

Seventh Day Baptists in England.

ONE hundred and twenty-six works relating to English Seventh-day Baptists were calendared in the Baptist Bibliography of 1916. Dr. Thirtle contributed a most careful article on Dr. Chamberlain of London and Woodham in Essex to our Transactions. The one church that remains in Europe, long worshipping in Mill Yard, Whitechapel, has deposited its church book in America, and five articles prompted by this have appeared in *Notes and Queries* since September 1946, written by the Rev. F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, M.A., F.R.Hist.S. The time seems ripe for another study of the whole movement, in our own columns.

When King Charles had been beheaded, the question of a successor was sure to arise. In 1652 an eclipse of the sun on 29 March enabled someone to deduce and publish that there would be a "glorious rising of the Fifth Monarch." But as Oliver Cromwell declined to take the crown, Fifth-Monarchy men met in 1656 at Norwich and Coleman Street, London. When Richard Cromwell became Protector, John Wigan in 27 July, 1659 feared the result of excluding Fifth-Monarchy men from the regiments; then Peter Chamberlain stated some problems of the legislative power. The earliest tract about "King Jesus" appeared in 1642 from an Oxford scholar. By 1649 James Toppe, a Baptist of Tiverton, wrote to his friend Mark Leonard Busher, about "Christ's monarchicall and personall reigne uppon earth over all the kingdoms of the world. . . . in wch is also shewed the tyme when this kingdom shall begin and where it shalbe." Here then are leading Baptists considering the Fifth Monarchy as imminent.

Another group of Baptists was directly considering the question of Saturday sabbath. James Oakford in 1649 published on "the doctrine of the fourth commandment . . . reformed and restored to its primitive purity." Thomas Tillam sent by a London Baptist church to the north was soon descanting on "the two witnesses, their prophecy slaughter resurrection and ascention." Thomas Chafie issued 102 pages on the seventh-day sabbath, William Aspinwall gave a brief description of the Fifth Monarchy, or kingdom, that shortly is to come into the world. In 1652 Tillam was at Hexham, both ministering in the abbey, and beginning to gather a church on a new basis. The return of Jews to England after centuries of banishment, called forth comment, and their observance of Saturday for worship caused "A lover of peace with truth" to show that the seventh-day sabbath was

proved from the beginning, from the law, from the prophets, from Christ and His apostles, to be a duty yet incumbent upon saints and sinners. Early in 1657, William Saller and John Spittlehouse made an appeal to the conscience of the chief magistrate of the commonwealth, touching the sabbath-day. The same year Spittlehouse and Aspinwall concentrated on the precise point of the seventh-day sabbath, while Tillam from prison wrote of the seventh-day sabbath sought out and celebrated. This was controverted next year by John Hanson. . . . This year saw also the anonymous tract writer of 1653 revealing himself as Edward Stennett of Walling.

A rector at Colchester, which town had seen much of the Seventh-day people, published at Ipswich 263 pages to prove that the Jews' sabbath was antiquated and the Lord's Day was instituted by divine authority. This simple doctrine appeared in 1659. Next year, Theophilus Brabourne followed with a short tract on the sabbath day, which he thought to be at the moment the highest controversy in the Church of England. Next year, Tillam was in prison, with time to publish 410 pages as a clear description of the true gospel church with all her officers and ordinances, while someone else bade a last farewell to the rebellious sect called the Fifth Monarchy men with its total dispersing. In 1661, John James of the Seventh-day church in Whitechapel was executed for preaching treason. In the next two or three years, Tillam and others organized a wholesale emigration up the Rhine to a settlement in a disused monastery; this drained away most of the Fifth-Monarchy men and many Seventh-day Baptists. This colony soon met with total disaster. But first it had been disowned by Edward Stennett, while Thomas Grantham put forth a pamphlet against the seventh day sabbath as ceremonial. John Collinges also published against those who contended for the old sabbath of the seventh day. Edward Stennett and W. Saller published separately to the contrary. In 1671 Saller examined a book by Dr. Owen concerning a sacred day of rest, while a brick-layer named Belcher was found preaching at Bell Lane on the sabbath. The late minister of Sherborne in Dorset announced his judgement for observing the Jewish or seventh day sabbath, which was opposed by Benn of Dorchester.

