

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bq\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php)

remarked with genuine diplomatic courtesy that he "quite approved of liberty of thought in matters of religion." A deep voice, in measured words, answered: "My lord, we do not wish for liberty to *think*: that you cannot give or take away; we ask for liberty to *act*." Looking around for the speaker, he met the stern eye and grave face of the secretary of the Baptist Mission.

This paper must now end, albeit with reluctant abruptness, on account of space. In labours like these, in addition to a responsible pastorate and extensive authorship, Fuller toiled for twenty-three years as leading rope-holder. He carried on his broad shoulders and in his brave, noble and God-fearing heart, the chief part of the burden of the mission; and then, before his time, at sixty-one years of age, worn out with travel and toil, this true and valiant servant of God fell asleep with his hand still upon the rope.

GILBERT LAWS.

---

## Abraham Greenwood, 1749—1827.

THE Rev. Abraham Greenwood is one of the least known of those who united with William Carey, on October 2nd, 1792, at Kettering, in the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society. He was a Yorkshireman, so his eyes seemed always to be seeing the fields afar, and he proved to be a Baptist pioneer in Lancashire, Staffordshire, and Lincolnshire. He was born at Barnoldswick, January 21st, 1749, in the cottage adjoining the Baptist chapel house, which is now the property of the church. For over two centuries his forebears had been known as *Dissenters* in the parish, and their descendants have been in the Baptist fellowship of the town ever since.

In youth he attended the ministry of the Rev. Alverey Jackson, one of the leaders of the denomination in Yorkshire and Lancashire, who helped to re-organize the original Baptist Association of Lancashire and Yorkshire in 1718, being the first to lead it in prayer at the throne of grace; and also a protagonist for the ministry of song being exercised in the then songless sanctuaries. Greenwood began to preach in 1770, and became a pupil for a year and a half with his brother-in-law, the Rev. Mr. Armitage, an Independent minister at Delph, in Saddleworth. When the celebrated Dr. John Fawcett opened an academy in his own house at Wainsgate, Hebden Bridge,

Abraham Greenwood became the first student, entering July 27th, 1772, and remaining two years and a half. There he would no doubt meet John Sutcliff, a native of the district, who the same year went to be trained for the ministry at the Bristol Baptist Academy.

About this time the Baptist interest had been begun at Rochdale, through the influence of the Rev. John Hirst, Pastor of the Bacup church, with which Greenwood was now in membership. The work developed from cottage meetings, begun in 1756, when weather or accident prevented the Baptists journeying to Bacup or Wainsgate. Hirst found a ready helper in Dr. Fawcett, and naturally, the young student tried his prentice hand in these little gatherings. By 1773 the Bacup members at Rochdale felt strong enough to secure a room, attached to the Bull Inn, in Yorkshire Street, the mother church agreeing that the contributions of the Rochdale members should be spent locally. On October 12th, the same year, Hirst, Greenwood, Bamford (of Accrington) and Crabtree (of Bradford) held a great open-air service, and the first-named baptized, in the Roach, nine people, who certified to the crowd that they were not paying five shillings each for the ceremony. In 1775 a church was formed, with a meeting-house in Town Meadows. Both Bacup and Wainsgate dismissed Rochdale members to the new cause. How cordial was the feeling between the brethren may be inferred from the fact that Bacup made a liberal contribution towards building the meeting-house, and that the first pastor of this new church, Abraham Greenwood, was dismissed at the same time, serving the church with devotion for nearly six years. On February 14th, 1775, he married Susanna, the daughter of Mr. Jackson, his former pastor; she singularly had been born in the house of his birth, and only eighteen months later than himself.

At this time the Midland Baptists were most remarkably indebted to Lancashire. At Birmingham it was James Turner, of Bacup, who came in 1775 to a tiny church of fourteen members, and built it up for twenty-five years. Four sons of Henry Butterworth, a blacksmith of Goodshaw in Rossendale, were exercising remarkable ministries. John settled at Coventry in 1753; James at Bromsgrove in 1755; Henry in 1768 succeeded John Macgowan (of Warrington) at Bridgnorth; while Lawrence, who became an M.A., had settled at Evesham in 1764. Now in 1754 application had been made through Mr. Cartwright to the Baptist Board in London, for help to build at Dudley, and in 1765 a church there had been welcomed into the Midland Association, of which Lawrence Butterworth was Secretary for forty years. Is it not possible that when they were thinking of a settled pastor one of the

