Robert Robinson (1735–1790), Baptist Minister in Cambridge, on Anabaptistic Convictions

Ian Randall

Dr Ian Randall is a Senior Research Associate at the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide and a Senior Research Fellow of IBTS Amsterdam.
ian.m.randall@gmail.com

Abstract
Robert Robinson (1753–1790) was an influential Baptist minister and thinker, whose ministry spanned three decades in St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge. There has been no recent scholarly treatment of Robinson's life and work as a whole. What has been done tends to see him through the eyes of others. Robinson's ability as a speaker and writer led to his being asked to write a history of the Baptist movement. In the completed *History of Baptism*, a work ultimately of 566 pages, Robinson was wide-ranging. The focus of this article is on what Robinson wrote about Anabaptism. Sections of his book covered many other aspects of baptismal practice. The article examines what Robinson said about the different types of Anabaptists that existed. It then goes on to consider the contested convictions which Robinson found in Anabaptism. Finally, Robinson's work on Anabaptism in relation to baptism and the church is covered.

Keywords
Robert Robinson; *History of Baptism*; Anabaptism; contested convictions

Introduction

Robert Robinson, an influential Baptist minister and thinker, was born in Swaffham, Norfolk, in the East of England (East Anglia). His father, Michael Robinson, was a customs officer and his mother, Mary (Wilkin), was from a better-off family, with whom she had a strained relationship. Michael died when Robert was aged five and an uncle helped to support Robert in his education. His mother had to work hard to keep the family together. At fourteen, Robert was apprenticed to a hair-dresser in London, and later to a butcher, but his real desire was to study. He experienced evangelical conversion through the preaching of a leader in the Evangelical Revival, George Whitefield. When Robinson heard Whitefield, he initially pitied 'the poor deluded Methodists' but came away 'envying their happiness'. He then began to attend the Tabernacle,

in London, where Whitefield preached, and his conversion took place three years later.[1] A move back to East Anglia followed, and Robinson began to preach, first among Calvinistic Methodists, including at a Tabernacle in Norwich established by Whitefield.[2] For a time he preached to an independent group, then among Baptists, and he was baptised by immersion in 1759. His exceptional ability was recognised. A Baptist congregation meeting in the Stone Yard, St Andrew's Street, Cambridge, heard that Robinson, then aged 23, 'might perhaps be persuaded to undertake the pastorate'.[3] A move took place, resulting in the whole of his ministry being in Cambridge. As well as his preaching and pastoral work, his voracious reading led to his producing a significant range of books.

There has been no recent scholarly treatment of Robinson's life and work as a whole. Two articles, in 2019 and 2023, have examined Robinson through six letters by Andrew Fuller, a leading Baptist exponent of evangelical Calvinism.[4] Jeongmo Yoo looked at Fuller's critique of Robinson's desire to avoid allegorical interpretations of Scripture.[5] A case in point was the Song of Songs, but Yoo's article extended beyond the issue of the Song to look at interpretations of 'ceremonies' in the Old Testament. Fuller saw spiritual meaning in ritual cleansing, whereas Robinson offered some alternatives to do with physical cleanliness. While Yoo referred to Robinson's work (which was a sermon) *The Doctrine of Ceremonies* (1780), he did not utilise it. When *The Doctrine of Ceremonies* is read, questions can be raised about Fuller's narrow focus. Robinson wrote that 'the Mediator of the New Testament' is Jesus Christ, and in him is found 'a priest not stained with

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1 Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), 2, p. 408.

2 George Dyer, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson* (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1796), pp. 25–26. Dyer's is the most substantial biography of Robinson, but he is not reliable as an interpreter of Robinson's theology since he wished to portray Robinson as having abandoned evangelical views.

3 Graham W. Hughes, *With Freedom Fired* (Carey Kingsgate Press,1955), p. 16.

4 For Fuller, see Peter J. Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)* (Paternoster, 2015).

5 Jeongmo Yoo, 'Allegory or Literal Historical Interpretation?: Andrew Fuller's Critique of Robert Robinson's View of the Canonicity of the Song of Songs', *Evangelical Quarterly*, 90.3 (2019), pp. 264–288. See p. 279.

the blood of bulls and goats', but 'one who by his own blood obtained redemption for us, and ever liveth to make intercession for all'. Robinson continued with an exhortation to be involved in 'disseminating the gospel of Christ', and in words that show Anabaptist sympathies he encouraged believers to 'go forth without the camp bearing his reproach: animated with the Joy that is set before us, let us endure the cross and despise the shame'.[6]

The article in 2023 by Ryan Rindels also looked at the six letters by Fuller, but as with Yoo the use of Robinson's own work is scant.[7] On the basis of Fuller's letters, Rindels described Robinson as a 'rationalist and reductionist'. The Song again featured, with Rindels seeing Fuller's interpretation as submitted to Scripture and engaged with the Christian tradition. But Robinson also followed Christian thinking as espoused, for example, by Sebastian Castellio, who queried allegory and was also known for opposing Calvin over the sentence of death passed on Michael Servetus. Robinson, like Castellio, argued strongly for freedom of conscience.[8] In Fuller's 'On the Influence of Satan on the Human Mind', Rindels sees Fuller as opposing Robinson's alleged view that 'the human mind operates in an autonomous manner that precludes penetration by demonic beings'.[9] Once more, engagement with Robinson himself would have helped. Robinson wrote, 'The design of the devil is to keep men in ignorance, and as he could not keep the gospel out of the world, he maketh it his great business to keep it out of the hearts of men.'[10] It is unfortunate that in such doctrinal areas some authors associate Robinson with the views of Joseph Priestley, a leading Unitarian. Priestley referred to Robinson as a Unitarian, but admitted that he did not know Robinson well.[11] This article is not about Robinson's supposed unorthodoxy, but does examine an aspect — a

[6] Robert Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Ceremonies* (London: C. Etherington, 1781), pp. 25–26. A sermon.
[7] Ryan Rindels, 'Rationalist and Reductionist: Andrew Fuller's Response to Robert Robinson in Six Letters', *Perichoresis*, 21.2 (2023), pp. 84–96.
[8] Nicholas Thompson, 'Does the Cause Make the Martyr? Sebastian Castellio and John Calvin debate the Execution of Michael Servatus', in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Christian Martyrdom*, ed. by Paul Middleton (Wiley, 2020), pp. 271–286.
[9] Rindels, 'Rationalist', p. 92.
[10] Robinson, *Ceremonies*, p. 27
[11] Joseph Priestley, *Reflections on Death* (Birmingham: J. Belcher, 1790), pp. iii, 21.

neglected one — of his theological enterprise: Robinson's major work on baptism and specifically 'anabaptistical' (as he put it) views.

