

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

The Baptist Licenses of 1672.

IN the exercise of the "dispensing power," whereby the Stuarts gave leave to specified persons to be exempt from the operation of certain laws, Charles II. notified on 15 March 1671-2 that he would grant licenses, (1) for a particular place to be used for worship other than according to the customs of the Established Church, (2) for a person to teach a congregation in a place named, (3) for a person to teach in any licensed place. For a year many applications were made, and the great majority were granted. The Quakers declined to apply, holding that they would acknowledge the justice of the Conventicle Act by accepting dispensations from it. Many Baptists shared this scruple, and continued to worship without license; but many others applied, and the licenses issued were all registered in a special book now in the Record Office in Chancery Lane. This has been repeatedly studied, and local extracts have often been published. It will be, however, of service to have the whole of the Baptist entries summarised and annotated. Comparison with the reports made to the bishops in 1669 and 1676 is of special value.

The spelling of all names of places has here been conformed to that in Bartholomew's 1904 Gazetteer: the spelling of the names of men has usually been reproduced, unless the preference of the man himself is known.

In Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and Westmoreland, not a single Baptist sought a license. This is not because none existed, for the churches at Muggleswick and Newcastle are well known; but apparently they disdained to ask as a favour what they claimed and exercised as a right. Whatever the motive, such cases remind us at the outset that a list of licenses will never disclose all the churches and men that were really active.

In Lancashire only a single license was taken out, on 5 July, for the house of John Leeds in Manchester. This was of course for the church founded in 1649 by John Wigan, and upheld by Edward Gathorne. No preacher there sought a license. In Bury and

Liverpool, where the bishop of Chester knew of Baptists, no sign was made by them. When we examine what was being done in Furness, in connection with the church of Tottlebank and Broughton, we find that William Rowlingson made two applications, one for his house at Cartmell, the other for his house on Furness Fell, while Gabriel Camelford also obtained a license for his house on Furness Fell; but all three were declared to be for Congregationalists. These facts remind us that the question of baptism was ignored in this scantily populated district, so that all evangelical dissenters might unite in one community. Not till 1719 did this church unite in fellowship with Baptist churches, nor did it record anything about baptisms till Sedgfield came in 1725. Meanwhile it is remarkable that no preacher in 1672 obtained a license for these places.

On the border of Cheshire stood Warrington, where a Baptist cause had existed for a score of years, now owning a plot of ground across the river at Hill Cliff. But no one connected with this place sought a license at all. There was also a cause at Great Warford, but here also the people trusted in obscurity rather than in the king's pleasure, though the bishop was aware of their existence in both vicinities. In this county the only licenses taken out, on 25 July, were for Samuel Bowden to preach in the house of William Browne at Stockport.

Nor were the Baptists of Yorkshire much more complaisant. Thomas Walker in April applied for leave to preach in his own house at Horton, near Bradford. This is an interesting coincidence with the subsequent growth in this district connected with the Horton College, but there is not trace of any real connection. In July Theophilus Browning obtained leave to minister to a congregation in the house of William Wombwell at York. The wording of these licenses deserves attention, for whereas many men acquiesced in the nickname "Anabaptist," these at York were declared to be for "Baptists." The variations in this respect are frequent, but do not disclose any obvious principle. No application was made on behalf of the churches at Pontefract and Stokesley, as to which the archbishop was well informed.

In Lincolnshire a very different state of things obtained. The Baptists here had made repeated applications to Charles for toleration, and now that it was granted, they decided to comply with the terms, and shelter under the king's ægis. The licenses were mostly obtained in three batches, on 10 August, 28 October, and 9 December. Although in the Isle of Axholme, possibly since 1615 and the days of John Smith, there was a flourishing Baptist church meeting at Crowle, Butterwick and Epworth, with

