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VISIONARY WOMEN AMONG EARLY BAPTISTS

Curtis W. Freeman

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- *Curtis Freeman is Research Professor of Theology and Baptist Studies and Director of the Baptist House of Studies, Duke University Divinity School.*
 - *This article examines the role of prophetic women in early Baptist life. Particular attention is given to writing prophetesses among the early Baptists and other dissenting groups more broadly. Freeman is editing a collection of the texts of these prophetic women, Strange and Wonderful Visions: Baptist Prophetesses in Seventeenth Century England, which will be published by Baylor University Press.*
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In 1646, the English Presbyterian controversialist, Thomas Edwards, published an encyclopaedic account of heresies, provocatively entitled *Gangraena*. It contained 'A Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errors, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time, vented and acted in England in these four last years'. Orderly Protestants like Edwards worried that the Baptists and other dissenters were spreading 'confusion and disorder in Church-matters both of opinions and practices, and particulars of all sorts; of Mechanics taking upon them to preach and baptize, as Smiths, Taylors, Shoomakers, Pedlars, Weavers, &c.' At the top of the list of cankerous offences among these disorderly sects was permitting women-preachers to 'keep constant lectures, preaching weekly to many men and women'.¹

The Baptist movement began four centuries ago at a time when 'the world', as one noted historian described it, was 'turned upside down'.²

With kingly sovereignty called into question and male supremacy also under strain, women began to exercise remarkable authority among the gathered churches. Baptists were, to be sure, less obviously radical than many of their fellow dissenters, which included Quakers, Ranters, Familists, Levellers, Diggers, Muggletonians, and Fifth Monarchists. But the appearance of orthodoxy concealed a deeper problem. Scottish Presbyterian minister, Robert Baillie, warned that the Baptists were in fact the fount of all heresy.³ Their respect for the liberty of conscience fostered tolerance for diversity of opinion, and their democratic polity encouraged greater participation of the membership in the governance of congregations. Both principles, Baillie contended, threatened the prospects of godly reformation of the Church after the pattern of Westminster Calvinism. When it came to the participation of women in Baptist churches, Baillie and Edwards had grounds for concern. In many Baptist congregations, women outnumbered men. And even when women did not explicitly call for the right to preach, they played a more active role in Baptist life than in the established Church of England or among Presbyterian-ordered congregations.⁴ But did earlier generations of Baptists really have women preachers? The answer is a complicated story that requires a careful telling.

HANDMAIDS OF THE LORD

One of the Baptist congregations that figured prominently in Edwards' scornful catalogue of sectaries was the Bell-Alley Church of London led by Thomas Lambe, a soap-boiler by trade. Lambe's church was associated with the General Baptists, who were theologically more radical and ecclesialogically more loose than the Particular Baptists. The lively and often contentious meetings at Bell-Alley were open space for the free exercise of spiritual gifts among all the saints, regardless of gender.⁵ Services often lasting several hours featured multiple preachers whose sermons were debated by the congregation after (and sometimes before) they had finished preaching. Edwards describes the Bell-Alley Baptists as raucous and disorderly:

In their church-meetings, they have many exercisers, in one meeting two or three, when one hath done, there's sometimes difference in the church who shall exercise next, 'tis put to the vote, some for one, some for another ... In this church 'tis usual and lawful, not only for the company to stand up and object against the doctrine delivered when the exerciser of his gifts hath made an end, but in the midst of it, so that sometimes upon some standing up and objecting, there's pro and con for almost an hour, and falling out among themselves before the man can have finished his discourse.⁶

Edwards provides a vivid, and in his view a scandalous, description of the 'she preachers' from Lambe's Church, one of whom was Mrs Attaway the lace-woman, the most notorious woman preacher in all of London. In 1645 she began holding a Tuesday afternoon lecture that attracted as many as a thousand people. At one meeting she entered the assembly accompanied by two other women 'with Bibles in their hands'. They sat at a table before the gathering. After a time of deliberation about who should speak first, Mrs Attaway began by offering 'a word of exhortation'. Quoting from the second chapter of Acts, she announced that 'now those days were come' when 'God would pour out his Spirit upon the handmaidens, and they should prophecy'. After a season of extempore prayer lasting about half an hour, she offered a message from the text, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15). Her exposition and exhortation continued for about forty-five minutes. When there were no questions or objections to her message she yielded to a second woman who was soon interrupted by voices urging to 'Speak out!' As the interruptions continued, the second woman broke off her instruction and sat down. An agitated Mrs Attaway then offered a closing prayer that included a plea for God to 'send some visible judgment from heaven' upon those who had interrupted her dear sister. The imprecations petition elicited a cry from the dissenters for 'God to stop her mouth'. Edwards concludes that the meeting came to an end in 'confusion and disorder'.⁷

However, there was tension between Mrs Attaway and the Bell-Alley congregation. After addressing another weekday afternoon gathering, offering light for more than an hour, she asked if anyone took exception

to what she had delivered or could show that she had taught in error. A 'sister', presumably one of the female members of the Bell-Alley Church, objected, asking 'what warrant she had to preach in this manner'. Mrs Attaway interrupted, recognizing that by 'in this manner' the sister meant 'that she ought only to preach to those that were under baptism'. Mrs Attaway continued, disclaiming that she was not preaching, but only exercising her gifts. The sister pressed again, asking what warrant she had then for exercising. Quoting 1 Peter 4:10-11, Mrs Attaway responded,

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth:

She continued, citing the command to 'exhort one another' (Hebrews 10:25), as well as numerous other Scriptures. Mrs Attaway explained that when she first began exercising, it was only among women, 'but when she considered the glory of God that was manifested in babes and sucklings, and that she was desired by some to admit of all that pleased to come, she could not deny to impart those things that the Spirit had communicated to her'. The female church member again objected to spiritual lectures being held in such a public forum, saying that Mrs Attaway 'ought not to preach to the world'. Further queries and discussion devolved into an argument about infant baptism, so that Mrs Attaway stopped speaking and got up from the table. Another woman dismissed the gathering, saying, 'You have heard what was delivered, and may rest satisfied'.⁸

