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## The Legacy of John Gill

**C**HRISTMAS EVANS, the famous Welsh preacher, once expressed to Robert Hall his wish that Dr. John Gill's works had been written in Welsh, which he said was a more expressive language than English. Hall was quick to reply, "I wish they had, Sir; I wish they had, with all my heart, for then I should never have read them. They are a continent of mud, Sir."<sup>1</sup> When encountering the mountain of books, tracts, and sermons of the famous London divine, it is difficult not to agree with Robert Hall's judgment.

The best source of information on John Gill's early life is Rippon's memoir written in 1800.<sup>2</sup> He records that Gill was born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, on November 23, 1697, to parents of modest means. An ardent student, he had acquired a working knowledge of Latin and Greek before circumstances forced his withdrawal from the local grammar school at the age of eleven. He soon taught himself Hebrew with the help of a grammar and a lexicon. Though he helped his father in the woollen trade, he spent much of his spare time reading the Latin Fathers and various continental authors.

Young Gill's regular trips to the local bookseller on market days were common knowledge in the community. Rippon remarks that "when speaking of anything they considered certain, it is as sure, said they, as that John Gill is in the bookseller's shop."<sup>3</sup> He maintained this reputation throughout his life, and his congregation paraphrased the adage of his boyhood, saying, as surely as Dr. Gill is in his study."<sup>4</sup>

Gill was baptized in 1716 into the local congregation of Particular Baptists which his family attended. He soon began to preach and took the charge of Higham Ferrers, about six or seven miles from Kettering. After his marriage, he served the church at Kettering until 1719, when he accepted the call to become pastor of the congregation at Horsleydown, Fair-street, Southwark, and he was still minister there when he died in 1771.<sup>5</sup>

The world into which John Gill cast his systematic theology had grown weary of systems.<sup>6</sup> Men were beginning to seek simple statements of faith and to draw away from the formidable systematic dissertations of Calvinistic scholars. Man was being viewed with more optimism. A more moderate Calvinism was arising, stemming partly from the tradition of Richard Baxter, wherein some were assured of absolute salvation, but

the rest were not necessarily damned.<sup>7</sup> Men were gradually ceasing to view themselves with "that profound sense of worthlessness which leads to the Augustinian-Calvinist position."<sup>8</sup>

Against this prevailing attitude Gill found his calling. "Systematic Divinity," he observed candidly, "is now become very unpopular. Formulas, articles of faith, creeds, confessions, catechisms, and summaries of divine truths, are greatly decried in our age."<sup>9</sup> And yet he insisted upon a system. For him, the man without a system was little more than a sceptic.<sup>10</sup> It was in systematic statement that God's revelation to man could be best interpreted and understood. Thus, with the help of Gill's well-distributed doctrinal treatises, Baptists remained sternly Calvinistic while the rest of Nonconformity moved to new ground.<sup>11</sup>

Mid-eighteenth century Baptists accepted Gill's works as the final word on orthodox interpretations of scripture. From his active pen came an entire theological library. His major works, or at least the better known of his writings were these: (1) *Exposition of the Song of Solomon*, 1728. (2) *The Prophecies of the Old Testament Respecting the Messiah Considered*, 1728. (3) *Treatise on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1731. (4) *The Cause of God and Trust*, in four volumes, 1735-1738. (5) *Exposition of the Holy Scriptures*, his *magnum opus*, the New Testament commentary in three volumes, 1746-1748; and the Old Testament portion in six volumes, completed in 1766. (On the strength of this work, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1748.)<sup>12</sup> (6) *Dissertation on the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel Points, and Accents*, 1767. (7) *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 1767. (8) *A Body of Practical Divinity*, 1770. These last two were combined in later editions. In addition, there are extant a large number of sermons and tracts. Many of these were disputations over points of doctrine, sermons for special occasions, funeral sermons, and the like. A collection of sermons and tracts was published in two volumes in 1773. At least one other collection is available, a twelve volume set, containing essentially the same material as the 1773 publication.<sup>13</sup>

Gill's supreme effort in theology was the *Body of Divinity*, his complete statement of faith. These volumes enjoyed several editions and were still in demand during the early years of the nineteenth century. "The possession of these elaborate performances was, in those days, considered as almost an essential part of the library, not only of ministers, but of private Christians of the Baptist denomination, who could afford to purchase them. They were read almost exclusively, to the neglect of other works on divinity."<sup>14</sup>

Gill's amazing longevity also contributed to the growth of

his influence. He died at the age of seventy-four, after fifty-two years (from 1719 to 1771) as pastor of one of the country's leading Baptist congregations. In a real sense, his life and works linked late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Baptist thought with that of the seventeenth century Calvinistic divines.