more than a hundred members at this time, no application was made thence. A license was taken out by Thomas Williamson of Scotter, to preach anywhere, and this may refer to Axholme, though it directs attention to the neighbouring church in Kirton. Further east, Ralph James of North Willingham was licensed for his own house, while the widow Brumpton registered her house at Cherry Willingham. The widow Perk at Thurlby provided a home for the church known best as Alford. Down the centre of the county was a line of licensed houses: Valentine James at Hackthorne, John Anderson at Brattleby, Roger Fawnes and Nicholas Archer at Lincoln qualified themselves and their residences, while Elizabeth Lyly and John Anderton provided two more meeting places in the city. John Taylor registered his house at Hykeham, Edward Browne of Bassingham, Robert Wood of Carlton le Moorland obtained licenses for themselves and their homes, while at Stragglethorpe the house of William Rollington was available, at Moorland that of John Ward, at Brant Broughton that of John Barker. Further south three more men put themselves and their homes under the protection of Charles: John Skerrett at Manthorpe, John Allen at Easton, Henry Hitchcock at Ingoldsby. At Stamford Abel Laine obtained leave to preach in the house of William Collington; at Sutton St. Edmunds near Wisbech John Diggott ministered in his own home; Richard Wale in his home at Pinchbeck provided for the church of Spalding; John Thorp at Frampton similarly accommodated the church of Swineshead. Boston was housed by John Ashwell in his own home, and Moses Wells threw open his doors at Stickford. So also did John Haw at "Wierell," not identified.

Eighteen licensed preachers, with twenty-five licensed meeting places, show that Baptists mustered much more strongly in this county than further north. This is natural when we remember that the General Baptists arose by the efforts of John Smith, famous about 1600 in Lincoln and Gainsborough. Though he died abroad, we know that many of his followers returned, and that they soon founded a church in Lincoln city. The diocese was so huge that the returns for this county were overlooked when the transcript was made for Lambeth, and we cannot tell what the bishop knew here. Apparently all the Baptists in this county were of the General type. It is with some surprise that we miss the name of Thomas Grantham here, but for him we must look across the border.

For Leicestershire the licenses were drawn with some carelessness, and in a few cases people are entered as Presbyterian and Congregational, when we know that they were not. The Baptist

licenses were chiefly issued on 8 August and 9 December. In the adjacent county of Rutland none were sought.

John Kitchin obtained a license, but not for his own house at Lutterworth, being content with leave to teach at Shilton in Warwickshire, where John Perkins lived. The bishop knew him as an ironmonger, with another congregation at Leyre. William Aynsworth of West Langton qualified himself and his home; we know him as ministering for some time past to a congregation at Saddington, whence he had been reported to the bishop of Lincoln as a labourer. At Lubenham, hard by, the house of Henry Hartshorne was licensed; he also had been reported to the bishop as a yeoman and husbandman, serving about four Anabaptists of the meaner sort. At Mowsley, a short walk to the west, William Burdett gathered a congregation in his own house. Then not far away, at Rolleston, Thomas Grantham took out a license. We are probably safe in interpreting "Raiston" and "Ralleston" thus; yet it is news to find this man in this district; he had previously lived near Alford in Lincolnshire, on the South Marsh, and he is met afterwards in Lynn, Norwich and Yarmouth, while there is no other sign of his activity here. The entry is, however, vague as to where his ministry is to be exercised. So also with Richard Hiffe of Fleckney. At Kilby, Richard Farmer licensed his own house; he too was known to the bishop as gathering some forty Anabaptists of a meane sort at Blaby, and as a yeoman preaching at Arnesby. In Leicester itself the home of Richard Coleman was made available, but no preacher was specified; this is the more singular as the bishop knew four leaders there. At Earl Shilton, where fifty Anabaptists of the meaner sort had been reported, the house of Edward Choney was thrown open for William Biggs to preach in. At Barwell, close by, John Jones was licensed for the house of John Onebye. Another license was issued to John Ownsby to conduct worship in his own house for a "Presbyterian" gathering, but this is manifestly a blunder, as the family is known otherwise, here and at Long Lawford in Warwickshire, as Baptist. William Peasant of Bosworth also took out a license, without the sphere of his work being mentioned. At Ratby, Richard Boosh preached in his own house, and this probably accounts for the church at Markfield. Mountsorrel had been the seat of a Baptist church for some time, but the only license issued here was for Richard Adams, to Congregationalists in his own house. Here is another evident mistake, for he is well known as coming to London and ministering there to two Baptist churches. When, therefore, we find that Henry Coleman licensed his house at Tur Langton, and that

Richard Farmer was licensed to preach in the house of Henry Fox at Wigston, although these are specified as Congregational, the evidence of the names makes us suspect further errors. And there may also be doubt about the houses of George Borfert at Fleckney, William Hartshorne at Harborough, John Cave at Theddingworth and Elizabeth Brotherhood at Thornton; for two places and two people have Baptist associations. And again we know of numerous churches which refrained from any application.

