



# Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society

(Incorporated, State of New Jersey, 1916)

Rev. Albert N. Rogers, President

Rev. C. Harmon Dickinson, Treasurer

Miss Evalois St. John, Librarian

Seventh Day Baptist Building, 510 Watchung Avenue, Plainfield, New Jersey  
Box 863 07060

February 7, 1969

William T. Voyce  
3123 Bowdoin Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50313

Dear Mr. Voyce:

I am enclosing photo-copies of pages 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, and 208 from the volume - Seventh Day Baptists in West Virginia (by Corliss F. Randolph). These pertain to the South Fork Church about which you inquire. You will note by these that the South Fork Church used both terms - Seventh Day Baptist (p. 199) and Seventh Day Baptist Church of Christ (p. 206).

The original church record book is not in our possession and I do not know as it even exists. Among some manuscripts of the late Corliss F. Randolph I find what he notes is a copy of the church records. I find this reference to the celebration of Communion:

"March 20th, 1853. Church met in conference and after reading a portion of God's word and prayer by Brother A.P. Zinn proceeded:-- The first that came under consideration was, is it required of God's people to partake of the Lord's Supper more than once in twelve months. From examination of the scripture we have decided according to the best of our understanding that on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month is the day in which the death and suffering of Christ should be commemorated. Therefore we decline communing according to our previous appointments, and commune once in twelve months."

I have "no inkling at all as to what happened during the 1860's when no records were kept."

I am not aware of any other church or churches of our faith with similar tendencies.

The reference you make to the Millyard Church in London had nothing to do with Communion. The church was "conditionally accepted" because as a church it did not agree with articles I, II, and V. of the doctrinal sentiments adopted by our General Conference in 1833. I send a photo-copy of these three articles.

I wish you had given me the title and author of a "certain church history booklet that says that right after the Adventists accepted the Sabbath doctrine they merged with Sabbathkeepers of your type."

I do not believe this is a true statement. Individual second advent followers (Millerites) may have joined some of our Seventh Day Baptist churches. It could be possible but I have never seen such a statement.

The followers of William Miller were many. After the disappointment of 1844 I have read that there was great confusion among them.

The minutes of the 1843 session of our General Conference record the following resolution that was passed at that session:

"Resolved, That in view of the necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit to incline men to the love of truth, it is our solemn duty to connect with all our efforts to enlighten them in reference to the Sabbath, earnest prayer to God for his blessing;

Therefore--

Resolved, That it be recommended to the churches of this denomination to observe the first day of November next (fourth day of the week) as a day of fasting and praying, humbly imploring Almighty God to arise and plead for his holy Sabbath."

In 1844, again at the session of our General Conference, this action was taken:

"Resolved, That inasmuch as the first day of November, 1843 was observed, in accordance with the recommendation of the Conference . . . . since which time a deeper and wider-spread interest upon the subject has sprung up than has ever before been known in our country;

Therefore--

Resolved, That the fourth day of the first week in January next (1845) be observed as a day of fasting, devout acknowledgement for blessings bestowed, and earnest prayer that God would continue to plead for his holy Sabbath, and also prepare us by his Holy Spirit for the labor thus devolved upon us. . . . ."

We do know that in the spring of 1844, Mrs. Rachel Preston, a Seventh Day Baptist and member of one of our churches in New York State, went to Washington, N.H., to visit her daughter - Mrs. Cyrus Farnsworth. The Farnsworth were active in the Adventist Church (Second Advent) there. Mrs. Preston, in turn, was an ardent believer in the claims of the Bible Sabbath. She brought with her a supply of Seventh Day Baptist literature. This she distributed. In time practically the whole Second Advent church "had taken their stand for the Sabbath of the Bible. . . Thus was brought into being the first Seventh-day Adventist Church." (Olsen)

Of course you must understand that the term "Seventh Day Adventist" was not in use then and was not used officially until much later.

The truth of the Bible Sabbath was accepted by many Second Advent people in other parts. Joseph Bates, a leader in the Seventh Day Adventist denomination later, also once a follower of William Miller, traveled extensively I am told and visited other scattered groups of Millerites and presented the truth of the Bible Sabbath.

The term - Seventh Day Adventist - was not the official name until in the 1860's I believe. Some wished for or voted for this name - "Church of God" - but it was turned down by the leading powers as not being a distinctive enough name. For that reason the name Seventh-day Adventists -- they were believers in the second advent and in the Bible sabbath. This caused much bitterness I have read. Some churches refused to change their name from Church of God (which they preferred) to Seventh-day Adventist, and such churches formed their own alliance or conference. There were such churches in Michigan.

If you are making a study of Sabbath-keeping churches from an historical point of view, it would be much wiser - it seems to me -- to use as your source material that material which is accepted by the individual denominations as authentic and as accurate as is possible at the time.

I repeat again - it was the Second Advent (Millerites) who accepted the Bible Sabbath after the disappointment of 1844. Some of them, as I understand it, took the name Church of God and refused to come into the conference or union with the Second Advent group who declared that the name of their denomination should be - Seventh-day Adventist General Conference. (1860's)

I repeat -- I have seen in no original book of our early churches, nor in any early correspondence - the term Church of God in connection with their official name. I have seen frequently -- Church of Christ.

I will add that in the photocopies of pages from the South Fork Church you may see the name Alexander Campbell used. This Alexander Campbell was a minister in our denomination and had no connection whatever with the Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) who was the founder of the Disciples of Christ - sometimes called "Campbellites."

Sincerely yours,

*Evalois St. John*  
(Miss) Evalois St. John  
Librarian