The hyper-Calvinism which flowed from John Gill's pen was an instrument to discourage change in the conservative, isolated, rural churches. They looked to London and there received the aid of the learned Dr. Gill. He was their controversial champion. His teachings were easily digestible for the most part, and his legalistic interpretations of the New Testament and Calvin were suited to their tastes. The rural congregation, isolated from the mainstream of intellectual and social change is, as a rule, prone to conservatism, and this sort of conservatism tends over the years to become more and more legalistic in its interpretation of the "points of the law." This was true of Baptists in mid-eighteenth century England, whose churches were mostly rural and conservative, separated from London not geographically but also culturally. Of necessity they looked to London when they needed guidance in spiritual matters, and in London, it was only natural that they should look to John Gill as the most learned man among them. Gill was the natural theological leader of his day, for he had written more, published more, and defended the faith more openly than any of his brethren. Though it is notoriously easy to exaggerate in history — and perhaps particularly in church history — the influence of individual "seminal minds" on the course of a church or denomination, yet Gill's paramount intellectual position almost suggests that he had been a more moderate Calvinist, the whole denomination might have followed him.

He thus became the spokesman for Calvinistic Dissent in general and for Baptists in particular. His *Declaration of Faith and Practice, Read and Assented to by Members, at Their Admission into the Church of Christ, Under the Pastoral Care of Dr. John Gill*, became the basic church covenant for most Particular Baptist churches. It is also one of the most concise statements Gill published. Because of its long and widespread acceptance as the standard Baptist doctrinal statement, it is quoted in its entirety.

I. We believe, That the Scriptures of the old and new Testament, are the word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice.

II. We believe, That there is but one only living and true God: that there are three Persons in the God-head, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are equal in nature, power and glory; and that the Son and the Holy Ghost are as truly and properly

God as the Father.

III. We believe, That before the world began, God did elect a certain number of men unto everlasting salvation; whom he did predestinate to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ of his own free grace, and according to the good pleasure of design, he did contrive and make a covenant of grace and peace with his Son Jesus Christ, on behalf of those persons; wherein a Saviour was appointed, and all spiritual blessings provided for them; as also that their persons, with all their grace and glory, were put into the hands of Christ, and made his care and charge.

IV. We believe, That God created the first man Adam, after his image, and in his likeness, an upright, holy, and innocent creature, capable of serving and glorifying him; but he sinning, all his posterity sinned in him, and came short of the glory of God; the guilt of whose sin is imputed, and a corrupt nature derived to all his off-spring descending from him by ordinary and natural generation: that they are by their first birth carnal and unclean; averse to all that is good, incapable of doing any, prone to every sin; and are also by nature children of wrath, and under a sentence of condemnation; and so are subject, not only to corporal death, and involved in a moral one, commonly called spiritual; but are also liable to an eternal death; from all which there is no deliverance, but by Christ the second Adam.

V. We believe, That the Lord Jesus Christ, being set up from everlasting as the mediator of the Covenant, and he having engaged to be the surety of his people, did in the fullness of time really assume human nature; in which nature he really suffered and died as their substitute, in their room and stead; whereby he made all that satisfaction for their sins, which the law and justice of God could require; as well as made way for them both for time and eternity.

VI. We believe, That the eternal Redemption which Christ had obtained by the shedding of his blood is special and particular; that is to say, that it was only intentionally designed for the Elect of God, the Sheep of Christ; who only share the special and peculiar blessings of it.

VII. We believe, That the Justification of God's Elect, is only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, without the consideration of any works of righteousness done by them; and that the full and free

pardon of all their sins and transgressions, past, present, and to come, is only through the blood of Christ according to the riches of his grace.

VIII. We believe, That the work of regeneration, conversion, sanctification, and faith, is not an act of man's free-will and power, but of the mighty, efficacious and irresistible grace of God.

IX. We believe, That all those, who are chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit, shall certainly and finally persevere; so that not one of them shall perish, but shall have everlasting life.

X. We believe, That there will be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust; and that Christ will come a second time to judge both quick and dead; when he will take vengeance on the wicked, and introduce his own people into his kingdom and glory, where they shall be forever with him.

