

More about the Sabbatarian Baptists.

IN the *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, Vol. II, 1910-11, Dr. Thirtle presented a full length study of Dr. Peter Chamberlen, court physician to the Stuarts and leader of the Seventh Day Baptists. Thirty-seven years later, in 1947, Dr. W. T. Whitley contributed to the *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XII, pp. 252f. a valuable article describing the Seventh Day churches in England from the seventeenth century to our day, when only one remains. Additional facts and material have recently come to light and it is well that they be recorded for the benefit of future investigators. It is to be hoped that there will one day be a scholarly and comprehensive monograph on the whole movement. In the United States there are a number of Seventh Day Baptist Churches and the denomination is affiliated to the World Council of Churches.

The connection between the Fifth Monarchists and the Seventh Day Baptists was noted by Dr. Whitley in his *History of British Baptists*, 1932 edition, p. 86, though he gave few details. Edward Stennett was clearly an important figure in this connection. In *The Baptists of Berkshire*, recently published by the Carey Kingsgate Press, I have been able to tell something of Stennett's connection with Abingdon and of his subsequent leadership of a Seventh Day Baptist cause in Wallingford. In a bundle of papers which once belonged to John Rippon and which are now in the Angus Library of Regent's Park College, there are copies of letters which Stennett wrote in 1671 and 1674 to Seventh Day Baptists in Rhode Island. From these I have been able to quote.

Through the kindness of Dr. Corliss Fitz Randolph, of New Jersey, I have now received copies of further letters from Stennett to Rhode Island, written in 1668 and 1670, and also a copy of an important communication sent across the Atlantic in 1668 by the Seventh Day Church which met in Bell Lane, London. This has never been published in this country and deserves reproduction in full. The list of signatures is particularly valuable. It is possible that the John Jones, who appears in the list, is the "ancient grave Christian" of that name who figured in the disturbances at Abingdon at the funeral of John Pendarves in

1656. This John Jones came from Longworth, near Faringdon. In 1660 he was imprisoned with five other Baptists in Reading gaol. John Jones, Aaron Squibb, John Belcher and Robert Goodgroom were arrested in 1671 and taken to the Tower, whilst other members of the Congregation were imprisoned in Newgate and Bridewell. The Bell Lane meeting-house was ordered to be destroyed. It will be noted that the names of John Belcher and Robert Woods occur in the 1690 list which appears later in this article. Is Christian Williams the William Christian, of Leicester, whose name is in the 1669 Tenison ms. at Lambeth (see Whitley, *Minutes of the General Assembly*, I p. xliii)?

The Church of Christ meeting in Bell Lane, London, upon the Lord's holy Sabbath, desirous to keep the commandments of God and the testimonies of Jesus, sendeth salutations to a remnant of the Lord's Sabbath-keepers, in or about Newport, New England; unfeignedly wishing you all needful grace, that truth and holiness may be multiplied and increased in you more and more unto the perfect day :

BELOVED AND PRECIOUS BRETHREN,—Although unknown to you by face, yet, through grace, we trust we can call you so; being affected by hearing from you, by our beloved brother John Cowel, and the more, when we perceived the grace of God that is in you, by those choice and savory letters you sent him, which, with his desire, hath encouraged us to write unto you at this time; observing that you may be steadfast, and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; that in his day he will show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and not only so, but will also make manifest both *who are* and *what is* his, that so his people may not, through anti-Christian darkness or mistake, call light darkness, and darkness light; which evil is too much practiced in the present day, by reason of which the trial is great upon the poor and sincere of the flock.