Butterworths should introduce the name of Greenwood? Every precedent suggested that a Lancashire man would be most suitable. At any rate, Abraham Greenwood is settled there in 1780. He found that some of his members, along with others belonging to the Brettel Lane church, met for worship every Sabbath at the Darkhouse, Coseley.<sup>1</sup> The name originated from the fact that the place was a house surrounded by trees, and therefore, dark. In 1783 these decided to form themselves into a separate church, but the Dudley church objected, notwithstanding that the new cause desired to share in their pastor's services, and were willing to contribute towards his support six guineas a year. Under this arrangement, on November 9th, 1783, Greenwood preached at Darkhouse, but his sermon, from the text 1 Tim. v. 18, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox," roused the dissatisfaction of all the local members, and brought a disruption between the two churches. However, early in 1784 a better feeling prevailed, and Greenwood was again preaching and baptizing for the Coseley Church. In 1786 he left Dudley for Oakham, in Rutland. Afterwards the Dudley cause declined so that the church died out, but later, in 1809, was revived through the help of the Coseley friends, who thus heaped coals of fire upon her head.

The Midlands were originally evangelized by General Baptists, Coventry dating from 1626 at least; a conference of representatives of thirty congregations met in 1651, and issued a confession entitled "The Faith and Practise." They came from churches reaching from North Willingham in Lincolnshire, through Burley, Thorpe and Tixover in Rutland, to Marston in Warwickshire. They had planted a church at Netherton, near Dudley, in 1654. It is remarkable that Greenwood's pastoral work took him through their district, where their churches were either joining the New Connexion, or were stagnating in independence, or were stiffened with Calvinism. Thus the 1651 church at Burley, which had done good service in that century, was growing languid in the eighteenth; there was no building, and no arrangement to train ministers. In 1715 we find that two ministers were working over a circuit including Oakham, Uppingham, Braunston and Empingham. A building, appropriated for worship, did exist at Harringworth, just across the Welland, in Northants. The minister there in 1745, Matthew Stanger, moved nearer to Morcot, so that the Burley Baptists placed themselves under his care. At his death, in 1770, there was a double reorganization. The Oakham group decided to organize separately again, and they did so on a Calvinistic basis. In 1764 a new and strong Association, called Northants., had been formed, with Olney and Kettering as its foci; Notting-

ham had joined 1768, Leicester in 1770. So in 1773 Oakham threw in its lot there. Two years later John Sutcliff settled at Olney, and when Oakham wanted a pastor, once again private friendship paved the way. Greenwood, after preaching a year on trial, was invited to become the pastor at Oakham, and for some time his settlement proved eminently satisfactory.

In 1791 the Northamptonshire Association held its annual meetings at Oakham, Greenwood became the Moderator, and wrote the circular letter. It was printed and sent to the churches of the Association, which really covered ten counties, and not simply Northants. This letter on "Holy Peace, Described and Recommended," is characterized by choice language and emphatic declarations of the necessity of holy living. His directions for gaining peace were, viz:

1. Cultivate a spirit of trust in God.
2. Preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.
3. Repent of every day's sins and go anew to Christ.
4. Strive for the things which make for peace among your fellow men and fellow Christians.

These were the motives for seeking it, viz:

1. Peace is so important that we cannot do without it.
2. Consider the advantages which we have for obtaining this blessing.
3. Honour and happiness accompany peace.
4. The success of the Gospel is generally connected with peace.
5. Heaven requires peace as a preparation for it.

The letter concludes with the Hebrew Benediction.

The next year he is at Kettering, in Widow Wallis's back parlour, when, though Europe was convulsed with war and revolution, he and twelve like-minded men formed the first society to send Messengers of Peace to every nation. He not only signed the resolutions, but promised his guinea, and helped to make the collection £13 2s. 6d. The gifts were generous, yet they seemed inadequate, but God was with them. They expected great things from God, and were attempting great things for God. Their hopes for the future were as bright as the promises of God.

