

The Sabbath Through the Ages

The Sabbath In America

All who are familiar with American history remember that in A.D. 1620 the Puritans (or Pilgrims) landed at Plymouth Rock, coming to the New World primarily to escape religious persecution which prevailed in Europe. The Puritans had zealously endeavored to purify the Church of England, and the result was that those who felt they could not remain with the established church went afterwards by some such names as Non-Conformists and Separatists. Were there any Sabbatarians on the Mayflower which brought the Pilgrims to America? This question has been considered and pondered for a long time. The evidence seems to be in favor of their presence in the Plymouth Colony.

In the month of December, 1934, Hugh Sprague, editor of the *St. Joseph Gazette* (Missouri), wrote an editorial on this very matter, as follows:

"Strange as it may seem, in the early history of America there was an attempt at suppression of the Christmas spirit. The stern Puritans at Plymouth, imbued with the rigorous fervor of the Old Testament abhorred the celebration of the orthodox holidays. Their worship was on the Sabbath (Saturday), rather than Sunday, and Christmas in particular they considered a pagan celebration. Later immigrants attempted to observe Christmas as a time of joy, but were suppressed. Governor Bradford, Elder Brewster, Miles Standish and other leaders were firm against the yuletide spirit as we know it today."

In a private conversation between Elder A. N. Dugger and Mr. Hugh Sprague, after this editorial appeared, the latter stated that the Pilgrims were his direct ancestors,

and that he very well knew their religious beliefs and practices. And in addition he stated that all his grandparents and great-grandparents knew that the Pilgrims of the Mayflower days were strict Sabbathkeepers on the seventh day of the week, instead of on Sunday.

Chief Rabbi Kohn of Budapest, Hungary, in a work entitled, *Sabbatarians in Transylvania*, says of the Puritans: "Several leaders and preachers of the Puritans have retransferred the rest day from Sunday to Saturday (1554)", p. 38. And of the Bohemians and the English he said: "In Bohemia Sabbatarians sprung up as early as 1520. Such Sabbatarians, or similar sects, we meet about 1545 among the Quakers in England" (1894 edition).

What does appear evident is that among the Puritans, both in England and in America, were conscientious Sabbatarians. The earliest Sabbathkeeping churches in America were local congregations, not formally incorporated or organized into conferences. The local groups went by various names, such as: Sabbatarians, Church of God, Church of Christ, Seventh-Day Baptists, and even Independents. The Seventh-Day Baptists were among the earliest ones to effect a General Conference organization (in 1802). The Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Church of God (Seventh Day) effected theirs in the 'sixties.

Arthur Elwell Main, D. D. in *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America* Vol. I, says that just when or how the Sabbath truth first came to America from England was not known, but that as early as 1646 it was the occasion of much earnest discussion in New England. This dates Sabbath agitation about eighteen years prior

to the London Seventh-day Baptists' sending of Stephen Mumford to America. That situation may also be ascertained from Felt's *Ecclesiastical History of New England*, Vol. 1, p. 593.

As far as historical records go, it appears that the first organization of Sabbathkeeping Christians in America was that of the church at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1671. Isaac Backus, the historian of the early New England Baptists, recorded the following:

"Stephen Mumford came over from London in 1664, and brought the opinion with him that the whole of the ten commandments, as they were delivered from Mount Sinai, were moral and immutable; and that it was the Antichristian power which thought to change times and laws, that changed the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. Several members of the first church in Newport embraced this sentiment, and yet continued with the church for some years, until two men and their wives who had so done, turned back to the keeping of the first day again" (*Church History of New England*, from 1783 to 1796, Chap. XI, Sect. 10).

Mumford attended the first-day Baptist church in Rhode Island, and for several years taught the Sabbath truth among them. As a result, a number of them embraced the Sabbath in 1665, and in 1666, but their intention was not to sever their connection with the Baptist Church. They soon learned, however, that even in the Church of Roger Williams, where liberty of conscience was supposed to prevail, it was not possible to have close communion on such drastic differences in beliefs as the Sabbath and Sunday brought about.

