



The Pioneering Evangelicalism of Dan Taylor (1738-1816)

This Whitley Lecture explores the unique gifts and ministry of Dan Taylor, who slipped 'down the candle' from Anglican through Methodist to Baptist. Taylor became one of our denomination's pioneers in the 18th century, founding the New Connexion in 1770 because of his belief in the missional power of meaningful association. In hearing his story the reader cannot fail to be impressed by Taylor's refusal to be imprisoned by established interpretations of the Bible: not least in his treatment of women; the mobilisation of all believers to missionary activity; the atonement and its reach (then and now, a key topic of debate); and even an insistence on the importance of contextual training for ministry, which we often think to be a 20th century phenomenon. Here is a true Baptist: free in thought and egalitarian in action. Baptists today might ponder the implications for their own ministries and social engagement.

"Dan Taylor is little known today, but he is an extremely important figure in English Baptist history. In this excellent lecture, Richard T. Pollard draws the contours of Taylor's wide ranging and influential ministry on the map of Baptist life, showing especially how he was shaped by the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. Taylor emerges as a lively evangelical thinker who was determined to put his principles into practice. Pollard describes him as 'The Baptist Wesley' and makes a strong case for this bold claim. He has mined a rich seam of primary material and the scholarship on display here is impeccable. Both the details and the broad sweep of Taylor's ministry are brought into focus as never before, and this lecture makes a real contribution to our understanding of Baptist heritage, as well as illuminating wider

trends. This very readable study also has great contemporary significance. Taylor was a pioneer, an entrepreneur who sought to be both faithful and creative in his ministry. He was a strategic thinker who shaped the life of a denomination around key evangelical priorities whilst holding firm to core Baptist principles. Above all, in his thinking and his practice he prioritised gospel mission. Pollard wisely refrains from drawing out lessons for the twenty-first century, instead focusing on writing good history. But for those with eyes to see there is much here that is relevant to our own context. This Whitley Lecture is, therefore, a resource not only for scholars but for all who seek to engage in ministry and mission today."

Dr Peter Morden, Vice Principal (Director of Training), Spurgeon's College, London



Richard T. Pollard acquired BA and MA degrees in politics at the universities of Northumbria and Sheffield, and later embarked on ministerial formation at Spurgeon's College. His PhD on the theology of Dan Taylor is from the University of Wales (under the auspices of Spurgeon's College). Richard has previously served as Associate Minister on the staff teams at St Thomas Crookes, Sheffield, and South Parade, Leeds. He is currently team leader at Fishponds Baptist Church, Bristol. He is married to Nikki and has two sons. Richard enjoys football, birdwatching and taking his crazy Old English Sheepdog for walks!

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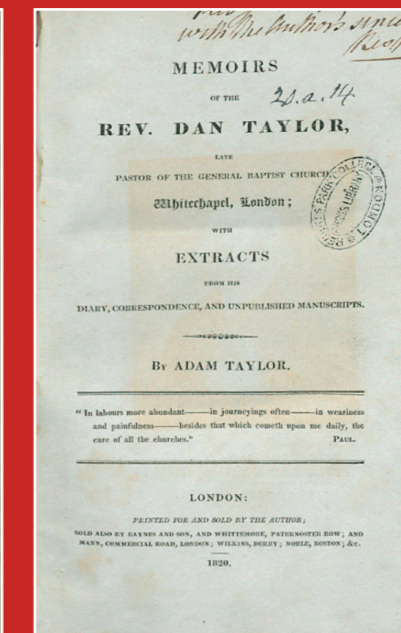
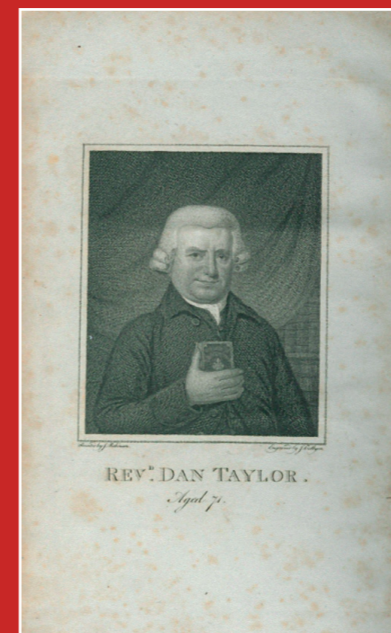


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The Whitley Lecture

The Whitley Lecture was first established in 1949 in honour of W.T. Whitley (1861–1947), the Baptist minister and historian. Following a pastorate in Bridlington, during which he also taught at Rawdon College in Yorkshire, Whitley became the first Principal of the Baptist College of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, in 1891. This institution was later renamed Whitley College in his honour.

Whitley was a key figure in the formation of the Baptist Historical Society in 1908. He edited its journal, which soon gained an international reputation for the quality of its contents – a reputation it still enjoys nearly a century later as the *Baptist Quarterly*. His *A History of British Baptists* (London: Charles Griffin, 1923) remains an important source of information and comment for contemporary historians. Altogether he made an important contribution to Baptist life and self-understanding in Britain and Australia, providing a model of how a pastor-scholar might enrich the life and faith of others.

The establishment of the annual lecture in his name is designed as an encouragement to research and writing by Baptist scholars, and to enable the results of this work to be published. The giving of grants, advice and other forms of support by the Lectureship Committee serves the same purpose. The committee consists of representatives of the British Baptist Colleges, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, BMS World Mission, the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship and the Baptist Historical Society. These organizations also provide financial support for its work.

Sally Nelson, Secretary to the Whitley Committee

INTRODUCTION

This study makes a detailed examination of the evangelicalism of Dan Taylor (1738-1816), a leading eighteenth-century General Baptist minister and founder of the New Connexion of General Baptists – a revival movement. Through extensive use of primary material, the chief facets and underpinning tenets of Taylor’s evangelicalism are delineated. Particular consideration will be given to Taylor’s spiritual formation; soteriology; understanding of the atonement; beliefs regarding the means and process of conversion; ecclesiology; approach to baptism, the Lord’s Supper and worship; and his missiology. Many new insights will be provided on the theological thinking of this important evangelical figure. This examination of Taylor’s evangelicalism also makes a contribution to the recent debates regarding the origins of evangelicalism. The extent of the continuity between evangelicalism and its Protestant past has been a particular point of disagreement. It is here that the nature of Taylor’s evangelicalism is especially relevant. It will be seen that it reflects that which was distinct about evangelicalism as a movement that emerged from within the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. Taylor’s propensity for innovation serves as a unifying theme throughout this study, with many of its accompanying patterns of thinking and practical expressions, demonstrating that which was distinct about evangelicalism as a primarily eighteenth-century phenomenon.

EMERGENT EVANGELICAL

On 11 June 1800 Taylor represented the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers in a direct address to King George III.¹ While his selection for this role reflected the respect he commanded as a leading evangelical figure, the nature of his background meant he would not have envisaged ever being presented with such an opportunity.² Taylor was born into a poor

¹ Adam Taylor, *Memoirs Of The Rev. Dan Taylor, Late Pastor Of The General Baptist Church, Whitechapel, London; With Extracts From His Diary, Correspondence, And Unpublished Manuscripts* (London: Baynes and Son, 1820), p. 220. As with this reference, it should be noted that in my use of all primary sources, I have endeavoured to follow the capitalisation, grammar, spelling and formatting of the original titles. A further point to note is that Dan Taylor did not use inclusive language. While I have quoted Taylor accurately, I have sought to use inclusive language in my own writing in this study.

² For a description of the material constraints that were apparent in Taylor’s upbringing, see Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp. 2-3.

household near Halifax, West Riding in 1738.³ He was the second son of Azor and Mary who had eight children. Family life was marked by material austerity, hard work and a regard for moral living. From the age of four to twenty-four, Taylor worked with his father in a local coal mine. This was arduous and dangerous, and on at least one occasion he nearly lost his life.⁴ He received no formal education other than that taught by his mother. The Bible was read to him from an early age and the family regularly attended Halifax Parish Church.⁵

Taylor's introduction to the Evangelical Revival began during the mid-1750s when he travelled many miles with his brother John (1743-1818)⁶ to hear evangelical preachers. In particular, they made frequent visits to Haworth Parish Church to listen to the preaching of William Grimshaw (1708-63).⁷ While the origins of the evangelical movement in Yorkshire began with the evangelistic endeavours of others such as Benjamin Ingham (1712-72), stonemason John Nelson (1707-74), and shoemaker William Darney ([1684/5?]-1774), Grimshaw's ministry was significant. As John Walsh notes, he was 'the dominating figure of the period'.⁸ After Grimshaw embraced evangelicalism in 1738, the twelve regular communicants at Haworth in 1742 soon grew to a gathering of regularly over a thousand people.⁹ Grimshaw became one of the most renowned evangelists in the North of England.¹⁰ The Taylors' visits to Haworth involved them standing among crowds of many thousands as they attended the preaching of other leading evangelicals. These included the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield (1714-70) whose ministries further contributed to how 'the revival

³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 2.

⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp. 2-4. Adam Taylor describes how Dan Taylor narrowly escaped with his life when the mine flooded in 1753.

⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp. 2-5. While Adam Taylor did not provide the name of the parish church that the family attended, my examination of records at the West Yorkshire Archives Office indicate that it was Halifax Parish Church. See, Richard T. Pollard, 'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice': The Pioneering Evangelicalism of Dan Taylor (1738-1816)' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales, 2014), p. 29.

⁶ John Taylor also became a General Baptist minister.

⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 5. Haworth was twelve miles from the family home in Northowram.

⁸ John D. Walsh, 'The Yorkshire Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century: With Especial Reference to Methodism' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1956), p. 330. For the significance of Grimshaw's ministry in Yorkshire, see Walsh, pp. 96-113. See also, Frank Baker, *William Grimshaw 1708-63* (London: Epworth Press, 1963).

⁹ John Newton, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late Rev. William Grimshaw, with Occasional Reflections by John Newton, in Six Letters to the Rev. Henry Foster* (London: Bensley, 1799), p. 70.

¹⁰ John W. Laycock, *Methodist Heroes in the Great Haworth Round, 1734-84* (Keighley: Wadsworth, 1909), p. 32.

was expanding and consolidating in Yorkshire'.¹¹ Taylor was both a witness of this revival and willing participant.

Taylor's nephew, Adam Taylor (1768-1832), recorded how Dan Taylor's trips to Haworth frequently 'melted him to tears'.¹² The preached message of the need to place faith in Christ as the Son of God, who died for the sins of the world and for each person individually, was 'instrumental' in helping Taylor gain 'clearer views of the plan of mercy through a redeemer'.¹³ Taylor soon considered his inherited understanding of the gospel as deficient and stated that 'if the gospel had been preached as it ought to have been, he should have obtained liberty much sooner'.¹⁴ He perceived the evangelical depiction of the gospel as something new and with which he felt compelled to engage.

As Taylor participated in the revival he encountered what David Bebbington in his 1989 publication of his landmark *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* refers to as evangelicalism's 'special marks' of 'conversionism' – the belief that human beings need to be converted; 'activism' – that the gospel needs to be expressed in effort; 'biblicism' – a special regard for the Bible as the source of spiritual truth; and 'crucicentrism' – a particular focus on the atoning work of Christ on the cross.¹⁵ While Bebbington does not present the movement as entirely uniform but as comprising numerous strands, he is clear that this 'quadrilateral of priorities' forms 'the basis of Evangelicalism' and provides it with a 'self-conscious unity'.¹⁶ The way Bebbington roots his examination of evangelicalism within a close consideration of the surrounding context of the English Enlightenment provides a further reason for the attention I have placed on his understanding of evangelicalism. While Reginald Ward, for example, provides insights into the origins and nature of evangelicalism, the thrust of his focus is the influence of Continental Pietism.¹⁷ However, there is no evidence of direct

¹¹ Walsh, 'The Yorkshire Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century', p. 144.

¹² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 6.

¹³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 9. Adam Taylor's account of Taylor's entrance into evangelicalism is particularly important as neither Taylor's diary entries, surviving letters, nor published works cover this period. It was not until 1764 that Taylor began writing his diary and he was then occupied with more immediate concerns rather than recording his experience of faith during his earlier years.

¹⁵ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman 1989), pp. 2-17.

¹⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 3, 3, 27.

¹⁷ See, e.g., W. Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

continental influences on Taylor or on his formation of the New Connexion which was a thoroughly English movement. A further core dimension of Bebbington's approach is that he views evangelicalism as inseparable from the beginnings of the Evangelical Revival in the 1730s.¹⁸ This aspect of Bebbington's understanding of evangelicalism has proved most contentious. An example is the 2008 publication *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*, edited by Michael Haykin and Kenneth Stewart.¹⁹ In the main the contributors seek to demonstrate that eighteenth-century evangelicalism was no more than a continuum of theological thinking and practices, particularly those associated with the Reformation and Puritanism. The extent to which Taylor's pioneering evangelicalism serves to support Bebbington's argument is a central theme of this study.

When Taylor listened to evangelical preachers he heard a uniformity of message. This comprised what Grimshaw referred to as the 'main doctrines of all discourse' and included 'Man's fall and degeneracy, his redemption through Jesus Christ alone, the nature & necessity of the new birth, justification by faith alone, sanctification by the indwelling spirit of our redeemer'.²⁰ These elements formed the essential content of the evangelical message Taylor heard. Grimshaw also contended that it was not beneficial for his listeners to insist on subjects of controversy in his preaching.²¹ Taylor also came to embrace this conviction. He later urged ministers to 'be little concerned in the pulpit about niceties of dispute, especially in nonessentials'.²² A consequence of Taylor having been introduced to this style of preaching at Haworth was that he was unlikely to have then been aware of the differing theological standpoints surrounding the scope of the atonement. While these differences had elsewhere caused contention between the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield and some discord between their partisans,²³ Walsh notes that 'here on the moors individual quiddities, Election

¹⁸ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 20.

¹⁹ *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*, ed. by Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008).

²⁰ William Grimshaw, 'Letter to John Gillies', 19 July 1754, in John Gillies, *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel* (Kelso: Rutherford, 1845), pp. 506-8 (p. 507). *Historical Collections* was first published in 1754, although Grimshaw's letter was not included.

