

fore. But when Charles issued his Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, Lamb put out a Stop to the Course of Separation. Just as in 1657 he tried to induce Baptists to disband generally, so in 1672 he tried to keep the Presbyterians within the Established Church. Thus, when in 1742, John Lewis of Margate was preparing for a second edition of his *History of the Baptists*, he made full notes of Lamb as one who had seen the error of his ways.

Daniel Noble.

Daniel Noble was a General Baptist of the eighteenth century, whose life shows more variety than the average. Ivimey thought that he sprang from Huguenot immigrants, and he certainly belonged to a church which always had a fascination for these—the "Mill Yard" Seventh-day church, which numbered in its earliest members Peter Chamberlain.

When John Savage, Elder of this church, died in 1720, he was succeeded as trustee by Thomas Noble senior. By 8 March 1726/7 a new Elder had been discovered, Robert Cornthwaite, from Chesham and Boston: he was on that day ordained Elder, and succeeded automatically to the trusteeship held by Thomas, who was at the same time ordained deacon. Our Daniel was born 14 June, 1729. Thomas became trustee again two years later, instead of his fellow deacon deceased, John Haydon; but he died in 1733.

In 1740 John Le Vasseur died, and while Noah Noble filled his office of trustee, Daniel Noble senior succeeded him as deacon. On 24 September, 1743, Cornthwaite baptized our Daniel.

The Scotch invasion under the Young Pretender stirred the youth to write a Letter to the People of England, which his admiring family published as the production of a lad of fifteen. Fortunately his head was not turned, and he desired the best education available. There was extremely little choice then for a dissenter; four good academies in the west country and one in Wales were suspect of Arianism, and it was either Doddridge at Northampton, Latham at Findern, or Rotheram at Kendal. The last had recently had two other G.B. boys, and Cornthwaite came from Bolton-le-sands, quite near; possibly the romance of the Stuarts through the town helped: so in 1747 the London youth went to this new scene. Thence he proceeded to Glasgow university.

With 1752 his church claimed his help, for Cornthwaite had an apoplectic stroke, and needed to be relieved of the Sabbath morning service. Two years later, Noble succeeded him, preach-

ing his funeral sermon. The care of the church, however, did not absorb all his energies, as an assistant was endowed, Peter Russell. And so, though he lived in the manse down Mill Yard, for the rest of his life, he opened a school in the village of Peckham. Having an education beyond that of the ordinary Baptist minister, he fraternized with Joseph Burroughs, pastor of Barbican, who had been schooled at Highgate under Kerr of Leyden; and on his death in 1761, preached his funeral sermon. The year before, he had paid another loyal tribute to the House of Hanover, on the decease of George II. At this time the Mill Yard Church was at the height of its prosperity, with eighty-seven members.

It had rented its building on Sunday to an ordinary G.B. Church under Matthew Randall and John Brittain successively. In 1763 this migrated to a new building in Church Lane, White-chapel, and the income of the Seventh-day church fell; for endowed churches rarely subscribed anything substantial for their expenses. When, therefore, the Barbican church lost another pastor in 1766, it called Noble to serve it on the Sunday. This inaugurated a remarkable policy of alliance and amalgamation. On 2 September that same year, the G.B. church meeting in Glasshouse Yard lost its pastor. There was no system of training for the ministry, as the General Baptist Fund only granted books to ministers in the country, and did not assist students with bursaries. After vain efforts to find a man, the Glasshouse Church arranged with Barbican to dissolve and hand over its premises, on the understanding that the disbanded members should join the incoming church, which should call Noble to be its pastor. Thus Noble now enjoyed one endowment as Elder of Mill Yard, another as Elder of Glasshouse, besides his income as schoolmaster. The arrangement was complete by 8 May, 1768. While it was pending, Noble was fired by the success of Allen Evans, chairman of the Dissenting Deputies, who for a generation had been contending for civil liberties, and three weeks before his death, won an important case in the House of Lords which put an end to a monetary persecution by the City of London; he preached a funeral sermon to commemorate the event.

Noble's new pastorate brought him into relations with fresh churches, and he gave some help to the G.B. church at Amersham. He also became joint treasurer of a fund being raised for the Rhode Island College by Morgan Edwards. But it also brought him into strife. A young minister from Northamptonshire, settling at Sevenoaks, found the church there very luke-warm in its Christology. There had been trouble on this score in the G.B. Assembly about 1706, only healed by a clear pronouncement in 1735. On a similar declaration being sought now, it could not be obtained. Brittain, of Church Lane, there-

upon headed a secession, and Noble was in the chair at the crucial meeting of 6 June, 1770, when the Assembly took refuge in vague generalities. His wide tolerance is shown also in that he went out to Amersham in October to "lay hands" on some members recently baptized; for while much else was indifferent, the Assembly did profess to hold fast the Six Principles of Hebrews—which the author of that letter regarded as so elementary.