With 1672 Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence, and in the new atmosphere an aged clergyman named Homes, put out an essay on concerning the sabbath. In 1677 Bampfield was free, and publishing books with marvellous titles; one of them taught that the seventh-day sabbath was the desirable day. On the other hand, John Cowell of Natton near Tewkesbury announced that the snare was broken, and that he had grounds for leaving off the observance of the sabbath of the Old Covenant. Bampfield

soon founded in London another Seventh day church, which endured till 1863, while Stennett criticised Cowell. A Colchester rector set forth in 1683 the doctrine of the Church of England as to "the Lord's day, or Sunday-sabbath;" this was lengthy, and a second edition was called for in 1695. Bampfied wrote two more books with unreadable titles, was imprisoned, and died in Newgate. On the Sabbath day, Saturday 1st February 1683-4 Joseph Stennett published an elegy and epitaph. With 1684, John Bunyan felt called on to deal with the matter, and offered proof that the first day of the week was the true Christian Sabbath. Next year, another Stennett, Jehudah, put out a Hebrew grammar and reader; this family was destined to be in evidence for quite two centuries. With the flight of James II in 1688, and the passing of the Toleration Act, the whole atmosphere ameliorated, and Joseph Stennett published poems on state affairs in 1690, while John Savage answered an anonymous pamphlet. Thomas Bampfied entered the field in 1692, and was opposed by Dr. Wallis, keeper of the archives at Oxford, besides a modest G. T. Bampfied replied to the Oxford scholar in 1693, who rejoined next year. A prominent ordinary Baptist, Isaac Marlow, took up the cudgels next year, while Joseph Stennett published sermons on ordinary topics, then at some uncertain date disputed with Charles Leslie as to observing the first day of the week as the Christian sabbath. At intervals he published hymns and translated from the French an account of the Spanish discoveries and cruelties in the New World.

With 1700 Benjamin Keach of Southwark entered the field to prove that the Jewish sabbath was abrogated and the Saturday sabbatarians were confuted. Perhaps he was incited to this by their occupation of Mill Yard in 1692, and the wealthy Joseph Davis from Whitechapel acquiring the manor of Little Maplestead in Essex, of which a map may be seen at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwith. Joseph Stennett published the works of Plato, and a poem in memory of King William, then advice to the young for the early conversion to God.

A member of the Mill Yard church was Nathan Bailey who kept a school, and soon proved himself a practical lexicographer till 1736. His publications began with a dictionary of all sorts of country affairs, handicraft, trading and merchandizing, etc., in 1704. Joseph Stennett the same year celebrated the victory of Blenheim, made a new version of the Song of Solomon, and answered an attack on Baptists by David Russen. He followed the progress of the war by sermons, while Bailey published Latin exercises for schoolboys, which were reprinted till 1798 in eighteen editions. Stennett was a loyal preacher, as he showed by a sermon on the Union in 1707.

That year, however, Joseph Davis of Mill Yard died in February, and a short "legacy" was printed with much curious information as the seventh day Baptists, which was reprinted in 1720. In 1869 the minister of "Mill Yard" put forth another edition; and in May 1947 the Rev. E. A. Payne sent a full account to *Notes and Queries*. The minister in Whitechapel, John Maulden, published a threefold dialogue, the third point being whether the Seventh or the First day of the week be the sabbath of the Lord. It was reprinted twenty years later, but he followed it up at once with a guide for a pious young man, both under the alias Philotheos. This was met by Edward Elliott of Wapping, newly come from an ordinary Baptist church in the west, who gave a brief examination of the chief arguments for keeping the Jewish seventh day sabbath. This was the second time he had touched the topic, as a year earlier he had cited scripture against the preaching of Stennett. This minister was not deflected from public affairs in his publications, which dwelt otherwise on deaths; he died in 1713.

