

THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY

- Yale University Library; microfilm copy in Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford.
25. Stephen, p.140.
26. John Rowlands, *Cofiant y Parch. Daniel Davies DD, Llanelli 1879*, p.179.
27. *ibid.*, p.181.
28. Owen Davies, ed., *Gweithiau . . .*, vol.2, Caernarfon 1899, p.13.
29. *ibid.*
30. *ibid.*,
31. John Rowlands, *op.cit.*, p.180.
32. Owen Davies, *op.cit.*, p.14.

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THE GLASS HOUSE AND GLAZIERS' HALL

Two Seventeenth-Century Baptist Meeting Houses - Or One?

Anyone writing in a minority language has to be prepared for his work to go unnoticed, even though his scholarship may be highly respected. This has happened to Thomas Richards, whose English books on Welsh Puritanism are widely known but whose Welsh essays, many of which were published during the quarter of a century he spent as editor of *Trafodion . . .* (the Transactions of the Welsh Baptist Historical Society) remain unknown to English scholars, even though some of them contain material which is of interest to English Baptists.

A case in point is his identification of two distinct Baptist locations in London in the mid seventeenth-century, the one known as the Glass House, the other as Glaziers' Hall. English Baptist historians, both ancient and modern, give the impression that the Glass House and Glaziers' Hall are variant names for the same place. Thus, when a reader looks up 'Glaziers' Hall' in the index of W. T. Whitley's *Baptists of London*, he is directed to the article which concerns the 'Glass House'. In his *History of English Baptists*, Joseph Ivimey states that John Miles and Thomas Proud 'attended with a Baptist church meeting at Glaziers'-hall and from thence called the church at the Glass House' (Vol.I, p.235). B. R. White echoes this in his 1987 essay, 'The London Baptist Calvinistic Leadership, 1644-60' (*Faith, Heritage and Witness*, ed. J. H. Y. Briggs, pp.42-3):

The covering letter which the London churches sent with the copies of this material from Ireland was addressed from 'the Glasshouse, London'. One of the London Calvinistic Baptist Churches had met at the Glaziers' Hall in Broad Street since 1649 . . . John Miles and Thomas Proud had been sent out from Glaziers' Hall in 1649.

However, if Thomas Richards is correct, Whitley, Ivimey and White err and this last quotation contains at least three inaccuracies:

- i) Glaziers' Hall was *not* in Broad Street;
- ii) the Baptist congregation which met there was *not* Calvinistic;
- iii) it was *not* the church meeting at Glaziers' Hall that sent forth Miles and Proud to minister in Wales.

Thomas Richards examined the relationship between the Glass House and Glaziers' Hall in an essay entitled 'William Rider', published in *Trafodion . . .* 1950. His interest in the subject was aroused by a December 1655 minute in the Llanwenarth Churchbook which expressed the church's concern about the meaning of Hebrews 6.1-2 and in particular the reference to laying on of hands. The Llanwenarth Church had circulated other churches about the practice and in response had received a visit

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from William Rider, who is described in the minutes as the minister of Glaziers' Hall, London. Richards noted that Rider's name does not appear in the mass of correspondence sent out from the Glass House (see Ivimey i.235-255) nor is it appended to the Calvinist Confession of Faith of the Seven Churches, 1644, and its subsequent revision and reprints in 1646, 1651 and 1652 - a Confession which says nothing about the imposition of hands on the newly baptized. From this he concluded that Rider had no standing among the Calvinist Baptists of the Glass House. Moreover, W. T. Whitley lists William Rider of Southwark among the leaders of the General Baptists between 1654 and 1660 (*Minutes of the General Assembly*, I, xli) and by 1660 the General Baptists had certainly adopted the practice of laying hands on all baptized believers, in accordance with the views Rider had published in a pamphlet *Laying on of Hands Asserted* (1656). Thomas Richards deduced from this that if William Rider was the minister of Glaziers' Hall, as the Llanwenarth Churchbook maintained, it must have been a congregation composed of General Baptists.