²¹ Newton, *Memoirs...Rev. William Grimshaw*, p. 99.

²² Dan Taylor, 'Letter to George Birley', 6 February 1778, Letters from the Revd Dan Taylor to the Revd George Birley, 1771-1808, Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College, Oxford, Hughes Collection (D/HUS 1/6/5) (page not numbered).

²³ For example, in 1739 John Wesley published his 29 April 1739 sermon on *Free Grace* within which he challenged the doctrines of limited atonement and unconditional election. Annexed to this work was a poem on universal redemption by Charles Wesley, see John Wesley, *Free Grace: A*

or Perfection, seemed insignificant while the great harvest stretched before the little band of reapers'.²⁴ This was reflected in how Taylor held the Wesleys and Whitefield in equal regard.²⁵

While Taylor and many others in the West Riding considered the content of evangelical gospel preaching as new, what Grimshaw cited as its 'main doctrines' were found within the teaching of earlier movements such as the Protestant Reformers, Puritans and Separatists. It also shared certain commonalities with Latitudinarianism, which was dominant in the Church of England in the eighteenth century.²⁶ Similar to the evangelicalism Taylor came to embrace, many Latitudinarians disliked theological controversy and instead promoted irenicism. A further commonality was the way in which their preaching and written works tended to be marked by plainness, absence of abstractionism and an emphasis on the practical duties of faith.²⁷ Despite these similarities, a crucial difference was how Latitudinarians often understood salvation without reference to Christ's atoning work and as guaranteed for those who lived a moral life.²⁸ Taylor was likely influenced by Latitudinarianism as he worshipped at Halifax Parish Church under the ministry of George Legh (1693-1775). Despite Legh being a friend to evangelicals,²⁹ wider evidence, such as his strong association with Bishop Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761), upholds John Hargreaves' designation of Legh as an 'undogmatic Latitudinarian'.³⁰ Legh's Latitudinarian leanings would have contributed to what Taylor found to be new as he listened to evangelicals emphasise the sufficiency for salvation of the exercise of faith alone in Christ's atoning work.

Sermon Preach'd At Bristol (Bristol: S. and F. Farley, 1739). In response, Whitefield wrote a reply to John Wesley where he strongly defended the sovereignty of God in salvation, see George Whitefield, 'A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John. Wesley', 24 December 1740, in George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, new edn (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), pp. 571-88. This publication is a revision of William Wales' 1905 edition of Whitefield's *Journals*.

²⁴ Walsh, 'The Yorkshire Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century', p. 108. Walsh's reference to 'Perfection' concerns John Wesley's doctrine of perfection.

²⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 5.

²⁶ Latitudinarianism emerged in the seventeenth century through individuals including the Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson who drew upon the ideas of Cambridge Platonists such as Ralph Cudworth. For an examination of Latitudinarianism and its central tenets see Martin I.J. Griffin Jr, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England*, ed. by Lila Freedman (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

²⁷ Patrick Muller, *Latitudinarianism and Didacticism in Eighteenth Century Literature: Moral Theology in Fielding, Sterne and Goldsmith* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 79-82.

²⁸ Griffin, *Latitudinarianism*, pp. 39-40, 106, 126-48.

²⁹ John A. Hargreaves, 'Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax c. 1740-1914' (unpublished PhD thesis, Huddersfield Polytechnic, 1991), pp. 71-72.

³⁰ Hargreaves, 'Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax c. 1740-1914', p. 71.

At Haworth Taylor was introduced to new ways in which the gospel was articulated. The framing of sermons around an invitation for people to put their faith in Christ, use of market language, limited doctrinal detail and importance placed on the experiential, were influential on his evangelical development. Taylor's first published work was a tribute to Grimshaw as a 'powerful preacher'.³¹ The Anglican minister and hymn writer John Newton (1725-1807) emphasised that whereas many who had a Church of England background 'seldom heard any thing more from the pulpit, than cold lectures upon lean, modern morality', Grimshaw 'commanded their attention...as one who was well assured of the truth and importance of his message'.³² Evangelicals such as Grimshaw also tended to dismiss 'metaphysical subtleties' and 'speculative' aspects of the faith as superfluous to the core gospel message, and particularly to the task of helping people reach a point of conversion to Christ.³³ As examined later, this subsequently became a central characteristic of Taylor's approach. It also reflected how intellectual thinking and social attitudes gave rise to pragmatism as part of the English Enlightenment.³⁴

The significant ways Taylor was impacted by evangelicalism led him in 1755 to join the Methodists in Halifax where, for nine years, he was actively involved.³⁵ His participation in the Halifax society gave him the opportunity to delve more deeply into those elements of evangelical teaching that had fostered within him a new sense of liberation and understanding of the Saviour. When he attended society meetings he was taught the key tenets of Methodism. A general view of the atonement was laid before Taylor who quickly embraced the doctrine.³⁶ As examined later, his involvement in the society's structures and participation in hymn singing were influential on his future approach to ministry. Taylor's involvement in Methodism and travels to Haworth were highly formative upon his evangelical development.

³¹ Anon. [Dan Taylor], *A Thought on the Death of the Late Reverend Mr. Wm. Grimshaw, who died the 7th April 1763* (Halifax: Darby, 1763), p. 1.

³² Newton, *Memoir...Rev. William Grimshaw*, p. 56. The formatting of 'any thing' in the first of these quotations is as in the original.

³³ Newton, *Memoirs...Rev. William Grimshaw*, p. 99.

³⁴ See, e.g., Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 22.

³⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 6.

³⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 6.

INNOVATIVE APOLOGIST

For various reasons, Taylor declined the opportunity to become a travelling Methodist preacher and withdrew from the Methodist movement in 1762.³⁷ Later that year, he assumed leadership of a small group of fellow Methodist seceders in Hepstonstall, near Halifax.³⁸ He acquired premises for the fellowship in nearby Wadsworth and soon afterwards left his employment in the coal mine to commit more fully to the fellowship's development.³⁹ In early 1763, Taylor helped the fellowship establish core ecclesiological and theological principles they could unite around.⁴⁰ These included a commitment to a general view of the atonement and an embracing of believers' baptism. Taylor was himself baptised in February 1763.⁴¹ The church soon grew in number with Elizabeth Saltonstall who became his first wife, one of the 'first fruits'.⁴² He then oversaw the process by which the fellowship became the first General Baptist church in Yorkshire.⁴³

Taylor was ordained in July 1763⁴⁴ and soon began visiting other General Baptist churches as he raised funds for the building of a church on a hillside called Birchcliff – the name by which the fellowship subsequently became known.⁴⁵ During these visits, Taylor became aware that many General Baptists were resistant to the Evangelical Revival and held contrary understandings to himself concerning subjects such as the nature of sin, deity of Christ and atonement. These beliefs – usually referred to as Socinianism, Unitarianism and Universalism differed greatly from those he had embraced within the Evangelical Revival. Displaying an almost palpable frustration, he noted 'How far do we differ in judgement with respect to all these things! What can be done?'⁴⁶ He responded by assuming the role of an evangelical apologist. In 1772 Taylor wrote *The Scriptural Account of the Way of Salvation* which provided a direct response to the teachings of William Graham (1721-96) – an influential Unitarian minister in the West Riding and close friend to the eminent scientist, philosopher

³⁷ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 9.

³⁸ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 9.

³⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 10.

⁴¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 13.

⁴² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 17.

⁴³ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 15.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 15.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 17. Throughout this study, I have used the spelling of 'Birchcliff' which is the way it was written by Taylor and his contemporaries. It later became known as 'Birchcliffe'.

⁴⁶ Dan Taylor, diary extract, 19 May 1765, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 21.

and Unitarian theologian Joseph Priestley (1733-1804).⁴⁷ Taylor insisted that Graham adopt a scriptural understanding of both humankind's depravity and guilt before God, and how salvation was acquired only as a free gift through faith in the atoning work of the fully human and yet fully divine Christ.⁴⁸ While Taylor provided an orthodox depiction of the essentials of the faith, his surrounding theological framework was typical of how he functioned as an innovative apologist. The compatibility he highlighted between reason and revelation was a significant example. He was unhesitating that the most natural orientation of humankind's extensive capability as a 'rational creature; capable of thinking, reasoning and judging' was to 'receive and embrace' divine revelation.⁴⁹ He was unreserved in his praise for what he referred to as the 'grand office of reason'.⁵⁰ Taylor's position was typical of how Bebbington argues that evangelicalism was not a fundamentalist reaction to the preeminence placed upon reason within the the social, cultural and intellectual phenomenon of the Enlightenment, but was itself 'an expression of the age of reason'.⁵¹

Taylor's conviction that the process of submission to divine revelation was complemented by a rational means of approach was at variance to most Puritan assumptions. Even among Arminian Puritans such as the influential seventeenth-century poet and polemicist John Milton (1608-74), and the theologian John Goodwin (1594-1665), a deeply entrenched sensitivity concerning the corrupting effects of sin led to a refusal to commend the benefits of rational thinking in the salvific process. For example, while Milton resisted strictly deterministic understandings of salvation, his recurring emphasis upon the corrupting influences of the 'general depravity of the human mind and its propensity to sin' meant he never attributed specific credence to people's rational abilities.⁵² Taylor's positive endorsement of humankind's rational capacity reflected his refusal to accept that a person's depraved nature restricted their ability to respond in reasoned manner to the gospel.⁵³ The

⁴⁷ Dan Taylor, *The Scriptural Account of the Way of Salvation in Two Parts: The former, an appeal to the conscience of every reader, respecting some important doctrines of Scripture and his own personal concern in them. The latter, a free examination of a sermon lately published by the Rev. W. Graham, M.A. Intituled 'Repentance the only condition of Final Acceptance'* (Halifax: Jacob, 1772).

⁴⁸ Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... an appeal*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... an appeal*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... an appeal*, p. 8.

⁵¹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 53.

⁵² John Milton, *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine: Compiled From the Holy Scriptures Alone*. Trans. by Charles R. Sumner, Vol. 1 (Boston: Cummings, Billiard and Co, 1825), p. 348.

⁵³ Dan Taylor, diary extract, 1 January 1765, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 55.

way in which such a position was alien to Puritans, even those of Arminian persuasion, effectively illustrates the nature of Taylor's enlightened evangelicalism.

Taylor's *Scriptural Account of the Way of Salvation* was underpinned by references to significant Enlightenment writers such as Alexander Pope who he commended as a 'celebrated Poet'.⁵⁴ He specifically highlighted Pope's assertion in his *Essay on Man* that 'to reason right, is to submit' to God.⁵⁵ Taylor hailed John Locke (1632-1704) as the 'consummate Philosopher' and included references to Locke's influential works such as *The Reasonableness Of Christianity* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* within which Locke sought to reconcile faith with empirical knowledge and rational inquiry.⁵⁶ The heralding of sensory perception, experience and evidence as a basis for knowledge which together lay at the heart of Locke's empirical approach was particularly influential upon Taylor. As Taylor sought to convince Graham that it was only through Christ's obedience believers are made righteous, and God therefore imputes righteousness as a gift rather than in response to good works, he employed unmistakable Lockean terms. Taylor argued that the appropriateness of God choosing to act in this way was confirmed if people 'judge according to the nature of things, or consult our own experience in the matter'.⁵⁷ Similarly, as he reflected on the nature of humankind's depravity in his 1785 *Our Saviour's Commission to his Ministers*, he argued this was evident 'from constant observation, from universal experience, and from the current language of Scripture'.⁵⁸ His attempts to convince others of the truth with reference to the merits of observation and experience were distinct from Puritan tendencies to focus only upon the scriptures and associated biblically based spiritual practices. Taylor's empiricism was so deeply engrained that it naturally undergirded his theological outlook.

⁵⁴ Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... an appeal*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, ed. by Mark Pattison, 6th edn (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1881), p. 32. Qtd in Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... an appeal*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... examination of a sermon*, p. 5; John Locke, 'The Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures', in *The Works of John Locke*, 11th edn, 10 Vols (London: Otridge, 1812), Vol. 7, pp. 1-158; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

⁵⁷ Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... examination of a sermon*, p. 23.

⁵⁸ Dan Taylor, *Our Saviour's Commission to his Ministers, Explained and Improved. The Substance of a Sermon Delivered at Canterbury, and in Worship-Street, London, At the Administration of the Ordinance of Baptism* (Leeds: Wright, 1785), p. 7.

Taylor's innovativeness was apparent within the creative fusion of ideas that underpinned his overarching soteriological motif of God as moral governor. On the one hand, his approach shared certain parallels of theme and emphasis with the Dutch jurist and early Remonstrant leader, Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) – a leading exponent of the governmental view of atonement.⁵⁹ Examination of Taylor's *Fundamentals of Religion* reveals he shared Grotius' core belief that God's moral government was vindicated by Christ's death.⁶⁰ He noted that it served to appease divine justice as it maintained the highest regard for God's law and governing authority. However, whereas Grotius rejected propitiatory understandings of Christ's atonement as a sacrificial ransom that paid humankind's debt before God, Taylor was firm that Christ gave his life as 'a ransom for many'.⁶¹ Contrary to Grotius' rejection of a penal substitutionary view of the atonement, Taylor insisted that the biblical language of Jesus having 'borne our sins, died for our sins, and having been made a propitiation and curse for humankind' served to 'corroborate' what he referred to as 'the idea of punishment for our sins'.⁶² This is significant, for while the congruence of governmentalism with wider cultural trends meant other Baptists of Taylor's day later engaged creatively with the theory,⁶³ Taylor appears to have been the first eighteenth-century Baptist to have fused governmentalism with a penal approach to the atonement.⁶⁴ This was entirely in keeping with his innovative and pioneering outlook.

⁵⁹ For an overview of the life of Grotius, see Charles Butler, *The Life Of Hugo Grotius: With Brief Minutes of the Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Literary History of the Netherlands* (London: Murray, 1826). Grotius' governmental view of the atonement is outlined in Grotius, Hugo, *A Defence of the Catholick Faith Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ*, trans. by W.H. (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst and Johnathan Robinson, 1692).

⁶⁰ Dan Taylor, *Fundamentals Of Religion In Faith and Practice* (Leeds: p.p., 1775), p. 180. Grotius' influence on Taylor is clear from Taylor's diary entries and wider references.