Nottinghamshire yielded only a group of six hamlets near Newark, in the Trent Valley, associated really with the Lincolnshire churches. The nearest is Muskham, where the house of Robert Colvert was licensed; then Norwell, where Richard Easam preached at home; Carlton and Sutton, where William Woolhouse took out two licenses to teach in his own houses; while across the river the house of William Russell was available at Scarle and the house of William Hart at Collingham. The archbishop knew Woolhouse as preaching regularly at the latter place to about sixty people. The influence of Helwys at Basford and of Colonel Hutchinson at Nottingham left no trace at this time. Elias Boyer, known to the bishop and to several churches, made no application. Thomas Case of Kersall, and farmer John James of Hintham, known to the archbishop as ministering to Independents or Anabaptists, chose to register as Congregationalists.

Derbyshire was even less touched by Baptist views; not a single preacher was licensed, and only two places were registered for preaching; the home of Francis Stephenson at Dronfield, and the home of George Booth at Glossop. Yet the bishop of Lichfield and Coventry knew of quite a strong group round Bakewell and Great Longstone and Moniasbrough to whom Ainsworth came from Leicestershire; they probably trusted in their inaccessibility, and lived to form the church of Ashford.

Stafford had only three scattered places licensed. At Burton-on-Trent, where a large meeting had been denounced to the bishop, John Blundell took out a general permission, while the house of John Tomlinson was ready for him. At the county town John Wade took charge of a congregation in his own home. And near the borders of Cheshire, the town of Audley seems to have been a Baptist stronghold, though it is otherwise unknown in our annals; Thomas Beech arranged to preach in the house of John Cotrocke, and Thomas Sillito in the house of Samuel Sillito.

In the county of Salop, not a single Baptist took any notice of the king's declaration.

Hereford, however, had been well evangelised from across the Welsh border, and a few applications came thence. In the city itself the home of Edward Prae was put under the king's protection: this entry is probably an error for Edward Price, known there as Baptist a few years later; especially when we see that Price did take out a license as a preacher in his own house, when he is described as Congregational. In Leominster, where the work of Tombes had been followed up by Vavasor Powell and Price, Francis Pritchard and John Powell successively registered their houses. At Moccas, David Jones licensed his home. A curious feature is that no preacher qualified for any of these places, perhaps Welsh itinerants were relied upon. There were, however, two English Baptists; at Wharton Richard Whitall had led the way in protecting his house; while Samuel Tracy of Clifford Priory registered himself as preacher and his mansion as a meeting house, on the same day that the Welsh applications went in. When we note the doubtful entry as to Price's denomination, we look again at another "Congregational" entry, which is of Richard Perkins for his house at Weston-under-Penyard. Now in 1653 there was a Baptist church here, which joined with the churches at Leominster and Hereford in a letter to Hexham, denouncing infant sprinkling; there seems some probability that Perkins was really sheltering this church. The bishop of Hereford's returns are not available for comparison.

The numerous Worcestershire Baptists were not allured by the promises of Charles, except that John Langford registered his house at Kyrewood; as this is on the Hereford border, and the license was sought on the same day as the Herefordshire licenses, we may probably associate them.