Accordingly, the seventh-day ob-

servers left the Baptist church on December 7, 1671, and sixteen days later, on the 23rd of December, they covenanted together in a church organization. Those entering the church covenant were William Hiscox, Stephen Mumford, Samuel Hubbard, Sister Mumford, Rodger Baster, Sister Tacy Hubbard, and Sister Rachel Langworthy. William Hiscox was chosen to be their pastor.

Other Sabbathkeeping centers that were established shortly after the Newport, Rhode Island group, were the group located near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, through the labors of Able Noble, who came from England about 1684; and the group located at Piscataway, New Jersey, which was organized in the early years of the eighteenth century. Edmund Dunham was chosen pastor of the latter-mentioned group, and was sent to Rhode Island to receive his ordination. From these centers, streams of Sabbatarian emigration flowed westward and southward until there were not less than twenty churches and settlements of Sabbathkeepers, in nine of ten colonies or states when the General Conferences of Seventh-day Baptists was organized in 1802. Their headquarters are at Plainfield, New Jersey.

There is also in the State of Pennsylvania a small body of German Seventh Day Baptists, who have a very interesting Sabbathkeeping heritage. It dates approximately from 1728 when Conrad Beissel, a native of Germany, became the real leader of an independent Sabbathkeeping group, established in the Ephrata Community. In those years it was largely a monastic movement, comprised of the "Brotherhood of Zion" and the "Spiritual Order of the Roses of Saron," one of the most celebrated establishments of its kind in the country. Because of their unusual manner of life, and because it was feared that through their influence the whole State of Pennsylvania would be affected with their Sabbatarian teachings, they were at times persecuted.

It is said that the hymnology in-

troduced there (responsive singing into the services), and which attracted the attention of the music critics of the Old World, developed rapidly and came into use among the Brethren and the Sabbatarians from then. They also established and successfully maintained a Sabbath school at Ephrata, their headquarters, forty years before Robert Raikes introduced the system of Sunday schools.

Because of the circumstances of the times, no doubt, they had some associations with William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington. Franklin did some of Beissel's printing. Peter Miller was a close friend of the Penn family. He was personally acquainted with George Washington, also. When the Continental Congress sought a trustworthy and loyal man to conduct its diplomatic correspondence with the governments of Europe, it was this recluse of the Ephrata Community who translated the Declaration of Independence into seven different languages. During the Revolutionary War the Cloister was converted into a military hospital for the sick and wounded, shortly after the Battle of Brandywine in 1777. A monument on the site marks the place of several hundred buried soldiers.

Between the years of 1835 and 1843, William Miller, a student of prophecy, preached and stirred many thousands into believing that the Lord would return in 1843. His conclusions were largely based on the prophecy of Daniel 8:13, 14, respecting the 2300 days, which he believed were symbolic and meant years instead of literal days. When the Lord did not return in that year he set another date for October 22, 1844, saying that he had made a mistake in his figures of about a year's time. When the second disappointment came, it caused great consternation. Miller honestly admitted that he had made a mistake, but there were other first-day Adventists who believed that he was right with his figures. So they made a special study of the Sanctuary question, comparing the earthly with the heavenly, and decided

that Jesus, at His ascension, did not sit down at the right hand of God in the Most Holy Place, but entered the first or Holy Apartment until October 22, 1844, when He entered into the Most Holy, there to cleanse the sanctuary, blot out sins, make the final atonement, and also to start the Investigative Judgment.

The Advent people at Washington, New Hampshire, at about that time, had the Sabbath first introduced to their attention by a faithful Seventh-day Baptist Sister, Mrs. Rachel Preston. Nearly the entire church in that place, consisting of about forty members, became observers of the seventh-day Sabbath. Elder Joseph Bates, who had acted a prominent part in the time-setting Advent Movement, also had the Sabbath brought to his attention. In 1845 he took hold of the Sabbath truth and began to set it before his fellowmen. Elder and Mrs. James White accepted this light a little later, and became the most prominent leaders of what later became known as the Seventh Day Adventists. "An association was incorporated in the city of Battle Creek, Michigan, May 3, 1861, under the name of the Seventh-day Adventist Association" (J. N. Andrews in *History of the Sabbath*). According to the Seventh Day Adventist Yearbook, the "denomination was organized May 21, 1863. . . ." They are by far the most numerous and widely known Sabbathkeepers when it comes to membership.