Nathan Bailey issued another dictionary, on husbandry and gardening, 1717. Another member of the Mill Yard church appeared in Thomas Slater, whose family had steadily maintained membership here. A member of Woodbridge in Suffolk, John Rutland, ventured into print to vindicate stern Calvinism, about 1720. Then Bailey found his line of research most welcome. In 1721 he issued his *Universal Etymological English Dictionary*, which he kept improving with each of nine editions. The thirtieth edition came out in 1802, while a German edition appeared as early as 1752.

Four books for and against the seventh day came out in 1722 and 1724; then Bailey in five years put out the *Colloquies of Erasmus* (reprinted 1733, 1877, 1878), the *Antiquities of London and Westminster* (three editions), a spelling book, an edition of Ovid, and completed his dictionary work with a folio containing thousands of additions. His health seems to have failed, for he had several sub-editors, and only in 1736 did he complete his labours in this direction (though he lived till 1742), with a complete household dictionary for the use of both city and country.

A portentous volume of over 400 pages came out from Nicholas Wincop in 1731, stating and vindicating the inviolable obligations to the religious observance of the seventh day. Apparently nobody was interested enough to answer it. But editions of Maulden's ordinary preaching were called for as late as 1738, while the new minister, Robert Cornthwaite, opposed Transubstantiation, and a second edition was needed in 1734. He used his popularity to uphold the seventh day in three large pamphlets against Samuel Wright; defence of the usual view

was undertaken by a tallow-chandler named Thomas Chubb, and by Daniel Dobel, a shoemaker at Cranbrook, in the General Baptist church there.

Joseph Stennett published several sermons, including a proposal to encourage young men in their studies for the ministry, also a new version of the Psalms. Yet another Joseph Stennett, at Coate, celebrated the victory at Dettingen in 1743, the last in which a king of England took an active part. The invasion by the Young Pretender in 1745 called forth two patriotic sermons.

Indeed, the topic of the seventh day, though it received attention in America, elicited nothing more in print here for many years. Moreover, the churches which observed it sank into somnolence.

It is therefore fortunate that the church books can show quiet life of ordinary members to some extent. At Mill Yard, Robert Cornthwaite was invited to the Eldership in 1726, from Boston, where he had been in charge of the ordinary Baptist congregation. The shrinkage of most of the seventh day churches gave more support to those which survived; and with a manse, almshouses, burial ground, the minister could live happily. Peter Russell aided the Elder in later days. Daniel Noble was born in Whitechapel 1729, and his parents intended him for the ministry, Cornthwaite began his education. Hitherto there had been little official training for the ministry, only private tuition in what came to be called "Academies." One of these was under Caleb Rotheram at Kendal, and Noble went north (1747). Hence he proceeded to University at Glasgow. There is no information how the expense of this education was met. He did not escape the drift toward Socinianism which was prevalent, nor did he seem to have been attracted by the revival under the Early Methodists, nor the formation of the Baptist New Connection of General Baptists. Noble returned and was chosen Elder in 1755, continuing till 1783 when he was invited to the ordinary Baptist church at Paul's Alley, Barbican; in his time the church appears to have gently subsided into insignificance. It is not clear whether Russell or Noble was the technical Elder. When both had left, William Slater succeeded, maintaining himself by a school. A fire in 1790 ended public worship for a time. John Evans, LL.D., wrote a sketch of denominations, which was constantly revised; the edition of 1821 says that the place was closed. The trustees offered it to the church of Bampffield, but the Slaters objected, and lawsuits were instituted.

Fuller light comes from William Henry Black, a Scot from Aberdeen, a tutor and officer in the Public Record Office; a sketch of his life, which is very inadequate and even inaccurate, appears in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. That he had

long been the pastor here, or even a minister at all, was a surprise to most of those who knew him as a skilled antiquary. He was the mainstay of the General Baptist church at Cranbrook in Kent till his death in 1872, as well as being minister at Mill Yard, where he had married a Slater; removing to the manse on 17 September, 1844.

