

Correcting Mistakes— Part 1

by Oscar Burdick

The writing of the English section of *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America*¹ has been plagued with errors. Once something is published it is easy to assume everything is true! When volumes one and two were published, a review said, "...much critical work [needs] to be done on the English sections."² The English sections are so bad that anyone using them is urged to first get the current list of corrections from the SDB Historical Society (available on our website under "Resources").

Even non-SDB writers are not immune from mistakes/assumptions. The mistakes are not confined to dates. The following is a sampling of errors, but one is urged to get the SDB Historical Society's larger list.³

- *About early Sabbath proponent Theophilus Brabourne's relationship to Seventh Day Baptists:* Theophilus Brabourne's many books for the Seventh Day were influential, but he always remained a priest in the Church of England.
- *About James Ockford's book, The Doctrine of the Fourth Commandment:* Now that a copy of Ockford's first book has been found, the publication date is 1650.
- *About the Mumfords coming to America as SDB missionaries from London:* In 1661 John Cowell and a few others of Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, Baptist Church became Seventh Day Sabbath observers. Among the 1663 members were Stephen Mumford and Sister Mumford who arrived in Rhode Island early in 1665. That the Mumfords came as missionaries from the Bell Lane SDB church in London has been disproved by a May 26, 1668 letter from Bell Lane to Rhode Island.⁴ The Mumfords' Sabbath observing clearly led five Newport, RI First Baptist Church members to the Seventh Day. Tension became so great that these five separated from that church in 1671. Soon with the Mumfords they formed the first SDB church in America with seven members. (It is clear now that the Mumfords did not join First Baptist.)
- John James, who was hanged and quartered November 27 (not 26), 1661, was not a religious martyr but a political one. William Saller (not John James) appears to have been the pastor of the Saller-Soursbey-Mill Yard SDB Church in London from some time at least by 1657⁵ until his death; his will was proved in 1681. The death date of 1713 is that of William Saller, Jr., his nephew. James' church (1661) with its Fifth Monarchy flavor is like the Bell Lane Church which was Fifth Monarchy; James' church and Bell Lane appear not to be in the Mill Yard sequence.
- Nathan Bailey (the famous lexicographer) and Mill Yard Church parted ways about 1712; he did not die a member of that congregation. His major work was published after his departure from Mill Yard.
- *About the previously supposed existence of an SDB group in Norweston, Oxfordshire:* Norweston, Oxfordshire is a misunderstanding of Norwalson [Norwalsom]; it should be Ingham, Norfolk, near Northwalsam, Norfolk. With the discovery that Buckinghamshire was a separate Seventh Day church, this means that there were nine churches outside of London to be aided by the Joseph Davis trust.
- The supposed existence of a book titled *Luther Proved Lyar* by English SDBs seems to come from misreading handwriting referring to a Thomas Tillam book title, *The Lasher Proved Lyar*. An anonymous book about Luther by English SDBs with a similar title is not known to exist. SR

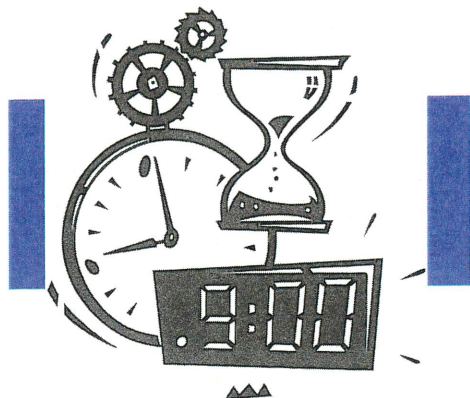
¹ "The Sabbath in the British Isles," in *Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America* (Plainfield, NJ: Printed for the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference by the American Sabbath Tract Society, 1910-72), 1:19-115.

² *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, 2 (1910-11), 126.

³ Available by mail or on the Society's Website: www.sdbhistory.org/resources/additional-resources

⁴ "...although unknown to you by face..." *Protestant Sentinel* 2/44 (February 15, 1832, 173).

⁵ As proved by sections of Thomas Tillam's *The Seventh Day...* (London, 1657) 50-51.



Correcting Mistakes — Part 2

by Oscar Burdick

Note from Nick: This is the second of three articles begun last month correcting significant errors published about English SDB history found in Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, Volume 1 and 2, which was published by the General Conference in 1910.

We remind you that a document containing corrections (listed by page numbers) is available on the Historical Society's website: www.sdbhistory.org. These corrections spring from Oscar Burdick's extensive work on this subject over many years as he has researched to write an authoritative work on English SDBs.

• ***About the assertion that John Traske was a Seventh Day Baptist in 1617, and started the Mill Yard SDB church (an assertion which has been frequently repeated in sources beyond SDBs in Europe and America):***

John Traske kept the Seventh Day Sabbath only briefly; his only publication about it was his recantation (published in 1620). He was not a Baptist. There is no Traske organic or personal connection with Seventh Day Baptists.

The incorrect connection of Traske to "Mill Yard" came through two men with the surname Coppinger, one of whom was supposed to have been a follower of Traske, and then another who was subsequently a member at "Mill Yard" in the 1650s. Subsequent investigation has proven that these were actually two men with different first names, neither of whom was ever associated with Traske or his followers.

