61</sup> In line with John Calvin's (1509–1564) view of the spiritual presence of Christ at the Table, Dutton affirmed that

the Lord Jesus is indeed present at the celebration of his supper and makes it a means of grace for those who partake of it with faith. As she stated later in the treatise: in the Lord's Supper "the King is pleas'd to sit with us, at his table."<sup>62</sup> In fact, so highly did she prize this means of grace that she declared, with what other Calvinistic Baptists of this era would describe probably as some exaggeration, that the celebration of the Lord's Supper "admits" believers "into the nearest approach to his [i.e. Christ's] glorious self, that we can make in an ordinance-way on the earth, on this side the presence of his glory in heaven."<sup>63</sup>

### **WRESTLING WITH HER VOCATION: ANNE DUTTON ON WOMEN'S WRITING**

Although affirmed in her vocation as an author by such Christians as George Whitefield and Howel Harris, Dutton clearly wrestled with whether or not it was biblical for her to publish her works. In a tract entitled *A Letter To such of the Servants of Christ, who May have any Scruples about the Lawfulness of Printing any Thing written by a Woman* (1743), she noted that she had been criticized for going into print.<sup>64</sup> Her critics appear to have regarded her writings as a violation of two specific texts, 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.<sup>65</sup> She also mentioned that some considered women "unfit" for the vocation of writing, even "unworthy of it," and that it made them "arrogant and affirming."<sup>66</sup>

Dutton pointed out that the Pauline verses mentioned above specifically forbade women to engage in "public authoritative teaching in the Church." Publishing was of quite a different order. Though books were public media, they were read in private and not in the assembly of the congregation. In this way, books were akin to private letters sent to a friend or having a "private conference" with him or her.<sup>67</sup> The Scriptures clearly did not forbid such a means of communication. Moreover, as Dutton pondered Romans 14:19 ("Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another," KJV), she noted that it was addressed to all believers, male and female, and that it was therefore "the duty of women to seek the edification of their brethren and sisters." When Dutton applied this text specifically with regard to writing books, it led her to conclude that "any believer, male or female, that is gifted for, and inclin'd

to publish their thoughts in print, about any truth of Christ, for the private instruction and edification of the saints," is not only free to do so, but is "commanded so to do."<sup>68</sup> She thus generalized later in the tract regarding the way individuals need to follow their respective vocations: "If any person is fully persuaded in his own mind, from the Word and Spirit of Christ, that it is his duty to engage in any piece of service for God; it is sufficient warrant for him so to do."<sup>69</sup>

Dutton appealed to the example of Priscilla in Acts 18:26, who, with her husband Aquila, taught Apollos in private. "Communicating one's mind in print, is as private" a means of teaching as what Priscilla did in this case.<sup>70</sup> Dutton also had to answer critics who argued that other female authors had used the press for "trifles." Dutton pressed home her case with some vehemence: "shall none of that sex be suffer'd to appear on Christ's side, to tell of the wonders of his love, to seek the good of souls, and the advancement of the Redeemer's interest?"<sup>71</sup> Dutton believed it quite possible that this opposition to female Christian authors was a stratagem of Satan to hinder their "usefulness." But to anyone acquainted with the biblical record, such opposition was not surprising. The Apostle Peter, for instance, had to be rebuked when he sought to dissuade Christ from his "great work of redemption" and told by Jesus in no uncertain terms, "Get thee behind me Satan" (Matt 16:23).<sup>72</sup> The disciples' opposition to the woman who anointed Christ's head at Bethany was yet another illustration to Dutton that Christians, "under the influence of sin and Satan" may disparage "those good works, which the Lord himself will own and honour."<sup>73</sup>

Dutton emphasized that she wrote not for fame, but for "only the glory of God, and the good of souls." It was her "earnest desire, some way or other, to serve him, his interest and people."<sup>74</sup> She thus asked those who objected to her writing to imagine that "when my books come to your house, that I am come to give you a visit" and have "communion. . . in this way." Although she might be but "so weak a worm," it is "all one to Omnipotence to work by worms, as by angels."<sup>75</sup> Anne thus viewed her books as a means of carrying on important conversations and thus a vehicle for furthering fellowship within the Church. And in this way, she was serving her generation with diligence, which her contemporary Joshua Thomas had noted was one mark of true piety.