The most high Lord of Heaven is further revealing his truth, that we may know that there are no wounds like those we receive in the house of our friends, nor anything like the strong opposition of brethren, differing from us in what we are persuaded is the mind and law of Christ. Although this be grievous to us, God hath promised that our bow shall abide in strength, and the arms of our hands shall be made strong by the hand of the mighty God of Jacob, and be fed with the heritage of Jacob our father, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; and we know, that "he is not a man that he should lie, or the son

of man that he should repent." Therefore, great will be the blessing of Sabbath-keepers, when they shall be exalted to ride upon the high places of the earth, and have dignity and prosperity, temporal and spiritual. How acceptable will it be—even as the rain upon the mown grass—after all our troubles, and frowns of friends, and persecution of enemies, for the truth's sake! We beseech you, dear brethren, be not discouraged, but resolve, through Christ's strength to persevere in the ways of uprightness, before him that weigheth the paths of the just. Though you meet with hard things, know that truth never comes into the world without great opposition. * * * * * Oh, what were the contests in former ages, as the saints were creeping out of Babylon! and what fiery trials have they met withal! Yet truth, being of prevailing nature, because God, who is the author of it, is stronger than man, it *did* prevail, though the instruments were weak; and we doubt not, through the Lord's mercy, but that it will be revealed more and more; believing it to be a part of the great work of God, in the last days, to magnify the law and make it honorable; for the law must go from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains. Oh! *then* we shall have no more to do with the mother of harlots, nor the beast that carries her, that hath changed times and laws; but shall cast away the carcase of those kings, and defile the coverings of their graven images, that this fourth monarchy has set up (Is. 30:22,) to provoke the Lord to jealousy. And the nearer we come to the promised glory, the more will the mysteries of God be opened to us. Then, without doubt, the fallacy of those vain objections (no Sabbath, or a seventh part of time), will appear. We shall then see that the ark, wherein were the table laws, only will be there. The Lord will then make manifest that principles and precepts will stand together in a gospel church state. But, while you are among differing brethren, you have nothing but what you have received. Be very tender towards them, giving them good examples by your light, and by your holy conversation, avoiding harsh and bitter speeches against them, that they may be neither hardened in their present ignorance, nor stumble at the truth.

We add no more at present, but that our prayers may be for you, to the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named; desiring yours for us, that we all may be kept in the evil day, to the praise of our God and your God, and to the glory of his great name. We rest, hoping to remain your brethren, fellow servants, and fellow heirs of the kingdom of our Lord, which is now hastening upon us.

Subscribed in behalf of the church, this 26th day of March, 1668.

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| John Labourn, | Robert Woods, |
| Edward Fox, | Robert Hopkin, |
| William Gibson, | John Jones, |
| Aaron Squibb, | Christian Williams, |
| John Belcher, | Samuel Clarke, |
| Richard Parnham. | |

It will be seen that this letter throws interesting light on the connection between Fifth Monarchy expectations and Sabbatarian views.

At the close of his 1947 article, Dr. Whitley referred to an old Minute Book then in the possession of the "Mill Yard Church" meeting on Saturdays at the Upper Holloway Baptist Church under the leadership of the Rev. James McGeachy. It is a vellum-covered foolscap book with the letters F.B. on the cover. The first entry is dated 14 October, 1686, but there are some details from an earlier book covering the previous ten years. The foolscap volume continued in use until 1863 at which time the Mill Yard Church was under the leadership of W. H. Black. He carefully annotated and indexed it.

One records with somewhat mixed feelings that this historic Minute Book was last summer sent to the Library of the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Association in Plainfield, New Jersey, U.S.A. The reproduction of many of the earliest entries would be of value to historians. I hope on a later occasion to give some notes on the contents of this Minute Book.

The most important recent discovery has come quite unexpectedly from Wales. The Rev. T. Haydn Morgan, B.A., has been carefully studying two vellum-covered volumes in the possession of the Llanwenarth Baptist Church, Monmouthshire. His discoveries and conclusions are of considerable importance for the early history of Baptists in Wales, and it is much to be hoped that they will shortly be published.