XI. We believe, That Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his second coming; and that the former is absolutely requisite to the latter: that is to say, that those only are to be admitted into the communion of the church, and to participate of all ordinances in it, who upon profession of their faith, have been baptized by immersion, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

XII. We also believe, That singing of Psalms, Hymns and spiritual Songs vocally, is an ordinance of the Gospel to be performed by believers; and that everyone ought to be left to their liberty in using it.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly there is no mistaking the fact that Gill was a Calvinist, but there hardly seems to be anything here which would have provoked controversy, and the Declaration differed in no major point from the other Calvinistic confessions of faith. *The Rules and Articles of Faith of the Particular Baptist Church*, published in 1852, are amazingly similar.<sup>16</sup> Neither was there any direct threat to evangelism in this statement: the doctrine of Reprobation was not even mentioned, and there was certainly no encouragement to Antinomianism. What, then, was the difference? It lay primarily in emphasis and interpretation.

Perhaps the most effective way to approach Gill's theology is to examine the criticisms levelled at him, since a complete study of this type is impossible in the present project and brief summary must suffice. No discussion of Gill's work and its critics would be complete without mentioning John Brine,

whose name was often coupled with that of Gill.<sup>17</sup>

He, like Gill, was a native of Kettering and held pulpits in London during Gill's long ministry there. Although his work does not show a scholastic discipline equal to Gill's, his publications were widely read by Baptists and other high Calvinists.

Gill and Brine were most noted as theological controversialists, for it was through such exchanges that their ideas were spread beyond the confines of the denomination. With his metaphysical frame of mind, his concern for systematic consistency, and his Puritan scrupulosity of conscience, Gill found it impossible to leave unanswered any statement which seemed to him a misinterpretation of the truth. Several accounts of Gill's controversies mention a remark of Augustus Toplady concerning Gill's controversy with John Wesley, "I believe it may be said of my learned friend as it was said of the Duke of Marlborough that he never fought a battle which he did not win."<sup>18</sup>

All of Gill's critics have not been so kind as Mr. Toplady (who himself battled against Wesleyan Arminianism in the great Methodist-Calvinist controversy). Bogue and Bennett, writing in 1831, candidly criticized his work and influence: "In the course of this period, this denomination received injury from the writings of Dr. Gill. He was the oracle of the body; and his books were spread extensively among them. . . . The doctor's supra-lapsarianism is well known, and he carried his ideas as high as any of the name. . . . but to those who are rude in theological knowledge, the danger of receiving injury is not small. The unlettered preachers read them with eagerness and delight, carried the ideas into the pulpit, were often expatiating on the divine decrees, when they should have been enlarging on the relation of a Saviour, for the deliverance of perishing sinners. There are, indeed, few subjects on which minds untutored, and unaccustomed to mental disquisitions, are apt to go so far astray."<sup>19</sup>

Most successive accounts of eighteenth century Baptist history have been equally critical of Gill's works. In short, he is credited with the stagnation of the denomination during his lifetime. This is, of course, gross over-simplification. But there can also be little doubt that the accusation does contain some truth. While it seems unlikely that either Gill or Brine consciously dominated Baptist thinking, "yet," as John Fawcett, Jr. remarked, "it would have been difficult for them wholly to repel the charge of prescribing with too great minuteness, and in language not always authorized by Scripture what ought to be the sentiments of those who connected themselves with the societies."<sup>20</sup> Fawcett deplored the wide spread of "Gillism" in the denomination.<sup>21</sup>

Most criticisms of high Calvinism in general and of Gillism in particular have been based on two assumptions: First, that high Calvinism as taught by Gill discouraged evangelism and was thus an impediment to the growth of the churches. Second, that such a theological system contained an inherent tendency toward Antinomianism.

The first charge centered around the doctrine of election, or the doctrine of divine grace. High Calvinist Baptists of this period were especially concerned that the gospel should not be preached indiscriminately to all men, lest the non-elect be openly invited into the Christian fellowship. The natural result was that very few people were brought into the local churches save the children of those already members. Such a closed society incurred the suspicion of the rest of the community, thereby further discouraging any desire among outsiders to join.