In 1772 he welcomed the Assembly for its Annual Meeting to the Barbican premises. At this session there was a new member, Joseph Jeffries, professor at Gresham College, and successor of Weatherley as pastor of the Artillery Lane church. These men were both old Taunton students, and Noble would welcome the appearance of another educated minister. They backed the application to Parliament to relieve dissenting ministers from signing the articles; and doubtless their motive was not only a love of civil liberty, but also of loose thinking. Yet it is only fair to say that Noble was asked to draw up a letter to the churches suggesting remedies for the decay of Christian piety; whether he thought of the evangelistic fervour of John Wesley, or of the Barton preachers, is very doubtful, but it is certain nothing was done within a year. He and Jeffries advised that a catechism by Sturch of Newport be adopted, but could not get the Assembly to do more than ask the author to publish it. He took the lead in gathering opinions about churches which needed financial help, and also in gathering statistics for Josiah Thompson, with a view to further Parliamentary pressure for religious liberty.

In 1775 he came into close relations with Joshua Toulmin, a friend of Jeffries, and so admired his sermon to the Assembly that he secured its publication. He was invited to become "Messenger," or peripatetic superintendent of all the G.B. churches in Kent and Sussex, which by this time were weeded of all orthodox churches. His refusal may be put down to his important London duties, which were about to be intensified by property troubles. For the lease of the Barbican was expiring at Michaelmas in 1777, and the Church was not inclined to return to its other leasehold premises in Glass-house Yard. Country churches were appealed to for subscriptions, and by 1779 a piece of land was bought in Worship Street, the lease of Glass-house being sold to raise funds. On the new site a little meeting-house and vestry were erected, the rest being laid out for burials, and several coffins were transferred from former leasehold grave-yards. The new chapel was opened on 24 June, 1781.

It was for the joint use of four churches, each with a pastor. Noble and his "Glasshouse" Church were perhaps the most important; but there came also the original church of 1612,

"White's Alley," under Charles Bulkley; and the second church of 1624, "Horsley Down," under Joseph Brown; and the "Artillery Lane," church under Joseph Jeffries. Yet all four churches together could not raise the money, even with the country subscriptions; and in the end they had to mortgage the building to the trustees of a Ramsgate endowment. The transaction is eloquent of the decay of these bodies.

Another sign is that Noble was again asked to be Messenger, and though at the age of 52 he could hardly undertake vigorous evangelistic duties over two counties, he accepted after some hesitation, and was ordained at Canterbury in July 1783. But within six months he was dead, while his friend Jeffries fell ill attending the funeral, and died soon after.

The fate of the five churches so curiously linked, is worth noticing. Mill Yard still had an assistant, Peter Russell, who soon found a colleague in William Slater; and it improved its finances by again letting its premises on Sunday, this time to a Particular Baptist Church under Timothy Thomas, who seems to have succeeded to Noble's school at Peckham. It was unfortunate in executing extensive repairs and then having everything burned in 1790. "Glasshouse" called Anthony Robinson from Fairford, then an American Universalist, Elhanan Winchester, then John Evans, a relation of the Bristol tutors; he lived by a school in Islington and by writing many books. "Artillery Lane" managed without a pastor, for two were ample in the one building, and it disbanded in 1797. "White's Alley" that year lost its pastor, and had it not been for an endowment, the five men and the three women left might well have followed the example; but it maintained an artificial existence for another century. "Horsley Down" went back across the river in 1801, when there were twelve members, and—two years later—amalgamated with another ancient church in Deptford, where it may be found to-day—with a microscope. The history of endowments does not increase our faith in their value to churches or to morality.

Noble's library was sold in 1786. His family seems to have lost connection with either of his churches, the last link being broken in 1798, when Mrs. Experience Noble died in January, aged 76, and Dr. John Evans preached her funeral sermon. This prompted Toulmin to write a sketch of her husband which appeared in the *Protestant Dissenters' Magazine*. And so faded from memory the life of a man who embodied in his career many of the weaknesses of the General Baptists of that century. It is significant that directly after his death the New Connexion and Dan Taylor joined the Old Assembly and gave it one more opportunity of revival.