This supposition is not destroyed by the few other facts known about Rider. Thomas Crosby states that Rider broke with an old and important church in 1652 'for practices judged disorderly', but does not identify the church concerned. Ivimey believed that the break was with the church meeting at the Glass House (which would rule out his being a minister there at the time he went to Llanwenarth); but Whitley, who never associates Rider with the Glass House or Glaziers' Hall, believed the break to have been with the church where Elias Tookey had once been minister. Rider had, therefore, always been a General Baptist and the 'disorderly practices' he advocated in 1652 are thought to have included the imposition of hands on the newly baptized. Having left Tookey's people, he gathered around him a congregation which became famous in later years under the ministry of Benjamin Keach, a General Baptist who was later to embrace Calvinism.

On consulting Stow's *Survey of London* (1633), to test his supposition further, Thomas Richards found that the Glass House and Glaziers' Hall were not variant names for the same building. The Glass House was, indeed, in Broad Street - which was also the name of the City ward where it was located; Glaziers' Hall, on the other hand, was situated in Kerion Lane in Vintry ward. For confirmation of his findings Richards wrote to the Clerk of the Glaziers' Company who replied, '. . . we had nothing whatsoever to do with Glass House.'

There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Glasshouse and the Glaziers' Hall were separate buildings, as writers on seventeenth-century London make clear. Writing of the 'crouched or crossed fryers' (i.e. the Crutched Friars), Brett-James records that, 'the Fryers Hall was made a glasse house or house wherein was made glasse of divers sorts to drinke in' (Ref. Kingsford, i, 140 [sic] actually 148); at the time of Stow's observation this had become a carpenter's yard and a tennis court. The Crutched Friars were located to the west of Tower Hill, and the Street crossing between Poor Jewry, Hart Street and Woodroffe Lane was so marked on the Map of Stow's London as in 1600; the site of the Crutched Friars' Priory is shown on the south-side of Hart Street, adjacent to St Olave's Church (G. Brett-James, *The Growth of London*, 1935, p.33.)

The Glaziers, already established as one of the London guilds by 1328, were incorporated in 1638. They were artists and craftsmen, whose skills were in staining and etching glass; hence their concern to distance themselves from the mere manufacturers of glass, glasshouses and the like. They had their own hall in Fye Foot Lane, now Queen Street. The Hall, which was leased from the Fishmongers' Company, was destroyed in the Great Fire and not rebuilt. Fye Foot Lane is also identified by Stow as Finemore Lane (p.329 in Henry Morley's 1890 edition), which

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ran into Old Fish Street Hill in Queenhithe, and indeed Stow (p.322) speaks of the Fishmongers' Hall there which they had let out (R. J. Blackham, *The Soul of the City: London's Livery Companies*, n.d., p.27).

The editor of *Trafodion* . . . was convinced that he had identified a previously unknown General Baptist meeting house and found the proper location of the congregation which eventually formed Benjamin Keach's people. However, Thomas Richards' essay on William Rider poses as many questions as it answers. Was the church at Llanwenarth as confused as later historians by the names 'Glass House' and 'Glaziers' Hall'? Were the Calvinist brethren there aware that Rider was a *General Baptist*? Did Rider hide his theological conviction in order to win new adherents to the practice of laying on hands?

It would appear that Rider's visit to Llanwenarth caused some division within the church, as did a subsequent visit he paid to the church at Hay-on-Wye; nevertheless, within a generation the new and influential church at Rhydwylym in West Wales had adopted the practice of imposition of hands on the newly baptized and this led to its being adopted by the Welsh Association (formed in 1700) as one of the characteristics of Welsh *Particular Baptist Churches*: ' . . . owning Believers Baptism, laying on of hands, the doctrine of personal election and final perseverance.' It was not until 1766 that a church 'of the same sentiments, except Laying on of hands' was accepted into the Welsh Association. Even that did not put an end to William Rider's influence in Wales as some churches in West Wales lay hands on newly baptized members to this day.

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