On these grounds David Douglas in 1846, reflected that the influence of Gill and Brine had "chilled the piety of the churches, and greatly checked their usefulness in the world."<sup>22</sup> Joseph Ivimey's indictment was more succinct. "The wonder is not that the churches did not increase, but that they continued to exist."<sup>23</sup> Ivimey also quoted two sermons, one each of Gill and Brine, which he observed were "totally destitute" of "any appeals being made to the consciences either of sinners or saints."<sup>24</sup> Whether Gill was fully conscious of the logical conclusions of his teachings is a moot point. A careful study of his sermons supports the view that he never knowingly discouraged presentation of the gospel to "sinners," and his published views on the duties of the Christian minister support this conclusion. He occasionally preached the "charge" or ordination sermon at ministerial inductions, and often on these occasions spoke on pastoral duties. He counselled one young ordinand that the work of the minister was to instruct both the righteous and the wicked, for if he failed to do so, "their blood will be required at his hand; but if he performs his office faithfully, he delivers his soul, *i.e.*, he saves himself from such a charge against him."<sup>25</sup> He reiterated that the minister was the instrument through which the soul is brought to salvation. This he said, should serve as one of the minister's greatest encouragements. "What can, or does, more strongly engage Ministers to take heed to themselves than this? That they may be useful in the Conversion and so in the Salvation of precious and immortal Souls, which are of more worth than the World."<sup>26</sup>

However, he cautioned young ministers on at least five different occasions,<sup>27</sup> this might prove difficult in certain situations. The minister, he reminded them, may often be called to the aid of a person of profane and worldly character, usually by

relatives who fear his disturbing this "carnal peace." Nevertheless, he admonished, ". . . be faithful, labour to shew the one and the other their wretched and undone state by nature; the necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in his blood, righteousness, and atoning sacrifice, for peace, pardon, justification, and salvation."<sup>28</sup> An even stronger statement was made at the ordination of a Mr. John Davis: "Souls sensible to sin and danger, and who are crying out, What shall we do to be saved? you are to observe, and point out Christ the tree of life to them; and say, as some of the cherubs did to one in such circumstances, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, Acts XVI: 31. Your work is to lead men, under a sense of sin and guilt, to the blood of Christ, shed for many for the remission of sin, and in his name you are to preach the forgiveness to them."<sup>29</sup>

John Brine took a similar stand in answering John Johnson of Liverpool, who had written that ministers were not to admonish sinners to repent. Brine acknowledged that there was a "wrong" way to present such admonition, but "it doesn't therefore follow, that it is wrong in itself, and is not to be done at all."<sup>30</sup>

Similar statements were not uncommon in the numerous published sermons of both men. The tragedy is that the import of such statements was so often lost in the intricate word-play of theological controversy. An outstanding example of this is the distinction drawn between "sinners," to whom the gospel may properly be preached, and the "non-elect," to whom the preacher is not obligated, thereby effectively relieving the minister of the necessity of preaching to anyone save those already in his flock.<sup>31</sup>

We can conclude, then, that Gill and Brine actually felt that the minister did have an evangelistic responsibility, but that this responsibility was only to the "elect," and that any real evangelistic emphasis was far overshadowed by questions concerning the nature of election.

Gill's writings can be seen in proper perspective only in relation to the larger idea of the Covenant. It is in his exposition of this idea that Ivimey's criticisms find their real support. As a Covenant theologian, Gill believed that all relationships between God and man were based on a legalistic Covenant, pre-existent to creation. Because Adam would inevitably break the Covenant, as the nation of Israel would break God's Covenant with Moses, provision was made for a mediator through yet another Covenant, this one between God the Father and God the Son. In this controversy with John Wesley, Gill defined the Covenant and cited Scriptural evidence,

. . . in which will appear plain traces and footsteps of

a covenant, or agreement, of a stipulation and re-stipulation, between the Father and the Son; in which the Father proposes a work to his Son, and calls him to it; even the redemption of his people; to which the Son agrees, and says, Lo, I come to do thy will, O! my God; and for a recompence on his being an offering for sin, and pouring out his soul unto death; tis promised he should see his seed and prolong his days, and have a portion divided him with great, and a spoil with the strong. And that there was such a covenant subsisting before the world began, is clear; for could there be a mediator set up from everlasting, as there was, and a promise of life before the world began made to Christ and put unto his hands and all spiritual blessings provided, and all grace given to his people in him, before the foundation of the world; and yet no covenant in being?<sup>32</sup>