Ministry and Community

Robinson can be understood properly only by taking full account of his primary calling as a pastor. For two years, 1759–1761, he preached at the Stone Yard in Cambridge, and his ministry was fruitful, but he was hesitant to respond to the many requests he received from members of the church and others to be their pastor. He was aware of his lack of training: in 1761, however, he accepted a call and was ordained. The members at that point numbered thirty-four. Not much could be given to Robinson by way of financial support, and he took up farming to supplement what he received; yet he and his wife Ellen (Payne), as well as caring for their growing family, welcomed needy people into their home.[12] The congregation expanded. A month after his ordination, Robert Robinson wrote to a relative, John Robinson: 'Touching the work of God amongst us, — I bless his holy name. We are not left without witness, — we have many here, upon whom we hope there is a good work begun, who seem to be giving all diligence, to make their calling, and election sure, and these are chiefly young persons.'[13] The way Robert Robinson attracted younger people, especially students, was to be increasingly significant.

Alongside his concern for those outside the church, Robinson sought to build up a strong sense of community within the congregation. He wrote in the St Andrew's Street *Church Book* that church members were marked by 'faithfulness, forbearance, and tenderness to each other', and his own experience was that members 'tenderly loved him'. He and Ellen had 'fathers, brothers, sisters'.[14] In 1762, Robert Robinson again wrote to John Robinson on the subject of friendship, recalling

[12] Dyer, *Memoirs*, 136–138. Dyer became a tutor of some of the Robinson children for a time. See Timothy Whelan, 'George Dyer and Dissenting Culture, 1777–1796', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 155 (Spring 2012), pp. 9–30.

[13] Robert Robinson to John Robinson, 11 July 1761, in Timothy Whelan, 'Six Letters of Robert Robinson from Dr Williams's Library', *Baptist Quarterly*, 39.7 (2002), pp. 347–359.

[14] *Church Book: St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge 1720–1832*, ed. by L. G. Champion and K. A. C. Parsons (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1991), pp. 20-21, 25-26, citing Robinson.

hearing Whitefield say that 'parting with friends was worse to him than death itself'. For Robert Robinson, as expressed in this letter, Jesus was 'a friend' as well as head of the church. Next to fellowship with Christ, 'communion with the members', was something to be desired and he added that 'I can truly say, to me no blessing equals it'. In human friendship imperfections were present, whereas in Christ there was 'no fear of discovering any imperfection'. In a simple testimony, Robert Robinson said, 'I love him too little.'[15] His experience was more publicly expressed in the congregational hymns he wrote, such as 'Come thou fount of every blessing', which includes the line, 'Oh to grace how great a debtor'.[16]

The membership at St Andrew's Street grew consistently, largely through conversions. In a letter in 1766, Robinson wrote of 'many avenues to the human heart'. He included fear, hope, grief, and joy. Through all of these, God could work as 'his blessed word' was read and preached.[17] By 1774 the church membership was 120.[18] With many more attending, a chapel was built seating 600. Financial help came from some wealthy supporters; the building was filled and over-filled on Sundays.[19] 1774 saw Robinson's first published work, *Arcana* (Latin, mysteries), with topics including the right of private judgement, the civil magistrate, and persecution. He commended Quakers like William Penn; extolled innovation as intrinsic to science and the arts; repudiated the falsity of religion supported by the state; and urged Methodists to go back to the spirit of John Wesley and Whitefield.[20] Themes such as his repugnance for religious persecution would feature in his work on

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15 Robert Robinson to John Robinson, 11 October 1762, in Whelan, 'Six Letters'.

16 *A Dictionary of Hymnology*, ed. by John Julian, 2 vols (John Murray, 1970), 2, p. 969. This was originally published in 1892 and has undergone numerous reprints since then. See Michael A. G. Haykin, '"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing": Robert Robinson's Hymnic Celebration of Sovereign Grace', in *Ministry of Grace: Essays in Honor of John G. Reisinger*, ed. by Steve West (New Covenant Media, 2007), pp. 31–43.

17 Robert Robinson to John Robinson, 30 November 1766, in Whelan, 'Six Letters', pp. 354–355.

18 *Church Book*, ed. by Champion and Parsons, p. 51, citing Robinson. For more see L. G. Champion, 'Robert Robinson: A Pastor in Cambridge', *Baptist Quarterly*, 31.5 (January 1986), pp. 241–246.

19 Len Addicott, 'Introduction', *Church Book*, p. xiii.

20 Robinson, *Arcana* (Cambridge: Fletcher & Hodson, 1774).

Anabaptism. *Arcana* created interest within Cambridge University and among those attending St Andrew's Street by the 1770s were university students and some tutors. Dissenters were barred from graduating from Cambridge, and most students would have known only Church of England worship. Some were attentive. Others interrupted the services. Robinson was deeply committed to defending freedom, including freedom not to believe.[21] Alongside this conviction, he preached, and published in 1776, a satirical sermon about poor behaviour in worship. Improvement ensued.[22]

As well as preaching in Cambridge itself, Robinson engaged in wider ministry around Cambridgeshire villages. He was assisted by John Berridge, a Church of England clergyman and fellow of Clare Hall in the University. Robinson sent the biblical texts on which he preached in advance. One of his published books contained sixteen 'discourses' that were 'addressed to Christian assemblies in villages near Cambridge'. His varied themes included God as the 'Lovely Father'; Christ as a teacher; care for the poor, especially widows; the divine inspiration of Scripture; forgiveness through Christ's death; holiness of life by the Spirit; and love of enemies.[23] His intent was always pastoral, and in 1776 he published 'A Pastoral Letter', with the title *A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ*, which was indebted to James Abbadie, a French Protestant minister and scholar, in his *Vindication of the Truth of the Christian Religion* (English translation, 1694). This was well received by Dissenters and some Church of England readers too. Robinson argued that either 'Jesus Christ is truly and properly God' or his worshippers are 'guilty of idolatry'. At the same time, he felt the 'tenderest compassion' for those 'mistaken' on this subject.[24] French Protestantism continued to interest

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[21] Karen Smith, 'The Liberty Not to Be a Christian: Robert Robinson (1735–1790) of Cambridge and Freedom of Conscience', in *Distinctively Baptist: Essays on Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Walter B. Shurden*, ed. by Marc A. Jolley with John D. Pierce (Mercer University, 2005), pp. 151–170.