- 1 In the preparation of this essay, I am deeply thankful for help given by Josiah Classen, one of my doctoral students, Dr. Blair Waddell of Providence Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama, Dr. Adam G. Winters, the Archivist of the James P. Boyce Centennial Library at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, and Dr. Taffey Hall, the Director of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, Tennessee.
- 2 C. H. Spurgeon, *The Burden of the Word of the Lord* in his *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1975), 35:614.
- 3 For studies of Felix Carey, see D. G. E. Hall, "Felix Carey," *The Journal of Religion*, 12:4 (October, 1932): 473–492; M. Siddiq Khan, "Felix Carey: A Prisoner of Hope," *Libri*, 16:4 (1966): 237–268; Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, *Felix Carey (A Tiger Tamed)* (Hooghly, West Bengal: Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, 1991).
- 4 Chatterjee, *Felix Carey*, 114. For the remarkable problems surrounding Felix being the Burmese ambassador, see Hall, "Felix Carey," 484–491.
- 5 See the classic study by Karl Holl, "The History of the Word Vocation (*Beruf*)," trans. Heber F. Peacock, *The Review and Expositor*, 55:2 (April 1958): 126–154.
- 6 John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament* (London, 1763–1765), 4:450, commenting on Prov 22:29. This four-volume work, as well as Gill's five-volume NT commentary (see following note), will be cited henceforth by the relevant volume and page number, as well as the specific biblical text upon which Gill is commenting.
- 7 John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament, Both Doctrinal and Practical* (London: George Keith, 1774–1776), 3:78, commenting on Acts 6:4. As Gill maintained in his comments on 1 Tim 5:18: "such who labour in the preaching of the Gospel, ought to have a sufficient and competent maintenance" (*Exposition of the New Testament*, 4:556).
- 8 John Gill and Samuel Wilson, *The Mutual Duty of Pastor and People, Represented in Two Discourses Preached at the Ordination Of the Reverend George Braithwaite, M. A.* (London: Aaron Ward, 1734), 9.
- 9 Faith and Brian Bowers, "After the Benediction: Eighteenth-century Baptist Laity" in Stephen L. Copson and Peter J. Morden, ed., *Challenge and Change: English Baptist life in the Eighteenth Century* (Didcot, Oxfordshire: The Baptist Historical Society, 2017), 234.
- 10 Anonymous, "James Jones' Coffee House," *The Baptist Quarterly*, 6 (1932–1933): 324–326.
- 11 Robert Halley, *Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity* (Manchester: Tobbs and Brook/London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1869), 2:326–327; Robert Dawbarn, "The 'Johnsonian Baptists,'" *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, 3:1 (May 1912): 54–55.
- 12 James Hargreaves, *The Life and Memoir of the Late Rev. John Hirst, Forty Two Years Pastor of the Baptist Church Bacup* (Rochdale: Joseph Littlewood, 1816), 45, 88–89.
- 13 Hargreaves, *Life and Memoir of the Late Rev. John Hirst*, 115, 118–119, 120–121.
- 14 For a brief account of the early history of the Horsley church, see Albion M. Urdank, *Religion and Society in a Cotswold Vale. Nailsworth, Gloucestershire, 1780–1865* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 90–93.
- 15 Cited Urdank, *Religion and Society*, 95; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Letters by Benjamin Francis," *Trafodion* (1983): 6. In one of the circular letters that Francis drew up for the Western Association, he mentions that some of his readers are "sorely distressed with pressing indigence" (Circular Letter of the Western Association, 1772, 3).
- 16 Gwyn Davies, "A Welsh Exile: Benjamin Francis (1734–99)" (Unpublished ms., 1999; in the possession of the author), 2. On Francis' financial problems, see also Thomas Flint, "A Brief Narrative of the Life and Death of the Rev. Benjamin Francis, A. M.," annexed to John Ryland, Jr., *The Presence of Christ the Source of eternal Bliss. A Funeral Discourse, ... occasioned by the Death of the Rev. Benjamin Francis, A. M.* (Bristol, 1800), 49.
- 17 Bowers, "After the Benediction," 233–236.
- 18 J. H. Y. Briggs, "Baptists and the Wider Community" in Copson and Morden, ed., *Challenge and Change*, 135.
- 19 K. R. Manley, "Robert Bowyer (1758–1834): Artist, Publisher and Preacher," *The Baptist Quarterly*, 23 (1969–1970): 32–46.
- 20 Ernest A. Payne, *The Excellent Mr. Burls: First London Member of the Committee and Third Treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society; First Treasurer of the Baptist Irish Society* (London: Carey Press, [1943]).
- 21 In the year of Gill's death, Gill's magnum opus, *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, was described as "incomparable" by the Northamptonshire Association. See *The Circular Letter from the Ministers and Messengers, Assembled at Oulney, in Buckinghamshire, June 4 and 5, 1771* (Circular Letter of the Northamptonshire Association, 1771),



