

# Rev John Fawcett DD



Rev John Fawcett DD was a Baptist theologian, pastor and hymn writer. He started his ministry at Wainsgate Chapel in Old Town and moved to Ebenezer Chapel in the heart of Hebden Bridge. When it outgrew that building, the congregation built Hope Baptist Chapel further along the road.

**1739** born in Bradford. As a boy, he was apprenticed to a Bradford tradesman but was determined to educate himself and studied by candlelight at night.

**1763** He was invited to become the minister at Wainsgate, having been a visiting

preacher to Wainsgate when the founding minister, Richard Smith, was unwell and subsequently died. People came from afar to hear him preach and Wainsgate Chapel had to be expanded. The existing chapel is the third one to be built.

**1767** He began training young men for the ministry including the essayist, John Foster. This led eventually to the establishment of the Northern Baptist Education Society, (in 1804), at Rawdon College.

**1772** His fame as a preacher had spread to London and he had been invited to take up a permanent post to replace Dr Gill after the success of a preaching tour. At the last minute, as everything was packed and loaded, he could not bear to leave the local people. As a result, he wrote his best known hymn, "Blest be the ties that bind".

By **1775** he was running a school. The concern he felt for the poor children in the district had led him to write booklets entitled "The History of John Wise" and "Hints on the Education of Children, particularly of the Children of the Poor", which sold for four pence, but Fawcett often gave copies away to poor families. His son continued to run the school at Brearley after his retirement.

**1777** he built Ebenezer Chapel in the developing town of Hebden Bridge.

**1786** He established a Sunday school at Ebenezer Chapel, the first in Calderdale and one of the first in Britain.

**1792** he declined another invitation to move away to become president of Bristol Academy.

**1793** He was given an M.A.

**1795** He bought a printing press very cheaply, to print fly sheets in prose and verse, to distribute among his pupils and friends. He also wrote the "Life of Rev. Oliver Heywood". "John Wise" was taken over by the National Tract Society because of its popularity with Sunday Schools.

Through his writing of "Essay on Anger", he came to the attention of King George III who wanted him to be made a Bishop but then he found that he could not do this as Fawcett was a dissenting minister.

Fawcett saved the life of a young man convicted of forgery by asking the King to intervene and the death sentence was commuted to deportation to Australia.

He had communications with John Newton (who wrote Amazing Grace).

**1804** Fawcett built 4 houses and retired to one of them in 1805 where he wrote more books in his plantation by the canal. He named the area Machpelah, after Genesis (Abraham's burial place). It was to be a burial ground for himself, his wife who died in 1810, and his family.

He was still preaching and his travels included Blackpool, Liverpool, Manchester (1808), Bradford. When he no longer felt able to travel by horse, he made at least one trip to Bradford by canal which was described many years later by the poet Dearden in "The Village Sage".

**1811** the "Devotional Family Bible" was completed and Fawcett received a degree of Doctor in Divinity from an American University.

**1816** Fawcett preached his last sermon at Ebenezer and soon after was carried to his son's house.

**1817** Fawcett was buried at Wainsgate; his wife and grandson were exhumed from Machpelah and buried with him. It was no longer a peaceful burial place at Machpelah.

[www.hope-baptist.org.uk](http://www.hope-baptist.org.uk)

[www.wainsgate.co.uk](http://www.wainsgate.co.uk)