Strict Protestants like Edwards regarded Mrs Attaway as more infamous than famous. They worried that her willingness to question the social order, if followed by others, would inevitably lead to chaos and anarchy. Edwards reported that after reading John Milton's tract on divorce, Mrs Attaway commented that 'Master Milton's doctrine ... was a point to be considered of; and that she for her part would look more into it, for she had an unsanctified husband, that did not walk in the way of Sion, nor speak the language of Canaan'. She was apparently

persuaded by the argument that a loveless and troubled marriage is worse than 'a needful divorce' and 'practiced it in running away with another woman's husband', one William Jenney, who was likewise unequally yoked to an unbelieving spouse. Jenney reasoned with Milton 'from that Scripture in Genesis where God saith, "I will make him an help meet for him"', that when a mans' wife was not meet help, he might put her away and take another; and when the woman was an unbeliever (that is not a sectarie of their church) she was not a meet help, and therefore Jenney left his wife and went away with Mistress Attaway'.⁹ Presbyterian and Anglican critics rightly saw nonconformists as a threat to the religious establishment because they embraced a civil rather than an ecclesiastical justification of marriage and family.

Edwards' polemical account was surely intended to portray the Baptists in the worst possible light. They were a convenient and credible scapegoat. By consistently describing them as 'Anabaptists', a label they vigorously resisted,¹⁰ Edwards conjured the radical spectre of the Münster rebellion, where in 1534 Anabaptist fanatics took control of the North German city introducing communism and polygamy as they awaited the return of Christ and the establishment of the millennium. The ill-fated experiment resulted in tragedy as the entire population was put to the sword. Yet despite his negative strategy, Edwards offers a credible portrait of Baptist church meetings in the 1640s. As the eminent historian of the seventeenth century, Christopher Hill, observed, Edwards' *Gangraena* is an alarmist account by a professional heresy-hunter. Nevertheless, it is 'well documented and seems to stand up quite well to examination'.¹¹ Still, there is tension between the ways that the women of Lambe's Church seemed to understand their proclamation as 'exercising' but not 'preaching' and Edwards' contention that the Baptists were swarming with 'illiterate mechanick preachers, yea of women and boy preachers!'¹² The difference may in part be due to what one means by 'preaching'. Baptists recognized their preachers as valid if they were called by a gathered congregation, but in the eyes of the Church of England and Parliament, because they were ordained by neither bishops nor presbytery, Baptist ministers — all Baptist ministers

— were regarded as lay preachers, and thus their exercise in public meetings was warrantless.

Experience of grace, baptism with a confession of faith, and a congregational call were for the Baptists necessary criteria of warranted preaching. But in the eyes of Parliament and the established Church, neither soap boilers nor weavers nor young men nor women were fit preachers. As Nigel Smith observed, 'radical religion itself flourished precisely where learned clergy who had moved into separation or sectarian positions interacted with the "middling sort" and artisans'.¹³ Gathered churches were full of such lower and middle-class folk, and no social group among them was more systematically excluded from all professions, including the clergy, than women. That Edwards scrupulously noted the class and gender of each Baptist indicates that these factors, every bit as much as suitable ordination credentials, counted in disqualifying dissenting preachers who were neither university educated nor proper churchmen. It was not long, however, before the General Baptists, with whom Lambe's own church was associated, began to take steps toward establishing an orderly process for ordination limited to those of the male gender, recommending to churches 'that some gifted men should be appointed or set apart to attend upon the preaching of the word'.¹⁴

The women preachers among the Baptists from Edwards' account also understood their exercise to be warranted by a higher authority than the Church of England, which sometimes put them at odds even with their fellow Baptists, for they perceived themselves to be actors in the end-time drama. Their prophetic activity, they believed, was the fulfillment of God's promise for a great outpouring of the Spirit and a great overturning of the social order in which women as well as men would proclaim the word of the Lord. It was a subversive hermeneutical vision in a social world where biblical warrants were used to reinforce the subjugation of women who were regarded as the natural and spiritual inferiors of men and who were limited to a destiny of marriage and childbearing.¹⁵

Edwards' description of Baptist women prophetesses bears a striking resemblance to the self portrait offered by two Quaker women, Priscilla

Cotton and Mary Cole, who in 1655 were imprisoned in Exeter for preaching. Their arrest was based on a supposed violation of the biblical injunction: 'Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak' (1 Corinthians 14:34). Preaching women were commonly dismissed as simple-minded or mentally unstable. Rather than disputing this assumption, Cotton and Cole answer to the prelates that 'Silly men and women may see more into the mystery of Jesus Christ, than you'. They clarify that the biblical prohibition silencing women applies not to women only, because the same apostle Paul states that 'we are all one both male and female in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). The apostle Paul further teaches that both men and women may prophesy in the church with the qualification that 'a woman may not prophesy with her head uncovered, lest she dishonor her head' (1 Corinthians 11:5). Then they ask what appears to be an innocuous question: What is 'the meaning of that "head"'? They reply, that the answer is given, or at least implied, by Paul just two verses earlier when he states that 'the head of every man is Christ' (1 Corinthians 11:3). Christ is the head. If anyone, woman or man, speaks in church so that what they say is only the 'wisdom of man' then 'Christ, the true head' is not covered and 'Christ the head is then dishonored'. The decisive moment of hermeneutical subversion comes when Cotton and Cole explain to the established, university-educated, male clergy who speak in words of worldly wisdom and thus do not prophesy under Christ: 'You yourselves are the women that are forbidden to speak in the church'.¹⁶