⁶¹ Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... examination of a sermon*, p. 29. For a reflection on Grotius' rejection of propitiatory understandings, see Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), p. 230.

⁶² Taylor, *Scriptural Account ... examination of a sermon*, p. 37.

⁶³ See e.g. Pollard, 'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice', p. 86.

⁶⁴ For the influence of governmentalism on Andrew Fuller, see Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), pp. 89-92.

NOVEL ADVOCATE

Taylor advocated a mission-orientated application of spiritual disciplines. He viewed this as important in helping the New Connexion to maintain an evangelistic focus. He encouraged the Connexion's members to fast as this would lead to even greater numbers of 'quickenings of soul'.⁶⁵ Scriptural meditation was focused on the 'work of the Lord' which believers were called to embrace within scripture's grand plan of God's mission.⁶⁶ Believers were to engage regularly in spiritual self-examination and consider whether non-believers might see evidence of their faith.⁶⁷ Taylor was similarly probing when he addressed ministers. He encouraged them to make sure their inner 'propensities, passions and tempers' were always 'adapted for the purposes of conversion'.⁶⁸ He was fully committed to ensuring all believers utilised the spiritual disciplines to assist them in sharing the gospel with others.

The importance Taylor placed on a mission-orientated application of spiritual disciplines was a further distinguishing facet of his evangelicalism. It stood apart from the more introspective tendencies of many Puritans. Although never monolithic in their outlook, Puritans generally had little regard for issues surrounding the sharing of the gospel when engaging in disciplines such as spiritual self-examination. This is apparent within the reflections on the practices of Puritan piety provided by commentators such as James Packer and Charles Hambrick-Stowe.⁶⁹ When Puritans approached spiritual self-examination they tended to be more concerned with their own standing before God, particularly as they sought to identify the 'signs of grace' that might indicate they were among those who they believed God had elected to be saved. William Perkins, one of the foremost Puritan leaders in the

⁶⁵ Dan Taylor, diary extract, 10 May 1765, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 40.

⁶⁶ Dan Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', in *Minutes Of An Association Of General Baptist Ministers, And Representatives of Churches, Held At Loughborough, Leicestershire, July 1st, 2d, and 3d, 1801* (Derby: Printed by G. Wilkins, 1801), pp. 15-22 (p. 22).

⁶⁷ Dan Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches', in *Minutes of an Association of General Baptists, Held in Retford, Nottinghamshire, 27-28 May 1789* (London: Fry, 1789), pp. 3-5 (p. 5).

⁶⁸ Dan Taylor, 'Outline of a Charge Delivered at the Ordination of his Son in Law in Great Suffolk Street, Southwark, from Prov. xxiii.15,16.', in *General Baptist Magazine*, ed. by Dan Taylor, vol. 3 (London: Button, 1800), pp. 206-12 (p. 211); Taylor, 'Outline of a Charge', pp. 261-64 (p. 262). This reference is the conclusion of that outlined earlier in the same volume.

⁶⁹ James I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990); Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 170-75.

Church of England, described a process of ‘descending into our own hearts’.⁷⁰ Such an uncertainty was found within the declarations of other English Puritan preachers such as Thomas Brooks who viewed salvation as a ‘crown that few wear’.⁷¹ Peter Morden draws attention to the ‘protracted struggle for assurance’ of John Bunyan (1628-88) and how he tended to lack the ‘confidence and certainty’ expressed by evangelicals.⁷² There was, as Ian Randall states, a tendency for Puritans ‘to see a ‘settled, well-grounded’ assurance of personal salvation as a blessing that was rare’.⁷³ Taylor’s position was different. He was convinced that all who placed their trust in Christ could be confident of their salvation. Declarations that ‘I have good evidence that my state is safe’,⁷⁴ and how he felt ‘excited and encouraged’ by the ‘precious promises’ of scripture regarding the surety of salvation were both normative.⁷⁵ This confident platform of assurance enabled Taylor to utilise spiritual disciplines to maintain a focus on evangelism.

Taylor also demonstrated a novel manner of proceeding as he acted as a proponent for his understanding of theological truth. His succinctness was a key distinctive. Given his resolve to protect the Connexion from the influence of Socinianism and Unitarianism it might have been expected that its founding *Articles of Religion* would have expansively outlined his understanding of the gospel.⁷⁶ Instead, Taylor wrote merely 652 words regarding the fall of humankind, moral law, person and work of Christ, salvation by faith, the Holy Spirit and baptism. Taylor’s approach to the process of joining the Connexion, and spiritual formation in general, saw him place primacy on a person’s spiritual experience rather than credal assent. From 1775 the validity of a person’s telling of their faith experience replaced commitment to

⁷⁰ William Perkins, *An exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles: according to the tenour of the Scriptures, and the consent of orthodoxe Fathers of the Church* (London: [n.pub.], 1595), p. 439. Qtd in Ian Randall, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus: The Evangelical Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005), p. 17.

⁷¹ Thomas Brooks, *Heaven on Earth* [1654], in Thomas Brooks, *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Nichol, 1866), vol. 2, pp. 302-534 (p. 317).

⁷² Peter Morden, ‘John Bunyan: A Seventeenth-Century Evangelical?’, in *Grounded in Grace: Essays to Honour Ian M. Randall*, ed. by Pieter J. Lalleman, Peter J. Morden and Anthony R. Cross (London: Spurgeon’s College and Baptist Historical Society, 2013), pp. 33-52 (pp. 42, 51).

⁷³ Randall, *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, p. 17.

⁷⁴ Dan Taylor, diary extract, 13 December 1765, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Dan Taylor, ‘Letter to George Birley’, 1 February 1781, Letters from the Revd Dan Taylor to the Revd George Birley, 1771-1808 (D/HUS 1/6/10) (page not numbered).

⁷⁶ *Articles of Religion of the New Connexion*, in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. edn (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), pp. 342-44.

the *Articles* as the principal criteria for admission into membership.⁷⁷ The brevity of the *Articles* is further pronounced when compared to earlier General Baptist creeds and confessions such as the 1660 Standard Confession, which considered particulars such as election, the eternal destiny of children, and laying on of hands.⁷⁸ Similarly, the 1678 *Orthodox Creed* is 16,000 words in length and includes reflection on subjects such as the Trinity, pre-destination and divine providence.⁷⁹ In contrast, the nature of Taylor's evangelical Arminianism was such that he preferred to isolate only core principles and offer minimal reflection.

Taylor's succinctness was a significant difference compared to how the influential seventeenth-century General Baptist minister Thomas Grantham (1633-92) 'canvassed the whole of Christian doctrine' in *Christianismus Primitivus*.⁸⁰ Rather than engage in detailed doctrinal reflection, the practical spread of the gospel was always Taylor's greatest priority. At his most impassioned, Taylor declared 'I have now done with preaching on doctrinal points' and instead resolved to be 'diligent in illustrating, enforcing and promoting experimental and practical religion'.⁸¹ When his role as overseer of the Connexion necessitated he engaged with doctrine, the underpinning sentiments of this declaration still influenced his thinking. He also refused to enter into metaphysical and speculative reasoning. For example, while holding a Trinitarian position, he was critical of John Owen's (1616-83) examination of the nature of the Trinity.⁸² He was convinced that God never intended people to debate 'curious and nice distinctions concerning the manner of his existence'.⁸³ To prevent people getting distracted from the priority of sharing the gospel he repeatedly argued that the

⁷⁷ *An Association Held in the Town of Hinckley, Leicestershire, The 7th and 8th Days of June 1775*, Angus Library and Archives, Regent's Park College, Oxford, GB NC Association Minutes, 1770-96 (page not numbered).

⁷⁸ *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith*, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 224-35. After its first modification in 1663 the *Brief Confession* became known as the Standard Confession of the General Baptists.

⁷⁹ *An Orthodox Creed, or a Protestant Confession of Faith, being an Essay to Unite and Confirm all True Protestants in the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Religion, Against the Errors and Heresies of Rome*, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 297-334.

⁸⁰ Clint C. Bass, *Thomas Grantham (1633-1692) and General Baptist Theology* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2013), p. 30; Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus, or, The Ancient Christian Religion, in its Nature, Certainty, Excellency, and Beauty...With Divers Cases of Conscience Discussed and Resolved* (London: Smith, 1678).

⁸¹ Dan Taylor, diary entry, 31 July 1767, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 53.

⁸² See, e.g., John Owen, *Vindiciae Evangelicae* [1655], in Owen, *Works*, ed. by Goold, vol. 12 (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1853), pp. 1-590.

⁸³ Taylor, *Our Saviour's Commission*, p. 35.

Bible was 'a plain book, designed to instruct plain people, in a plain way to heaven'.⁸⁴ For instance, unlike the exhaustive manner in which the doctrine of general redemption was upheld by the few Puritan advocates of the doctrine such as John Goodwin,⁸⁵ Taylor insisted that debate surrounding the scope of Christ's atonement be restricted to 'the plain, practical parts of scripture'.⁸⁶ Similarly, when he upheld Christ's deity in response to what he labelled as Joseph Priestley's 'speculative notions' concerning Christ's identity,⁸⁷ he concentrated on that 'plainly spoken of' in the scriptures.⁸⁸ This was in keeping with a wider Enlightenment emphasis on pragmatism and simplicity. Taylor highlighted Locke's recommendation that believers focus only on the 'plain, direct meaning' of the scriptures.⁸⁹ This approach informed all aspects of his theological thinking.

Taylor functioned as a novel advocate regarding his 'darling theme' of Christ's death for all.⁹⁰ Whereas the writings of former General Baptists such as Grantham and Thomas Monck contain a lack of specific attention to the upholding of general redemption, it was central to all Taylor taught.⁹¹ Examples include his writings on *The Duty of Ministers*,⁹² 'Chief Subjects'

⁸⁴ Scrutator [Dan Taylor], 'Letter I. To Mr. Responsor', *Leeds Intelligencer* (date not specified), in Scrutator [Taylor], *Scrutator to Responsor; Or an Introduction to a Farther Proof, (If need be,) That Jesus Christ, the blessed Son of God, Laid Down His Life for the Sins of all mankind, In Two Letters to Responsor. With a short letter to Considerator*, 2nd edn (Leeds: Printed by J. Bowling, for the author, n.d. [1781]), pp. 3-15 (p. 5).

⁸⁵ For an examination of Goodwin's approach see, e.g., John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), p. 199.

⁸⁶ Scrutator [Taylor], 'To Mr. Considerator' (date not specified), in Scrutator [Taylor], *Scrutator to Responsor*, pp. 23-24 (p. 24).

⁸⁷ Philagathus [Dan Taylor], *A Practical Improvement of the Divinity and Atonement of Jesus, Attempted in Verse; Humbly Offered as a Supplement to the Tracts Lately Published by Mr. Cayley, the Rev. Mr. Morgan, Verus and Biblicus* (Halifax: Jacob, 1772), p. 2.

⁸⁸ Dan Taylor, *The Scriptural Account ... an Appeal*, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, pp. 1-158 (p. 2). For further consideration of the influence of Locke's works on Taylor see Pollard, 'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice', pp. 96-99.

⁹⁰ Lover of All Mankind [Dan Taylor], *Observations on the Rev. Andrew Fuller's Late Pamphlet, entitled, "The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation." ... In Nine Letters, to a Friend* (London: Buckland, Marsom and Griffiths, 1786), p. 98.

⁹¹ While Monck wrote on subjects such as the incarnation, the Trinity and religious toleration, he never specifically sought to uphold Christ's death for all in his published writings, see, e.g., Thomas Monck, *A cure for the cankering error of the new Eutychians* (London: p.p., 1673). It was similarly absent from the many doctrinal themes that Thomas Grantham chose to focus upon within his expansive *Christianismus Primitivus*.

⁹² Dan Taylor, 'Some Principal Parts of the Duty of Ministers explained and urged', in Dan Taylor and William Thompson, *The Respective Duties of Ministers and People Briefly explained and enforced* (Leeds: Wright, 1775).

for youth,⁹³ and *Mourning Parent Comforted*.⁹⁴ Taylor's foremost emphasis was that all should know the depth of God's love as exemplified in the general scope of Christ's death. He was resolute that this should motivate believers to share the gospel with others.⁹⁵ This missional thrust of his drawing attention to general redemption extended beyond how Puritan proponents of the doctrine such as Laurence Saunders and Thomas Moore Sr. emphasised the scope of God's love only with the hope of undermining belief in limited atonement.⁹⁶

The innovative way Taylor seized all opportunities to promote an understanding of a general view of the atonement is apparent when compared to John Wesley's (1703-91) approach. While Wesley addressed the subject such as in his 1739 sermon on *Free Grace*,⁹⁷ and refuted unconditional election in his 1752 *Predestination Calmly Considered*,⁹⁸ he generally did not utilise the doctrine as such a dominant theological motif. Distinct from Taylor's approach, Wesley spoke on subjects such as *Scriptural Christianity*⁹⁹ and *The Way to the Kingdom*¹⁰⁰ without drawing significant attention to the importance of general redemption. When seeking to account for the greater regularity of emphasis Taylor attached to the doctrine, it should be noted that the overarching aim of Wesley's ministry was different from Taylor's. Wesley's prime focus was his belief that 'God's design in raising up the Preachers called Methodists' was 'to spread scriptural holiness over the land'.¹⁰¹ While Taylor held the need for holiness in high regard, his overriding concern was 'To revive

⁹³ Dan Taylor, *Entertainment and Profit United: Easy Verses on Some of the Chief Subjects of Christianity for the Use of Poor Children and Youth*, 3rd edn (London: Hawes, [1777]).

⁹⁴ Dan Taylor, *Mourning Parent Comforted* (Halifax: Jacob, 1768).

⁹⁵ See, e.g., Dan Taylor, 'Letter I to Gilbert Boyce', 25 May 1793, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 268.

⁹⁶ Laurence Saunders, *The Fullnesse of Gods Love Manifested* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 1643); Thomas Moore, *The Universality of Gods Free Grace In Christ to Mankind* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 1646).

⁹⁷ John Wesley, *Free Grace: A Sermon Preach'd At Bristol* (Bristol: S. and F. Farley, 1739). Wesley heralded salvation as 'free for all', and asserted that all 'preaching is vain' if it is held that Christ only died for a limited number, see Wesley, *Free Grace*, pp. 5, 10.