By the phrase "to his people," Gill meant that only the elect were to come under the Covenant. He further pointed out that all this was predestined "before the foundation of the world," as indeed, was every relationship of man to God.<sup>33</sup> God was the high and exalted ruler over all. He was Creator, Lawgiver, Saviour, and complete Master of all that occurred in the universe. To suggest that any event could have taken place without God's having foreordained it was to deny the Sovereignty of God, which only Deists and Atheists might do.<sup>34</sup> God was in his heaven, and Man, his creation, was far removed, "an unworthy part of the dust of Zion," in the words of the 1769 Nottingham church covenant.<sup>35</sup>

Both Gill and Brine preached the doctrine of Predestination in its most rigid or pre-lapsarian form. God, in his infinite Wisdom, Justice and Mercy, had indeed called some to be joint heirs with Christ. But, Gill believed, God had foreordained the greater number to eternal death.<sup>36</sup> Predestined reprobation was as inescapable as predestined election. In answer to Wesley, he emphatically stated: ". . . that there are universal offers of grace and salvation made to all men I utterly deny; nay, I deny they are made to any; no, not to God's elect; grace and salvation are provided for them in the everlasting covenant, procured for them by Christ, published in the gospel and applied by the spirit; much less are they made to others."<sup>37</sup> He also pointed out Wesley's inconsistency in teaching that though some were predestined to salvation, the others were not necessarily damned. If "some men, not all," were chosen "to partake of spiritual blessings here and happiness hereafter,"<sup>38</sup> then those not chosen were necessarily rejected. A man who had been rejected, Gill believed, could not be saved, for

his personal choice had no part in his salvation or damnation. Man could not choose to have faith. He was not of the elect because he believed, but he believed because he was of the elec. ". . . their faith is not the cause or condition of their salvation, but their election the cause of their faith."<sup>39</sup>

Strangely enough, Gill considered this doctrine to be "more merciful than the contrary scheme, since it infallibly secures the salvation of some; whereas the other does not ascertain the salvation of any single person, but leaves it uncertain, to the precarious and fickle will of man."<sup>40</sup>

Brine also defended this position, designating any other belief as a "conditional scheme of Salvation."<sup>41</sup>

Logically enough, then, Gill regarded "talk of gospel-commands, gospel-threatenings, and gospel-duties, which, to me, are a contradiction in terms" as "loose and unguarded" speech.<sup>42</sup> "I am entirely for calling things by their right names; preaching duty, is preaching the law; preaching the free grace of God, and salvation by Christ, is preaching the gospel; to say otherwise, is to turn the gospel into law and to blend and confound both together."<sup>43</sup> The idea that man's salvation was in the way contingent upon his personal choosing not only violated the doctrine of predestination, but was also inconsistent with Free Grace in Gill's thinking. The beginning and end of salvation was in the hands of God.

Alvery Jackson of Yorkshire in 1752 wrote a pamphlet in which he stated that it was the duty of all men to whom the gospel is preached to have saving faith. Brine attacked this position. "What is that Faith which they maintain, is the Duty of unconverted Sinners? It is a belief of the Truth of the Report of the Gospel concerning Jesus Christ, in his Person, Offices and Benefits. This he asserts to be saving Faith, than which there is nothing more false."<sup>44</sup> Paraphrasing St. James, Brine said that even the Devil himself believes and yet is not saved. Thus Jackson's argument, he claimed, is entirely lost."<sup>45</sup>

Apart then, from some of his own homiletical admonitions, Gill's theological writings present a formidable argument against open evangelism. With his rigid insistence upon Covenant theology, on election and damnation, and the futility of man's will in choosing his ultimate destiny, he effectively stifled the would-be evangelist.

The second charge against Gill was that his system contained an inherent tendency toward Antinomianism.

In 1752 Gill expressed quite candidly his thoughts on the matter in answer to a pamphlet by Dr. Abraham Taylor, who had charged "some ignorant enthusiastic preachers" with dwelling "on eternal union with Christ, so that sin could do a believer no harm."<sup>46</sup> Gill thought the reference was to several seventeenth

and early eighteenth century divines, including Crisp.<sup>47</sup> He must have realized that if Crisp were an Antinomian, then their common theological tradition made him liable to the same charge. Much of the pamphlet answer to Taylor is devoted to a vindication of Crisp, and the same championship characterized Gill's introduction to the *Works* of Crisp, published in 1755. John Rippon tells us that ". . . Dr. Gill would have as soon allowed him to be an Atheist as an Antinomian."<sup>48</sup> Rippon was equally emphatic concerning Gill himself: ". . . nor could he be an Antinomian, as he for ever denied what they confirm, . . . that believers are not under the moral law, as the rule of their conduct."<sup>49</sup>