Sutcliff shares with Carey the honours that belong to the founders and pioneers of modern missions. It was on his motion, in 1784, that the proposal was adopted by the Association, to set apart an hour on the evening of every first Monday in the month to pray in concert for the success of the Gospel, and to invite Christians of other denominations to unite with them in prayer that it "may spread to the most distant parts of the habitable globe." He too was at Kettering

at that memorable meeting, and wrote his signature, along with Greenwood's, to the resolutions adopted. Sutcliff and Greenwood were making such an impression that the Northants. men saw the wisdom of impregnating the mountain spring at its source; Carey was deliberately sent to win the interest of Fawcett, and the second printed list of subscribers to the the B.M.S. shows a Yorkshire Greenwood.

Soon afterwards, Abraham Greenwood got into trouble with the friends at Oakham, and in 1796 the dissatisfaction came to such a crisis that the church requested him to leave. It must be confessed, however, that the Oakham church—from the story told in its minute books—either had extraordinary misfortune in its dealings with ministers, or, what is equally likely, was exceedingly difficult to please. The church book contains the following entry:

“In the year 1796 we agreed to give the Rev. Mr. Greenwood notice of our desire that he should withdraw from us, and we generally felt dissatisfied with his manner of preaching, and the prevailing spirit he discovered, he being in the habit of indulging himself in low vulgarity in the pulpit, till it became disgusting to us and offensive to others who occasionally heard him, and wch we thot below the dignity and importance of a Xtian minister. And too often dealt out personal invective from the pulpit.”

All which may simply mean that he was too vigorous in his pulpit denunciations to suit the staid Puritanism of his congregation.

His next move may again be the result of personal influence, this time of a George Greenwood of Hull; for the Oakham pastor had received a call to the pastorate of the Baptist church at South Killingholme, near to the Lincolnshire creek from which the Pilgrim Fathers sailed to Holland in 1608. This church dated back to 1686, and its pastor, John Hannath, who had served for 53 years, was feeling the infirmities of age, and therefore had resigned, being 83 years old. It was an ancient General Baptist church, but when Hannath joined the New Connexion he did not carry the majority of the church with him. These now asserted themselves, and by 47 votes to 30 the call was given to Greenwood. Then a strange thing happened. You have two churches, each with its own minister, sharing the building and also endowments for over fifty years at Killingholme. When Greenwood settled, Hannath resumed his ministry, which he continued until his death in 1799. One church met in the morning, and the other in the afternoon. The G.B.'s had four preaching stations, the P.B.'s eight.

For over thirty years Greenwood affectionately and zeal-

lously preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and exercised a widespread ministry, not only at Killingholme but at Immingham, Stallingborough (the birthplace of Anne Askew), Brigg, Caistor, and Binbrook. North-east Lincolnshire everywhere felt his power. In 1817 the "Aged and Infirm Baptist Ministers Society" was founded at Bath. Greenwood was not infirm, but at sixty-seven might call himself aged. He joined at once, along with another Greenwood marked as junior. In 1822 he preached the first sermon for the new Baptist cause at Grimsby, and can be looked upon by his services to that cause as a founder of our Grimsby and Cleethorpes churches. The chapel he preached in at Killingholme was built in 1792, and he was buried in the adjoining burial ground, where the inscription upon his stone commemorates the fact that he was one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society. He died 25th June, 1827, aged 78 years, at Immingham. His widow, Susanna—who had been a true helpmeet during 52 years—survived until July 6th, 1828. Their son Abraham, who was an Independent Minister at Barton-on-Humber, a few miles away, placed a monument in his chapel as an act of filial duty, to their memory.

In the British Museum can be found a pamphlet of 41 pages, printed at the Brearley Hall Press by Dr. Fawcett, entitled "An affectionate address to young people, published with a design of engaging their attention to those subjects which most affect their present and eternal welfare." The author is Abraham Greenwood, of Killingholme. It is dated 1796.

The year 1808 was remarkable for the change of sentiment, on the subject of Baptism, that took place in the minds of James Alexander Haldane, and several Independent ministers in Scotland. Was this helped by the publication that year at Colne, near Greenwood's birthplace, of "A catechism, or, more serious questions and answers on baptism"? It was said to be by Abraham Greenwood, of Hawkshead. This was translated and published in Welsh the next year by John Johns at Croesoswallt. Was this the work of our Abraham Greenwood, or his son, or some one else of the same name? For about this time there was an Abraham Greenwood, Baptist minister at Bingley, in Yorkshire.

At any rate we can say of our hero he was a good man, full of faith and the Holy Ghost.

ARTHUR S. LANGLEY.

Coseley, Staffs.