Warwick is really linked with Leicester, not only geographically but doctrinally; as early as 1626 the influence of John Smith had founded a General Baptist church at Coventry, and in 1651 one or two neighbouring hamlets sent delegates to a Midland convention. This group was now represented at Brandon, where John Woollaston registered for the house of Thomas Matthews; and at Long Lawford, where John Wilcox registered for the house of the widow Onely. This last entry is to be compared with the entries for Barwell in Leicester, and with the news the bishop of Lichfield three years before that Wilcox and John Only were active here. Midway between these places lies Shilton, where John Kitchin of Lutterworth took leave to preach in John Perkins' house. Further along the great Roman road lies Nuneaton, where William Sadler licensed for his own house, known to the bishop as a mercer's warehouse: and only a few miles

beyond is Atherstone, where the bishop knew he had been accustomed to preach in the house of William Powers; the good results were shown in Francis Clayton taking out a license to teach there, while William Keeling took out another for himself in his own home. Close by is the hamlet of Whittington, where Manassas King qualified for the house of Thomas Chapman. Perhaps King is the Coventry man reported with Elias Boyer as busy at Castle Donington. All these licenses were taken out on 25 July, together with one for John Cammidge to teach in the house of Jeremiah Saunders at Burton: now Burton Hastings is close to Atherstone and Nuneaton; but Burton Dassett is several miles to the south, close to Avon Dassett where the bishop knew of a strong Baptist meeting, and to Horley in Oxfordshire, another centre; which is the licensed Burton is not quite clear.

In Northamptonshire there were many Baptists in touch with those of Warwick and Leicester; but they all refrained from accepting the king's offers, except that at Sibbertoft, near Lubenham and Mowsley, Thomas Carne qualified as a preacher, though the only house licensed there was that of Samuel Sturgess, for Presbyterian worship. Far to the east Baptists had long found a refuge, and under the shadow of the cathedral Isaac Spence registered his house, while Christopher Bell obtained leave to preach. Four miles to the north-east lies the hamlet of Eye, where Edward Payton took out a General licence, while William Holt registered his house; a month later John Sarjant also obtained a personal license. These places lie in the fen country, bordering on Lincoln, Cambridge and Huntingdon, so that this same group of people used to preach at Whittlesey in Cambridge, where the house of John Gates, known to the bishop of Ely as the centre, was now licensed. Also at Parson Drove the house of Robert Hilton afforded another centre nearer Wisbech.

Cambridge shows a group of churches, which sent in their applications by John Denne on 16 May, and received them through his father, Henry Denne, the famous evangelist and officer. The house of Joshua Johnson provided a home for the important group at Wisbech, where the bishop had been erroneously told that no conventicle was held, as the Anabaptists met in neighbouring towns. Thomas Meeres welcomed his friends at March, the widow Sherwood at Ely, Thomas Gotobed at Stretham, Thomas Waller at Swaffham Prior, John Denne junior at Wilbraham magna, William Davis at Trumpington, which the bishop knew as a great centre whither hundreds of dissenters resorted, the widow Pate at Harston, and Benjamin Metcalfe at Melbourn, where the bishop had long had an eye on his farm. Up the Great Ouse

was another group, Robert Cole taking leave to preach in the house of William Cranford at Over, John Denne himself at his own house in Saint Ives, Edmund Mayle at his own house in Fen Stanton, Thomas Chapman at the home of Robert Stokely in Warboys, John Lacy at Godmanchester in the house of the widow Weeden, and Thomas Gates in his home at Ellington. Henry Denne had been a celebrated itinerant, and saw the advantage of taking out general licenses, permitting the holders to preach in any licensed place, so that an unusual number of such documents was obtained for this district. William Blackburne of Ely would thus be able to minister at Elm and Wisbech, where he had already been known to the bishop's spy, and Thomas Taylor of Wisbech was made free of the district around, including that Sutton St. Edmund already noted in Lincolnshire. Joining hands with them was Edmond Smyth of March, though it is with some surprise we see there was no place made available at Chatteris, where a church was flourishing. Abraham Coe of Stretham was splendidly placed to go either on the Great Ouse or the Cam. Thomas Waller of Swaffham Prior could serve the flourishing southern group, with the help of Edward Hancock from Wilbraham, also prominent enough to figure on the bishop's list, Giles Taylor from Trumpington, William Homerston of Harston, and farmer Metcalfe of Melbourn.