Such a radical vision of equality met resistance at almost every level of society. William Allen voiced the prevailing attitude toward gender relations when he suggested to Sarah Timms, another Quaker prophetess, that instead of prophesying, she should be 'sweeping the house and washing the dishes'.¹⁷ Yet somehow these visionary women found ways not to be bound by the conventions of domesticity, and they proved to be every bit the theological match for the apologists of patriarchalism. Kathrine Chidley, a Leveller and a member of the Independent London congregation led by John Duppa, challenged none other than Thomas Edwards himself. She defended churches gathered by

‘well-meaning Christians’, no matter how socially humble, rather than by ‘ill-meaning priests’, who ‘are very unfit men to make churches; because what they build up with one hand, they pull down with the other’.¹⁸ Edwards was particularly worried that toleration of the gathered churches would lead to a breakdown of what he took to be the God-given authority of ‘husbands, fathers, and masters over wives, children, and servants’. Chidley answered him, appealing to 1 Corinthians 7:13, which, she argued, ‘plainly declares that the wife may be a believer, and the husband an unbeliever’. She taunted:

I pray you tell me, what authority this unbelieving husband hath over the conscience of his believing wife; It is true he hath authority over her in bodily and civil respects, but not to be a Lord over her conscience ... Yet it is Christ the King of Kings that reigneth over their consciences; and thus you may see it taketh away no authority which God hath given to them.¹⁹

The records of the General Baptist Church in Fenstanton, Cambridgeshire from 1658 offer a similar argument in the case of Jane Adams who, when asked by Messengers ‘why she did neglect coming to the meetings’, replied, ‘her husband would not suffer her’. After reproofing and admonishing her, they excluded her from membership. The congregation then considered ‘whether the threatenings of a husband are sufficient warrant for a woman to keep from the assemblies. After consideration it was concluded and resolved, that unless a person was restrained by force, it was no excuse for the absenting themselves from the assemblies of the congregation.’²⁰ Though Baptists respected the conscience of women, they expressed reservations about the full participation of women in the life of the church. Proto-Baptist John Robinson maintained that women were not permitted to prophesy in the church meeting, but ‘they may make a profession of faith, or a confession of sin, say amen to the church’s prayers, sing psalms vocally, accuse a brother of sin, witness an accusation, or defend themselves being accused’, and even reprove the whole congregation if needed.²¹ Women in the congregation of the first Baptist, John Smyth, were likewise not allowed to prophesy in the church meeting, and there were

questions about whether they should be permitted to vote, though they could serve as deacons.²² The records of the Midland and Abingdon Particular Baptist Associations in 1656 and 1658 indicate that women could speak in a church meeting to make a profession of faith or a confession of sin, or to offer a witness in fraternal admonition. Otherwise they should remain quiet, 'acknowledging the inferiority of their sex'.²³ The West Country church records, however, suggest that some Baptists took an even stricter view, answering that 'a woman is not permitted at all to speak in church, neither by way of praying, prophecy nor enquiring'.²⁴

Yet Baptist women were expected to answer for themselves in matters of discipline. For example, in the Fenstanton records of 1652-1653, Widow Saunders, Anne Pharepoint, Elizabeth Brown, Widow Binns, and Widow Wiggs were all admonished by Messengers of the congregation on charges ranging from absenting from worship, marriage to a non-church member, attending services in the parish church, and forsaking the faith. In each case, the women were presented with the charge against them and asked to declare their resolution.²⁵ Some Baptists, however, went further, allowing women to prophesy in the church meeting. For example, a conflict arose in a London congregation between sister Anne Harriman and a male member, a brother Naudin, who 'had said that he would not walk with such as gave liberty to women to speak in church, whilst she, for her part, would not walk where she had not this right'. The church conceded to her request on the basis that 'a woman, (maid, wife or widow) being a prophetess (1 Corinthians 11) may speak, prophesy, pray, with a veil. Others may not'.²⁶

The participation of women in the polity of local Baptist congregational life demonstrates that although they were not regarded to be complete equals with men, as was more nearly realized among the Quakers and Levellers, women were nevertheless respected as moral agents. Husbands were not lord over the conscience of their wives. In the end women church members were responsible to answer for themselves. Nigel Smith summarizes this radical vision of gender equality: 'What should be noted is the tendency among some Puritans (the more radical

the Puritanism, the greater the tendency) to regard women as the spiritual equals of men'.²⁷ It confirms the more general observation by R.A. Knox that 'the history of enthusiasm is largely a history of female emancipation,' though he added, in his opinion 'it is not a reassuring one.'²⁸ Yet the distinction between 'preaching', in which only men could engage, and 'prophesying', that permitted women to exercise their gifts, was difficult to maintain. As historian Keith Thomas observed, they 'often came to much the same thing'.²⁹

In 1641 an anonymous tract entitled *A Discovery of Six Woman Preachers* appeared. It named six women from Middlesex, Kent, Cambridgeshire, and Salisbury, all of whom likely were Baptists, explaining that their 'manners, life, and doctrine' were 'pleasant to be read', but warning that their stories were 'horrid to be judged'. The unnamed author disputed the claim that 'their only reason or cause of preaching was, that there was a deficiency of good men, wherefore it was but fit that virtuous women should supply their places', and that 'they themselves would preach nothing, but such things as the Spirit should move them'. One of the six, Anne Hempstall in Middlesex County, derived her call to preach from a vision of the biblical prophetess Anna, who appeared in a vision. The author describes Hempstall's sermon as striking the congregation 'into an astonishment', adding, 'long did she preach, and longer I dare avouch than some of the audience were willing'. The author suggests these women preachers were perhaps trained in their prophetic ministries at Bedlam or Bridewell, two infamous institutions for the confinement of the insane and disorderly. It concludes, 'At this time I have described but six of them ere long I fear I shall relate more, I pray God I have no cause.'³⁰ Four years later, another anonymous tract was published, entitled, *A Spirit Moving in The Women Preachers*, in which 'certain queries [were] vented and put forth unto this affronted, brazen-faced, strange, new feminine brood'. The author suggests that the appearance of these prophetesses is due to a failure in the home, stating that most of them, 'wearing the breeches' in the family, 'lead their husbands by the nose'. The critique continues, charging women preachers with arrogance, ignorance, and delusion:

