

## Sheffield Baptists in 1685.

**T**HE earliest notice of Baptist life in Sheffield is found in Adam Taylor's "History of the English General Baptists," Vol. I., 320. There we read that "there were several general baptists, A.D. 1700, at Sheffield, in Yorkshire: who applied to the Lincolnshire association for assistance. Mr. Hooke [Joseph Hooke was the Messenger and of Bourne Hackenby], at the request of that meeting, went over to set in order (what was wanting among them; and several other ministers visited them. This supply was continued till 1703, when they appear to have chosen Mr. Edward Howard [one of the founders of the association] for their pastor. . . . the expenses of all these journeys were paid out of the chest."

The Hollis family, who were leading Baptists in London, came from South Yorkshire; one of these was Thomas Hollis (1634-1718), the founder of the Hollis Hospital, Sheffield, who also endowed churches at Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield. Alas, these churches did not long survive.

There is, however, a collection of MSS. at Welbeck Abbey, belonging to His Grace, the Duke of Portland, K.G., and in it is to be found a written certificate of commendation from the Sheffield Church for one of the poorer members of the church, named Jane Newman, dated 1685. She seems to have gone on a pilgrimage, and possibly she was compelled to seek relief as she journeyed. At any rate she reached London. Through the kindness of Mr. R. W. Goulding, the Librarian at Welbeck Abbey, we are able to present a copy of the certificate. It reads as follows:—

Wee the Church of Christ meeting in Sheffield in Yorkshire who are in the Fayth and Practise of those six Principles specified Heb: 6. 1, 2, Doe send Christian Salutation unto any Baptized Congregation of Christ, where these Lines may come, either in England or elsewhere, who are in the same Fayth and Order of the Gospel with us according to the

aforesayd Principles Heb: 6: wishing Grace, Mercy and Peace to abound unto and amongst you in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Beloved Brethren, These are to Certifie you that the Bearer Jane Newman is a Baptized Beleiver in full Comunion with us, Whose Life and Conversation soe far as we know, hath been as becometh the Gospel of Christ, Her therefore we recommend to you, as one meet to be in Comunion with the Church of God, Desireing you to watch over her in the Lord. Furthermore wee doe hereby satisfie that Shee is a very poore Widdow formerly the Wife of John Newman, a Man of an honest Life and Conversation, and was [blank] his Life in fflanders leaveing our poor Sister in great want with three small Children. She alsoe hath had much Sickness and now is desirous to Travell in Search of her ffreinds and of her late Husband's Freinds, Hath desired this our Letter of Comendation; Therefor wee recomend her unto you as a fit object of your Christian Charity, Desireing you to Administer to her Necessities as you shall see fit, As well knoweing that if you give but a Cup of Cold Water to a Christian, you shall not loose your Reward. Now unto the Protection of [blank]

and subscribe ourselves your

Thomas James	Sam. Ellison Elder
William Newton	Rich: Stafford Elder
Rich: Simms	George White Deacon
	Owen Charleton Deacon

Sheffield, November the twentie seaventh 1695.

[The above is in one handwriting, but this note is added in another hand, evidently pour encourager les autres.]

Collected at Mr Kiffin's Meeting House Nine Shillings anid Sixpence.

Rich: Adams.

Richard Adams was the ejected Vicar of Humberstone, Leicestershire, who was assisting Kiffin at Devonshire Square, as the Rev. Daniel Dyke, M.A., has done before him. On the death of the latter, he was called to be joint elder with Kiffin, and was ordained to that office in October 1690.

[John Newman may be the man who represented Horley at the Midland Conference of 1651, where also Valentine James of Hackthorne appeared. George White went to Stonehouse in Staffordshire, whence, in 1687, he removed to Dockhead, the scene of a brief ministry by Richard Adams. Richard Newton of Shrewsbury in 1692 may be connected with this group.]

Certificates of commendation seem to have been given by other churches. Thus, in July 1699 one was brought to Spalding from the church at Cowley, in Middlesex. This was for a person who had lost by fire, and who was going to see his brother at Barton-upon-Humber. Help had been given apparently by the churches at Wantage, Hook Norton, Horley, Scaldwell, and Emprigham. Spalding took a collection for the case and it amounted to 6s. 11d.

Thus was fulfilled the injunction, "Bear ye one another's burdens." Even the Particular Baptists of Devonshire Square accepted the counsel of the General Baptists of Sheffield, and so fulfilled the law of Christ.

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