Practically all the Baptists met hitherto were firm believers that the Gospel was meant for absolutely all men, and that there was no limitation to the "elect." But when we pass into East Anglia a different type comes to view, connected with the Calvinists, and not thoroughly differentiated from the Pædobaptist Separatists, with decidedly exclusive views as to election and salvation. The little handful of churches lay in the district north and south of Norwich and Yarmouth, and are known to be connected with the Separatist movement in the early years of the century, as may be seen in the pages of George Gould and John Browne. Within the city of Norwich, William Tuke of St. Clement's took out a general license for himself, a hint at a group of churches; Henry Austin, known to the bishop as a dyer, Thomas Flatman, Daniel Bradford, and John Waddilow of St. Peter's did the same. The only place within the city where they asked leave to assemble was at Tuke's own home, though the bishop knew they met at Bradford's home and with a chemist called John Willson; so that we naturally look afield to see the scenes of their labours. To the north lay North Walsham where Henry Symonds now had leave to preach at the house of John Haggis, who in 1677 was to become pastor of Ingham. This

village had had a Baptist church since 1637, and in 1657 enjoyed the services of John Woolstone; he now took out a license to preach in the house of Samuel Durrant, himself destined to take pastoral care on the death of Aggas. Between the two was East Ruston, where the bishop was aware of Woods, Woolston and Tracy as leaders; Robert Wood now took out his license to preach in the house of Elizabeth Becker. On the coast at Yarmouth Thomas Tracy and John Barber took out licenses, rather vague in form, but apparently available anywhere, while Timothy Pye put his house under the king's protection for worship. It may be remarked that Tracy had been prominent in Separatist circles for more than twenty years, but had been expelled from the Congregational church in 1657 for urging his Baptist views. Further south lay Mundham, where John Wilson took leave to preach in his own house; was he the chemist from Norwich? Not far on was Hedenham, where Thomas Mallett or Mariott obtained a like permission for himself and his home; and just across the Waveney in Suffolk was Bungay, where John Allen and Thomas Walcott obtained a remarkable joint license for their houses to be used for Congregational and Anabaptist worship, while Henry Lacy with more exclusive views licensed his home for Baptists. It may be observed that most of these licenses were among the last issued, as if there had been great hesitation about trusting the king's ability to protect them against the law.

In Essex there was even greater reluctance, and most of the numerous churches ignored the offer of Charles. Only at Matching did William Collins take leave to preach in the house of widow Anne Boreham. A few years later the work centred at Potter Street and Harlow, which latter place was represented by Collins in 1689 at the Assembly of the Particular Baptists.

Hertfordshire yielded only two groups of people who heeded the invitation. At Cheshunt, not far from Matching, Joseph Maisters took out a general license; John Spencer also obtained leave to preach here in the house of Anthony Spinage. Perhaps this was the Captain Spencer who had defied the law three years earlier, and openly preached in Hertford, where four hundred Anabaptists had fitted up three places of worship. But these places were now not protected by license. Far away on the borders of Bedfordshire, Thomas Silly and Thomas Vaux and Robert Collinson took out a joint license to preach, while Thomas Carter's house was made available for the Baptists there. Vaux had been reported to the bishop of Lincoln as leader at Edworth, just across the border, but a prisoner in Herts jail three years before.

In Bedfordshire not one house was licensed for Baptist worship, and only a single Baptist preacher obtained recognition, Stephen Kilbey of Shefford. This brings us face to face with the singular case of John Bunyan. It is well known that he joined a church in which baptism was not made a pre-requisite to fellowship, and it is equally well known that while he himself was baptised, he strongly opposed making baptism a test of communion. It was exactly at this time, 1672 and 1673, that he was engaged in a vigorous paper warfare on the point, against Kiffin and other strict communionists. Hence when he applied for a number of licenses, he styled them all "Congregational." We recognise that in his lips, this word did not imply the adoption of infant baptism, but neutrality on the question. Hence we scan the list, to see if from other sources we can identify any as really connected with Baptists. Two places cannot be identified at all, Ford End in Bedfordshire, where Nathanael Alcock was licensed to preach in the house of John Tingey; Upthorpe in Huntingdonshire, where George Fowler was licensed for the house of John Cooke; the latter may represent Upton.