[D]ivers of them have lately advanced themselves with vain-glorious arrogance, to preach in mixed congregations of men and women, in an insolent way, so usurping authority over men, and assuming a calling unwarranted by the word of God for women to use: yet all under the colour, that they all as the Spirit moves them; wherein they highly wrong and abuse the motions of the blessed Spirit, to make him to be the author of so much schism, disorder, and confusion; they being rather led by the strong delusions of the prince of darkness, to countenance their ignorance, pride, and vain-glory.³¹

Critics who suspect that the role of female prophecy in this revisionist account of radical Puritanism was of marginal influence would do well to take a careful look at the numbers. Reasonable estimates indicate that between 1640 and 1660 as many as three hundred women prophetesses were active in England. A checklist of women's published writings during this period suggests that more than half of these women's writings could be described as 'prophetic'.³² Most of them published nothing, but many of the forty-seven well-known women visionaries during the revolutionary period did write. Nine of these writing prophetesses were Baptists.³³ Contrary to the unflattering portrait presented by critics like Thomas Edwards, these women told their stories in their own words, although their visions and revelations were in some cases dictated to a 'relator' who redacted their oracles. The life and ministries of five women, all of whom were associated with the Particular (or Calvinistic) Baptists, illustrate the importance of visionary women in early Baptist life. They are Sarah Wight (1632-?), Anna Trapnel (1642-1660), Jane Turner (1653), Katherine Sutton (1630-1663), and Anne Wentworth (1629/30-1693?).³⁴ That the combined total of the writings of these five women was over one thousand pages is no small record. And because many of these writings were published as cheap pamphlets, and thus available to even the poorest labourers, they were able to reach a wide audience and often went through multiple editions.

ORACLES OF KING JESUS

The remarkable story of sixteen-year-old Sarah Wight, entitled *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, was based on eyewitness accounts kept by members of her congregation and edited by Henry Jessey, one of the most prominent London Baptist ministers of the day.³⁵ The 186-page book that provided a narrative of her conversion from 'a hopeless and restless state to joyful rest in the Lord', was published in 1647 and went through six editions by 1652. For radical Puritans, and especially Calvinistic Baptists, conversion was a process often lasting years and requiring meticulous self examination of one's 'experience' in search of signs of saving grace.³⁶ These evidences were displayed over time in preparatory stages ultimately leading to an awareness and reception of salvation.³⁷ Sarah Wight's conversion began about age twelve and lasted four years. In February of 1647 her consciousness of sin grew so intense that 'she could believe nothing but hell and wrath to be her portion'.³⁸ After numerous failed suicide attempts, she began a total fast on 27 March 1647 that lasted seventy-six days during which she was struck deaf and blind. As she moved in and out of trance states she received a series of revelations that offered signs of grace.

The first vision occurred on 6 April 1647, in which she saw herself crucified with Christ. After calling for a drink of water, she sat up in her bed and spoke softly:

Ah, that Jesus Christ should come from the bosom of his Father, and take the nature of man upon him! ... Who came he to die for? For sinners; aye for the greatest sinners, the chiefest sinners, the chieftiest sinners. A dying Christ for a denying Peter. Peter denied him, and yet he died for him. Go tell Peter! Go tell Peter! Ah Peter.³⁹

Later she reflected on this event:

I lay in visions. And in that time, the Spirit of God was powered in upon me. And then Jesus Christ was presented to me, as crucified for my sins, I saw it: and myself crucified with him: and when I saw a glimpse of his love, then I mourned bitterly for my sins, and never truly sorrowed for

sin, till then. I never mourned for sins, as sin, before. But then I mourned bitterly. And now praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify his name together.⁴⁰

As Barbara Dailey suggests, Wight's testimonial finds its place broadly in the tradition of devotional practices associated with the art of dying (*ars moriendi*) in which women were permitted to speak to friends and family within the liminal space of the deathbed. Among radical Puritans like Wight, the conversion narrative as witness to spiritual death and rebirth, transformed this ritualized practice so as to authorize women like Wight to prophesy. And with imaginations intensified by social and political upheaval, her beside congregation was hungry for a taste of the future.⁴¹ In the days of her visitation, Wight had a series of revelations culminating in the completion of her conversion. The rest of the book contains the record of 'conferences' in which she heard the experiences of other women who 'heard what the Lord had done for her soul'.⁴² One of those that questioned Wight was Joshua Sprig, who asked, 'But do you not think there will be a time, when God will pour out more of his Spirit upon his sons and daughters, than now is usual?' She answered, 'This is but a taste now of what shall be.'⁴³ On 11 June she received a vision in a dream that told her: 'Rise, and stand upon thy feet: For I have appeared to thee for this purpose, to be a minister and a witness, both of the things thou hast seen and in which I will appear unto thee.'⁴⁴ After she awoke, she broke her fast and began to recover her strength. Little more of her is known about her subsequent ministry and witness, except that in 1656, after 'the death of her brother' and 'the troubles of her mother', *A Wonderful Pleasant and Profitable Letter Written by Mrs Sarah Wight* appeared in print.⁴⁵

One of the visitors who came to confer with Sarah Wight was a young woman named Anna Trapnel.⁴⁶ Like Wight, early in her life she began experiencing spiritual visions that confirmed her election. Her father was a carpenter, but her mother was a visionary woman, who prayed upon her deathbed: 'Lord! Double thy spirit upon my child.'⁴⁷ This prayer was dramatically answered in January 1654, as Anna Trapnel suddenly burst on the public stage while awaiting a verdict in the hearing of Vavasour Powell, a Welsh Baptist preacher and Fifth