⁹⁸ John Wesley, *Predestination Calmly Considered* (London: Printed by W.B., 1752).

⁹⁹ John Wesley, Sermon 4: *Scriptural Christianity*, 24 August 1744, in John Wesley, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* [Hereafter *BE*], ed. by Albert C. Outler, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), pp. 159-80.

¹⁰⁰ John Wesley, Sermon 7: *The Way to the Kingdom* [1746], *BE*, vol. 1, pp. 218-32.

¹⁰¹ John Wesley, 'Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others; From the Year 1744 to the Year 1789. Q.3', in John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. by Thomas Jackson, 3rd edn, 14 vols (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872 [1831]), vol. 8, p. 299. Wesley was here responding to the question – 'What may we reasonably believe to be God's design in raising up the preachers called Methodists?'

experimental religion or primitive Christianity in faith and practice'.¹⁰² This was underpinned by his aim that all might grasp 'the very glory of the gospel' – Christ's death for all.¹⁰³ It was therefore central to all that Taylor taught.

Taylor also operated as a novel advocate in the freedom he granted concerning several longstanding contentious matters within General Baptist practice. In contrast to the General Baptist prohibition towards the eating of blood, Taylor insisted believers be granted the 'liberty of thinking and acting according to their own views'.¹⁰⁴ He exercised a similar freedom regarding the customary practice of the laying on of hands after the administration of baptism and at the reception of new members.¹⁰⁵ Taylor's stance was a further indicator of his progressive outlook. He insisted that 'I have neither time nor taste for controversy'.¹⁰⁶ Issues of contention that he deemed as irrelevant to the core message of the gospel were of little importance to him.

Taylor's emphasis on liberty was apparent as he advocated the active role of women in the church. At Birchcliff, he encouraged women to 'speak freely, on every subject', and to serve as elders and deacons.¹⁰⁷ Only two years after the Connexion's formation he secured unanimous agreement that women be allowed to vote at church meetings on matters relating to church order and discipline.¹⁰⁸ Taylor's stance was in contrast to how wider eighteenth-century General Baptist life was marked by strict restrictions and rules that regulated

¹⁰² *The Proceedings of an Assembly of Free Grace General Baptists, Formed in the Year of Our Lord 1770, London, June the 7th 1770*, Angus Library and Archives, Regent's Park College, Oxford, GB NC Association Minutes, 1770-96 (page not numbered).

¹⁰³ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁴ Adam Taylor, *The History Of The English General Baptists In Two Parts. Part First: The History Of The English General Baptists. Part Second: The History Of The New Connection* (London: Printed for the author by T. Bore, and sold by Button and Son, 1818), Part 2, p. 214.

¹⁰⁵ Dan Taylor, *Minutes Of An Association Of General Baptist Ministers, And Representatives Of Churches, Holden At Halifax, June 26th, 27th, 28th*, 1798 (London: Sammells, 1798), p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Dan Taylor, 'Letter to George Birley', 10 May 1788, Letters from the Revd Dan Taylor to the Revd George Birley, 1771-1808, Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College, Oxford, Hughes Collection (D/HUS 1/6/98) (page not numbered).

¹⁰⁷ Dan Taylor, *A Sermon Occasioned By The Death Of Mrs. Elizabeth Taylor, Who Departed This Life October 22, 1793, In The 49th Year of Her Age. With A Short Account of Her Life, And A Description Of Her Character* (London: Marsom, Knott, Button and Ash, 1794), p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ *The Association Held At Brothers Grimley's and Dunnisthorp's Meeting House In Loughborough, The 3^d and 4th Days of June 1772*, Angus Library and Archives, Regent's Park College, Oxford, GB NC Association Minutes, 1770-96 (page not numbered).

women's speaking in worship and at church meetings.¹⁰⁹ His pioneering approach was indicative of his ecclesiological egalitarianism and sensitivity to the increasing appreciation found within the Enlightenment towards the moral capacity and shifting social roles of women.

ENLIGHTENED CRITIC

Taylor throughout his ministry entered into many theological discourses. None was of greater significance than his 1786-90 engagement with Particular Baptist minister Andrew Fuller (1754-1815). The catalyst was Fuller's publication of *The Gospel of Christ* which became a renowned statement of eighteenth-century evangelical Calvinism.¹¹⁰ Fuller's publication was motivated by his frustration at the influence of High Calvinism within the Particular Baptists. Typically, High Calvinists denied that the gospel should be preached to all people. Salvation was understood as restricted to the elect, who God alone would bring to faith, through the sovereign outworking of his purposes. They tended to accuse those who advocated the free offer of salvation to all as teaching that people were saved by their own efforts, rather than by the grace of God.¹¹¹ In contrast, Fuller emphasised divine sovereignty and human responsibility.¹¹² He sought to demonstrate that universal gospel invitations were in accordance with the scriptures and that it was the duty of all to believe. This conviction was at the heart of the Evangelical Revival with both Calvinists and Arminians preaching it with equal conviction.

Taylor's reply took the form of nine letters written to George Birley, a New Connexion colleague.¹¹³ His tone was respectful as he expressed his hope that Fuller would convince

¹⁰⁹ For an examination of the historical function of women in Baptist life, see Ruth M.B. Gouldbourne, *Reinventing The Wheel: Women and Ministry in English Baptist Life* (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 1997), pp. 13-14. It is unfortunate that Gouldbourne does not mention Taylor's pioneering approach towards the function of women in the church.

¹¹⁰ Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation: Or The Obligations of Men Fully to Credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes Known...and the Duty of Those Where the Gospel Comes in That Matter* (Northampton: Dicey, 1785).

¹¹¹ See Curt Daniel, 'Andrew Fuller and Antinomianism', in *'At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word': Andrew Fuller as an Apologist*, ed. by Michael A.G. Haykin (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), pp. 74-82 (p. 81).

¹¹² See Peter J. Morden, 'Andrew Fuller and the Baptist Missionary Society', *Baptist Quarterly* [Hereafter *BQ*] vol. 41, no. 3 (July 2005), pp. 134-57 (p. 137).

¹¹³ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*.

Calvinists of the validity of offering gospel invitations.¹¹⁴ Many aspects of Taylor's and Fuller's discourse were marked by irenicism. This was indicative of how they were nurtured as evangelicals in the context of the Enlightenment where the values of respect and cooperation were ascendant. Taylor, however, challenged Fuller's assumption that the gospel could be offered universally while not believing there was provision for all in Christ's atonement. He urged Fuller to accept that this was an 'embarrassment to his hypothesis'.¹¹⁵ His language reflected the high regard found within the Enlightenment for establishing and testing hypotheses. Taylor insisted that 'universal invitations must be founded on universal provision'.¹¹⁶ He contested Fuller's judgement that it was unnecessary for non-believers to have assurance that Christ specifically died for them. Taylor argued that unless this was the case, nobody would 'rationally trust' in Christ as a Saviour.¹¹⁷ His critique of this aspect of Fuller's scheme was underpinned by a Lockean framework where he held that claims to truth must be judged with reason and common sense.

A consequence of *The Gospel Worthy* was that Fuller found himself, as John Morris described, 'between two fires; the Hyper-Calvinists on the hills and the Arminians in the vallies'.¹¹⁸ Fuller anticipated the response from Arminians that if the atonement was limited to only a few then the means and basis by which most could believe was removed. He cited the Puritan writer Elisha Coles who argued that though Christ died for a limited number, there was hope for all as 'you may be of that number'.¹¹⁹ Taylor was emphatic that 'may be' was 'no foundation for faith'.¹²⁰ As normal in his evangelical response to the works of Puritan scholars, Taylor emphasised the simplicity and plain message of the scriptures. It was from this basis he emphasised that all people should have full confidence that Christ died for them. Taylor was adamant that the gospel could not be received as good news if there was no assurance of Christ's death for all. He contended that it presented God as 'a cruel and merciless tyrant', as people could not believe if no provision of salvation had been made for

¹¹⁴ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 37.

¹¹⁵ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 15.

¹¹⁶ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 90.

¹¹⁷ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, pp. 31-32.

¹¹⁸ John W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, Late Pastor of the Baptist Church at Kettering, and First Secretary to the Baptist Missionary Society* (Boston, MA: Lincoln and Edmands, 1830), p. 205.

¹¹⁹ Elisha Coles, *A Practical Discourse on God's Sovereignty. With Other Material Points Derived Thence*, 8th edn (London: Midwinter, Longman, Cox, Oswald and Ward, 1753), p. 143. Qtd in Fuller, *The Gospel Worthy*, p. 135.

¹²⁰ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 33.

them.¹²¹ As on other occasions, Taylor's thinking was undergirded by the influence of the values of justice and benevolence within the Enlightenment.

Taylor challenged aspects of Fuller's understanding of the means and process of conversion. These included Fuller's beliefs such as the necessity before salvation of the creation of a divine principle of faith within an unbeliever's heart, and conviction that regeneration preceded belief.¹²² Taylor resisted such a deterministic outlook with his reasoning also influenced by the Enlightenment emphasis on individual liberty. He also dismissed Fuller's distinction between natural and moral inability.¹²³ By contending that people possessed the natural ability to turn to God, but were morally unable to do so, Fuller hoped to defend his approach from the High Calvinist critique that people were unable to do what was spiritually good. Likewise, Fuller believed it would exonerate him from the Arminian accusation that his emphasis on God's sovereign electing purposes, and limited view of the atonement, meant people could not be held responsible for their lack of faith. Taylor was convinced that Fuller's distinction between natural and moral inability gave rise to a profoundly unjust representation of God.¹²⁴ If, in respect to moral inability, humankind did not have the power to turn to God, then he viewed the idea proposed by Fuller that God would punish people for their unbelief as unjust.¹²⁵ He likened its unfairness to how, 'If I were to command a stone to walk, or a horse to sing, they could not obey me.'¹²⁶ Unlike Fuller, Taylor did not subscribe to the view that a person's impurity vitiated their rational capabilities regarding an understanding of salvation.

Taylor's response to *The Gospel Worthy* led Fuller to make significant modifications to his position. He no longer referred to the divine working of the principle of faith in an unbeliever's heart but restricted it to a 'bias of mind' that God sought to produce.¹²⁷ His most significant shift was his recognition that if he held to a limited view of the scope of the

¹²¹ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 88.

¹²² See Pollard, 'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice', pp. 160-63.

¹²³ Fuller was influenced by Jonathan Edwards who extensively examined the nature of moral and natural inability in *Freedom of the Will* [1754], in Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. by Paul Ramsey, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957).

¹²⁴ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 43.

¹²⁵ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 43.

¹²⁶ Lover of All Mankind [Taylor], *Observations*, p. 44.

¹²⁷ Andrew Fuller, *A Reply to the Observations of Philanthropos* [1787], in Andrew Fuller, *A Defence of a Treatise Entitled The Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation; Containing a Reply to Mr. Button's Remarks and The Observations of Philanthropos* (Northampton: Dicey, 1787), pp. 1-113 (p. 6.).

atonement, then it was not tenable to argue that the inability of at least some to respond in faith was not natural, as there were some for whom there was no atonement provision. Instead, he accepted that Christ's death was universally sufficient and that all who came to God would be saved. He declared that 'not one soul need be sent away for want of a sufficiency in Christ's death' and 'if every sinner who hears the gospel were to come to Christ for salvation, every such sinner would undoubtedly be saved'.¹²⁸ Although he remained insistent that the application of Christ's death was restricted to a limited number, the atonement position Fuller now assumed was 'general' in its scope. He was convinced that Christ's death was of 'infinite value, sufficient to have saved all the world'.¹²⁹ This was a significant change of position and demonstrated Taylor's commanding influence on Fuller.

Fuller cited Taylor's influence in an 1803 letter to John Ryland Jr (1753-1825). He wrote, 'I freely own that my views of particular redemption were altered by my engaging in that controversy'.¹³⁰ With reference to Taylor, he stated,

I tried to answer my opponent without considering the sufficiency of the atonement in itself considered, and of its being the ground of gospel invitations; but I could not. I found not merely his reasoning, but the scriptures themselves, standing in my way.¹³¹

This assertion exposes the inadequacy of argument of commentators such as Clint Sheehan who have denied Taylor's influence on Fuller,¹³² or presented it in the most minimalistic way.¹³³ The profundity of Fuller's change of perspective and deference to Taylor was apparent in his admission to Ryland that 'I conceded to my opponent that the death of Christ *in itself* considered, i.e. irrespective of the design of the Father and Son as to its application, was sufficient for all mankind.'¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Fuller, *A Reply*, pp. 64-65, 53-54.

¹²⁹ Fuller, *A Reply*, pp. 63-64.

¹³⁰ Andrew Fuller, 'Letter IV to Dr. Ryland', 17 January 1803, in Andrew Fuller, *The Works of Andrew Fuller*, ed. by Andrew G. Fuller (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2007 [1841]), p. 322.

¹³¹ Fuller, 'Letter IV to Dr. Ryland', p. 322.

¹³² Clint Sheehan, 'Great and Sovereign Grace: Fuller's Defence of the Gospel against Arminianism', in *At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word*, pp. 83-121 (p. 89).

¹³³ See e.g. Ernest F. Clipsham, 'Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation', *BQ* vol. 20, no. 5 (January 1964), pp. 214-25 (p. 218).

¹³⁴ Fuller, 'Letter IV to Dr. Ryland', p. 322 (Fuller's emphasis).

Fuller adopted the pseudonym Agnostos for the final part of his discourse with Taylor which comprised thirteen letters addressed to Fuller.¹³⁵ Agnostos' praise for Fuller understandably led many to think that Agnostos was 'a friend and admirer' of Fuller.¹³⁶ Only after the deaths of Taylor and Fuller did it emerge that Agnostos was actually Fuller himself.¹³⁷ The underhand nature of Fuller's self-congratulation likely reflected his uncomfortableness at the significant shifts in perspective he had undergone as a consequence of his discourse with Taylor. These were now a central component of his theological apparatus.¹³⁸

Taylor also made some surprising pronouncements during his engagement with Fuller. He accepted that the salvation of at least some could be viewed as containing an element of absolute determinism and special design.¹³⁹ However, his thinking was never worked out in any systematic way. It is likely that Taylor's concession to Fuller was pragmatically motivated as he sought to persuade Fuller to accept, without any qualification, that Christ died for the sins of all.¹⁴⁰ Taylor was mindful of Fuller's charge that he had not given sufficient regard to the efficacy of Christ's death. Taylor never affirmed the determinacy of God's salvific workings without emphasising that this was consistent with Christ's death for all. This again suggests Taylor's change of theological stance was pragmatically inspired. Pragmatism was a central facet of evangelicalism, whereas it was rarely a catalyst to alteration of theological conviction expressed by those of earlier Puritan or scholastic persuasion.