[22] Hughes, *With Freedom Fired*, pp. 20–22. The sermon, as later published, was *A Lecture on a Becoming Behaviour in Religious Assemblies* (Cambridge, 1776).

[23] Robert Robinson, *Sixteen Discourses on Several Texts of Scripture: Addressed to Christian Assemblies in Villages near Cambridge* (London: Charles Dilly, 1786). Much of what he said was not written until afterwards, when he dictated his addresses to a friend.

[24] Robert Robinson, 'A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ', in *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: J. Deighton, 1807), pp. 5–137 (pp. 5, 107). There are four volumes of *Works*.

Robinson, and starting in 1775 he translated and edited sermons by James Saurin (1677–1730), a pastor in The Hague.[25]

In 1781, when writing on 'toleration' and arguing for 'free' or 'open' communion, Robinson included comment on Anabaptism. He deplored how those reckoned as 'orthodox' thinkers 'put Anabaptists into the list of the most pestilent heretics'. He praised Anabaptists for clear statements of faith, by contrast with 'impenetrable jargon' which had done Christianity no favours. Baptists and Anabaptists, he continued, were misrepresented as 'fomenters of anarchy' because they denied the authority of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. 'Even [Thomas] Cranmer,' he stated, 'thought it no crime to burn an anabaptist woman,' and others followed his 'bloody example'.[26] Robinson had read about Joan Bocher, or Joan of Kent, who was burned at Smithfield, London, in 1550. Cranmer, then Archbishop of Canterbury, tried to persuade her to abandon her views, but when she refused, he was a party to her execution. Kirk MacGregor explored Joan's theology and concluded that due to her maintenance of her convictions under persecution, Bocher should be regarded as 'the exemplar of sixteenth-century English Anabaptists'.[27] It was a view Robinson had anticipated.

A History of Baptism

Robinson's ability as a speaker and writer led to his being asked to write a history of the Baptist movement. It was felt that the work done by Thomas Crosby (?1665–1752), the first historian of English Baptist life, was inadequate. Crosby, introducing his work, which came out in four volumes between 1738 and 1740, emphasised that English Baptists should be distinguished, as he put it, from Anabaptism's 'mad and heretical people' in Münster. However, he noted that George Cassander, a sixteenth-century Flemish Reformed theologian who had debates with

[25] Robert Robinson, *Sermons Translated from the Original French of the late Rev. James Saurin*, vols 1–5 (London: Longman & Rees, 1775–1780).

[26] See Robert Robinson, 'The General Doctrine of Toleration Applied to the Particular Case of Free Communion', in *Miscellaneous Works*, 3, pp. 185–186.

[27] Kirk, MacGregor, 'The Theology of English Anabaptist Martyr, Joan Bocher', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 91.4 (October 2017), pp. 453–470 (p. 470).

Anabaptists and visited some of them in prison, described them as having 'an honest and a pious mind'. They 'condemned the outrageous conduct of their brethren of Münster', and they taught that 'the kingdom of Jesus Christ was to be established only by the cross'.[28] Crosby was well-aware of seventeenth-century English Baptist developments, since his father-in-law was Benjamin Keach, an influential early Baptist leader, and Crosby was a church member in Horsleydown, Southwark, where Keach had been minister.[29]

Keith Jones notes that Crosby, and those who followed him in the early period of the writing of Baptist history, 'were concerned with the development of the movement against infant baptism'.[30] That was true of Robinson. Among those encouraging Robinson to take up work on the history of baptism was Andrew Gifford, a Baptist minister at Eagle Street, London, and from 1757 until his death in 1784, assistant librarian at the British Museum. He also became a member of the Society of Antiquaries.[31] Additional approaches to Robinson came from other London Baptists, and the initial thought was that Robinson might spend time in London where he would have access to materials.[32] However, Robinson bemoaned the fact, as he put it in a letter in 1784 to Joshua Thomas in Herefordshire, that papers he collected in London were unsatisfactory for his purpose. Thomas was himself producing historical output which Eric Hayden described as 'monumental'.[33] When Robinson began his research, as he explained to Thomas, he was discouraged by 'the greatness of the work'. To understand movements in other countries he studied Italian, Spanish, German, and Dutch. With

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[28] Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, vol. 1 (London: privately printed, 1738), p. xxviii.

[29] B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1983), pp. 12–14. For detailed studies of Crosby see B. R. White, 'Thomas Crosby, Baptist Historian', *Baptist Quarterly*, 21.4 and 5 (October 1965 and January 1966), pp. 154–168 and 219–234 respectively.

[30] Keith G. Jones, *A Believing Church: Learning from Some Contemporary Anabaptist and Baptist Perspectives* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1998), p. 11.

[31] *Challenge and Change: English Baptist Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Stephen Copson and Peter J. Morden (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2017), p. 206.

[32] Robinson, 'Memoirs', in *Miscellaneous Works*,1, pp. 11–156 (p. 100).