Edmund Coppinger's name appears very near Traske's in a book by Ephraim Pagitt (*Heresiography*, published in 1662), which led some to falsely conclude there was a connection between the two, though Edmund died in 1591 in prison. Matthew Coppinger was a Sabbathkeeper who participated in a public debate about the Sabbath along with two prominent SDBs in 1659.

With this information—that Traske was never a Baptist, and that the supposed connection between Traske and "Mill Yard" through Coppinger does not exist—the only conclusion is that the 1617 date for the founding of the Mill Yard, London, congregation

is also not correct. It is likely that the proper date of the "Mill Yard" congregation would be 1657 or before.

• ***About the end of the Traske movement:***

According to a 26 December 1634 letter, "only two or three women do now uphold" Traske's teachings; two of them being Mrs. Traske and her nurse...¹ As of 1635 of his four "messengers" or leaders, "three are now dead, the fourth hath renounced these things."² Mrs. Traske, a Sabbath-keeper, died in prison about 1643 or 1644.

It was reported in 1662, "So there is the end of her Sect, in less than half a generation, 'tis true, it begins of late to be revived again; but yet faintly; the progress it makes is not observed to be much...."³ This later comment seems to reflect the Seventh Day Baptist movement in the 1650s. *SR*



Oscar Burdick is an ordained Seventh Day Baptist minister and a member of the Bay Area, California, Seventh Day Baptist Church. He is retired as Librarian for Collection Development of the Graduate Theological Union Library in Berkeley and 2007 recipient of the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society's Gold Headed Cane award.

¹ Pagitt, Ephraim. *Heresiography*, p168

² Pagitt, p189-90

³ Pagitt, p197



Correcting Mistakes — Part 3

by Oscar Burdick

Note from Nick: This is the last of three articles correcting significant errors published about English SDB history found in [Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, Volume 1](#) and [2](#), which was published by the General Conference in 1910.

We remind you that a document containing corrections (listed by page numbers) is available on the Historical Society's website: www.sdbhistory.org. These corrections spring from Oscar Burdick's extensive work on this subject over many years as he has worked to research and write an authoritative work on English SDBs.

- **About Edward Stennet[t], and several false assertions about him:** Now that the death date and age are known for Edward Stennet[t], November 21, 1705, age 77, he must have been born in 1627 or 1628. He could not then be a priest opponent of Theophilus Brabourne (1632 book). Stennet was a Baptist by 1656, and Seventh Day by 1658 or before, and lived at Abingdon so could not have been a sequestered Church of England priest at Wallingford in 1662.
- **About the later generations of the Stennett family:** Joseph Stennett, a son of Joseph Stennett, Jr. was probably not an SDB. Joseph the son of Dr. Samuel Stennett was not a Sabbathkeeper. That there was a "Samuel Stennet I" seems to be an assumption concerning a later man, a Dr. Samuel Stennett cousin; the description of an earlier Samuel I appears to be assumptions partly based on a different Stennett.
- Westmancote, Worcestershire was simply the address of the Natton pastor, Rev. John Miller, not the location of a distinct congregation there in 1829.
- **About the existence of an SDB congregation in Swansea, Wales, under the leadership of Ephraim Wheaton:** Swansea, Wales is a misunderstanding of Swansea in Massachusetts; the congregation was in America, not Wales. This congregation does not appear to have been SDB, though some members may have held seventh-day views for a period of time.
- There were no SDB churches in Burton-on-Trent, Derbyshire in the 1600s. This is a misunderstanding of a reference from a newspaper article in 1901. The misunderstood quote in the article about Burton-on-Trent, Derbyshire in the 1600s actually refers to "some [Seventh-day Baptists] around Bourton [Gloucestershire]."

- The early Baptist records of Hexham (which include Thomas Tillam) have long since been published; it was not Seventh Day. This appears not to have been assumed until an 1879 book.¹
- **About the suggestion that Dr. Peter Chamberlen was a SDB pastor:** It has been printed he was probably pastor in 1653 in the Mill Yard Church (London) sequence. But a BAPTIST record book (1652-1654) in the Bodleian Library (Oxford), appears to demonstrate he was the *de facto* leader of that Baptist church about that time. C.H. Greene, who did most of the English research for [Seventh Day Baptists in Europe and America, Volume 1](#), later wrote that this 1652-1654 church "could by no means be a Sabbatarian church."²
- The following should not be considered SDB, though they are listed as such in *SDBEA, Volume 1*: Edward Brerewood, John Fryth (Frith), Alexander Gordon, Vavasor Powell, Thomas Rogers, Robert Shalder (Spalder, Spaulder), Philip Tanny (Tandy), John Tombes, Ephraim Wheaton, and William Whiston. **SR**



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¹ Robert Barclay, *The Inner Life...* (1879), p.252

² Charles H. Greene, "Material relating to the origin... of the Mill Yard Seventh Day Baptist Church," pp. [4-5], a manuscript in the SDBHS library. That is a Greene letter to Corliss F. Randolph.