

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tbhs_01.php

Notes and Queries.

Thomas Collier.

This great evangelist of the West has never had his life and work properly studied, although he is known to have founded several churches, and to have taught a peculiar type of doctrine that deserves attention. Twenty of his works, 1645—1690, are in the Angus Library and the British Museum, while the Bristol College is certain to have others. Anthony Wood says he was "an husbandman, sometime teacher in the church at York &c." The York reference is out of line with everything else known about him, and is not supported by any evidence.

Edwards in his *Gangræna* tells of him as expelled from Guernsey with many followers, and publishes complaints about him from Lymington, Southampton, Waltham, telling that he was once imprisoned at Portsmouth. Two of his letters were stolen; one shows him writing in 1645 from Guildford to Taunton and referring to a church established by him at Poole, the other shows him in London next year. Edwards sums him up as a "mechanicall fellow," which seems to show Wood was mistaken as to the identity. In 1647 he preached a sermon at the Army headquarters in Putney, and showed himself of the Millenarian type; next year he was still active in politics. In 1649 he issued a third *Generall Epistle* to all the saints, which thoroughly bears out Edwards' statement that he was a man of great power, sending emissaries to supply his place in his absence from the West. In 1650 he was debating at Axbridge in Somerset; in 1652 was conducting a printed controversy as to baptism and lay-preaching; Wood heard of him at Westbury this year. In 1656 he was disputing with the Quakers, defending the admission of the Jews to England. He also presided at Wells over a meeting of sixteen churches in Somerset, Wilts, Devon, Gloucester and Dorset, which issued a circular letter printed in this number, and published a confession of faith, preferring not merely to endorse the London confession of 1644, but expressly to disclaim freewill, falling away from grace &c., as he had been accused of spreading some Arminian principles. In 1659 he returned to politics discussing the limits of civil authority.

In 1672 we find him licensed to preach at North Bradley in Wilts, and this seems to fix his residence. Two years later he published a *Body of Divinity*, and this evidently stirred controversy, for Broadmead recorded that in 1676 he had been holding forth some unsound doctrine or new notions, so that Nehemiah Cox, Captain Deane, Captain Kiffin, Titten of the Jessey Church and Moreton were coming to settle the disorder. In this they failed, for when Cox's colleague next year put out a revision of the Westminster Confession in a Baptist sense, Collier at once challenged it in a Confession of 1678. Perhaps we may attribute it to his influence that the Western Churches were so jealous of London, declined to accept it as the sole place for Assemblies, and declared again their own faith in distinction from the reiterated Confession of 1689. While most of his churches remained Calvinistic, a few developed in other directions, Taunton and Trowbridge to Socinianism being the most conspicuous examples.

Will students in the West send any other gleanings, especially from their own Church records? And will some scholar in the West, or elsewhere, gratify one of the Churches due to Collier, by undertaking a sketch of his career?

Marriages before 1754.

By Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, which came into force with Lady Day, 1754, all marriages except those of Jews and Quakers, which were not had under licence, or after publication of banns, as well as marriages not solemnized in churches or chapels of ease, were declared null and void to all intents and purposes in law whatsoever. Hence since that date, no marriage could be legally celebrated in any Dissenting Chapel till 1836.

But the question has often been asked how the law stood before 1754. It is well known that during the Commonwealth, marriages could be solemnized before justices of the peace; this law was treated as obsolete at the restoration of Charles, and it is a matter of some interest what was customary among Baptists between 1660 and 1754, and how far their customs were legal.

Thomas Grantham, the famous General Baptist, published a piece "Of the Manner of Marriages among the Baptized Believers," from which Rippon copied a few paragraphs in his Register, III., 452. "We are not against, but for, the public solemnization of Marriages according to the law of the land, save that there are some ceremonies used therein which we cannot comply with. And because some of the Priests will not marry us at all, and others will not do it, unless we conform to all the ceremonies required in the service-book; this puts us upon a necessity to have it done without them, and the manner thus:

"The parties to be married, being qualified for that state of life, according to the law of God, and the law of the land, as to the degrees, &c. therein limited, they call together a competent number of their relations and friends; and, having usually some of our ministry present with them, the parties concerned declare their contract formerly made between themselves, and the advice of their friends, if occasion require it; and then taking each other by the hand, declare, That they from that day forward, during their natural lives together, do enter into the state of marriage, using the words of marriage in the service book, acknowledging the words to be very fit for that purpose. And then a writing is signed by the parties married, to keep in' memory the contract and covenant of their marriage."

Grantham gives specimens of the writings with signatures of the witnesses, and concludes, "After these things, some suitable counsel or instruction is given to the parties, and then prayer is made to God for his blessing upon the parties married, &c."

Many such entries are to be seen in old church books; but among the Particular Baptists there was a decided inclination to magnify the office of the pastor, and Rippon quoted from his own church book six entries of marriages "by Mr. George Barrett, Rotherhithe parish," or by Hansard Knollis or by Benjamin Keach or by Richard Adams.

Some members were hardly willing to forego the stately ceremonies at the parish churches, and the question was debated often at many places, usually with the decision to disown any who resorted to the parish church.