[33] Eric W. Hayden, 'Joshua Thomas: Welsh Baptist Historian 1719–1797', *Baptist Quarterly*, 23.3 (January 1969), pp. 126–137 (p. 127).

such a daunting task, he felt his 'incompetence'. He persevered because through friends in Cambridge who were in the university he was able to borrow and use books from the university library.[34]

Robinson set out in letters to Daniel Turner, Baptist minister in Abingdon, what the demands of writing the history involved.[35] With the responsibilities during the day of pastoral ministry, Robinson's research and writing meant he sometimes wrote in the early hours of the morning: he described to Turner how 'the clock struck three, when I dipped the first pen', while the kettle boiled. Later he breakfasted, and had the help of his 'beloved pipe'. Turner had recommended that Robinson read Adrianus Regenvolscius, who wrote on Slavic history, and Robinson had made 'great use of him' in looking at Catholics, Calvinists, Moravian Brethren, and Anabaptists. It had been exciting for him to read about Polish Anabaptists (the non-Trinitarian Polish Brethren) in a volume written by Stanislaw Lubieniecki.[36] Robinson had initially 'despaired', thinking this crucial volume was unavailable in England, but a friend of his, a fellow of Trinity College in Cambridge University, found it in a corner of the College library. Robinson confessed that when the volume was lent to him, he shortened his mid-week talk at St Andrew's Street to go home and read it. Other writers he used were Ferdinando Ughelli, a seventeenth-century Italian Cistercian monk and church historian, and the eighteenth-century Maria Paciaudi, an Italian antiquarian. In this complex field, Robinson asked Turner for ongoing advice.[37]

The experience of working with others, in ministry in the church setting and through his research, was something Robinson enjoyed. He wrote to one 'old friend', Henry (Harry) Keene, in Walworth, London, who was urging him to write, that his time was being taken up in ministry

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[34] Robert Robinson to Joshua Thomas, undated, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 243–244.

[35] Robinson and Turner had an affinity as they cooperated in commending an 'open table' at Communion. See R. W. Oliver, 'John Collett Ryland, Daniel Turner and Robert Robinson and the Communion Controversy, 1772–1781', *Baptist Quarterly*, 29.2 (April 1981), pp. 77–79.

[36] Robinson probably used the history by Stanislaw Lubieniecki in Latin. Publication was in 1685. See *History of the Polish Reformation: And Nine Related Documents*, trans. and ed. by G. H. Williams (Fortress Press, 1995).

[37] Robert Robinson to Daniel Turner, 28 September 1786, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 239–240.

and in the farm.[38] Keene helped Robinson when the latter had small-pox and in return Robinson gave Keene a cow from the farm, accompanied by a poem, 'The Rocket Cow', which exhorted the cow, 'the milk-white messenger', to be 'the generous Harry's own *milch* cow'.[39] Robinson was happy to report to Daniel Turner that he had been visited by American politicians who appreciated his views on liberty of conscience, heard him preach, and offered him inducements to go to America.[40] With Joshua Thomas, he expressed gratitude for the 'valuable papers' Thomas had lent him. Regarding books, he wrote, 'I have had loads, and loads more I must have, if I finish the plan I have laid out.' He was investigating Anabaptist theology in Transylvania, and although he did not defend all their views he was convinced that those in these movements 'were zealous defenders of the perfection of scripture'.[41]

In a further letter to Thomas, by which time Robinson had an overall plan for the book, he described how he had ranged across church history to explore baptismal convictions.[42] He had read much of which he 'had no notion', until he 'went heartily into the business'. He was not simply telling the story of Baptists, but of how baptism was practised. This was the plan: 'The whole is intended to contain an account of the rise, progress, connections, corruptions, appendages, and reformation of baptism.' The historical part, he continued, 'begins with apostolical churches, goes through the several countries of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and ends with America'. A first draft was ready, but he was cautious until he had 'taken the opinion of a few wise and good men'. In order to do so, he had sent twenty copies of part of his work as a specimen to readers such as Thomas, who could say whether it was 'likely to serve the cause' — the Baptist community. It is not clear which section Robinson was sending, but it was from the body of the text and it is likely that he drew attention to the beginning of what he saw as Anabaptism. He went back to the New Testament, and asserted boldly

[38] Robert Robinson to Henry Keene, 26 May 1784, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, p. 231.
[39] Robert Robinson, *The Rocket Cow* (Biggleswade: T. W. Spong, 1784).
[40] Robert Robinson to Daniel Turner, 22 June 1784, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 234–235.
[41] Robert Robinson to Joshua Thomas, undated, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 243–244.
[42] Robinson enjoyed plans. In 1778 he produced for Baptists a much used 'Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Non conformity'. Edmund Burke, an MP, attacked it in Parliament. See 'Memoirs', in *Miscellaneous Works*, 1, p. lxix.

that since Paul re-baptised disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7), 'he reflects perfectly what is an Anabaptist'.[43]

Different Kinds of Anabaptists

In the completed *History of Baptism*, a work ultimately of 566 pages, Robinson was wide-ranging. The focus here is on Anabaptism, but sections of his book covered, for example, the baptism of John; Jewish washings; baptism as instituted by Jesus; baptism in the early church; baptismal practices in the Patristic period; washing in Muslim tradition; the St Sophia Church in Constantinople; the Lateran baptistry in Rome; artists depicting baptism; baptismal fonts; the influence of Tertullian, the role of Cyprian, and the arguments of Augustine; the Eastern Church, which he had evidently found fascinating; the causes of the acceptance of infant baptism across Europe; church and state; specific practices in Britain; and modes of baptism. One review saw a *History of Baptism* as a book that would not only clarify the subject of baptism, but, because it was connected with so many other subjects, would open up 'a wide field' and make a contribution to literature that 'casts much light upon the state of Christianity in different ages of the church, and in different parts of the world'.[44]

In addressing beliefs and practices under the heading 'Anabaptism', Robinson argued that there were six approaches. On the first conviction, which was the necessity for 'virtue' in the person baptised, Robinson noted that 'about the close of the second, or the beginning of the third century', in North Africa, 'Tertullian began to complain of the corruption of baptism, and he wrote a book in the Greek language, against the administering of it to immoral persons'.[45] After Tertullian, Robinson highlighted Agrippinus, Bishop of Carthage, and neighbouring bishops, who 'agreed to reject the vague baptisms administered, they knew not how or by whom'. In this way, Robinson