There is evidence that one of the Stennetts (who were a numerous family) began to preach in Abergavenny about 1706. One of his children was buried in Llanwenarth in 1717. This would assure the Welsh group of some knowledge of the Seventh Day Baptist tradition, for Joseph Stennett (Edward's son) was minister of one of the London churches from 1690 until his death in 1713. But already the friends of Llanwenarth must have been interested in the Sabbatarian Baptists. This book contains a remarkable list of Seventh Day Churches in existence in 1690. It is as follows, and is reproduced through the kindness of Mr. Haydn Morgan, who has secured for me a photostat copy:—

An account of some Sabbathkeepers in England, & the places
of ther aboad.

December 1690

In the city of london three congregations

- 1 one to whom Mr. John Bellcher & Mr. Henry Cooke be
ministers or Elders
- 2 another to whom young Mr. Stennet is minister
- 3 the others have Mr. Henry Shorsby to ther minister

In the county of Essex

ther is a congregation in the city of Colchester
Abraham Chaplin ther minister
and at a seaport called Harwich ther is a Remnant.

In the county of Southffolke

At Woodbridge & Melton there beth A Remnant

In the county of Norffolke

Ther is a congregation at Ingham and Northwalsham,
and therabout, Mr. John Haggis ther minister
as also A little Remnant at great Yarmouth

In Lincolnsheire

Att A seaport called Boston ther be A small Remnant
In the city of Nottingham & therabouts be A Remnant
in the county of Bucks or Buckinghamshaire

There be a congregation William Charsley & henry Cock
ministering Brethren

at Wallingford in Barksheire

Ther be a congregation M^r Edward Stennet ther elder
at Watleton in Oxffordsheire

ther be also A Remnant Relating to the sayd M^r Stennet
at Salisbury in Wiltshaire

Ther is a congregation John Laws & John Hall
ministering Brethren, but ther Elder lives at Southampton
whose Name is, Michell Aldridge

in Dorsetshaire ther is also a congregation

som at the city of Dorsetor & some at Belmister som at Sherbon
& som at Sturmister all market towns Joseph Newman and
some other Brethren to minister to them

ROBERT

In Glostersheire Ther be two

congregations that have each of them an Elder and

ROBERT WOODS severall Ministering Brethren

In the county of Surry ther is at A market
town called Cherssey M^r William Burnet ther elder
& M^r Thom Stickland a ministering Brother

December

1690

The names of John Belcher (d. 1695), Henry Shorsby (or Soursby), William Charsley, Edward Stennett, John Laws and William Burnet will be found in Whitley's *Baptist Bibliography*, and that of Henry Cooke in Whitley's *Baptists of London*, p. 114. There was a Cock family in Lincoln who were Baptists. Edward and Robert Cock signed the 1651 Confession (*Baptist Quarterly*, II. p. 247), while Charles Cock signed the Lincolnshire reprint of the standard Confession of the General Baptists drawn up in 1660. Henry Cock, of Chalfont St. Giles, is mentioned in the 1669 Tenison ms.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

The Healing of the Nations, by Mary I. M. Causton. (Carey Kingsgate Press, 5s.)

Occasioned by the jubilee this year of the Medical Mission Auxiliary of the Baptist Missionary Society, this interesting volume claims that the ministry of healing is a continuation of Christ's own purpose of bringing wholeness into broken lives and describes the development of the medical missionary work undertaken by British Baptists from 1792 to the present day. We are reminded that the first missionary accepted by the B.M.S. was not, as is often assumed, William Carey, but the mercurial Dr. John Thomas and we are taken stage by stage through the expansion of the medical enterprise, from the early days when the preaching-missionary, equipped for the task with only a bottle of quinine, made compassionate but amateurish attempts to alleviate suffering, to the arrival of the qualified doctor, then the nursing sister, down to the establishment of the teaching hospital and medical school of today. In the chapter, "Changes of Climate," Miss Causton touches upon the possible repercussions in the future of State public health services. The book is chiefly concerned, however, with the formation and growth of the Medical Mission Auxiliary which owed its inception largely to the initiative

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