The legality of these proceedings is rather doubtful. Blackstone commented that till 1754 any contract of marriage made in words of the present tense was deemed valid marriage for many purposes. An appeal case to the House of Lords found the lords equally divided on the question whether the marriage was good enough to legitimate children or to ensure the descent of property, though they agreed that for other purposes it was a good and indissoluble marriage.

Early Statistics.

When tracing out the history of a church, the student often wishes to know where he can lay his hand on masses of statistical material. A few of the most obvious may be mentioned as a guide to the beginner. The returns for 1665, 1669, 1672, 1676, were mentioned in our last issue. The General Baptist information from 1656 till 1811 is being digested for our subscribers, and part is already in the press. The list of Particular Baptist Churches in 1689 was reprinted by Rippon in Vol. IV. of his Register, and again by Ivimey in his first volume at page 503. A manuscript list of the dissenting churches in 1715 is at

Dr. Williams' Library. Maitlands' History of London tabulates the dissenting meeting houses of 1739 on page 516. Mr. John Ryland in 1753 drew up a list of Baptist Churches, and the managers of the Particular Baptist Fund printed another in 1763, which Ivimey combined in his fourth volume at page 13. Josiah Thompson, a wealthy Baptist minister, drew up a list in 1773, to be seen at Dr. Williams' Library. Rippon printed three lists of churches and ministers, with notes, in 1790, 1794, 1798. In 1838 a Royal Commission inspected the records of births, marriages, burials, &c., kept by dissenters, whether at meeting houses or in the great Register at Dr. Williams' Library: the report schedules 2264 registers from Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, with an indication of their dates and contents; the originals are now at Somerset House. In 1882 a return was published of all places registered for religious worship in England and Wales, showing the denominations; this runs to 400 foolscap pages, but fails to give dates of registration. New Connexion information is very well available and well indexed; Associations often preserve valuable material in their minute books and deed boxes.

Baptists in Northants Livings, 1655.

George Fox mentions in his diary, "I passed into Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. At Wellingborough I had a great meeting, in which the Lord's everlasting power and truth was over all; and many in that country were turned to the Lord. . . . Great spoiling also there was of Friends' goods for tithes, by . . . some Baptist priests, that had got into the steeple-houses." It is hard to identify these Baptists. At Wellingborough itself the vicar, Thomas Andrews, was certainly Presbyterian. The only names in Calamy that call for re-examination are: Dell, of Caius College and Yelden, who was attracted by the doctrines of Fox; Donne, of Pertenhall, who is expressly said not to have taken the tithes; Martyn, of Weedon Beck. Apparently whatever was true in 1655, only one of these tithe-taking Baptists remained till 1662. But there is nothing to hinder the idea that Fox was slightly exaggerating.

Anthony Palmer a Baptist?

On page 33 it was left uncertain whether Palmer, of Bourton-on-the-Water, was a Baptist in 1662, or at any time. One fact has a bearing on the question: a letter of his in 1658 is extant, acceding to a request of the Congregational elders in and about London, that he would notify the pastors and messengers of the Gloucestershire Congregational Churches to come to a meeting at the Savoy. But though this seems at first sight to settle the matter, we find Vavasor Powell, an undoubted

Baptist, promising to let the Congregational Churches in Wales know; this may indeed be explained by his being the "Approver" for Wales, but it renders the argument as to Palmer less conclusive.

Gabriel Camelford a Congregationalist.

The evidence for this was omitted by an oversight from page 30. He took out a licence in 1672 for his house in Furness Fell, and another for his friend, William Rowlingson, both for Congregational worship.

The Church to which he ministered entitled itself at first "Broughton, furness fells and Cartmel," but organized at the house of William Rawlinson, of Tottlebank in Coulton-in-Furness. All the persons concerned then seem to have been Pædobaptists, but the covenant did not stipulate for or against baptism of infants.

Claridge, rector of Peopleton.

Exact copying of authorities caused a mistake on page 31 of our last number, as to the exact name of the place where Richard Claridge had held a living. It was and is spelt Peopleton, as Mr. Ford points out. Claridge and Fisher are better known among the Friends, to whom they ultimately passed over.

The Indulgence of 1672, and the Licences.

We announced last issue that Professor Lyon Turner is preparing to publish the original documents. Before the year was out, Mr. Frank Bate issued a book of 143 pages, describing the events of 1660-1672, supplemented by an index to all the licences, covering 69 closely printed pages, and some other appendixes. Special attention has been paid to Lancashire, and the whole book is in most scholarly style. Mr. Bate does not give dates for the licences, he does not index all the places, he does not know all the licences extant, one being in our Library at Bristol; but no student of the period can yet afford to dispense with the book, which may be had for 6s. net., from Constable & Co.

Congregational Historical Society.

Our members will often find useful gleanings in the publications of this society. In particular, the four important papers in the Gould manuscript, the "Jessey Records," the "Kiffin Manuscript," the "Knowles Debate," and the "Southwark Story," have been printed in full, the latest appearing in Vol. III., completed last year.

In our next issue these will be reprinted from the Gould MS., with notes and introduction; together with other documents used by Crosby in compiling his history.