[43] Robert Robinson, *History of Baptism* [*HB*] (London: Thomas Knott, 1790), p. 459. For *History of Baptism* I am indebted to Helen Weller, the archivist at Westminster College, Cambridge.
[44] 'Review', *The American Baptist Magazine and Missionary Intelligencer*, 1 (1818), pp. 254–262.
[45] *HB*, p. 462. Here Robinson footnotes Tertullianus, *De Baptismo*, chapter 15.

argued, the need for re-baptism was accepted.[46] A few years later, Robinson continued, Cyprian and seventy-one neighbouring bishops renewed this agreement, and Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and bishops in Galatia, Cilicia, Phrygia, and other parts of Asia, agreed for the same reason to re-baptise.[47] Robinson then ranged over Dionysius and his followers in Egypt, Novatus of Rome, Novatian of Carthage, and Donatus and his followers, all of whom rejected baptisms administered in 'churches they called habitations of impurity'. Those who came from such churches were re-baptised.[48] The comment from Robinson was that there were churches holding to 'one baptism' — their own.[49]

Two further approaches Robinson analysed placed the essence of true baptism in the form of words used or in the character of the administrator. In 325 CE at the Council of Nicaea, the Trinitarian Christians decreed that those who came from the congregations of the Trinitarian Novatians into what was now seen as the Catholic Church should be admitted to communion by the laying on of hands, but those from the Paulicians, who denied the Trinity, should be re-baptised.[50] Robinson then outlined the third conviction, which focused on 'the virtue or competency of the administrator'. He wrote, 'To see a bad man perform the most solemn rites of religion, to see him perform them with carelessness, or it may be with contempt, is to behold a spectacle shocking to the most vulgar eye, the cause, naturally, of prejudice and infidelity in the people.' Robinson affirmed the Bohemian and Moravian Brethren of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, who re-baptised for this reason and were categorised as Anabaptists. In one instance, the Brethren, according to sources, complained that a parish priest

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[46] For background, see András Handl and Anthony Dupont, 'Who was Agrippinus? Identifying the First Known Bishop of Carthage', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 98.3-4 (2018), pp. 344–366.

[47] For background see Charlotte Methuen, '"The very deceitfulness of devils": Firmilian and the Doubtful Baptisms of a Woman Possessed by Demons', in *Doubting Christianity: The Church in Doubt*, ed. by Francis Andrews, Charlotte Methuen, and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 49–64.

[48] For background, Stanislaw Adamiak, 'Who Was Rebaptized by the Donatists, and Why?', *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 12.1 (Spring 2019), pp. 46–64.

[49] For this paragraph see *HB*, pp. 460–461.

[50] *HB*, p. 462, citing Philip Labbe, S.J., who collected the Acts of Nicaea.

'administered baptism laughing' and that baptism 'had more the air of a ludicrous comedy than of a religious institute'. Bishop Bossuet (in the seventeenth century), Robinson noted, 'properly enough observes' that for the Brethren, 'the Catholic Church had lost baptism'.[51]

In Robinson's final three categories, he looked at those with Anabaptist convictions in which a personal profession of acceptance of the Christian faith was seen as essential to baptism. He cited Faustus Socinius as holding this position.[52] On the question of consent to being baptised, Robinson wrote with some vehemence: 'The forcing of a Jew or Pagan to be baptised without his consent is now-a-days considered as an unwarrantable and unprofitable act of violence: but the baptism of a babe […] doth not shock anybody. So wonderful is the tyranny of custom!'[53] He highlighted the Mennonites, using for this a history by Hermann Schyn, a Dutch Mennonite leader.[54] For some who held to baptism after profession of faith, he noted, dipping or immersion in water was regarded as an essential element, and sprinkling was considered inadequate.[55] Robinson's last category overlapped with the previous two. He referred to Baptist churches in Britain, other parts of Europe, and America 'which, however diversified in speculation [about doctrines] and the practice of positive rites, all hold that dipping in water and a personal profession of faith and repentance are essential to baptism'.[56]

Moving to a summary of Anabaptism, Robinson argued that it was 'a singular phenomenon' that Anabaptists should be described by many celebrated writers as a 'dangerous set of men', forbidden in one state, banished from another, burnt or drowned in others, 'and allowed

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[51] *HB*, pp. 462–463, citing Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Histoire Des Variations Des Églises Protestantes* (Chez la veuve de Sébastien Marbre-Cramoisy, à Paris, 1688). For the Waldensians, Robinson used Lydius Balthas, *History of the Waldenses* (Dortrecht, 1624).

[52] *HB*, p. 463, citing Joshua Toulmin, *Memoirs of the Life, Character, Sentiments and Writings of Faustus Socinus* (London: J. Brown, 1777), p. 253.

[53] *HB*, p. 463.

[54] *HB*, p. 464, citing Hermann Schyn, *Historia Christianorum, qui in Belgio Foederato inter Protestantes Mennonitae appellantur* (Amsterdam: Waesberg, 1723). This was the first history of the Mennonites.

[55] *HB*, p. 464. In passing, Robinson commented that the Greek Orthodox Church did not hold sprinkling to be authentic baptism.

[56] *HB*, p. 464. Here Robinson drew attention to Thomas Crosby's, *History of the Baptists*.

to live in any country only as a favour'.[57] He spoke about 'confused writers' on Anabaptism, who had 'misled many other writers, much wiser and better than themselves'. A few commentators were 'men of learning and merit', but were 'strangers to the general history' of the Anabaptists. Here Robinson adduced William Wall, a Church of England clergyman, who through his writings was a 'champion of infant baptism'. Wall referred to the Anabaptists as 'Antipaedobaptists', but Robinson found this misleading as it could include Quakers.[58] Other writers believed the violent Anabaptism of Münster was typical, and Robinson was most scathing about Ephraim Pagitt — a clergyman during the reign of Charles I — and found it 'diverting to see historians on the continent' quote this 'obscure scribbler in England'. Pagitt's parishioners had 'tired of him and went to hear the sectaries, as he called them'. In response Pagitt 'humbly hoped' that Parliament would 'suppress the blasphemous Anabaptists'; he was glad some 'Christian princes and magistrates had never left burning, drowning, and destroying them'. Robinson concluded this section with the comment that of the opponents of Anabaptism, Pagitt was 'undoubtedly the first in ignorance and falsehood'.[59]