Twenty-four places besides these were comprised in the circle of Bunyan's interest, mostly within a radius of twelve miles from Bedford. At Toft and Gamblingay in Cambridgeshire the movements did not develop into ordinary Baptist churches, unless Gamlingay Old Meeting be a secession in 1710. At Kimbolton in Huntingdon there still is a mixed-fellowship church, which, however, claims to originate only in 1692. Keysoe in Bedfordshire where John Donne, ejected from Pertenhall, took a license, is to-day a Baptist church claiming 1652 as its origin, though the bishop of Lincoln classed the worshippers as Independent. Wollaston in Northampton has no ancient Baptist church, and the little cause at Brafield under the wing of Hackleton is probably not connected with Bunyan's day. But in Buckinghamshire we find two places of interest: John Gibbs took out a license to preach in his own house and in the barn of William Smith at Newport Pagnel. Now Gibbs was the ejected minister, and was well known to the bishop and the neighbourhood as an "Anabaptist." Olney was the other place patronised by Bunyan, and here too the bishop knew of a conventicle of two hundred Anabaptists served by Gibbs. While then this man so far shared Bunyan's views that when applying for a license at Astwood, he styled himself Congregational, and when asking for his own house to be licensed he called himself Presbyterian, common repute ranked him with Baptists. And by 1694 there was a church in Olney which was avowedly Baptist. Lower down the Great Ouse

lay Turvey, another of Bunyan's places, which gave rise to no Baptist church. Then Pavenham, where the bishop knew of forty Baptists of the meanest sort. Further on was Stevington where he knew of fifty more, and opposite was Oakley another Baptist centre. At Stagsden John Fenne was licensed, and the bishop knew him as a Baptist hatter. Kempston and Goldington, hamlets close to Bedford, the bishop was uncertain about, whether Baptists were there or not; but the fact that John Sewster was licensed for the former, and that the bishop knew him for a Baptist, clears up the uncertainty there. Cardington he knew as having fifty of the meaner sort, helped from Bedford and Gamlingay and Toft; and at Blunham, where John Wright was licensed, the bishop tells us he was a collar-maker, ministering to fifty Baptists of the middle sort. Cranfield and Ridgmont were classed as Independent by the bishop's spy, though the former has a Baptist church dating from 1660; Haynes he knew little about, but as Samuel Fenne was the licensee, we put it down as largely Baptist. Maulden was ministered to by Nehemiah Coxe, who is well known as son of a prominent Baptist minister in London, revising the Confession of 1644, and as himself taking charge of a prominent Baptist church there. At Edworth the bishop knew only of a score of Baptists of the meaner sort, but the case of Ashwell in Herts remains obscure. Of the whole group therefore, more than half were esteemed Baptist by the people around. Many are Baptist still, though the influence of Bunyan has availed to perpetuate a fellowship between Baptist and Congregationalists in the County Union.

We now reach the Thames Valley. In the London district there were about ten Baptist meetings which put themselves under the king's protection. William Potter of Bell Lane, Stepney, had his house licensed for Stephen Tory to preach in. In East Smithfield, Edward Whiston had dared to appropriate a house wholly for preaching; this was now used by Samuel Loveday and Randal Roper. All these were prominent General Baptists, known even to the Government. Loveday was known to the bishop as a coat-seller, and his place was in Whitsun Yard, Aldgate Parish. At Bishopsgate, near St. Botolph's, Daniel Dick took leave to preach at the house of David Jones, and Thomas Harrison in his own home. The latter was a tallow-chandler, prominent in Baptist ranks for fifteen years, a member at Devonshire Square lately. In Petty France, Edward Harrison obtained a license to preach in his own house; he was an ex-clergyman, and his meeting developed into the chief Particular Baptist church, still represented in Stoke Newington as "Devonshire Square." Not far away,

in Little Moorfields, Richard Horton's house was used by John Gosnold and Thomas Plant: Gosnold had been master of the Charterhouse, and the bishop tells us that the building had been a music house, and stood on Gun Alley. Near Aldersgate, George Harris had a house, now declared as the meeting place for Jonathan Jennings, another General Baptist leader. On Cornhill, Francis Smith opened his book-shop and preached openly. There were of course many other Baptist causes, but when the Coleman Street meeting was refused a license for John Martin's house in White's Alley, there was a broad hint that some need not apply. Across the river, only James Jones of Southwark was registered, and at present it is impossible to link him certainly with any Baptists before or after.