Monarchist, who stood accused of plotting against Oliver Cromwell. Trapnel fell into a trance state that lasted twelve days during which she issued oracles every three to four hours in sing-song, rhyming verse. It is not surprising that the visions at Whitehall came when they did. In April of the previous year, Cromwell dismissed Parliament and abolished the Commonwealth which drew the ire of Fifth Monarchists, a radical millenarian group that rejected the authority of all earthly sovereigns and looked for the establishment of the soon coming reign of King Jesus. Many of the Baptists of London, including Trapnel's own All Hallows the Great Church, were associated with the Fifth Monarchists. In a sermon on 19 December 1653, Powell had suggested, referring to Daniel 11:21, that Cromwell was the 'vile person' who would 'obtain the kingdom by flatteries'. Christopher Feake went even further. Preaching at the same meeting, he declared that Cromwell was the little horn of the beast, prophesied in Daniel 7:8 and 8:9-10. Both were imprisoned and released after a few days. Feake and Trapnell's pastor, John Simpson, were subsequently imprisoned in Windsor Castle on charges of treason.⁴⁸

Anna Trapnel's trance-induced utterances may have sounded gentle and mild, but they were filled with highly charged political speech which resonated with radical Baptists.⁴⁹ Trapnel began by describing Cromwell as a 'Gideon-like' figure 'going before Israel, blowing the trumpet of courage and valour', only to be transformed in another vision into a raging beast who claimed to be 'their Supreme' and charged 'at many precious saints that stood in the way of him, that looked boldly in his face'. She predicted defeat and destruction for Cromwell, whom she intimated was the little horn of the beast, and his beastly army who waged war against the saints, saying,

He gave them many pushes, scratching them with his horn, and driving them into several houses, he ran still along, till at length there was a great silence, and suddenly there broke forth in the earth great fury coming from the clouds, and they presently were scattered, and their horns broken, and they tumbled into graves; with that I broke forth, and sang praise.⁵⁰

Many of her songs also celebrated the coming of the new Jerusalem and the saints reigning with King Jesus, such as this one:

Oh therefore come! Oh come thou Christ!
 Oh shew thy self now here,
 Oh come! Come King Jesus, declare,
 How thou art drawing near.⁵¹

Trapnel was considered to be a subversive agitator by the protectorate, but because she enjoyed popular support and was widely regarded as a true oracle, acting without human agency, it proved difficult to hold her responsible for the radical politics of her revelations. Many Baptists welcomed her prophetic vision and voice. A tract entitled *Report and Plea* describes Trapnel's trip to Cornwall at the request of her church and pastor, John Simpson, to converse with Captain Langden MP and other Fifth Monarchists. Upon arriving in Cornwall she was accused of being 'a dangerous seditious person' and forced to stand trial.⁵² The book, *A Legacy for Saints*, was published shortly afterward, during her confinement at London's infamous Bridewell prison, where 'disorderly women' were incarcerated. Trapnel believed that during her detention she was subjected to the forces of Antichrist. Yet she remained undeterred, affirming her utter confidence in God's vindication, writing: 'For the Saints, their bars are iron, and their gates brass, so that the strongest dragons teeth cannot rend saints asunder'.⁵³ Many of her trance-inspired verses were collected in a ninety-one page book entitled *A Lively Voice for the King of Saints and Nations*, which concludes:

Now then friends treasure up these notes,
 Lay them up in your breast,
 That you may know the difference,
 Between false visions and the best.⁵⁴

Whereas the works of Wight and Trapnel are examples of oracular speech, a second literary genre employed by early Baptist women was the conversion narrative. Jane Turner's *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God* (1653) is representative of this type.⁵⁵ John Spilsbury,

the early Baptist leader and signatory of the First London Confession of Faith (1644), commended Turner in the preface as 'a Daughter of Zion' and 'a Mother in Israel', and described her book as 'full of the life and delight to a gracious experienced heart'. The exemplarity of her story as 'an experienced Christian' was paradigmatic for others seeking guidance in the process of conversion. The text delineates Turner's experience of grace through six stages: (1) ignorance and darkness, (2) awakening to and conviction of sin, (3) believing in and receiving assurance of God's love, (4) baptism and church fellowship, (5) understanding of notions and pretended spiritualities as Satan's deceptions, and (6) habits of grace and fruits of the Spirit.⁵⁶ Turner's story narrates her transition from Anglicanism, to Presbyterianism, to Anabaptism in which she remained, although she admits to being seriously tempted by what she described as the 'pretended spiritualities' of the Quakerism.

It is notable that, although she was a Particular Baptist, Turner commended a faith correlated, not with the doctrines of predestination and election, but with 'the invitations so general that whosoever would come might come and take of the water of life freely'.⁵⁷ Attesting that she 'had rather hear five words from a true Ministry, or in a Church of Christ, where he hath promised his blessing and preference, than five thousand elsewhere, Turner urged 'experienced Christians' to separate 'from all the false ways of worship' that are 'not rightly constituted ... according to the appointment and practice of Christ and his Apostles'.⁵⁸ Her account concludes with a caveat that the sort of experience Christians should attend to pertains not to the world, but rather with 'the effects and operations' of the Spirit of God in the soul. But she warned that all experience is subject to the rule of Scripture, which serves as the measure of experience. As she stated, 'one word of Scripture is more worth than all our experience'.⁵⁹ But for Turner, just as experience without principles is blind, so principles without experience are empty.⁶⁰ 'Christian experience', she explained, 'is truth brought home to the heart with life and power, by the Spirit of God conforming the soul in all things to the will of God, being united to Christ by faith.'⁶¹

Another Baptist sister in the Spirit who employed the conversion narrative was Katherine Sutton.⁶² Her book, *A Christian Woman's*

Experiences, published in 1663, was enthusiastically commended by Hanserd Knollys, the minister of the congregation of which Sutton was a member. Her conversion story is marked by intense religious experience that was intensified by the deaths of at least two children and a prolonged personal illness. Even after her baptism by the Baptists, Sutton struggled to be convinced of her lot among the redeemed. One verse of Scripture that weighed heavily on her during this time was: 'And on my servants, and on my hand maidens will I pour out of my spirit, and they shall prophecy' (Acts 2:18). As she reflected on these words, God gave her the gift of spontaneous singing in verse, which she dated as coming in February 1655:

These promises did dwell with me for a long season, so that I was much stirred up to pray to the Lord, that he would please to accomplish them upon me, and pour out of his blessed Spirit upon me. And after long seeking (especially one day) being very earnest and importunate with the Lord, after which I went out to walk, and on a sudden I was indued with the gift of singing, in such a way and manner as I had not been acquainted with before.⁶³

This gift was the 'one thing' that she sought for twenty years, and it marked the beginning of her prophetic ministry.