Contested Convictions

In the next part of his study, Robinson addressed some of the contested convictions that characterised those with 'anabaptistical' views of baptism. He was clear that it was not the mode of baptism — 'dipping or sprinkling' — that was the main area of contention. Those who baptised adult believers by sprinkling had been under the same pressure from opponents as had those who practised dipping. The issue was the baptism of adults who had previously been baptised as infants. This, Robinson stated, 'forms the grand objection' by opponents and 'is connected with the errors charged upon Anabaptism'.[60] For Robinson,

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[57] *HB*, p. 465.
[58] *HB*, p. 465. Robinson cited William Wall, *The History of Infant-Baptism* (London: George Whittington, 1646).
[59] *HB*, pp. 466–468, with reference to Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography; or a description of the Hereticks and Sectaries of these latter times* (London: Wilson, 1645).
[60] *HB*, p. 469.

what was at stake was not simply academic in nature: he was fully involved in the practice of baptism. Douglas Sparkes, in 1960, drew attention in the *Baptist Quarterly* to the way Robinson, over several years, conducted baptisms at Whittlesford (a village outside Cambridge) in the river adjoining the house of Ebenezer Hollick, a wealthy member of St Andrew's Street. On one occasion forty-eight were baptised. Manuscript accounts of this event were preserved.[61] Hollick worked closely with Robinson in the formation in 1783 of the Cambridge Constitutional Society, which met in the Black Bull tavern, Cambridge, to discuss 'civil and religious liberty' and its underpinning in theology.[62]

The exercise of civil and religious liberty was linked, Robinson argued, to views of baptism. He quoted Peter Heylyn, an Anglican (a description Heylyn used) in the seventeenth century, who condemned Anabaptists for saying 'a Christian ought not to execute the offices of magistrate'.[63] Robinson relished addressing this contested conviction. He saw the baptism of believers as having 'a close connection' with the subject of government. Infants, he wrote, were baptised by state churches — the sixteenth-century background against which Anabaptism developed. Thus, if someone chose to be baptised, they disowned the state 'in this matter of conscience'. Parents who did not baptise their children left the decision with them. There was, Robinson argued, 'an inseparable union between adult baptism and civil liberty'. All Anabaptists and Baptists struggled for liberty when oppressed by 'despotic governments'. Robinson then discussed variations in beliefs about church members being magistrates. Some Anabaptists, he noted, 'execute no offices, take no oaths, bear no arms, shed no human blood, and in civil cases resist not government'.[64] Robinson's own position was

[61] Douglas C. Sparkes, 'Baptisms at Whittlesford', *Baptist Quarterly*, 19.3 (1961), pp. 131–132.
[62] 'The Cambridge Constitutional Society', *The Cambridge Chronicle*, 16 January 1790; Hughes, *With Freedom Fired*, pp. 48–49.
[63] Peter Heylyn, *Ecclesia vindicata; or, the Church of England justified* (1657), p. 469. See Anthony Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: the Career and Writings of Peter Heylyn* (Manchester University Press, 2007).
[64] *HB*, p. 470.

that Christians could hold political office, and one of his friends was Christopher Anstey, who served as High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire.[65]

Another contested area was the place of 'learning' in Anabaptist communities. Robinson referred to those who maintained that it was 'an anabaptistical error to prefer illiteracy before learning'. He turned again to baptism, which was 'necessarily connected with a personal profession of believing the truth of the Christian religion' and thus with a process of thought. An infant, he stated baldly, 'asks no questions'. Robinson was in favour of making the gospel intelligible to 'plain men and women'. He had sympathy with those who found 'that Pagan literature had perverted the gospel' and that learning which was 'unprofitable' had been forced on many. However, there were examples of institutions that had successfully combined Christian thinking and study of the wider world. One of the 'remarkable' instances he cited was the 'university at Raków in Poland', under the auspices of the Polish Brethren. It began in 1602 and was closed in 1638 by the authorities. At its height it had over one thousand students.[66] Robinson saw no reason why philosophers like Plato should be commentators when 'expounding the inspired writers' of the Bible. He was not a philosophical rationalist. But he considered that Anabaptists and Baptists, 'as their history proves, hold all branches of science in a just and proper esteem'.[67]

Clerical authority was a further contested area. Robinson gave a sermon in 1784 at Maze Pond Baptist Chapel, Southwark, which had chosen James Dore as their pastor, and spoke of the freedom of a group of Christians to meet to 'sing, pray, teach and be taught, baptise and be baptised, administer and receive the Lord's supper'. He continued, 'The distinction of Christians into clergy and laity is groundless, and there is no mention of any such thing in the gospel; but, on the contrary, all Christians are put on a level in all matters of religion.' He wanted the

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[65] 'Memoir' in *Miscellaneous Works*, 1, pp. lxxiv–lxxv. Anstey's father was Rector of Brinkley, Cambridgeshire, and had an extensive library which Robinson was able to use.
[66] *HB*, p. 472. For more see Phillip Hewett, *Racovia*: *An Early Liberal Religious Community* (Blackstone, 2004).
[67] *HB*, p. 472.

words 'clergy' and 'laity' to be 'banished from Christian churches'.[68] Robinson was well-aware of complaints regarding the supposed 'anabaptistical error of rejecting all clerical authority'. In his research he had discovered considerable variety of opinion in this area. However, one conviction was widely held: responsibility to judge in matters of belief, looking to 'the holy scripture as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice'. Therefore a 'priest' became 'a mere tutor'. An approach that could 'effectually subvert all clerical authority' was the one Robinson advocated.[69] He had sympathy with communities in Moravia who had 'no regularly ordained ministers', and anyone, including women, 'gave instruction'.[70]

The relationship of 'anabaptistical' thinking to the work of the Holy Spirit was another area. Robinson was prepared to admit that Anabaptists and Baptists were 'enthusiasts', but he found 'enthusiasm' to be 'a vague term'. If enthusiasm was understood as 'unreasonable and irrational adherence to a doctrinal position or practice', and was 'coupled with fanaticism and superstition', then it had no place among those who required for baptism a profession of faith and thus 'deliberate exercise of thought'.[71] At the same time, the heart was fully engaged. In a letter in 1783 guiding a young minister, Robinson urged 'a *heart-felt sense* of religion'.[72] Similar concern was evident when Robinson preached at the ordination of General Baptist minister George Birley, at St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, near Cambridge, on Proverbs 27:10, 'Thine own friend, and thy father's friend forsake not.' Dan Taylor, the leading figure in the New Connexion of General Baptists, gave what was called the 'charge' to Birley, whom he knew well. In his address, Robinson spoke of churches composed of friends, where there was 'perfect equality of minds'. This might seem to rule out the heart, but Robinson

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[68] Robert Robinson, 'A Discourse addressed to the congregation at Maze-Pond, Southwark, on their public declaration of having chosen Mr. James Dore their Pastor, March 25, 1784', in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 25–58 (pp. 29, 33–34).