Taylor's discourse with Fuller revealed creative aspects of Taylor's evangelical Arminianism. These included his apparent belief in the doctrine of the perseverance of the

¹³⁵ Agnostos [Andrew Fuller], *The Reality and Efficacy of Divine Grace; With the Certain Success of Christ's Sufferings, in Behalf of All Who Are Finally Saved. Considered in a Series of Letters to the Rev. A. Fuller: Containing Remarks upon the Observations of the Rev. Dan Taylor, on Mr. Fuller's Reply to Philanthropos* (London: Sold by Lepard, n.d. [1790]).

¹³⁶ Morris, *Memoirs...Andrew Fuller*, p. 205.

¹³⁷ The letters were included in the 1831 publication of *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* with an attached 'advertisement' by Ryland who stated that Fuller was the author. See John Ryland, 'Advertisement' to *The Reality and Efficacy of Divine Grace*, in Fuller, *Works of Andrew Fuller*, p. 234.

¹³⁸ See Morden, *Offering Christ to the World*, p.72.

¹³⁹ Dan Taylor, *Observations on the Rev. Andrew Fuller's Reply to Philanthropos; Or a Further Attempt to Prove That the Universal Invitations of the Gospel Are Founded on the Universality of Divine Love...In Thirteen Letters to a Friend* (London: Buckland, Ash, and Marsom, 1787), p. 90.

¹⁴⁰ For closer examination of this, see Pollard, 'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice', pp. 174-76.

saints. Fuller concluded that Taylor ‘allows of the *certain perseverance of all true believers*.’¹⁴¹ Taylor responded with an unequivocal declaration that ‘nothing is more clear to me, than that God has made sufficient provision for the perseverance of all believers’.¹⁴² This suggests he held a belief in the doctrine. Taylor’s reluctance to record his thoughts on the subject may reflect some uncertainty regarding how to harmonise his belief with the wider elements of his framework. At that time it was unusual for someone who subscribed to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to hold a general view of the atonement.

Taylor’s engagement with Fuller exposed how Taylor’s Enlightenment-inspired understanding of justice formed the basis from which he rejected imputed guilt. While Taylor was firm regarding humankind’s guilt and sinful state before God,¹⁴³ he believed humanity’s culpability before God was based only on actual sins committed. This differed from how Fuller viewed people as subjects of God’s condemnation due to the imputation of Adam’s guilt. Taylor’s understanding of the scriptures and way he had been sensitised to an Enlightenment-influenced regard for benevolent justice meant he felt unable to accept this belief. Although a rejection of the doctrine of imputed guilt was a common characteristic of Arminian theology,¹⁴⁴ Taylor’s position was distinctive. For example, John Wesley believed that through Christ’s death all were cleared from Adam’s guilt,¹⁴⁵ whereas Taylor’s approach was rooted in a rational understanding of justice, whereby no person could be judged as guilty before any law had been broken.¹⁴⁶ This further demonstrated how Taylor in his response to Fuller, acted as an enlightened critic.

¹⁴¹ Fuller, *A Reply*, p. 99 (Fuller’s emphasis).

¹⁴² Taylor, *Observations...Fuller’s Reply*, p. 131.

¹⁴³ See Pollard, ‘To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice’, pp. 69-90.

¹⁴⁴ See Herbert B. McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley’s Evangelical Arminianism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), p. 158.

¹⁴⁵ John Wesley, ‘Letter to John Mason’, 21 November 1776, in John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. by John Telford, 8 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1960, reprint of the 1931 edn), vol. 6, pp. 239-40. Randy Maddox draws attention to this letter in his consideration of Wesley’s rejection of inherited guilt, see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), pp. 74-75, 292 (footnote 76).

¹⁴⁶ Taylor, *Observations...Fuller’s Reply*, p. 39.

THE BAPTIST WESLEY

Taylor sought to foster a practical and experiential regard for the truth of the gospel which was akin to that introduced to Methodism by John Wesley. As he prioritised the development of the relational means by which this could be achieved, he introduced Wesley's structure of class meetings at Birchcliff. Class meetings formed the 'basic unit' of Methodism with its intimate setting of twelve or so members, the prime place where previous learning was reinforced and people assisted in their application of scriptural truth.¹⁴⁷ Taylor noted that 'I would set down in several classes, the names of my dear brethren, that I may more regularly take them, a class at a time, and recommend them with their several circumstances and necessities, as far as I know them, to the Lord.'¹⁴⁸ Within the context of General and Particular Baptist life, the formation of class meetings was a pioneering initiative.

The methodology of the class meeting became the framework for Taylor's enterprising formation of experience meetings. He initiated these at Birchcliff in the late 1760s and then later throughout the New Connexion.¹⁴⁹ Similar to class meetings, members were divided into groups that met weekly. Group leaders recounted their recent experience of faith, including reference to their 'struggles against inward and outward enemies' and 'advancement or decline in the Christian course'.¹⁵⁰ Members were then expected to do likewise as they, for example, engaged with probing questions regarding the need for them to be sharing the gospel with others.¹⁵¹ The increased primacy given to spiritual experience is further illustrative of the lesser significance Taylor attached to the importance of credal assent in the process of spiritual formation. It also reflected the wider credence attached to personal experience within Enlightenment thought.

Another distinctive feature of experience meetings was that, similar to Methodist class meetings, they were not restricted to believers. Instead, they were open to all 'who desired to engage in the cause of Christ, and wished to obtain religious knowledge'.¹⁵² They fulfilled the

¹⁴⁷ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 78.

¹⁴⁸ Dan Taylor, diary entry, 4 October 1765, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ Taylor, *History...The New Connection*, p. 77; W.E. Blomfield, 'Yorkshire Baptist Churches in the 17th and 18th Centuries', in *The Baptists of Yorkshire: Being the Centenary Memorial Volume of the Yorkshire Baptist Association*, ed. by C.E. Shipley (Bradford: Byles and Sons, 1912), pp. 53-112 (p. 105).

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *History...The New Connection*, p. 78.

¹⁵¹ Taylor, *History...The New Connection*, p. 78.

¹⁵² Taylor, *History...The New Connection*, p. 78.

same function of ‘evangelism and conservation’ that Henry Rack attributes to class meetings.¹⁵³ Their mixed composition points to an increasingly common facet of eighteenth-century evangelicalism, namely the belief that an experience of God was a catalyst to conversion. It was perhaps for this reason that Taylor placed such priority on experience meetings. He even established them during the short period he was minister at the General Baptist church in Halifax between 1783-85.¹⁵⁴

Taylor also developed discipline meetings.¹⁵⁵ They were held once every six weeks and focused on a particular aspect of Christian discipline. Taylor was here replicating another of Wesley’s structures which he had previously participated within – a band meeting. As Kevin Watson notes, band meetings provided a context where ‘searching, blunt conversation occurred’.¹⁵⁶ This was very much the nature of Taylor’s discipline meetings. Taylor’s adaptation, into the Baptist context, of structures pivotal to Wesley’s design of Methodist societies was typical of the pioneering nature of his evangelicalism.

Taylor shared Wesley’s belief that the spread of the gospel was aided by believers associating together. He asked ‘Can we believe that *Methodism* would have ever spread so universally, had Mr. WESLEY and his preachers never associated?’¹⁵⁷ Taylor emphasised that it was ‘by mutual intercourse, we may be able to contribute a considerable share toward the effectual propagation of the gospel’.¹⁵⁸ This conviction was pivotal to Taylor’s formation of the New Connexion in 1770. His entrance into General Baptist life had left him troubled as he encountered contrary understandings, to that taught within the Evangelical Revival, regarding the nature of sin, deity of Christ and atonement.¹⁵⁹ He felt that the gospel could be more effectively propagated by closely partnering with other believers such as the

¹⁵³ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd edn (London: Epworth Press, 2002), p. 242.

¹⁵⁴ Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp. 122-23.

¹⁵⁵ Taylor, *History...The New Connection*, p. 97.

¹⁵⁶ Kevin M. Watson, *Pursuing Social Holiness: The Band Meeting in Wesley’s Thought and Popular Methodist Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 117.

¹⁵⁷ Dan Taylor, ‘Letter to the Churches of General Baptists: On the Nature and Importance of the Annual Associations’, in *Minutes Of An Association Of General Baptists, Holden At Hinckley, Leicestershire, On Wednesday and Thursday, April 3d and 4th, 1793* (London: Printed by R. Hawes, 1793), pp. 12-19 (p. 15) (Taylor’s emphasis).

¹⁵⁸ Taylor, ‘Letter to the Churches...Importance of the Annual Associations’, 3-4 April 1793, p. 16.

¹⁵⁹ See Pollard, ‘To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice’, pp. 69-80.

Independent churches of Arminian conviction associated with the fellowship in Barton-in-the-Beans, Leicestershire. These formed five of the Connexion's initial sixteen churches.¹⁶⁰ He viewed the development of a coordinated movement of churches as imperative to the effective spread of the gospel. This initiative was without precedent among Baptists. It was typical of how a propensity for evangelicals to pioneer had led to the emergence of wider bodies of believers, such as the different streams within Methodism. As John Coffey notes, these were similarly 'devoted to propagating vital evangelical religion', and 'coalesced around dynamic itinerant evangelists' like John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Howell Harris.¹⁶¹ The Connexion was certainly in this mould.

Taylor developed a coherent collective identity throughout the Connexion. He urged churches to ensure their representation at the annual Association, regarding it as crucial in helping 'to assist one another in endeavours so very important, as well as in the conversion of poor sinners to our Lord Jesus Christ'.¹⁶² His establishment of quarterly regional conferences also enabled ministers, deacons and chosen representatives to confer on the concerns of their churches.¹⁶³ He was convinced that a failure among General Baptists outside the Connexion to prioritise meaningful associations with other churches had led to the 'glaring fact' that 'their cause in many places was nearly extinct'.¹⁶⁴ Taylor was adamant that 'much of the success of the New Connexion of General Baptists, is owing to the love and zeal of their ministers and members, and *their frequent conferences* with each other'.¹⁶⁵ The sense of togetherness that Taylor fostered served to aid the movement's missional focus.

Within Baptist life, Taylor was the architect of an innovative framework within which churches associated together. It was distinct from how Particular Baptists began to associate more meaningfully from the late eighteenth-century, and exceeded the advisory powers that

¹⁶⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 30.

¹⁶¹ John Coffey, 'Puritanism, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Protestant Tradition', in *Emergence of Evangelicalism*, pp. 252-77 (p. 276).

¹⁶² Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches...Importance of the Annual Associations', 3-4 April 1793, p. 13.

¹⁶³ Anon. [Samuel Deacon Jr], *A Comprehensive Account Of The General Baptists With Respect To Principle And Practice In Which Are Displayed Their Manner Of Worship, Church Order And Discipline. By A Mechanic Who Was Long Conversant With Them* (Coventry: Luckman, 1795), p. 124.

¹⁶⁴ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches...Importance of the Annual Associations', 3-4 April 1793, p. 15.

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches...Importance of the Annual Associations', 3-4 April 1793, p. 15, italics added.

General Baptists outside the Connexion gave to its Assembly.¹⁶⁶ An example of the interdependency Taylor fostered concerned his coordinated approach to monetary giving. He urged churches to share their financial difficulties with the annual Association which selected a limited number of needs to which all churches were expected to contribute.¹⁶⁷ This collective perspective enabled the building of numerous churches.¹⁶⁸ It also provided financial aid for ministers with Taylor establishing both an Aged Ministers Fund and Itinerant Fund.¹⁶⁹ Taylor's response to the Connexion's financial needs was indicative of how, like Wesley in Methodism, he used the structures and relational bonds that existed between the churches in a practical and innovative way.

Taylor occupied an influence and authority over the Connexion's churches that was largely without precedent in English Baptist history. Adam Taylor recorded that 'his opinion was considered almost as an oracle'.¹⁷⁰ Independent minister John Kello (1750-1827) noted that he was viewed with 'deference, esteem and expectation' throughout the Connexion.¹⁷¹ Similar to the source of some of John Wesley's influence over Methodism, Taylor's unrivalled status within the Connexion emanated chiefly from his centrality to all aspects of the movement. He chaired its annual Associations, oversaw all aspects of training, represented the Connexion to wider evangelical bodies and defended the movement from its theological detractors. Taylor's commitment to the Connexion's members was clear. He travelled approximately 25,000 miles, preached 20,000 sermons and assisted at thirty-eight ordinations.¹⁷² He opened new meeting houses, offered advice to churches, and settled disputes. As Henry Vedder stated, Taylor was 'the life and soul of the movement'.¹⁷³ His relational energy and commitment to

¹⁶⁶ John F.V. Nicholson, 'The Office of 'Messenger' amongst British Baptists in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *BQ* vol. 17, no. 5 (January 1958), pp. 206-25 (p. 214).

¹⁶⁷ Dan Taylor, *Important Advice To Churches Involved In Pecuniary Difficulties, With Motives To Enforce It. From An Occasional Address By The Late Rev. D. Taylor* (London: Printed by P.&F. Hack, sold by J. Mann, sold also by Button and Son, 1819), p. 10.

¹⁶⁸ See, e.g., Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches...Importance of the Annual Associations', 3-4 April 1793, p. 18.

¹⁶⁹ See Frank W. Rinaldi, *The Tribe of Dan: The New Connexion of General Baptists 1770-1891: A Study in the Transition from Revival Movement to Established Denomination* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 53-55.

¹⁷⁰ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 109.

¹⁷¹ John Kello, 'Tribute to Taylor', in Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp. 301-7 (p. 307). John Kello was pastor of the Congregational church at Bethnal Green, London.