Gill's critics nonetheless designated him as the heir of Antinomian predecessors, and some charged that his own system was a haven for Antinomian interpretations. His overemphasis on the joys and privileges of the elect made it appear that if a person were of that number, then he would be saved no matter what he did.<sup>50</sup> Emphasis on man's inability to become apostate after he had tasted "the heavenly gift"<sup>51</sup> led some to see in this encouragement to loose living on the part of the Christian. Gill's position that "good works" were not necessary for salvation put him under even heavier fire.<sup>52</sup> In proportion to the total volume of his writing, he had very little to say about the holy life, a fact that his critics duly noted.

The substance of Gill's position on these charges was contained in another answer to the same Dr. A. Taylor. He defines "good works" as "the sanctification of the Spirit" rather than the work of sanctification itself.<sup>53</sup> Gill felt that even though good works were not necessary to man's salvation, they were nonetheless manifestations of the election or faith which was in the Christian. Gill's position was that good works were evidences of salvation. By good works he meant, ". . . a series of external holiness; not a single act or two, but a course of living soberly, righteously, and godly; a constant performance of religious duties and exercise, in the outward life and conversation."<sup>54</sup> He continued with the observation that good works were "necessary to be done, or ought to be done, . . . but not at the point of salvation, in order to that, or with a view to obtain it."<sup>55</sup>

Gill felt that there was a "passive holiness" or a stamping of the image of Christ on the soul of the elect, which took place in conversion. But he also stated, "I believe that an outward conformity to Christ in conversion, or active holiness of life, is absolutely necessary to evidence the truth of holiness of heart in all that are saved."<sup>56</sup> This was of particular importance in the life of a minister. "Ministers of the word ought to be careful of their lives and conversations; or otherwise, let their gifts

be 'what they may, they will become useless and unprofitable. They therefore should take heed to themselves, to conduct and to behave becoming their work and office; and so to walk as to be an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; and to take care they give no offence to the church, nor to the world, that the ministry be not blamed, for it is a most shameful thing, that they which teach others not to sin, but to guard against it, should be guilty of the same themselves."<sup>57</sup>

Taylor had sought to prove that Gill denied "the necessity of sanctification to complete happiness,"<sup>58</sup> but the honest reader must admit that Gill is far from being an Antinomian. The accusations hurled at him at this point are unmerited. His own conduct was above reproach or question, as was that of John Brine. Shortly before his death he penned a short article on preparation for death in which he summed up his position on the holy life: "In sanctification, or a work of grace and holiness, which takes place immediately upon regeneration; and without which no man shall see the Lord; but where this is begun, it shall be carried on, and be performed, until the day of Christ; and so furnishes us with a readiness for that day."<sup>59</sup>

John Gill firmly stamped his image on English Baptist life. He was the living symbol of Particular Baptist thought during the middle fifty years of the eighteenth century. If he helped to create that "hard, bitter rind of Calvinism" which (in Bernard Manning's opinion) covered Baptist faith from the solvent acids of rationalism, yet he also left the denomination a legacy of hyper-Calvinism which could have been nearly the death of Particular Baptists as an organized religious force in England.

But Gill's legacy was beginning to crumble even before his death in 1771. Young men with fresh ideas, who had little vested interest in the doctrinal *status quo*, were beginning to advocate a more moderate theological position. Mid-way in the century, new attempts at associational affiliations began in several parts of the land, and as these prospered, the hyper-Calvinist strongholds began to weaken. In such group meetings, a complacent pastor could be prodded by more zealous brethren toward the spread of the gospel. A consciousness of the decadent state of the denomination might precipitate in the same group a search for a common remedy. Gradually young ministers in several associations began to lead their congregations down the long road away from hyper-Calvinism.