4. During his lifetime, it was a saying among some English Baptists that "'Tis safe to believe any thing, if Mr. G[ill] believes it" (Anonymous, *Unity among Christian Ministers and People. Recommended in a Letter to Mr. John Gill* [London, 1746], 3).
- <sup>22</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the New Testament*, 4:507, commenting on 2 Thess 3:11.
- <sup>23</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the Old Testament*, 1:30, commenting on Gen 4:2.
- <sup>24</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the Old Testament*, 4:479, commenting on Prov 27:23.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:17, commenting on Gen 2:15.
- <sup>26</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the New Testament*, 4:359, commenting on Phil 4:6. See also Gill's comments on Prov 12:11; 20:13; 26:13; 27:24, 27; 29:17; Matt 5:21; Rom 12:11; 2 Thess 3:13. The emphasis on diligence in these various comments is part of Gill's indebtedness to Puritanism. See Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 34.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:667, commenting on John 21:3.
- <sup>28</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the Old Testament*, 3:336, commenting on Ps 37:5. See also Gill's comments on Eccl 9:11 and 1 Peter 5:7.
- <sup>29</sup> See Gill's comments on Prov 14:23; 20:13; Eccl 3:22; 9:10; 1 Cor 7:33; Gal 6:8; Phil 4:6; 2 Thess 3:8, 12–13.
- <sup>30</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the Old Testament*, 4:567, commenting on Eccl 9:10, and *idem*, *Exposition of the New Testament*, 4:637, commenting on Titus 3:14. See also Gill's comments on Ezek 44:11; 46:1; Acts 13:5; Rom 12:11; Phil 4:6; 2 Thess 3:12–13.
- <sup>31</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the New Testament*, 4:637, commenting on Titus 3:14.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:470, commenting on 1 Thess 5:6.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 4:359, commenting on Phil 4:6.
- <sup>34</sup> Lactantius, *Divine Institutions* 3.10.1 in L. Caeli Firmiani Lactanti, *Opera Omnia. Pars I*, ed. Samuel Brandt (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, vol.19; Prague and Vienna: F. Tempsky/Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1890), 202.
- <sup>35</sup> Gill, *Exposition of the Old Testament*, 587, commenting on Eccl 12:13.
- <sup>36</sup> "Queries and Solutions of Joshua Thomas and Benjamin Francis of Horsley 1758–70, being the answers of one to questions posed by the other on matters of theology, church government, preaching," 2 vols. (MS G.9.8.5 in the Archives of Bristol Baptist College, Bristol, UK).
- <sup>37</sup> "Queries and Solutions," I, 156–161, *passim*.
- <sup>38</sup> For Dutton's life and thought, see especially J. C. Whitebrook, "The Life and Works of Mrs. Ann Dutton," *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, 7:3–4 (1921): 129–146; Stephen J. Stein, "A Note on Anne Dutton, Eighteenth-Century Evangelical," *Church History*, 44 (1975): 485–491; Michael D. Sciretti, Jr., "'Feed My Lambs': The Spiritual Direction Ministry of Calvinistic British Baptist Anne Dutton During the Early Years of the Evangelical Revival" (PhD thesis, Baylor University, 2009). Most of Dutton's works have survived in only a few copies. Thankfully many of her works are currently available in a series of volumes compiled by JoAnn Ford Watson, *Selected Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-Century, British-Baptist, Woman Theologian* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003–2015), 7 vols.
- The sketch of her life that follows is dependent in part on Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 48–115. For her own account of her conversion, which she detailed in her *A Brief Account of the Gracious Dealings of God, with a Poor, Sinful, Unworthy Creature* (1743), see Watson, comp., *Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton*, 3:8–27.
- <sup>39</sup> Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 51–53.
- <sup>40</sup> Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God* in Watson, comp., *Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton*, 3:27–28. Dutton's capitalization of words in her writings, as well as some of the italicization, all of which Watson's editions retained, has been modernized.
- <sup>41</sup> On Goodwin's influence on Dutton, see Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 62.
- <sup>42</sup> On Moore, see Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 59–60, n.42.
- <sup>43</sup> Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God* in Watson, comp., *Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton*, 3:47, 50.
- <sup>44</sup> Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 64–65.
- <sup>45</sup> On this church's history during this period, see Murdina D. MacDonald, "London Calvinistic Baptists 1689–1727: Tensions within a Dissenting Community under Toleration" (DPhil thesis, Regent's Park College, Oxford, 1982), 109–131.
- <sup>46</sup> *God's Operations of Grace: But no Offers of Grace* (London: D. Bridge, 1707),
- <sup>47</sup> Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God* in Watson, comp., *Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton*, 3:51.
- <sup>48</sup> MacDonald, "London Calvinistic Baptists 1689–1727," 124.
- <sup>49</sup> Dutton, *Gracious Dealings of God* in Watson, comp., *Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton*, 3:63–64.

- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:70.
- <sup>51</sup> Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 76–77.
- <sup>52</sup> For a brief history of the church, see Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Isaac Taylor Hinton and Holdsworth & Ball, 1830), 4:509–510.
- <sup>53</sup> Cited Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 91–92.
- <sup>54</sup> Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, 4:510.
- <sup>55</sup> See the discussion of these links by Stein, "Note on Anne Dutton," 485–490, and Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 198–280.
- <sup>56</sup> Cited Stein, "Note on Anne Dutton," 487–488.
- <sup>57</sup> Cited *ibid.*, 488.
- <sup>58</sup> George Whitefield, Letter to Mr. [Jonathan] B[ryan], July 24, 1741 in *Letters of George Whitefield For the period 1734–1742* (1771 ed.; repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 280.
- <sup>59</sup> Sciretti, "Feed My Lambs," 100–101.
- <sup>60</sup> Anne Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper, Relating to the Nature, Subjects, and right Partaking of this Solemn Ordinance* (London: J. Hart, 1748), 7. Quotes from this work have been modernized with regard to capitalization.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 3–4.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>64</sup> Anne Dutton, *A Letter To such of the Servants of Christ, who May have any Scruples about the Lawfulness of Printing any Thing written by a Woman* (London: J. Hart, 1743), 3. It is reprinted by Watson, comp., *Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton*, 3:253–258.
- <sup>65</sup> Dutton, *Printing any Thing written by a Woman*, 4. On the employment of these Pauline texts in the Calvinistic Baptist community, see Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 1:319–320. More generally, on other female authors in the English Calvinistic Baptist community, see Timothy Whelan, "No sanctuary for Philistines": Baptists and Culture in the Eighteenth Century" in Copson and Morden, ed., *Challenge and Change*, 214–217.
- <sup>66</sup> Dutton, *Printing any Thing written by a Woman*, 8.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5, 6–7.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7. Gill also argued on the basis of Priscilla's example in Acts 18 that "women of grace, knowledge, and experience, though they are not allowed to teach in public, yet they may, and ought to communicate in private what they know of divine things for the use of others" (*Exposition of the New Testament*, 3:259, commenting on Acts 18:26). Compare his comments on Romans 16:3, 12; 1 Corinthians 14:34–35; 1 Timothy 2:12.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 11–12. See also Dutton's comments in her *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper*, A3 recto, where she stated that she wrote this particular work on the Lord's Table out of "love to Christ's honour and the good of souls."
- <sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. Catherine A. Brekus has argued that Anne's use of the term "weak" to describe herself and likening her printed words to "the lisping of a babe" (Dutton, *Printing any Thing written by a Woman*, 11) was a strategy to find a degree of credibility in the eyes of her male readers. See Catherine A. Brekus, "Writing Religious Experience: Women's Authorship in Early America," *The Journal of Religion*, 92 (2012): 489. See also Dutton, *Thoughts on the Lord's Supper*, A2 recto, where she noted her "weakness and insufficiency" to write about the Lord's Table.