¹⁷² See [Anon.], 'The Brief Memoirs of Taylor's life', in Dan Taylor, *The Christian Religion: An Exposition Of Its Leading Principles, Practical Requirements And Experimental Enjoyments* (London: Smith, 1844 [1802]), pp. 5-22 (p. 22).

¹⁷³ Henry C. Vedder, *A Short History of the Baptists*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), p. 247.

the movement's churches formed a vital consolidating function and, although never his intention, is important in accounting for the scope of his authority.

The Connexion's deference to Taylor gave him opportunity for directive oversight, yet he was rarely forceful or overbearing. He insisted that 'I pretend to dictate nothing.'¹⁷⁴ His determination to serve the Connexion in the manner of friend and guardian, rather than master, meant he ensured that decision making did not rest with himself but with the annual Association.¹⁷⁵ Neither did this body possess the authority to make decisions on behalf of the churches.¹⁷⁶ Its role was restricted to guidance and recommendation. A similar sense of freedom emanated from the letters Taylor wrote on behalf of the Association. For instance, when offering guidance on the prevalence of 'ungoverned passions' among youth, he emphasised that 'We are very far, Brethren, from wishing to lord it over your consciences, in this or any other instance of your conduct.'¹⁷⁷ This was indicative of how Taylor fused a desire to nurture the Connexion's churches, alongside a commitment to preserve their liberty.

The priority Taylor placed on the protection of liberty was evident in his lack of prescriptive direction concerning ecclesiastical order. He was convinced this should remain at the discretion of the churches.¹⁷⁸ Neither was Taylor dogmatic about the precise offices churches should adopt. He taught that each church possessed the 'full power to choose or refuse such officers, as may be judged most conducive to the edification of their own souls'.¹⁷⁹ While the granting of freedom to the local church was a long established principle of General Baptist ecclesiastical polity, both the Standard Confession, and *Orthodox Creed*, contain Articles

¹⁷⁴ Taylor, *Important Advice*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁵ See, e.g., *The Proceedings of an Assembly of Free Grace General Baptists...1770* (page not numbered).

¹⁷⁶ Taylor, *History...The New Connection*, p. 211.

¹⁷⁷ Dan Taylor, 'Letter To The Churches', In *Minutes Of An Association Of General Baptists, Held In Birmingham, Warwickshire, The 26th and 27th Days of March, 1788* ([n.p.]: [n.pub.], 1788), pp. 3-8 (pp. 4, 3).

¹⁷⁸ Dan Taylor, *A Circular Letter From The Ministers Of The General Baptist Denomination, Assembled At St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, June 10th and June 11th, 1778. To Their Respective Churches* (London: Pasham, 1778), p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ Dan Taylor, 'A Charge Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. George Birley', in Dan Taylor, *A Charge And Sermon, Together with a Confession of Faith, Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. George Birley on Wednesday, October 18, 1786, at St. Ives Huntingdonshire. The Charge delivered by D. Taylor of London, the Sermon by R. Robinson, of Cambridge* ([n.p.]: Buckland, n.d. [1786]), pp. 5-34 (p. 5).

regarding the function of church offices and workings of church governance.¹⁸⁰ The absence of these subjects from the Connexion's *Articles and Confession Of Faith* is significant. For Taylor, these matters were not priorities. The nature of his evangelicalism was such that he had no appreciation for unity and truth in terms of correct ecclesiastical order, but was far more concerned with their pragmatic capacity for engendering relational bonds of common purpose, focus and passion for the spread of the gospel. This conviction, when placed alongside his Enlightenment-influenced respect for individual freedom and expression of opinion, was a further important contributor to the liberty he extended to the Connexion's churches.

Taylor's refusal to monopolise control was apparent in his deferential regard for the Association. His letters to the churches were circulated only after they had been read to the annual Association and approved by the delegates. The chief instance of Taylor's submission to the Association surrounded his 1783 move to the General Baptist church in Halifax. On receiving the invitation, he immediately referred the matter to the judgement of the annual Association.¹⁸¹ Taylor was convinced that God, through people's corporate decision making and prayer, would provide a 'wisdom which is profitable to direct'.¹⁸² On this basis, Taylor accepted the Association's judgement that he should accept the invitation. The same pattern was followed in 1785 when he relocated to London and again demonstrated an ecclesiological confidence in God granting his wisdom through the collective voice of his people.¹⁸³ The placing of importance on this core Baptist value further illustrates the way in which Taylor was the *Baptist Wesley*.

¹⁸⁰ See, e.g., *Brief Confession*, Article twenty-five, pp. 229-30; *Orthodox Creed*, Article thirty-one, pp. 319-20; *Orthodox Creed*, Article thirty-four, pp. 322-23.

¹⁸¹ See Dan Taylor, 'A Brief Account of the Author's Removal from Wadsworth to Halifax', in Dan Taylor, *The Consistent Christian; Or the Truth and Peace, Holiness, Unanimity, Stedfastness, and Zeal, Recommended to Professors of Christianity. The Substance of Five Sermons. To Which is Prefixed, a Brief Account of the Author's Removal from Wadsworth to Halifax* (Leeds: Wright and Son, 1784), pp. iii-x (p. v).

¹⁸² Taylor, 'Brief Account', p. vi.

¹⁸³ Taylor, *Sermon...Death Of Mrs. Elizabeth Taylor*, p. 79.

CREATIVE PROPONENT

A central aspect of Taylor's pioneering evangelicalism was how he acted as a creative proponent for certain of his theological principles. This was apparent in his defence of believers' baptism. He assumed a non-sacramental interpretation. His writings contain no mention of its efficacy. This differed from the sacramental leanings of many seventeenth-century General Baptists. Although the way baptism is described in Article twenty-seven of the *Orthodox Creed* as a 'sacrament' and as an 'ordinance' is a reminder 'not to read modern distinctions back into the expressions of our predecessors', there is wider evidence of General Baptist sacramentalism from the seventeenth century.¹⁸⁴ Examples include Thomas Helwys (1575-1616) who viewed baptism as inseparable from the work of the Spirit in a believer's life.¹⁸⁵ The way Grantham viewed baptism 'as a means of sanctification' and as having 'kindled his [Christ's] presence in an extraordinary way', also extended far beyond that posited by Taylor.¹⁸⁶

Sacramental interpretations can also be found among the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists. *The Baptist Catechism* describes baptism as a means through which 'Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption' and which becomes 'effectual to the elect'.¹⁸⁷ While the understanding of baptism held by seventeenth-century Baptists may not have been uniform, Philip Thompson highlights how it was believed that Christ was 'active in the rite'.¹⁸⁸ In contrast, Taylor viewed baptism only as a symbol of Christ's death, burial and

¹⁸⁴ *Orthodox Creed*, Article twenty-seven, p. 317; Stanley K. Fowler, *More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p. 19.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* [1612], in *The Life and Writings of Thomas Helwys*, ed. by Joe Early Jr (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), pp. 155-303 (p. 257).

¹⁸⁶ Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 85, 84. See also, Thomas Grantham, *The Loyal Baptist, or, An Apology for the Baptized Believers: Occasioned by the Great and Long Continued Sufferings of the Baptized Believers in This Nation* (London: Printed for the author, sold by Thomas Fabian, 1678), Part 2, p. 15; Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book 2, Part 2, p. 4.

¹⁸⁷ Anon. *The Baptist Catechism: Commonly Called Keach's Catechism: Or, A Brief Instruction In The Principles Of The Christian Religion...Adopted By The Philadelphia Baptist Association, September 22, 1742* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1851 [n.d.]), p. 26. *The Baptist Catechism* emerged following a meeting of the General Assembly of Particular Baptists in 1693.

¹⁸⁸ Philip E. Thompson, 'Sacraments and Religious Liberty: From Critical Practice to Rejected Infringement', in *Baptist Sacramentalism*, ed. by Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), pp. 36-54 (p. 48). See also, Philip E. Thompson, 'A New Question in Baptist History: Seeking a Catholic Spirit among Early Baptists', *Pro Ecclesia* vol. 8, no. 1 (Winter 1999), pp. 51-72.

resurrection and command to be obeyed. Taylor's non-sacramental interpretation also differed, by degree, from that of many eighteenth-century Baptists. While Stanley Fowler highlights the works of Particular Baptists such as John Gill (1697-1771) Anne Dutton (1695-1765) and Andrew Fuller as evidence of a 'retreat from a more clearly sacramental view of baptism', they all contain sacramental elements not held by Taylor.¹⁸⁹ Examples include Gill's emphasis on how baptism facilitates a cleansing from sin,¹⁹⁰ Dutton's description of baptism as God's 'Seal' of salvation,¹⁹¹ and Fuller's understanding of baptism as serving to 'sanctify the soul' and a means by which 'sin is washed away'.¹⁹² The continuing sacramental tendencies of these Particular Baptists extended beyond Taylor's understanding of baptism.

It is unfortunate that Fowler's examination of Baptist approaches to baptism does not make any reference to Taylor. If Taylor's failure to give any credence to the efficacious nature of baptism had been acknowledged by Fowler, this would have drawn attention to Taylor as an innovator. Taylor's outlook anticipated the approach to baptism that became ascendant in the nineteenth century. As Fowler notes, 'By the end of the 19th century, it was widely assumed by Baptists that baptism is an "ordinance" as *opposed* to a "sacrament", an act of human obedience as opposed to a means of grace.'¹⁹³ This perspective was the same as that taught by Taylor.

Although neither Fowler nor Thompson mention Enlightenment values as a factor in the gradual transition of Baptists away from sacramental understandings of baptism, their influence on Taylor is again apparent. This was evident in his response to the arguments in favour of infant baptism propounded by Independent minister Stephen Addington (1729-96). Whereas Addington claimed that the baptism of infants signified their 'spiritual purity',¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Fowler, *More Than a Symbol*, p. 56.

¹⁹⁰ John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: Being a System of Evangelical Truths Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures*, Abridged by William Staughton (Philadelphia, PA: Printed for Delaplaine and Hellings, by B. Graves, 1810 [1769-70]), pp. 565-66.

¹⁹¹ Anne Dutton, *Brief Hints Concerning Baptism: Of the Subject, Mode, and End of This Solemn Ordinance* (London: Hart, 1746), p. 21.

¹⁹² Andrew Fuller, *The Practical Uses of Christian Baptism* [1802], in Fuller, *Works of Andrew Fuller*, pp. 728-30 (p. 728).

¹⁹³ Fowler, *More Than a Symbol*, p. 87 (Fowler's emphasis).

¹⁹⁴ Stephen Addington, *A Summary Of The Christian Minister's Reasons For Baptizing Infants, And For Administering The Ordinance By Sprinkling Or Pouring Of Water...In A Letter To The Doctor* (London: Buckland, 1776), p. 5.

Taylor dismissed this as a ‘vague and indeterminate’ judgement.¹⁹⁵ He viewed it as illogical, asking ‘How can this be done to an infant?’¹⁹⁶ His emphasis on what was logical or provable was akin to an Enlightenment scientific outlook. This influenced Taylor’s disregard of any viewpoint that was rooted in an efficacious understanding of baptism. Enlightenment influences were apparent as Taylor acted as a proponent of baptism by immersion. He reasoned that all doubts concerning the validity of immersion were ‘contrary to the truths derived from daily observation, and constant experience’.¹⁹⁷ Taylor attempted to substantiate this by making creative use of knowledge from a range of disciplines. For example, he responded to concerns that immersion was damaging to health by highlighting medical writings regarding the benefits of cold bathing.¹⁹⁸ His use of extra-biblical material was grounded in an enlightenment approach.

Taylor’s publications on baptism lack the meticulous attention to the scriptures that characterised Puritan approaches to the subject, such as Richard Baxter’s 1649 *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants*.¹⁹⁹ Neither is there the style of close scriptural exegesis of circumcision and covenant as found in Grantham’s *The Paedo-Baptist Apology*.²⁰⁰ Taylor simply argued that there is no New Testament evidence for any connection between circumcision and baptism and that neither are referred to as seals of any covenant.²⁰¹ This stood at variance to how Article twenty-eight of the *Orthodox Creed* refers to baptism as ‘a sign of our entrance into the covenant of grace’.²⁰² Taylor’s position reflected his tendency to reject theological positions that possessed any hint of nebulosity.

Taylor also displayed an inventiveness regarding the Lord’s Supper. His lack of attention to the precise nature of the Supper, absence of interest in the specifics of self-preparation and belief it should be celebrated weekly were significant differences compared to Puritan

¹⁹⁵ Dan Taylor, *Strictures On The Rev. Stephen Addington’s Late Summary Of The Christian Minister’s Reasons For Baptizing Infants And For Administering The Ordinance By Sprinkling Or Pouring Of Water* (London: Pasham, 1777), p. 5.

¹⁹⁶ Taylor, *Strictures*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁷ [Dan Taylor], *An Humble Essay On Christian Baptism* (Leeds: Wright, 1768), p. 18.

¹⁹⁸ See, e.g., [Taylor], *Humble Essay*, p. 18. Taylor here cited the findings of Sir John Floyer, a doctor in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

¹⁹⁹ Richard Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-Membership and Baptism* (London: White, 1653).

²⁰⁰ Thomas Grantham, *The Paedo-Baptist Apology* ([London]: [n.pub.], 1671).

²⁰¹ [Taylor], *Humble Essay*, p. 35.

²⁰² *Orthodox Creed*, p. 317.

practices.²⁰³ Taylor's advocacy of its experiential benefits was the standout feature of his approach. An emphasis upon divine encounter accompanies Taylor's every reference to the Table. Entirely typical was how through participation at the Table 'we make a near approach even to heaven itself...and...behold the King in his beauty; and the sight raises, and sometimes almost ravishes the soul'.²⁰⁴ He complained that 'Too many alas!...go to ordinances with no such view as this.'²⁰⁵ While Taylor shared the conviction of earlier General Baptists that the elements were only representations of Christ's body and blood, his experiential emphasis was quite distinct. Its spiritual benefits are absent from references to the Supper in John Smyth's *Short Confession of Faith*,²⁰⁶ Thomas Helwys' *A Declaration of Faith of English People*,²⁰⁷ and the Standard Confession.²⁰⁸ Although Article twenty-three of the *Orthodox Creed* mentions the 'spiritual nourishment' of the Supper, no particular significance was placed upon this.²⁰⁹ Grantham's limited reference to the external spiritual motivation that the Supper provided²¹⁰ was also very different to Taylor's creative depiction of God having designed the Supper as a 'reviving ordinance' and 'chief means of...edification', as he impressed upon the Connexion's churches.²¹¹

Taylor's high regard for the experiential was central to his endorsement of hymn singing that he was introduced to within Methodism.²¹² He described how non-believers had 'often been instructed, admonished, and otherwise benefitted' as they participated in sung worship.²¹³ Compared to the common practice of the wider General Baptists, Taylor's position was pioneering. While the General Baptist Assembly in 1735 allowed churches to

²⁰³ For consideration of Taylor's approach to these aspects of the Supper, see Pollard, 'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice', pp. 257-58.