#### NOTES

1. Robert Hall, *The Works of Robert Hall*, Ed. Olinthus Gregory, Vol. VI, 1833, p.125.
2. John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D.D.*, 1838
3. *Ibid.*, p.4

4. *Loc. cit.*
5. In 1757 the congregation was moved to Carter Lane, Tooley Street, near London Bridge. Gill pastored the church from 1719 until 1771. His successor, John Rippon, pastored the church until 1836, the two of them having combined ministry of some 117 years.
6. Benjamin Wallin, *The Redeemer's Charge Against His Declining Churches*, London: 1748, pp. i-ii. Also see: Norman Sykes, *The English Religious Tradition*, London 1961, pp.52-56.
7. Stromberg, *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England*, 1954, p.113.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.118-119.  
Vol. I, 1796, p.2. All references to the *Body of the Divinity* are to this edition, which is in three volumes.
10. John Rippon, *op. cit.*, p.97.
11. The Calvinism of the Independents began to show a marked change toward more moderate interpretations long before the Baptists. Philip Doddridge even went so far as to suggest investigation of mission possibilities as early as 1747. Dr. E. A. Payne suggests this as a prelude to the later moderate Calvinism which came into being in Northamptonshire. See Ernest A. Payne, *Before the Start, Steps Toward Founding of the L.M.S.*, London; 1945.
12. John Gill, *A Collection of Sermons and Tracts in Two Volumes*, 1773, p.xxiii.
13. This list is, in essence, the same as the one appearing in the DNB. *The Collection of Sermons and Tracts* in three Volumes cited there as appearing in 1773 was actually a two volume publication, printed for George Keith of London. The same man published a third volume of sermons and tracts in 1778, which apparently is the "third" volume to which the DNB refers. The Account of Gill's life prefixed to Vol. I of the 1773 edition is probably the most detailed reliable account of his publications available. They are far too numerous to be included here.
14. John Fawcett Jr., *An Account of the Life, Ministry, and Writings of the Late Rev. John Fawcett, D.D.*, 1818, pp.97-98.
15. John Gill, *A Declaration of Faith and Practice, Read and Assented to by Members, at Their Admission into the Church of Christ, Under the Pastoral Care of Dr. John Gill*, to which are annexed Scripture-Proofs, 1764, pp.4-12. There are several editions of this pamphlet available.
16. *Rules and Articles of Faith of the Particular Baptist Church*, Printed by J. Cadsby, London: 1852. There are a large number of individual church confessions and covenants from this period available in pamphlet form in the Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.
17. For a short biography and a complete list of Brine's works, see: Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses, in London, Westminster, and Southwark; including the Lives of their Ministers*, London: 1808. Vol. II, pp.574-579. There are several partial collections of sermons and tracts, but no complete compilation is available. There is also an entry on Brine in the DNB.
18. John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D.D.*, John Bennett, London: 1838, pp.64-65. Toplady and Gill were close friends and had much in common theologically. Rippon records on pp.118-119 that they frequently visited together. This 1838 publication was actually written by

- Rippon in 1800. There is also a memoir prefixed to the *Collection of Sermons and Tracts* published in 1773. Much of the Rippon memoir seems to have been taken from the 1773 account.
19. David Bogue and James Bennett, *The History of Dissenters*, Vol. II, 1833, pp.321-322.
  20. John Fawcett, Jr., *op. cit.*, p.4.
  21. *Ibid.*, p.99. The term "Gillism" was applied to the teachings of Gill in the years immediately following his death. After Andrew Fuller's writings became well known, there were often contrasts made between "Gillism" and "Fullerism." See *Baptist Magazine*, 1820, pp.240-241.
  22. David Douglas, *History of the Baptist Churches in the North of England*, 1846, pp.135-136.
  23. Joseph Ivimey, *History of the Baptists*, III, p.25.
  24. *Ibid.*, p.22.
  25. John Gill and Samuel Wilson, *The Mutual Duty of Pastor and People, Represented in Two Discourses Preached at the Ordination of the Reverend George Braithwaite, M.A.*, 1724, p.26.
  26. *Ibid.*, p.27.
  27. John Gill, *The Work of a Gospel-Minister Recommended to Consideration. A Charge Delivered at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. John Gill, Mr. James Larwill, Mr. Isaac Gould, Mr. Bonner Stone and Mr. Walter Richards*. *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 1773, Vol. II, pp.14-29. This was first published in pamphlet form by George Keith in 1763.
  28. *Ibid.*, p.21.
  29. John Gill, *The Doctrine of the Cherubim Opend and Explained, A Sermon at the Ordination of the Reverend Mr. John Davis, at Waltham-Abbey. Preached August 15, 1764*, p.36. Repeated admonition to preach "salvation by Christ" is to be found at the close of this sermon, p.48.
  30. John Brine, *Some Mistakes In a Book of Mr. Johnson's of Liverpool, Intituled, The Faith of God's Elect, & c. Noted and Rectified*, 1750, p.47. This work was one of several that passed between Johnson and Brine, most of which are available in the Angus Library.
  31. Almost without exception, when Gill was writing in controversy, as with John Wesley or Abraham Taylor, he used the term "non-elect" when defining those to whom the gospel was not to be preached. On other occasions, as in the above cited ordination sermons, he generally used the term "sinners."
  32. John Gill, *The Doctrine of Predestination Stated and Set in the Scripture-Light in Opposition to Mr. Wesley's Predestination Calmly Consider'd with a Reply to the Exceptions of the Said Writer to the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints*, *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, 1778, Vol. III, pp.271-272. See also: "Covenant Theology," in Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. For an analysis of the relation of the Christian to the old and new covenants, see: John Brine, *The Baptists Vindicated From Some Groundless Charges Brought Against Them by Mr. Eltringham, in a Pamphlet, entitled, The Baptist Against the Baptists, etc.*, 1756.
  33. The phrase "before the foundation of the world" is almost a by-word for both Gill and Brine. The phrase is so often repeated in their writings that one receives the impression that the whole system depends on it. For one in this vein of thought see: John Brine, *The Proper Eternity of the Divine Decrees, and of the Mediatorial Office, of Jesus Christ: Asserted and Proved*, 1754.