Sutton's gift served as more than a confirmation of divine light in her own conscience. It constrained her to be a conscience of the nation. In 1658, the same year that Oliver Cromwell died, she prophesied to 'some that then were in high places', in verse, saying:

Didst thou not hear a voice from on high,
Deny your selves (take up the cross) or verily you shall die?⁶⁴

Though she notes that her warning was initially met with a promising reception, it was not heeded, to which she added: 'poor souls, for not hearkening unto council in departing from sin they were soon brought down'. The protectorate did indeed collapse the year following her prophecy, and the monarchy was reinstated in 1660, signalling the dark days ahead for the Baptists and other dissenters. Sutton subsequently

fled to Holland where the trunk carrying her songs and prayers, which she calls 'the papers of my experience', was lost in a shipwreck.⁶⁵ She attempted with little success to reconstruct material from her memory, but most of her written work remains lost. Only a few hymns survive. One which celebrates 'the glorious workings of God's free grace', dated 20 November 1656, contains this verse:

Let Zions Children now rejoice,
And let them praises sing:
O! let them lift up pleasant voice,
In honour to their King.⁶⁶

A final example of seventeenth-century prophetic Baptist women's voices is Anne Wentworth.⁶⁷ Her books, *A True Account* (1676) and *A Vindication of Anne Wentworth* (1677), are examples of a third genre employed by Baptist women writers — the controversial tract. These texts narrate her story of an unhappy marriage to a husband who she describes as a man of 'fierce looks, bitter words, sharp tongue, and cruel usage'.⁶⁸ On 3 January 1670, she experienced a miraculous healing from a medically incurable fever that confirmed God's call 'to come and follow him'⁶⁹ and to let him alone be both her maker and her true husband.⁷⁰ She finally left the abusive relationship, which from that point on she called 'Babylon', vowing not to return to her husband 'unless he become a new-man, a changed man, a man sensible of the wrong he has done to me'.⁷¹ Her declaration was no mere demand that her husband become a better man working within the existing gender dynamics, but rather that he become converted into a new and transformed image of masculinity based not on hierarchy and dominance but on equality and love. The Baptist church in London where they were members, rather than supporting her cause, rejected her vision and drew up a 'bill of charge' against her, which the elders presented to her on 13 February 1673.⁷² The charges included that she exposed her husband's weakness to others, that she did not keep her promise, that she turned her back on one of the church's ministers refusing to hear him preach, that she refused to dress according to church order, that she said she would

seek strength from the Lord rather than going to men for help, that she left home without her husband's permission, that she said her husband's tongue should cleave to the roof of his mouth and his jaw fall, and that she had written a book that caused all the problems to begin with.⁷³ Wentworth was initially supported by Hanserd Knollys, a leading London Baptist minister who described her work as 'from God, and for the good of souls'.⁷⁴ In the end, the church and even Knollys turned against Wentworth, leaving her alone to challenge the patriarchal hierarchies with Abdiel-like courage — 'unshak'n, unseduc'd, unterrifi'd'.⁷⁵

Wentworth's most important work, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, is a remarkable piece calling for 'a thorough reformation of church worship'. It is not a compendium of spontaneous uttered verses nor a collection of narrative visions. It is rather a series of revelations which together form a sustained theological argument on the figures of Zion and Babylon: the true church and the false church. Whereas her contemporary Baptist prophetess, Mary Adams, announced almost certain impending doom on England,⁷⁶ Wentworth held out hope for the nation's redemption. Like the Hebrew prophet Hosea, whose failed marriage became an image of God's redemption for Israel, so Wentworth envisioned her life story as instructive for Zion, the true church. Just as her life in relation to Babylon produced bondage, so participation in Jerusalem above offers freedom. But Babylon signifies not just an abusive husband, nor is it confined to the whorish Roman Church as the scores of dissenters had previously claimed. Babylon, Wentworth writes, also represents hypocritical Baptists from whose formalism in matters of worship all true believers must come out.⁷⁷ Wentworth draws up a parallel between the Papists and the Baptists (or Anabaptists as she prefers to call them) and finds that both lie, oppress the conscience, quench the Spirit, uphold one another in sin, sin against the light of their own soul, and act with the same oppressive spirit as the pope.⁷⁸ Indeed, mentioning prominent Baptist ministers and elders by name, Wentworth declared that 'the principles of the Anabaptists are as false and as much displeasing to me, as the Pope of Rome'.⁷⁹ Formalism, she decried, has corrupted the worship of all religions in England including Anabaptists, Independents,

Presbyterians, Quakers, Episcopalians, and Papists.⁸⁰ Only one religion offers hope of salvation and freedom — the religion of King Jesus. He declares, ‘I King Jesus am thy King and thy Bridegroom: I am thy beloved Husband, I am Jesus, I am he that will make that stout proud man bow down to me’.⁸¹ This voice is, of course, the same one that called her out of a cruel and false marriage to William Wentworth, into a true and spiritual union with King Jesus. Thus bound with the cords of love the true Church of Christ lives ever free.