²⁰⁴ Taylor, *Fundamentals*, pp. 295.

²⁰⁵ Dan Taylor, *The Faithful and Wise Steward* (Leeds: Wright, 1766), p. 69.

²⁰⁶ *Short Confession of Faith in XX Articles by John Smyth*, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 100-101.

²⁰⁷ *A Declaration of Faith of English People*, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 116-23.

²⁰⁸ *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith*, Article six, pp. 224-35.

²⁰⁹ *Orthodox Creed*, Article twenty-three, p. 321. Given that this creed was an expression of Baptist conviction that sought to be as close as possible to standard Calvinist thinking, it is probable that an understanding of the Supper as a source of direct spiritual benefit was not, at this time, common place but the utmost limit of Calvinist teaching that could be accepted.

²¹⁰ Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book 2, Part 2, pp. 85-90.

²¹¹ Taylor, *Circular Letter...1778*, p. 9.

²¹² For the prominence of hymn singing in Methodism, see, e.g., John R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 205-64.

²¹³ Dan Taylor, *A Dissertation on Singing in the Worship Of God: Interspersed with Occasional Strictures on Mr. Boyce's Late Tract, Entitled, "Serious Thoughts on the Present Mode and Practice of Singing in the public worship of God."* (London: Buckland and Mortom, 1786), p. 28.

hold different views on the matter²¹⁴ and there were exceptional instances of General Baptist congregations engaging in hymn singing, there was widespread agreement that collective singing was inappropriate. Taylor responded to this viewpoint in his interaction with the General Baptist minister Gilbert Boyce (1712-1800). Unlike Boyce, Taylor contended that singing should not be restricted to individuals specifically enabled to sing by the Spirit. Taylor argued that hymns were not symptomatic of ‘dry and empty’ hearts as Boyce claimed, but instead reflected those who were ‘truly alive to God’.²¹⁵ Taylor conveyed his delight at how the melody ‘raises the spirits’ and ‘more easily engages the attention and affects the heart’.²¹⁶ His liberated stance differed to the concern for precise scriptural warrant that accompanied Puritan approaches to singing where, with the exception of certain innovators such as Isaac Watts, God’s praise was restricted to the singing of metrical psalms.²¹⁷ Hymn singing quickly became one of the Connexion’s most distinguishing features and Taylor was the first General Baptist to produce a hymn book.²¹⁸

Taylor highlighted the experiential advantages of singing in response to the prevalent belief among General Baptists that women should not participate as this contradicted the scriptures and ‘nature of things’, as Boyce stated.²¹⁹ Taylor insisted women be allowed to enjoy its ‘goodness’ and ‘pleasantness’.²²⁰ He designated the apostle Paul’s apparent prohibitions against women as only applicable in their ‘most strict and limited sense’ and argued that their ‘rational capacities’ necessitated they be granted equality with men.²²¹ Boyce also cited Grantham’s view that the participation of non-believers led to ‘promiscuous’ worship.²²² Taylor believed its experiential benefits necessitated that they be encouraged to participate. He accused Boyce of having a ‘mistaken idea of the nature and design of singing’,

²¹⁴ *Minutes of the General Baptist Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England, with Kindred Records 1731-1811*, ed. by William T. Whitley, vol. 2 (London: Kingsgate Press, 1910), p. 33.

²¹⁵ Gilbert Boyce, *Serious Thoughts on the Present Mode and Practice of Singing in the Public Worship of God* (Wisbech: Nicholson, 1785), p. 8; Taylor, *Dissertation On Singing*, p. 93.

²¹⁶ Taylor, *Dissertation On Singing*, p. 53.

²¹⁷ For an examination of Puritan approaches to singing, see Percy A. Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England: A Contribution to the Cultural History of Two Nations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

²¹⁸ [Dan Taylor], *Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Mostly collected from Various Authors; With a few that have not been published before* (Halifax: Jacob, 1772).

²¹⁹ Boyce, *Serious Thoughts*, p. 38.

²²⁰ Taylor, *Dissertation On Singing*, p. 33 (Taylor’s emphasis).

²²¹ Taylor, *Dissertation On Singing*, pp. 34, 33.

²²² Boyce, *Serious Thoughts*, p. 11. See also, Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book 2, Part 2, p. 101.

particularly emphasising how it was a means by which God worked to ‘strike and engage the mind’ of non-believers.²²³ That Taylor brought his concern for the spread of the gospel even into his approach to worship, was indicative of the overarching concern for mission that his evangelicalism fostered within him.

A RELIGIOUS ENTREPRENEUR

A distinctive feature of Taylor’s ministry was the way he introduced new endeavours, embraced new practices and developed new outlooks.²²⁴ As Bebbington notes, he was a ‘religious entrepreneur’.²²⁵ His proclivity for innovation was apparent as he adopted certain methods of evangelism. When Taylor assumed oversight of the believers in Heptonstall he immediately embraced new practices he had been exposed to within the revival. For example, he delivered his early sermons from the fields surrounding Wadsworth²²⁶ and introduced the gospel to neighbouring communities through open air preaching. He appears to have been the first General Baptist of his generation to engage in open air preaching. This was not surprising given the resistance of many General Baptists to the conversionist impulse of the Evangelical Revival and wider innovation and change.

Taylor’s years in Methodism led him to become active in the publication of tracts. Methodists such as John Wesley had widely circulated religious tracts. Taylor wrote tracts on subjects such as the importance of the scriptures, baptism, the atonement, and process of conversion.²²⁷ Distinct from the common practice of both the General Baptists and seventeenth-century Puritans, he often wrote specifically with non-believers in mind.²²⁸ Through his distribution of tracts, and particularly his ‘plain, honest, searching style’, he

²²³ Taylor, *Dissertation On Singing*, p. 28.

²²⁴ For further consideration of this, see Richard T. Pollard, ‘Dan Taylor: A Baptist Entrepreneur’, *BQ* vol. 47, no. 4 (October 2016), pp. 134-51.

²²⁵ David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), p. 85.

²²⁶ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 9.

²²⁷ Examples include Dan Taylor, *The Absolute Necessity of Searching the Scriptures* (Halifax: Darby, 1764); Dan Taylor, *Strictures*; Dan Taylor, *The Friendly Conclusion: Occasioned By The Letters Of Agnostos To The Rev. Andrew Fuller, Respecting The Extent Of Our Saviour’s Death, And Other Subjects Connected With That Doctrine: In Four Letters To A Friend* (London: Ash, Marsom and Button, 1790).

²²⁸ See, e.g., Dan Taylor, *Entertainment And Profit*.

demonstrated a notable means by which the gospel could be meaningfully shared with non-believers.²²⁹

Taylor's appreciation for tract distribution was influential in the New Connexion's establishment of the Derby General Baptist Religious Tract Society in 1810.²³⁰ As Taylor impressed the merits of tracts on the members of the Connexion, he sometimes referred to wider educational concerns. His endorsement of tracts in his 1801 letter to the Connexion's churches was preceded by a lament concerning the poor condition of education.²³¹ He therefore urged the New Connexion to 'exert ourselves by every means' to 'inform the minds' of others on all subjects.²³² Such sentiments exemplify Bebbington's observations of how for evangelicals 'religious duty was in harmony with the goal of eighteenth-century progressive thinkers: the enlightenment of the masses'.²³³ This conviction underpinned Taylor's establishment of a school alongside his ministry at Birchcliff,²³⁴ and his endorsement of charity schools and Sunday schools.²³⁵ Taylor's evangelistic passion for tract distribution should be placed within the context of the broader eighteenth-century educational framework and associated evangelical perceptions.

Taylor demonstrated an innovative approach to church planting. By the close of his life, one third of the movement's churches were church plants.²³⁶ He assumed a lead role in the emergence of the movement's first church plant in Queenshead, West Riding in 1773.²³⁷ The venture began with Taylor engaging in open air preaching which led to the establishment of a preaching station in the home of an early convert. This was followed by the enterprising adaptation of part of the Queenshead Inn as a place of worship. Given the 'rapid growth' of the Queenshead fellowship, it is not surprising that the model of planting Taylor adopted became a prototype throughout the Connexion.²³⁸ The summer months were spent in open air

²²⁹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 96.

²³⁰ See Taylor, *History...The New Connection*, p. 465.

²³¹ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 19.

²³² Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 19.

²³³ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 69.

²³⁴ See, e.g., Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp. 10, 90.

²³⁵ See, e.g., Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 19.

²³⁶ Rinaldi, *Tribe of Dan*, p. 101.

²³⁷ This fellowship is today known as Queensbury Baptist.

²³⁸ See Blomfield, 'Yorkshire Baptist Churches in the 17th and 18th Centuries', p. 106.

preaching, premises were then rented during the winter. Taylor's zeal for church planting was such that he 'strongly advised the churches to encourage their ministers to preach as often as they could, in the villages around their respective stations'.²³⁹ Taylor was personally involved in church planting in Burnley, Lancashire (1780), Shore, Lancashire (1795), Quorndon, Leicestershire (1804), and Duffield, Derbyshire (1810). These efforts typified Taylor's entrepreneurial spirit.

Taylor ensured that the Connexion made effective inroads into the fast developing working class communities found in the industrial towns and cities. Examples included church plants in Nottingham (1775), Halifax (1782), Birmingham (1786), and Derby (1789). While Alfred Underwood correctly highlighted this as evidence that the Connexion was 'much more alive to the needs of the time' than other General Baptists,²⁴⁰ his failure to appreciate Taylor's extensive personal involvement in church planting and strategic coordination is typical of other commentators. Frank Rinaldi's description of the movement's church planting only in terms of a spontaneity of approach is similarly inadequate.²⁴¹ The Connexion's plant in Burnley is typical of the careful consideration Taylor gave to the development of church plants. Taylor was the sole instigator of the 1779 decision to relocate one of the Connexion's preaching stations from the outskirts of Burnley, into the centre of the town. His motivation stemmed from his strategic recognition that Burnley was 'a town of some note'.²⁴² For preaching purposes, he rented a house in the market place and a church was founded the following year. This achievement was notable, particularly given Taylor's initial observation that 'The town is a wretched place; no religion in, or near it, that we know of'.²⁴³ John Wesley noted in 1784 how the town was resistant to Methodist advances, stating 'I went to Burnley, a place which had been tried for many years, but without effect.'²⁴⁴ It is important to recognise Taylor's role as an enterprising and strategic thinker – particularly concerning the larger urban settings.

²³⁹ Taylor, *Circular Letter...1778*, p. 10.

²⁴⁰ Alfred C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1947), p. 157.

²⁴¹ Rinaldi, *Tribe of Dan*, p. 108.

²⁴² Dan Taylor, 'Letter to William Thompson', 29 October 1779, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, pp. 102-3 (p. 102).

²⁴³ Taylor, 'Letter to William Thompson', 29 October 1779, p. 102.

²⁴⁴ John Wesley, Journal entry, 13 July 1784, in John Wesley, *BE*, ed. by W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, vol. 23 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), p. 322.

Taylor's missiology exemplified the 'new orientation towards the laity' that was commonplace within eighteenth-century evangelicalism.²⁴⁵ He was convinced that evangelism was the personal responsibility of all believers. He urged efforts be made to 'contrive means of conveying the word of truth into every town and village; and if possible, into every neighbourhood, and every family'.²⁴⁶ He encouraged believers to learn the 'beneficial art of directing the conversation, in as prudent and inoffensive manner as possible to spiritual subjects'.²⁴⁷ Travels to or from church were to be spent 'conversing with those who do hear the gospel, but do not much understand it'.²⁴⁸ Taylor's aim was to mobilise a movement of believers into an intentional, evangelistic, and vigorous lay activism which included nearly every sphere of life.

Unlike the seventeenth-century establishment of the role of General Baptist Messengers for the task of evangelism, no such office was created in the New Connexion.²⁴⁹ Taylor's approach differed from how, as Clint Bass notes, Thomas Grantham believed 'evangelism be largely restricted to the service of messengers' with this and the Messenger's wider responsibilities 'suggestive of a slightly hierarchical polity'.²⁵⁰ Neither did the offices of pastor, elder or deacon within the Connexion's member churches include any extra responsibility for mission. Instead, this was viewed as a mandate for all believers. Taylor's belief in the essential role of laity in mission was evident as he encouraged members to share the gospel on the basis that 'for various reasons, what you say to such persons, is more likely to be acceptable and effectual, than the same things said by your ministers will probably be'.²⁵¹ This view was important in his determination to see lay people released into evangelism.

²⁴⁵ Deryck W. Lovegrove, 'Lay leadership, establishment crisis and the disdain of the clergy', in *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism*, ed. by Deryck W. Lovegrove (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 117-33 (p. 120).

²⁴⁶ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 18.

²⁴⁷ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 18.

²⁴⁸ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 20.

²⁴⁹ For an overview of the office of Messenger, see, e.g., William Evershed, *The Messenger's Mission...To Which is Added an Appendix Showing the Work and Business of Those Messengers* (London: Printed for the author by J. Brown, 1783), Appendix, pp. 24-32; Nicholson, 'The Office of 'Messenger'', pp. 206-25; Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 46-60.

²⁵⁰ Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 52, 57.

²⁵¹ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 20.