It has been previously noted that Sabbathkeepers in America can be traced back to early colonial days. Local congregations developed in the New England States, and in several Eastern, as well as Southern, and later even in the Midwestern States. As far as is known (as indicated earlier), they went by various names, and were definitely independent congregations, although some of them associated with each other long before the Seventh Day Baptists were formally organized in 1802.

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cerning the strange absence of her loved ones, now busy in the marts of trade, ecumenism, unity-councils and places of worldly amusements.

"Experts, including Dr. Works, Dr. Reform and Dr. Joiner, disagreed as to the cause of her fatal illness, administering large doses of organizations, socials, contests and drives, but to no avail. A post-mortem showed that a deficiency of spiritual food, coupled with a lack of faith, heartfelt religion and general support were contributing causes. Only a few were present at her death, sobbing over memories of her past beauty and power."

—*The Crusader, Christ-Nagar Mission, India*

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Subsequent history reveals that not every individual Sabbatarian assembly became a part of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination.

When the Whites (leaders of the Seventh Day Adventist denomination) made their tours over the Eastern and Midwestern States, in the early 1860's for the purpose of effecting cooperation and general organization, they found many independent congregations of Sabbathkeepers, and it is evident that some of those had developed before the 1844 disappointment. A recent Yearbook states that when the Seventh Day Adventist denomination was organized in 1863, it was with a constituency of 125 churches. Articles appearing in the *Review and Herald* at that time, reveal that one of the disappointments of the Whites was the refusal of a number of local groups to cooperate and join their movement. Some refused because they could not accept Mrs. White's "visions." Others made the name for the church a "bone of contention," declaring that it should be called "The Church of God." Still others believed in no general conference organization at all.

At the same time, there were some of the groups who did not unite with the Seventh Day Adventists, nor with the Seventh Day Baptists, but for logical reasons as far as they were concerned, did actually desire mutual fellowship and cooperation in order to propagate gospel truths as they saw them. Elder Gilbert Cranmer, who had received light on the Sabbath truth as far back as 1843, was instrumental in effecting an organization in Michigan in 1860, of which he was the first president. In 1863 the Michigan Brethren began publishing a periodical, and the contents of those papers show that at that time groups with similar beliefs existed in the New England States, in New York, in Pennsylvania, in Ohio, in Indiana, in Illinois, in Iowa, in Michigan, in Wisconsin, and even in Canada.

Many conferences and camp meetings were held, especially so in Michigan, to which delegates were sent, and eventually a General Conference was organized. Some of those people, including Elder Cranmer, had, for a while, associated themselves with the William Miller movement, and some even with the Seventh Day Adventists, before they finally banded together and eventually took the name of "The Church of God" (Seventh Day). There were others, however, also independent, who did not come into this organization either.

Although an organization of the churches in Michigan was effected in 1860, as well as in several other states soon afterward, it was not until 1884 that a General Conference of the Church of God was actually formed in Michigan. In 1889 the body was incorporated in Gentry County, Missouri, and the headquarters were established in Stanberry. At the present time (1965) the General Conference headquarters of the Church of God (Seventh Day) are located in Denver, Colorado. The Publishing House remains at Stanberry, Missouri. Fundamentalist doctrine and theology prevail here. The

church believes in the infallibility of the Scriptures.

There are several other Sabbath-keeping groups, who consider themselves the "Church of God," besides a number of Seventh Day Pentecostal assemblies, Assemblies of Yahvah, and several others who carry on more or less independently. Theological differences in most of the cases, and church policies in others, are among the main factors which so far have been the cause of these variant societies, even as it has also been among Sundaykeeping and "No-day" church associations. One element that is common among all the Sabbatarians is the keeping of the "Commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Concluding Remarks

We have seen from our investigation of both the Scriptures and ecclesiastical (and even profane) history that the controversy concerning the day of worship is, indeed, an old one. The records have revealed that both the seventh day and the first day of the week (besides other days of the week) have been kept by various peoples in various fashions and forms, dating almost back to the beginning of the human race. Those who worshiped the Creator honored the seventh day of the week which He Himself instituted and called it the Sabbath. Those who later worshiped creation (the sun for instance), worshiped the sun on the first day of the week, hence it was called Sunday or the "day of the sun." Those who worshiped the moon honored the second day of the week, hence "moon's day."