[69] *HB*, p. 472.

[70] *HB*, p. 473. For Baptists in America, Robinson referred to Isaac Backus, *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists* (Newton, MA: Historical Society, 1871).

[71] *HB*, p. 474.

[72] Robert Robinson to a Young Minister, 1783, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, p. 229.

went on to say that being in fellowship 'excites the exclamations of Christians', who use the words of Psalm 26:8 to express their love for God and each other. 'There was', he said, an 'emotion of love', but it depended on 'a perpetual exercise of friendship'.[73]

The Life of the Church

For Robinson, the nature of the church as a church of believers was a crucial issue. This, he stated, 'is the article, from which all their other principles and practices proceed. It is for the sake of this that adult baptism is practised.' Robinson cited the perspective of Johann von Mosheim, Chancellor of the University of Göttingen, that the Waldensians, the followers of John Wickliffe, the Hussites, and others before 'the dawn of the Reformation', together with the Mennonites, all held the same principle, that the church was an assembly of 'true and real saints'. Mosheim referred to this stream of thought as a source of ecclesiastical 'peculiarities', or indeed, of 'pernicious doctrines'.[74] Robinson was roused by this and again addressed the practice of infant baptism, which he argued was of no benefit to children. Catholics defended it by tradition. Among Protestants, it could only be defended by finding in Scripture 'detached sentences, and figures of speech, and allusions' which might point to infants being baptised, but no substantial passages of Scripture were quoted — since these did not exist. At this point Robinson quoted 'that ornament of this country, the late Mr. [John] Locke', who saw a church as 'a free and voluntary society'. Locke was clear that no-one was born a member of any church. Membership did not go automatically from parents to children.[75] Thus infant baptism was not appropriate.

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[73] Robert Robinson, 'Discourse Preached at the Ordination of Mr. George Birley, at St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, 18 October 1786', in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 39–59, esp. pp. 45, 46, 48. This was on Proverbs 27:10, 'Thine own friend, and thy father's friend forsake not.'

[74] *HB*, p. 475. Robinson used a Latin version of Johann Lorenz Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*. The Anabaptist references can readily be found in a reprint (Cincinnati: Applegate & Co., 1858) pp. 491–494.

[75] This discussion is in *HB*, pp. 476–479. He used John Locke, *Letters Concerning Toleration* (London: A Miller, 1765).

It seems to have been Mosheim to whom Robinson took most exception in this section of what he wrote. Some of the words and phrases Mosheim had used in dismissing Anabaptists Robinson saw as outrageous. They were, Mosheim asserted, 'a seditious and pestilential sect', marked by 'tumultuous and desperate attempts' to overthrow established order. They were 'enthusiasts' — a term Robinson had already dealt with — and in their 'visionary notions' were seeking to erect 'a new spiritual kingdom'. Their practice of adult baptism and the fact that they re-baptised those who had received the sacrament as infants were in Mosheim's opinion 'intolerable heresies'. Among other things, Mosheim's horror of the established order being challenged flew in the face of Robinson's commitment to a church and society that were free. 'There is no hazard', Robinson continued scathingly, 'in saying Mr. Locke understood liberty, and a British Baptist day-labourer understands it better than the learned Dr. Mosheim.'[76] But among English and well as German ecclesiastical figures Robinson found people with Mosheim's spirit. He quoted from a 1589 publication, *A Godly Treatise*, by Robert Some, Master of Peterhouse in the University of Cambridge, which proclaimed that it 'examined and confuted many execrable fancies'. The book described Separatists in England, placing them in the tradition of 'anabaptistical' views. It was 'execrable' on their part to hold that a church ought to be constituted of believers only, that a church could elect its own pastor, and that the magistrate had no civil power in the church.[77]

The tendency to draw from Locke continued among British Baptists. Joseph Angus, who became Principal of Stepney College (later Regent's Park College), quoted Locke on the church as a 'voluntary society', but in a deeper sense a community with 'willing submission of the heart and life to Christ'.[78] Robinson had this same perspective, and in a sermon in Cambridge on 10 February 1788, from the text Luke 4:18 ('The Lord hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives'), he

[76] *HB*, pp. 480–481.

[77] Robert Some, *A Godly Treatise, wherein are examined and confuted many execrable fancies, given out and held partly by Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood: partly by other of the Anabaptistical order* (London: G.B., 1589).

[78] Ian Randall, *'Conscientious Conviction': Joseph Angus (1816–1902) and Nineteenth-Century Baptist Life* (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2010), pp. 11–12.

pictured an early Christian community where many members were slaves, and were not free outwardly, but were still free in Christ. He asked his hearers to 'imagine a primitive assembly of Christian slaveholders and slaves, not now, in this instance, as slaves, but above slaves, brethren beloved in the Lord, all sitting at the same table, eating the same bread, drinking the same cup'. They had all experienced the reality of Jesus bringing 'deliverance to captives'. A further step was that to see that 'the liberating of slaves was a part of Christianity'. Here, however, Robinson, brought the serious indictment that through the African slave trade, enslaving 100 000 people each year, Britain was reducing 'a people, who never injured us, to a servitude unmerited, unjust, and to an enormous degree barbarous as well as disgraceful to our country'. This was a scandal. There had to be liberty for the captives.[79]