A new chapter began with help from America, where the seventh-day Baptists have been fairly strong from the seventeenth century. Their headquarters are at Plainfield, New Jersey, and they have a university at Alfred in New York state, whose centenary I attended a few years ago, representing the Joseph Davis Trustees. William Mead Jones became seventh-day in Haiti, 1850, and came to Mill Yard in 1872. Here he founded a newspaper, *The Sabbath Memorial*, followed by *The Sabbath Observer*; he won the reputation of knowing seven languages. One of these issues tells that in May 1859 he baptized a native in the pool of Siloam. He married a daughter of Black. Ernest Axon, F.S.A. paid a visit and attended worship; except for his party, every one present was in receipt of help from the endowments. American Sabbath keepers had no tradition of Socinianism, and Jones ended the connection. His interest was in Bailey, whose lexicographical works he studied, printing new editions. He led the Church back to the General Baptist Assembly (practically Unitarian) in 1887; and died in 1895.

The London, Tilbury and Southend railway compulsorily bought the premises in 1885 to establish a goods station. The coffins were reverently removed to Abney Park cemetery, and the purchase money was invested under supervision of the Charity Commissioners, who then took cognizance of all the funds and established a trust which benefits three bodies which have no other link. The Trustees, of whom I am one, met once or twice a year, and if the seventh day church once at Mill Yard has spent more than £100 not including any stipend to the pastor, pay £100 as a first charge.

From America came W. C. Daland as the next minister, but lawsuits were instituted, and he returned at the close of the century. More lawsuits followed, till a new pastor was chosen in Colonel Richardson, a man of very varied interests. In private life he was vegetarian, teetotaller, non-smoker; in public, Grand Arch Master of the Loyal Orange Institute. A call at his home in search of information yielded nothing beyond the sight of a great placard in the hall that the Sabbath began at sunset on Friday. He was not communicative, and apparently bore in mind the direction of the Elder in II John, not to receive into his house any one who did not bring the message that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

Richardson died on 18 November, 1920, and services were continued by an ordinary Baptist minister, Winston Haines, for nine years. Then James McGeachy, a Scot from Glasgow, who had been a Seventh Day Adventist since 1913, and missionary in Egypt, made a slight change to Seventh day Baptist in 1927, and became pastor of the Mill Yard church.

Bampffield's Calvinistic church never owned any premises, probably thinking wiser to hire an ordinary Baptist chapel for Saturday. Townsend joined the Monthly meeting in 1748, till his death in 1763. Robert Burnside became pastor, 1785-1826, sharing the Joseph Davis charity, 1810. On his death, J. B. Shenston became pastor, with a church of five members near. W. H. Black represented this church at the meetings of The Baptist Union till he became Elder of the Mill Yard church. But when his church joined the General Baptist Assembly, which otherwise contained only Unitarian churches, the Union expelled him and it. In 1844 Shenston died; he is to be distinguished from William Shenston, against whose character there is nothing. Services were continued by W. H. Murch till 1849, when apparently the members were too few or too aged to assemble. The last member died on the 11 October, 1863, receiving the ministrations of Black. Mrs. Black Jones in 1915 deposited the church book at Dr. Williams's Library in Gordon Square, but it is now again in the possession of the Mill Yard Church.

The organization in America sends a copy of its annual report to the Baptist Union of Great Britain every year, and in it is always a little information as to the "Mill Yard" church. Also the University at Alfred in New York state, sends its magazine which shows a very active and versatile staff. At the centenary of the town I was the guest of the Dean of Divinity, and greatly enjoyed the pageant supervised by an Englishwoman in the College of Ceramics.

It will be seen that for more than eighty years the Seventh Day cause in England has been most microscopic, and has not needed the attention of a minister. Many of the ministers have been able to do other work, frequently keeping schools. This may guide us to distinguish people who personally observe the Seventh Day Sabbath, from those who belong to a church which worships on that day. Of this the Stennett family is a good example. In the seventeenth century this was also illustrated at Bristol by an early member of Broadmead, who caught attention by sitting at her door on Sunday, knitting. In the nineteenth century a novel by Besant introduced a character of a woman belonging to the Mill Yard church.

W. T. WHITLEY.