These stories of the handmaids of the Lord and the oracles of King Jesus indicate that prophetic women exercised considerable influence among communities of early English General and Particular Baptists. Through their writings they surely attained an even wider audience. Yet there was also tension between the prophetic voices of these women, the gathered churches, and the wider society that eventually refused to swallow their prophetic pill. Notwithstanding the influence of women in the church, when the Particular Baptists of London, including Hanserd Knollys, put together a second confession of faith (published in 1677 and reissued in 1688), they like the General Baptists left no question that prophetic women were to remain outside the ordained ministry, stating that ‘The office of Bishop, or Elder, in a Church, is, that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the church it self.’⁸² Revolutionary forces had destabilized the centres of power and dislodged the mechanisms of social control that long had kept women in their place. The social space that opened up enabled women, not just to think for themselves, but to speak their minds. Yet as the Baptist movement became organized and institutionalized many of the more egalitarian expressions of the early days dissipated. As historian Christopher Hill observed, one of the most visible signs that ‘the great period of freedom’ which began in the English revolution had come to an end was that ‘women were put back into their place’.⁸³

1 Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena: The First and Second Part*, 3rd ed. (London: Ralph Smith, 1646), I.29. See also Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

2 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1975).

3 Robert Baillie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme,*

- Antinomy, Familisme, and most of the other Errours which for the time doe trouble the Church of England* (London: M.F. for Samuel Gallibrand, 1647). See J. F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, ed. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 23-63.
- 4 Keith Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', in Trevor Aston, ed. *Crisis in Europe, 1560-1660* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), 320-21.
 - 5 Edwards, *Gangraena*, I.35. For a discussion of Lambe's Bell-Alley Church, see Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution*, 175-77; J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, 29-30; Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London, 1616-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 74-80; and Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 89-102.
 - 6 Edwards, *Gangraena*, I.36.
 - 7 Edwards, *Gangraena*, I.29-30.
 - 8 Edwards, *Gangraena*, I.31-32. See also Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints*, 81.
 - 9 Edwards, *Gangraena*, II.9; and *Gangraena: The Third Part*, (London: Ralph Smith, 1646), III.27. See also Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', 328-29; and John Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, in *John Milton Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1957), 696-715.
 - 10 For example, the First London Confession (1644) contains the disclaimer, 'The Confession of Faith, of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists', in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, revised ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 153.
 - 11 Christopher Hill, 'Irreligion in the 'Puritan' Revolution', in McGregor and Reay, *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, 206.
 - 12 Edwards, *Gangraena*, Epistle Dedicatory.
 - 13 Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 10.
 - 14 'The Faith and Practise of Thirty Congregations, Gathered According to the Primitive Pattern', (London: J. M. for Will. Larner, 1651), §58; in Lumpkin, 184.
 - 15 Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', 318.
 - 16 Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, *To the Priests and People of England We Discharge Our Consciences, and Give Them Warning* (London: Giles Calvert, 1655), 3, 6-8, emphasis added; discussed in Elaine Hobby, 'The Politics of Women's Prophecy in the English Revolution', in *Sacred and Profane: Secular and Devotional Interplay in Early Modern British Literature*, ed. Helen Wilcox, Richard Todd, and Alasdair Macdonald (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1996), 300-02; and Hobby, ' "Discourse so Unsavoury": Women's Published Writings of the 1650s', in *Women, Writing, History: 1640-1740*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, ed. Isobe Grundy and Susan Wiseman (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1992), 26.
 - 17 Cited by Elaine Hobby, in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 166.
 - 18 Kathrine Chidley, *The Justification of the Independant Churches of Christ* (London: William Larnar, 1641), 22-23. Chidley took up a second answer to Edwards in *A New-Yeares-Gift, of A Brief Exhortation to Mr. Thomas Edwards* (no publisher listed, 1644).
 - 19 Chidley, *The Justification of the Independant Churches of Christ*, 26.
 - 20 Edward Bean Underhill, ed., *Records of Churches of Christ Gathered at Fenstanton, Warboys, and Hexham*

- (London: Publisher, 1854), 242.
- 21 John Robinson, *A Justification of Separation*, in *The Works of John Robinson*, ed. Robert Ashton (London: J. Snow, 1851), 2:215-16.
 - 22 John Smyth, *Principles and Inferences Concerning the Visible Church* in *The Works of John Smyth*, ed. W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 1:256-60; and John Smyth, *A Short Confession of Faith in XX Articles* (1609), 16, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 101. See also Thomas Helwys, *A Declaration of Faith of English People* (1611), 20, in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 121-22.
 - 23 *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*, 3 vols., ed. B. R. White (London: Baptist Historical Society), 1:28; and 3:185. The records delineate four instances in which a woman may not speak in worship: public teaching, doctrinal exposition, church ruling, or leading prayer.
 - 24 *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 1660*, 2:55. Women were allowed to exercise their gifts 'in private' according to the rule of 1 Cor 11:5.
 - 25 Underhill, *The Fenstanton Records*, 20-85.
 - 26 Claire Cross, 'The Church in England, 1646-60', in G. E. Aylmer, *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972), 116-17; cited in John Briggs, 'She-preachers, Widows and Other Women: The Feminine Dimension in Baptist Life since 1600', *Baptist Quarterly* 31 (1986): 341.
 - 27 Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 12.
 - 28 R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 20.
 - 29 Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', 323.
 - 30 *A Discovery of Six Women Preachers, in Middlesex, Kent, Cambridgeshire, and Salisbury* (no location or printer, 1641), 1-5.
 - 31 *A Spirit Moving in The Women Preachers* (London: Henry Shephard, 1645), 1-8, esp. 3.
 - 32 Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings 1600-1700', in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 211-82.
 - 33 Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 106-07, 413-14. The nine Baptists mentioned by Mack are Mary Adams, Mrs Attaway, Anne Hall, Dorothy Hazzard, Elizabeth Poole, Katherine Sutton, Anna Trapnel, Jane Turner, Sarah Wight, and Anne Wentworth.
 - 34 The dates denote the period of their prophetic activity.
 - 35 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-2009), s.v. 'Wight, Sarah', by Karen O'Dell Bullock; Maureen Bell, and others, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers, 1580-1720* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1990), s.v. 'Wight, Sarah'.
 - 36 In Puritan theology, 'experience' was a technical term that denoted a constellation of convictions and affections between the awakening to sin and the conversion of the sinner through effective grace. See *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, X, in *Creeds of the Churches*, ed John H. Leith (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 206. Christian experience so understood is *theocentric* and *theological* and should not be mistaken for or confused with *anthropocentric* and *psychological* notions of experience associated with evangelical revivalism, protestant liberalism, or psychological theories.
 - 37 Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience: Studies in Spiritual Autobiography* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 1-17.
 - 38 *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1647), 7.