34. John Gill, *op. cit.*, p.258.
35. Sydney F. Clark, "Nottingham Baptist Beginnings," *Baptist Quarterly* XVII (1957-58), pp.162-169.
36. John Gill, *op. cit.*, p.261.
37. John Gill, *ibid.*, pp.269-270.
38. *Ibid.*, pp.264ff.
39. *Ibid.*
40. John Gill, *An Answer to the Birmingham Dialogue-Writer, Part I, Collection of Sermons and Tracts, 1773, Vol. II, p.117.* Also stressed in the answer to Wesley, pp.270-271. The arguments Gill used to answer his critics on the subject of Reprobation are most repetitious. Almost any sermon or discourse in which he discusses the subject will contain precisely the same argument, often with the points of his talk in the same order.
41. John Brine, *A Dialogue between Christophilus, Philalethes, and Philagathus, Wherein is Contained an Answer to Mr. Alvery Jackson's Question Answered, etc.*, 1753. Alvery Jackson was a pastor in Yorkshire who, in 1752, had written a pamphlet calling for a more moderate Calvinism.
42. John Gill, *The Doctrines of God's Everlasting Love to His Elect, and Their Eternal Union with Christ: Together with Some Other Truths, Stated and Defended. In a Letter to Dr. Abraham Taylor, 1752, p.78.*
43. *Loc. cit.* Also: *Body of Divinity, Vol. II, Book III.*
44. John Brine, *op. cit.*, p.28.
45. *Loc. cit.*
46. Dr. Tobias Crisp was an early nonconformist Divine (died 1643) who carried the ideas of predestination to ridiculous extremes. Stoughton calls him a "Mystical Antinomian," *History of Religion in England, Vol. II, p.348.* Gill's republication of his works in 1755 revived some interest in his thought, especially among Gill's followers.
47. John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, 1838, p.70.*
48. *Ibid.*, pp.103-104.
49. John Rippon, *op. cit.*
50. John Gill, *An Answer to the Birmingham Dialogue-Writer, Collection of Sermons and Tracts, 1773, Vol. II, p.128.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. John Gill, *The Necessity of Good Works unto Salvation Considered: Occasioned by Some Reflections and Misrepresentations of Mr. (alias Dr.) Abraham Taylor, in a Pamphlet of his lately published called An Address to young Students in Divinity, by way of caution against some paradoxies, which lead to Antinomianism. Collection, Vol. II, pp.181-195.* This was first published in pamphlet form in London in 1739.
53. *Ibid.*, p.183.
54. *Ibid.*, p.184.
55. *Loc. cit.*
56. *Ibid.*, p.183.
57. John Gill, *The Work of a Gospel-Minister Recommended to Consideration, etc. Collection, Vol. II, p.25.*
58. John Gill, *The Necessity of Good Works unto Salvation Considered: etc. Collection, Vol. II, p.183.*
59. John Gill, *Dying Thoughts: Consisting of a Few Unfinished Hints, Written by Dr. Gill, A Little Before His Decease, Collection, 1773, Vol. II, p.588.*