When the Son of Man came and built His church upon the solid Rock, the Hebrew people were still worshiping on the seventh day of the week. Many of the Pagans were still worshiping on the first day of the week, and when they became Christian converts they brought over many of their pagan ideas and practices, among which was Sundaykeeping. This

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became very evident about the middle of the second century. From then until now there has been a continual controversy over this matter.

What we have further learned is that side by side there have always been Sunday keepers as well as Sabbathkeepers, and the outlook is that this state of affairs will continue until the second coming of the Messiah. It is very likely that, as at other times in the past, laws regarding Sundaykeeping will be legislated, and the confusion be augmented. On the other hand, there is a definite moving of the Holy Spirit at the present time, leading many people to investigate this subject, and many are taking the matter seriously enough as to make a change to biblical Sabbathkeeping.

The Sabbath is an inseparable part of the Creator's moral law. To ignore or transgress any part of His law is sin (James 2:8-10). Is it possible that many of the preachers are to blame for the present terrible disregard for all laws? It has been preached so long that we need no laws, that people finally have believed the ministers. Should we wonder at all why there is such a lack of obedience to the laws of the land, as well as a lack of obedience to the laws of the most High? The great Law-giver is definitely displeased with all the violence, swearing, lying, killing, adultery, riots, bloodshed, stealing, disrespect for authority, juvenile delinquency, and Sabbath-breaking that is so very prevalent today. Declared His prophet:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6). See also 1-10.

The importance of the Sabbath as a memorial of creation cannot be overemphasized. The worship of Yahvah the Creator is based largely upon the fact that He is

the Creator of all other created beings. The Sabbath, in a sense, lies at the very foundation of divine worship, for the fourth commandment is the only one of the ten which points out the Creator and distinguishes Him from other gods.

The future is outlined, at least in part, in the prophetic Scriptures. From them we learn that our Saviour will return to this earth, and establish the Kingdom of Glory. During the reign of a thousand years of peace on earth, when the whole earth will be filled with His glory (Rev. 20:4; Psa. 72:7-11, 18, 19), the Sabbath will be observed, not only as a millennial rest, but weekly. Notice:

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 66:22, 23).

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

Prayer Requests

Please remember the continuing needs of the foreign work and the faithful workers, each in their respective fields.

The Youth Tour Team is currently on tour. Pray that their earnest efforts shall bear much fruit.

Earnest and thoughtful prayer is asked in behalf of our coming General Conference and Camp Meeting.

Milton Haeger (Ore.)—healing from mononucleosis.

Brother DeRoy McGill (Ore.)—healing from glaucoma.

Sister Hazel Howard (Calif.)—healing from heart condition.

Sister Durden (Calif.)—healing from diabetes.

A bill presented by Senator Jacob K. Javits and others, would, if passed, allow federal employees to have time off for special, non-religious holidays, but would require them to make up the time later by special arrangements with their agencies.

Sabbathkeepers who are, or may be employed in civil service, or any other interested parties should write their senators and representatives, asking them to give this bill favorable consideration.

Please Note:

The General Conference and Camp Meeting of the Church of God (7th Day) will convene at the Assemblies of God Campgrounds, 5700 South Broadway, Denver, Colorado, August 13 through 21. The first meeting will be Friday evening August 13.

These are momentous times. The things of God should take precedence over all else. Pray for this gathering and, if at all possible, plan to be present.

The first session of the 1965 Ministerial Council is called for 9:00 a.m., Thursday, August 12, at the Church of God, located at North 44th and Clayton Sts., Denver, Colorado. All ministers should be present, if possible. Credentialed ministers are especially reminded that a quorum is necessary for this session as well as throughout the Council.