Going up river, we take leave of General Baptists for a long time, and find only Particular Baptists in Berks, Bucks and Oxon. William Ruthey of Maidenhead and Edward Gillett of Cookham, known to the bishop of Salisbury as a collar-maker, took leave to preach in the house of James (or Thomas) Jeffrey in Cookham. Thomas Taylor conducted worship in his home at Wycombe, while John Harper of Watlington took out a general license. Reading was a Baptist centre, where Jeremiah Jues [? Ives] held a general license, Daniel Roberts took leave to preach in his own house, and Mary Kenton threw her house open. Wallingford had been made a stronghold by the Stennetts, though the bishop of Salisbury was under the illusion that meetings had ceased; so it is not surprising that Edward now claimed liberty in the castle, while John Kem obtained license to preach here in the house of Richard Cox. At Appleton, Silvester Marchant took out a general license, and as the house of Peter Stevens was put down for Presbyterian worship, we look on to Abingdon, where the bishop knew a strong band headed by Captain Consolation Fox, William Stevenson, a mercer, and Simon Peck, a maltster. Here John Coombes and John Man had leave to preach in the house of Katherine Peck. In Oxford city, Lawrence King and Richard Titmarsh registered to preach in the house of the latter, while at Woolvercot the house of James Beckford was also licensed. Witney saw the widow Collier open her doors, into which Thomas Packford of Finstock would often come with his general license, good in his own village at the home of Thomas Crasse. At Longworth, where they had been bold enough to appropriate a hop-garden for burials, John Man, who was already licensed for Abingdon, found another opening at the house of Jane Tuckwell. Most of these places are grouped in their applications for licenses, but at Wantage we find the influence

of Kiffin exerted to get leave for Robert Keat to preach in the house of Aaron Jones, and for Bartholomew Tull to preach at home. It is curious that Kiffin refrained from obtaining a license for himself and his church; perhaps at London he was able to forecast that the king's protection would have to be withdrawn soon.

In Gloucestershire among the Cotswolds, John Oates and Giles Watkins took out licenses at Cirencester, and as widow Jane Palteeres did not declare her denomination, and as no other declared itself, we may suppose that she sheltered the Baptist congregation. Kings Stanley was a Baptist centre, but its activities are only reflected here in that Thomas Evans took leave to preach at Nympsfield, in the house of widow Pegler. At Horton James Nobbs qualified to preach at home, and also from Westport in Wilts he sued out a general license, while Ann Smith provided a meeting place, available also for William Pick of Malmesbury with another general license. Back in Gloucestershire Samuel Webb of Chipping Sodbury held another of these roving commissions, while John Kibble opened his house. At Bristol no Baptist sign appears in the entry book, but at the Baptist College may be seen the original license granted to Thomas Hardcastle, described indeed as of Bitton, and a Presbyterian, but well known to be pastor of Broadmead. Also the original license granted to Andrew Gifford, who himself has corrected the description "Presbyterian" into "Baptist."

There is another group of churches in Wilts and East Somerset, clustering around the Avon. Passing up from Bitton, we reach Bradford where John Broomejohn held a license for his house, while Henry Sharpwell took leave to preach at large. Just to the north is Stowford, where widow Blake opened her house, and John Alchurch had permission to teach there. A mile or two further lies Whitley, where William Ruty used the home of Abraham Little. Back by the river is Wyke, where William Ads took leave to preach in the home of William Lewse. Trowbridge was the scene of Paul Frewin's labours, especially in the house of Edward Grant, whose clothing establishment had been a trouble to the bishop of Salisbury. At North Bradley, within an easy hour southwards, Thomas Collier took leave to preach at the house of widow Bradley, as also in Southwick at Robert Runwell's house; though the license in this latter case is for Congregational worship, Collier is well known as the absolute head of all the Baptist work in the West country. A little east was Earl Stoke, where William Aldridge was preacher, and Thomas George provided the place; while Devizes was the up-

land limit, where John and William Fox with Thomas Okey ministered at the house of widow Fidsall. On this home again the bishop had his eye, and was told that Okey the wool-breaker was of Fifth-Monarchy tendencies. Up another tributary of the Avon, in Somerset, was another great centre at Frome, round which the bishop of Bath and Wells was annoyed at the activity of Richard Allen. Curiously, the only license he obtained was marked "Presbyterian" and was for a barn belonging to Seamour's Court at Beckington; but there is a possibility that this is another mistake.

