

### **REVIVAL IN THE MIDLANDS 1745 - 1830**

*“We have heard with our ears, O God our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago.” Psalm 44 v1*

*“I will remember the deeds of the LORD; YES, I WILL REMEMBER YOUR MIRACLES OF LONG AGO.” Psalm 77 v 11*

*The above title needs clarification. I found Christ at an evening service during my National Service at RAF Cardington in 1955 - I later found I was descended from a long line of Nottinghamshire Baptists. I feel it is important therefore, as I am now 75, to pass on this wonderful heritage the 18<sup>th</sup> Century spiritual awakening brought to the Midland Baptist Churches.*

*Students of church history within the Baptist church know that there were 2 streams of Baptist churches after the first one established in 1612. The Particular, or Calvinistic, churches and the General or Arminian churches. This is about the THIRD STREAM, the New Connection churches.*

### **THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

*By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century many of the General Baptist churches had lost their way and had been drifting into Unitarian thinking – denying the Trinity and losing their hold on biblical truth. As we know the 18<sup>th</sup> century spiritual revival with key players John Wesley and George Whitfield is well documented. **The Methodist Churches sprang out of the revival, but what happened to the Baptist Churches?***

*In 1741 John Wesley preached at Markfield near Barton-in-the Beans, near Nuneaton. A number of local folk came to the Lord and founded a church, amidst much opposition, at Barton. The leaders studied the scriptures and were nicknamed Moravians, although they were a brand new fellowship with no connection to any denomination.*

*Upon studying the need for Baptism they first thought they should baptise babies by immersion but soon realised baptism was for adult believers and was by immersion. The elders baptised each other and then the whole church were baptized by the elders. Thus at Barton-in-the Beans a new Baptist church, fully biblical, FREE WILL, but not particularly Calvinistic began. From this church men went out to preach in the villages. They were called Barton Preachers. Two Barton preachers, Francis Smith and Abraham Booth, my ancestors, went to Melbourne Derbyshire and Kirkby Woodhouse Notts, and later Francis's son Robert Smith to Loughborough and Nottingham, and pioneered Baptist churches. Dan Taylor from Yorkshire linked in with this new stream of churches – the 5 new churches believed much in fellowship; they met each year for conferences, and worked much together.*

*Francis Smith who became leading elder at Melbourne walked miles preaching the gospel in the area and preaching stations as they were called were founded in many of the villages of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire It is a thrilling story.*

### *WHAT WERE THE RESULTS OF THIS 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVAL*

*As we know the other stream of Calvinistic Baptist churches, were entirely separate at that time from the other groups (The Baptist Union was not established until 1812) Their awakening through the 1784 call to prayer is well documented. They also had an awakening and in 1792 William Carey pioneering the Baptist mission in India as a result.*

*Getting back to the Midlands FREE WILL Baptist churches, what happened next? The fire of the Spirit continued and by 1770 it was felt a need to formalise a statement of faith and practice for the NEW CONNECTION of Baptist Churches springing out of Barton-in-the-Beans. Dan Taylor and Francis Smith and others WALKED ALL THE WAY TO LONDON FROM THE MIDLANDS AND AT WHITECHAPEL FORMALISED THE NEW CONNECTION OF BAPTIST CHUCHES.*

*The churches continued to grow and if you look in the Baptist Handbook you will see that many churches listed were founded at this time, particularly in the Midlands.*

*A DAY SCHOOL WAS FOUNDED AT HURST – and many of the leaders went there. Rev J Pike of the Broadway Derby church (incidentally founded by Francis Smith and others in 1791) felt the need for a General Baptist Missionary Society and this was formed in the early 1800s. Missionaries were also sent out to India besides Carey's group.*

*By the early 1800s it was felt a THEOLOGICAL TRAINING COLLEGE was needed and this was founded in Nottingham and continued until the first world war before it merged with the Manchester college.*

*Due to the Industrial Revolution many farm workers left the land and moved into the cities to work the new machinery – hence many Baptists moved to Nottingham and in particular there the Rev Robert Smith 1760-1829 (son of Francis Smith) became minister of the Stoney Street Baptist Church Nottingham. In 1792 Robert baptized in the River Trent 32 people (including my 3rd gt grandfather James Smith who later became the treasurer of the Baptist Theological College). Stoney Street Baptist Church (building still in Nottingham today – now a warehouse in Plumtre Place) grew and grew. At one time it had 1000 Sunday school children including those at its various preaching stations throughout the town. There was a split in 1815 and Broad Street Baptist Church Nottingham became the church ministered to by Robert, who was accused of immorality but subsequently his assistant minister was proved to have falsly accused him, and he was vindicated.*

*THE NINETEENTH CENTURY NEW CONNECTION HISTORY. In 1812 the Baptist Union was founded by the Particular Baptist Churches – The New Connection churches continued separately right up to the first war steadily growing in Numbers – it was only after the 1<sup>st</sup> world war that the decline in membership set in. In 1892 the New Connection churches had merged into the BU i.e. ,with most of the Particular Baptist churches – a minority of Strict Baptist churches formed a separate group.*

#### *PERSONAL TESTIMONY*

*On 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 1955, my first Sunday of National Service in the RAF I was convicted that I had been building not on the Rock which is the Lord Jesus Christ but on sand. The preacher said you can build a very good looking house on the sand. You can appear a Christian on the outside but have you accepted Christ? I went forward at this service to accept Christ and was baptised on a 48 hour leave at Morden Baptist Church, Surrey in February 1956 ; RAF service for me was a wonderful opportunity for 2 years to learn from the bible in small groups and become established in the faith – we witnessed by taking services in chapels in Yorkshire at one time – a great training for young believers.*

*Is this a coincidence? I was converted on **3<sup>rd</sup> July** 1955 and amazingly my ancestor Rev Francis Smith of Melbourne Baptist Church b 1719 d 1796 Derbyshire was born on **3<sup>rd</sup> July** 1719!! Are there really any coincidences for the people of God – are not our lives planned from the beginning of time in our Father's wonderful way.*

*Ronald Francis Granger*

*9<sup>th</sup> December 2011- Currently with Celia my wife members of Cheam Baptist Church, Surrey.*

*4<sup>th</sup> great grandson of Rev Francis Smith 1719-1796*

*PS Rev FS was a Barton Preacher, and from 1750c leading elder, later pastor of Melbourne Baptist Church, Derbyshire until 1796. See Rev Budge's 1949 history of Melbourne Baptist Church for his story.*

*(Rev RS minister of Stoney Baptist Church Nottingham 1790s to 1815 – then pastor of Broad Street Baptist Church Nottingham until 1829. In 1849 the Stoney St and Broad St churches merged into Mansfield Road Baptist Church, Nottingham.)*