Taylor's evangelistic stance was indicative of the approach to personal conversion that was prevalent among eighteenth-century evangelicals. The vigorous and enterprising ways the conversion of others was sought and the underpinning dependence on lay activism served to set evangelicalism apart from the emergence of a personal 'conversion narrative' that commentators such as Bruce Hindmarsh identify as having emerged among the mid-seventeenth-century Puritans.²⁵² The scope, strategic thinking, and all-embracing nature of the lay activity Taylor nurtured across the New Connexion differed from models of activism that were commonly applied only at an individual level by Puritans such as Richard Baxter. It also extended beyond that articulated in the Reformation by those such as Martin Luther. The nature of Taylor's mobilisation of the laity suggests the need for caution regarding acceptance of the view, as for example advanced by Carl Trueman, that evangelical lay participation 'must be understood as a development of the Reformation, not as an innovation of the Wesleys, Whitefield or whoever else'.²⁵³ The seventeenth-century General Baptists, and those of Taylor's day who remained resistant to the Evangelical Revival, also held firmly to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, yet Taylor tended to outwork this doctrine in a more dynamic and progressive manner. For example, no similar movement to the New Connexion emerged among the seventeenth-century General Baptists. The difference in approach can, at least in part, be accounted for by the nature of Taylor's platform of evangelicalism.

Taylor's desire for believers to be mobilised in mission was central to his pioneering creation of the New Connexion. Its establishment comprised the pinnacle of his response to the missional inertia and theological drift from orthodoxy he encountered among many General Baptists.²⁵⁴ His overarching goal for the Connexion was 'To revive experimental religion'.²⁵⁵ He was convinced this required all members to embrace evangelism. It is in this regard that Rinaldi's description of the emergence of the Connexion exclusively in terms of a

²⁵² D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Preface, pp. vi-x (p. vi).

²⁵³ Carl R. Trueman, 'Reformers, puritans and evangelicals: The lay connection', in *Rise of the Laity*, pp. 17-35 (p. 33).

²⁵⁴ For consideration of the theological drift of most General Baptists see Pollard, 'To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice', pp. 69-80.

²⁵⁵ *The Proceedings of an Assembly of Free Grace General Baptists...1770* (page not numbered).

‘theology of protest’ is insufficient.²⁵⁶ Taylor’s overriding motivation was for the Connexion to be a catalyst to effective mission and not, in the first instance, a tool of corrective theology.

Taylor promoted an active unity between believers of all denominations. This was in contrast to the tendency for insularity found among the General Baptists of his day. He viewed unity between all believers as a vital prerequisite to effective mission. This was the prime reason he remained in good relationship with the old General Baptist Assembly until 1803,²⁵⁷ despite the heterodox Trinitarian and Christological views evident in many churches. Taylor warned believers against proceeding in a manner of ‘party-zeal’²⁵⁸ and claimed there was a ‘*special blessing*’ on believers who cooperated with those in other denominations.²⁵⁹ This was also something he modelled. A notable example was his reaction to some ‘squabbles’ in 1769 between church members at Birchcliff and the neighbouring Particular Baptist church at Wainsgate where John Fawcett Snr (1740-1817) was minister.²⁶⁰ The disagreement concerned the scope of Christ’s atonement. Rather than defend the theological position of his members, Taylor challenged their inappropriate and divisive behaviour. Fawcett did likewise with his members. Taylor recorded how their joint response ‘succeeded as instrumental in making peace’.²⁶¹ Their shared spiritual heritage in the Evangelical Revival was key to their unity and enduring friendship. It enabled them to lay aside their different persuasions on the scope of the atonement and unite around other aspects of their evangelicalism – chiefly the primacy of mission. This was pioneering within Baptist life – both locally and beyond.

A further example of Taylor’s willingness to join with Particular Baptists was his close friendship with John Sutcliff (1752-1814) who assisted at Taylor’s school between 1769-72.²⁶² Given Sutcliff’s later influence as an evangelical who promoted a more moderate Calvinism among Particular Baptists, John Fawcett Jr’s reference to Taylor having taught

²⁵⁶ Rinaldi, *Tribe of Dan*, p. 11.

²⁵⁷ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England, with Kindred Records, 1654-1728*, ed. by William T. Whitley, vol. 1 (London: Kingsgate Press, 1909), p. xxv; See also, Pollard, ‘To Revive Experimental Religion or Primitive Christianity in Faith and Practice’, pp. 147-48.

²⁵⁸ Taylor, ‘A Charge Delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Mr. George Birley’, p. 33.

²⁵⁹ Taylor, *Consistent Christian*, p. 60 (Taylor’s emphasis).

²⁶⁰ Taylor, diary entry, 9 July 1769, p. 32.

²⁶¹ Taylor, diary entry, 9 July 1769, p. 32.

²⁶² Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 33.

Sutcliff ‘the best things’ of the Christian faith should not be overlooked.²⁶³ Taylor also emphasised his ‘common bond of union’ with Particular Baptist minister Abraham Booth (1734-1806), despite Booth having previously been a General Baptist. This typified the generosity Taylor extended to mission-minded believers of other denominations. Despite their differences regarding the scope of the atonement, Taylor noted that ‘there were other subjects on which we were agreed, we could converse with more pleasure and to greater advantage’.²⁶⁴ These subjects likely included an exchange of ideas on mission, ministerial training, and their support for the abolition of the slave trade.²⁶⁵

Taylor’s determination to model an understanding of mission that was outworked beyond denominational boundaries was evident in his involvement in several cross-denominational groups. He participated in the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers which frequently considered issues relevant to the spread of the gospel in London. His cross-denominational involvements were fuelled by a conviction that ‘there are some, I trust, of every denomination, who “worship him [God] in spirit and truth”’.²⁶⁶ Taylor epitomised the ‘interdenominational temper’ and greater degree of resolve for ecumenical relations that emanated from the eighteenth-century evangelical movement, than was evident in the seventeenth-century.²⁶⁷

Taylor enabled the laity to participate in overseas mission through the Connexion’s establishment of the General Baptist Missionary Society²⁶⁸ in 1816. Its creation is a further example of how Taylor’s evangelicalism was outworked in a ground-breaking way. It enabled General Baptists to participate in world mission for the first time, as the Particular Baptist

²⁶³ Anon. [John Fawcett Jr], *An Account of the Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett* (London: Baldwin, Craddock and Joy, 1818), p. 162.

²⁶⁴ Dan Taylor, ‘Tribute to Booth’, in Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 301.

²⁶⁵ For Booth’s involvement in these areas, see Ernest A. Payne, ‘Abraham Booth, 1734-1806’, *BQ* vol. 26, no. 1 (January 1975), pp. 28-42. Taylor wrote forcibly in favour of the abolition of slavery in 1795, See Dan Taylor, *The Cause Of National Calamities And The Certain Means Of Preventing Or Removing Them. A Sermon, on I Sam. xii.14.15* (London: Button, 1795). Taylor’s arguments reflected those outlined by Booth in his influential 1792 sermon entitled *Commerce in the Human Species*, 3 vols (London: Button and Son, 1813), vol. 3, pp. 185-219.

²⁶⁶ Dan Taylor, *The Interposition Of Providence In The Late Recovery Of His Majesty King George The Third, Illustrated And Improved; The Substance Of A Sermon, Preached March 15, 1789* (London: Buckland, Ash, Marsom, Scollick and Button, 1789), p. 16. Taylor noted that his reference to worshipping God in spirit and truth was from John 4.24.

²⁶⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 66.

²⁶⁸ Hereafter referred to as the GBMS.

Missionary Society which was established in 1792 would not accept General Baptists. GBMS missionaries were sent to countries such as India, China and the West Indies. While commentators such as Glyn Prosser have focused on the Society's emergence with reference to John Pike (1784–1854), its influential first secretary,²⁶⁹ Taylor's contribution has regularly been overlooked. Rinaldi's brief examination of the Society does not even include any mention of Taylor.²⁷⁰ This is a significant omission. Taylor was an important catalyst to its formation. In 1801 Taylor urged the movement's churches to consider the question, 'What is to be done that the interest of our Redeemer may be advanced in the world?'²⁷¹ His answer focused on the need for believers to go and preach the gospel in other nations.²⁷² He chaired the Connexion's June 1816 annual Association, which unanimously passed the resolution, that paved the way for its creation.²⁷³ The creation of the GBMS was typical of how, as Brian Stanley notes, 'The eighteenth-century Protestant missionary awakening was intimately associated with the birth of evangelicalism.'²⁷⁴

Taylor's entrepreneurialism was also apparent in his 1797 establishment of the Connexion's General Baptist Academy.²⁷⁵ This was underpinned by his hope that the provision of theological education would lead to 'the conversion of sinners, and the greater extension of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ'.²⁷⁶ This suggests the need for caution regarding Rinaldi's claim that the Academy's establishment stemmed from the Connexion's 'developing denominationalism' and priorities being diverted away from mission.²⁷⁷ Taylor accepted the position of tutor, opening his home in Mile End, London for this purpose. He focussed on instilling practical skills for ministry. Typical lectures included those on 'The

²⁶⁹ Glyn P.R. Prosser, 'Formation of the General Baptist Missionary Society', *BQ* vol. 22, no. 1 (January 1967), pp. 23-29.

²⁷⁰ See Rinaldi, *Tribe of Dan*, pp. 56-57.

²⁷¹ Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 15.

²⁷² Taylor, 'Letter to the Churches: The Concurrence of People with Their Pastors', 1-3 July 1801, p. 15.

²⁷³ *Minutes Of An Association Of The New Connection Of General Baptists, Held At Boston, June 25th and 28th, 1816* (Derby: Printed by G. Wilkins, 1816), p. 10.

²⁷⁴ Brian Stanley, 'Christian Missions and the Enlightenment: A Reevaluation', in *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, ed. by Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 1-21 (p. 2).

²⁷⁵ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 217.

²⁷⁶ Dan Taylor, 'Address In Behalf Of The Academy', in *Minutes Of An Association Of General Baptists, And Representatives Of Churches, Holden At Spalding, Lincolnshire, June 24th, 25th, 26th, 1800* (London: Printed by J.G. Barnard, 1800), pp. 14-15 (p. 14).

²⁷⁷ Rinaldi, *Tribe of Dan*, p. 158.

Work of the Ministry’, and the ‘Art of Sermon Making’.²⁷⁸ The preaching of doctrine was not a priority. This was in keeping with Taylor’s aversion to labouring on the intricacies of doctrine – particularly once he was assured his listeners had a good grasp of the fundamentals.

Taylor’s greatest concern was with the provision of practical forms of training he deemed most relevant to the spread of the gospel. He was particularly keen that students engaged meaningfully with their cultural situation. It was for this reason he insisted students took a daily two hour walk around London.²⁷⁹ Visits were made to places such as the House of Commons to listen to the Prime Minister William Pitt ‘the younger’, St. James’s Palace to watch an appearance of King George III, the British Museum, a Jewish funeral, and a public hanging.²⁸⁰ The significance of this enterprising aspect of the training Taylor provided should not be underestimated. It is also insightful that Taylor taught subjects such as the discipline of logic, rational examination of the ‘The Evidences of Christianity’, and appropriate preaching styles he believed would effectively connect with wider society.²⁸¹ Taylor’s approach to ministerial formation was very much alive to the spirit of the age.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the evangelicalism of Dan Taylor, the standout General Baptist minister of his generation. His approach to ministry was marked by his propensity for theological and practical innovation. Taylor’s entrepreneurialism was underpinned by a platform of evangelicalism that was pioneering. This was apparent in his approach to spiritual formation; soteriology; understanding of the atonement; beliefs regarding the means and process of conversion; ecclesiology; approach to baptism, the Lord’s Supper and worship; and his missiology. As demonstrated, it was the pioneering nature of Taylor’s evangelicalism which led him to function as an innovative apologist, novel advocate, enlightened critic, the Baptist Wesley, a creative proponent and religious entrepreneur of an evangelical understanding of the gospel that he hoped would revive Christianity in faith and practice.

²⁷⁸ Joseph Goadby, diary entry, in Bertha Goadby and Lilian Goadby, *Not Saints But Men: Or the Story of the Goadby Ministers. With an Introduction by Dr. John Clifford* (London: Kingsgate Press, n.d. [1906]), p.32. Joseph Goadby trained at the Academy in 1798.

²⁷⁹ Joseph Goadby, diary entry, in Goadby and Goadby, *Not Saints But Men*, p. 33.

²⁸⁰ See Joseph Goadby, diary entries, in Goadby and Goadby, *Not Saints But Men*, pp. 32-40.

²⁸¹ Taylor, *Memoirs*, p. 315.

The defining characteristics of Taylor's theological thinking are relevant to the debate that surrounds the origin and distinguishing features of evangelicalism. In particular, the distinctions of Taylor's pioneering evangelicalism affirm much of what David Bebbington argues was new about eighteenth-century evangelicalism. While Taylor's theological framework contains elements of continuity, such as an upholding of the core Reformation doctrines of the authority of the scriptures, justification by faith alone and priesthood of all believers, its distinguishing facets gave rise to an expression of faith that differed markedly. This was not only a consequence of the collective effect of the dynamic combination of the four principal marks of evangelicalism as highlighted by Bebbington, but also stemmed from other underpinning tenets of Taylor's understanding and articulation of the faith. These include the importance he attached to certain core values of the Enlightenment, such as his regard for reason, the merits of observation and experience, liberty and equality. This, in turn, affirms Bebbington's assertion that evangelicalism was not principally a reaction against the values of the Enlightenment but was itself an expression of certain emphases that were central to this phenomenon.²⁸²

Taylor's entire framework of thought was predicated upon a creative synthesis of differing influences that were congruent with that which was distinct about eighteenth-century evangelicalism. These include Taylor's placing of precedence on the experiential over the cerebral, pragmatism over the metaphysical, reason and observation over abstractionism, succinctness over verbosity, innovation over inertia, toleration over dogmatism, and liberty over rigid doctrine. He also wove the task of mission into all aspects of his understanding of faith. Together these characteristics challenge any understanding of eighteenth-century evangelicalism that views it as only a continuum of earlier patterns of theological thinking, particularly those associated with the Reformation and Puritanism. Instead, they represent elements of discontinuity and point to that which was distinct within evangelicalism. Taylor's pioneering evangelicalism is therefore of significant importance both due to its impact within Baptist life, and because of that which it indicates was distinct about evangelicalism as a primarily eighteenth-century phenomenon.

²⁸² Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 53.

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