This sermon was preached at a time of great sadness for the Robinson family. In a letter to a fellow-Baptist minister, Joshua Toulmin, Robinson spoke of the death of his seventeen-year-old daughter, Julia. She was, he said, 'the loveliest of all girls, the pride and the beauty of my family', marked by 'a fund of wit, an innocence of manners, and a piety and virtue regulated by wise and just sentiments'. She 'fell asleep, saying, as she reclined her head, Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit'.[80] Perhaps in part with the character of Julia in mind, in a sermon in Cambridge on 30 October 1788, on Matthew 10: 25, 26 — about God's kingdom as a place of servanthood — Robinson addressed in typical fashion the danger of hierarchical power, insisting that 'Jesus is guiltless of all the oppression that hath been exercised, and all the blood that hath been shed by his ill-informed followers in his name'.[81] In June 1789, he had the opportunity to preach on early

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[79] Robert Robinson, 'Slavery Inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity', in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 60–84, esp. pp. 70–71. Preached at Cambridge, 10 February 1788, on Luke 4:18: 'The Lord hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives.'

[80] Robert Robinson to Joshua Toulman, 1787, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, p. 251.

[81] Robert Robinson, 'On Sacramental Tests', in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 104–150, esp. pp. 113–114. Delivered at Cambridge, 30 October 1788 on Matthew 20:25, 26: 'Jesus said; ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they, that are great, exercise authority upon them: but it shall not be so among you.'

religious nurture. He described himself as 'a sincere and modest follower of Jesus Christ' and gave testimony to how in early life he 'hated God' and had a 'hard and callous heart'. Eventually he came to cry, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner', and after a long struggle discovered 'the love of God in Jesus Christ to wretched sinners like me'. After having been a pastor for many years, and 'having tasted the pleasures of holiness', he wanted to continue to serve and he looked forward to the Last Day. Let the church now and on that Day, he pleaded, 'give Jesus Christ what we ought to give him — honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen!'[82]

The way in which Robinson brought the Last Day into focus could be seen to have had a prophetic dimension, since he died a year later, at the early age of fifty-four. His death was sudden, although he had suffered difficulty in breathing. One of his last surviving letters, which shows his thinking near the end of his life, was to a friend, Samuel Lucas, minister of Swan Hill Independent Chapel, Shrewsbury. Robinson outlined to Lucas all that he had been doing on his *History of Baptism*. He had by that time completed the work. In looking back on all the movements he had covered in the book, Robinson said to Lucas, 'Believe me, I am neither a Socinian, nor an Arian,' and he went on to describe his faith in terms that were 'anabaptistical'. He expressed adoration to God for loving the world and sending his Son; he embraced Christ as an unspeakable gift; and he said unequivocally, 'I believe his doctrines, trust his promises, copy his life, imbibe his disposition, and live in hope of the glory he has promised all his disciples.'[83] One of Robinson's oldest friends, Coxe Feary, pastor of the Baptist church in Bluntisham, Huntingdonshire, twenty-one miles from Cambridge, recorded a conversation a month before Robinson's death. In this conversation, Robinson again made clear that he was neither a Unitarian nor an Arian, and told Feary, 'My soul rests its whole hope of salvation

[82] Robert Robinson, 'The Advantages of an Early Religious Education'. Preached at Mr. Dan Taylor's Meeting-House, London, 7 June 1789. Psalm 116:12: 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?', in *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. 4, pp. 142–153, esp. 147–149.
[83] Robert Robinson to Samuel Lucas, 10 September 1789, in *Miscellaneous Works*, 4, pp. 287–291.

on the atonement of Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God.'[84] Robinson stood in a determinedly Christ-centred tradition.

Conclusion

Much more could be said about Robert Robinson. This article has not considered his pastoral ministry in detail, nor the range and creativity of his thought in areas of theology and spirituality. In 2019, Bruce Hindmarsh took up the words 'Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it', from Robinson's hymn, and asked if the author wandered theologically. Hindmarsh, like others, noted that when Robinson died, he was spending time with Joseph Priestley. But being with someone does not imply a shared viewpoint. It is important to note that over three decades in the same church in Cambridge, Robinson was clearly an effective preacher and pastor, and one appreciated by his people for his teaching and care. Alongside that was Robinson's writing; his *History of Baptism*, his most substantial work.[85] It has, however, been neglected in favour of arguments about Robinson's orthodoxy. Although in the *History* he ranged far beyond Anabaptism, questions of re-baptism and of the nature of the church were a continuous theme. In his conclusion, in one of many examples of his breadth of reading, he quoted Voltaire, acknowledging him as a 'lover of liberty', while finding it disappointing that he included Anabaptists in his work but did not engage deeply with their history.[86] It is a mistake either to see Robinson through those whom he quoted, as if he agreed with them all, or through those who debated with him, since they might not all be doing justice to his Christ-centred thinking. Robert Hall, Robinson's successor at St Andrew's Street wrote that he was following in his ministry someone who was 'brilliant and penetrating', spoke with eloquence, was fascinating in

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[84] A note in *Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, vol. 2, ed. by Joseph Belcher (American Baptist Publication Society, 1831), pp. 223–224. See also Addicott, 'Introduction', in *Church Book*, pp. xvii–xviii, who shows the fallacies underlying the view that Robinson became a Unitarian.

[85] A further volume of Robinson's work was published posthumously: *Ecclesiastical Researches* (Cambridge: Lunn, 1792).

[86] *HB*, pp. 483–484. Voltaire portrayed an Anabaptist positively in *Candide*. Robinson referred to Voltaire's *Works* published in London in 1770.

conversation, had scholarly erudition, and displayed the discrimination of the historian and the boldness of a reformer.[87] In 1789, writing to Dan Taylor, Robinson wanted in much more modest terms to speak of the church fellowship, not of his individual role. He told Taylor how he saw affirmed the love of liberty that characterised congregations of 'us poor anabaptists'.[88]

[87] *Select Works of the Rev. Robert Robinson*, ed. by William Robinson (London: J. Heaton & Son, 1851), pp. lxxxvi–lxxxvii.

[88] Robert Robinson to Dan Taylor, 23 March 1789, in *Posthumous Works of Robert Robinson*, ed. by Benjamin Flower (Harlow: B. Flower, 1812), p. 306.