- 39 *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, 16.
- 40 *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, 54.
- 41 Barbara Ritter Dailey, 'The Visitation of Sarah Wight: Holy Carnival and the Revolution of the Saints in Civil War London', 55/4 (December 1986): 438-55.
- 42 *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, 48.
- 43 *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, 90.
- 44 *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, 135.
- 45 *A Wonderful Pleasant and Profitable Letter Written by Mrs Sarah Wright* (London: James Cottrel, 1656).
- 46 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. 'Trapnel, Anna', by Stevie Davies; Bell and others, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers, 1580-1720*, s.v. 'Trapnel, Anna'.
- 47 Anna Trapnel, *The Cry of a Stone* (London: no publisher named, 1654), 3.
- 48 Louise Fargo Brown, *The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men In England During the Interregnum* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1912), 44-46.
- 49 The positive reception of Trapnel was unlike that of Elizabeth Poole, another prophetess, whose 1648 pro-monarchy vision urged the General Council of the Army to 'stretch not forth the hand against' King Charles I resulting in her expulsion from the London congregation led by William Kiffin. Elizabeth Poole, *A Vision: Wherein is Manifested the Disease and Cure of the Kingdome* (London: no publisher, 1648), 5. In Poole's *An Alarm of War Given to the Army* (no location or printer, 1649), she further defended the monarchy against the revolutionary politics favored by her fellow Baptists.
- 50 Trapnel, *The Cry of a Stone*, 6-13.
- 51 Trapnel, *The Cry of a Stone*, 72.
- 52 Trapnel, *Report and Plea or A Narrative of her Journey from London into Cornwall* (London: Thomas Brewster, 1654), 52.
- 53 Trapnel, *A Legacy for Saints* (London: Thomas Brewster, 1654), 44.
- 54 Trapnel, *A Lively Voice for the King of Saints and Nations* (no location or publisher listed, 1657).
- 55 Jane Turner, *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God before, in, and after Conversion* (London: H. Hils 1653); Bell and others, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers, 1580-1720*, s.v. 'Jane Turner'.
- 56 Although Puritans agreed that conversion was preceded by preparatory stages, they did not describe the morphology of conversion in the same way. On the different morphological accounts see Jerald C. Brauer, 'Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism', *Journal of Religion* 58/3 (July 1978): 233; Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 90-91; Elizabeth Reis, 'Seventeenth-Century Puritan Conversion Narratives', in *Religions of the United States in Practice*, vol. 1, ed. Colleen McDannell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 22-26.
- 57 Turner, *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God*, 57.
- 58 Turner, *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God*, 97-99.
- 59 Turner, *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God*, 197.
- 60 Here obviously a play on Immanuel Kant's thesis, 'Concepts without percepts are empty; percepts without concepts are blind', in Preface to Second Edition (1787) of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St Martin's Press, 1956), 75.
- 61 Turner, *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God*, 202.
- 62 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. 'Sutton, Katherine', by Michael Davies; Bell and others, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers, 1580-1720*, s.v. 'Sutton, Katherine'.
- 63 Katherine Sutton, *A Christian Womans*

- Experiences of the Glorious Working of Gods Free Grace* (Rotterdam: Henry Goddaeus, 1663), 12-13.
- 64 *A Christian Womans Experiences*, 16.
- 65 *A Christian Womans Experiences*, 22.
- 66 *A Christian Womans Experiences*, 43.
- 67 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. 'Wentworth, Anne', by Catie Gill; Bell and others, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers, 1580-1720*, s.v. 'Wentworth, Anne'.
- 68 Anne Wentworth, *A Vindication of Anne Wentworth*, (no location or printer, 1677), 5.
- 69 Anne Wentworth, *A True Account of Anne Wentworths Being Cruelly, Unjustly, and Unchristianly Dealt with by Some of Those People Called Anabaptists* (no location or printer, 1676), 10-11.
- 70 Anne Wentworth, *A Vindication of Anne Wentworth*, 22.
- 71 Anne Wentworth, *A Vindication of Anne Wentworth*, 5.
- 72 Anne Wentworth, *A True Account*, 16-17.
- 73 Wentworth, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, (no location, publisher, or date), 6-8.
- 74 Wentworth, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, 5.
- 75 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V.899; in *John Milton Complete Poems and Major Prose*, 323. The prophetic example of Wentworth stands in stark contrast with the tragic story of Anne Hall, similarly rejected by both her husband and her Baptist congregation after having been deceived by a false vision, instructing her to have 'carnal knowledge' with and bear the child of another man. See *A Brief Representation and Discovery of the Notorious Falsehood and Dissimulation Contained in a Book Styled, The Gospel-Way* (London: J. L., 1649). Both women were victims of abusive relationships, but Wentworth exhibited the strength of character to stand up against the patriarchal powers.
- 76 Mary Adams, *A Warning to the Inhabitants of England and London in Particular* (no location or publisher, 1676).
- 77 Wentworth, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, 8.
- 78 Wentworth, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, 14.
- 79 Wentworth, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, 30.
- 80 Wentworth, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, 17.
- 81 Wentworth, *Englands Spiritual Pill*, 20.
- 82 The Second London Confession (1677/1689), § 26.9; in Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 287.
- 83 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 379.

BAPTIST ASSEMBLY SEMINAR

Sunday, 2 May 2010

How radical can Baptists be?
William Winterbotham of Plymouth in prison
and thinking of America

Speaker: Dr Emma Macleod of Stirling University