In Frome itself, John Davidson obtained leave to use the house of John Wayland, and Richard Gadge to use the house of George Hopper. Out at Whatley, the house of Richard Egerton was opened, and William Rundell qualified as preacher. Further up stream was Witham Friary, where William Clarke was alike host and teacher. Not far hence were two more villages on the Wiltshire downs; Deverill, where William Adlames protected his house, and John Uzzall took out a general license; Kilmington, where Robert Cox had leave to preach in the house of Francis Hartgill. The latter case gives interesting exercise to conjectural emendation, for the entry is of Kibminton, assigned to Somerset, whose border is indeed only a mile away; since the bishop of Salisbury, in whose diocese Wilts lay, was acquainted with Robert Cox as a husbandman at Maiden Bradley, a few miles away, there is no doubt that the license is wrong again, and we must hope that the magistrates would not insist on technical errors when it was pleaded. The remaining Wiltshire licenses are for places south of the watershed, and may be described in connection with Hampshire.

In Somerset, near Wilts and Dorset, lies Wincanton, where Thomas Coale entertained the Baptists and taught them. Fifteen miles to the north-west is Glastonbury, where William Angear opened his house in St. Bennet's, and taught. Thence an easy walk of five miles takes to Wells, where William Higgins was leader, in Anthony Taunton's house at St. Cuthbert's. Hard by was Croscombe, where in the home of Stephen Ames the Baptists met to hear Robert Addrige; or at Horrington in the house of Abel Bewsies, Ambrose Brooke was preacher. Lower down the Axe, John Collier's home at Cheddar was available for Stephen Ham, and at Axbridge Edward Woolcott took licenses for himself and his home. Coasting along to the Parrett, the next place of refuge was Bridgewater, where first Nathanael Byfield qualified to preach in John Oldmixon's house, then Toby Wells took leave for the home of Charles Miles; Tobias Wells was on the bishop's

black book. Not far off was Broomfield, where John Speare opened his house, and Robert Speare took a Baptist license, though his application was put in as a Presbyterian. At the head of the stream lay North Perrott, where the home of John Partridge was opened, Christopher Jones and Thomas Miller preaching. Miller belonged to Hushe in Dorset, where he sued out a second license without place being specified; so that he could help William Ireland and Jeremiah Dry at the house of Robert Carlisse in South Perrott. Down the Parrett again, and up the Tone, it is surprising at first that Taunton Baptists claimed no protection, when we remember the importance of the town and the cause. Only at Pitminster did Edward Gatchell take licenses for himself and his house, and at Ashbrittle Francis Bryant, John Carnall and Isaac Farman took personal licenses, though no one protected his house. Did they cross the hills to Minehead on the coast, to help Stephen Lanelark preach in his home?

Perhaps Devon was more attractive to them, for at Bampton John Ball and Thomas Bryant had obtained licenses for their houses, while Richard Hooper had leave to preach at home. Eight miles down the Exe was Tiverton, where the ancient church now sheltered in the house of Martin Dunsford, and profited by the ministrations of William Facey. Down at Exeter Adam Pearse opened his house, but no leader is known; the bishop, however, had been greatly annoyed seven years earlier by John Symonds, described to him as an ignorant Anabaptist who practised physic and kept conventicles at Farringdon, two or three miles further on; perhaps as he was described then as unlicensed, he kept up that reputation and his ministry. Up the Dart was a second group of Devonshire Baptists; Robert Stead at Dartmouth took out a general license, as befitted a leader; while possibly the house of John Forly at Totnes was available, and the house of James Searle at Darlington, though the licenses (mis-spelt) read as Presbyterian.

The delectable Duchy of Cornwall showed not one licensed Baptist preacher; the redoubtable Thomas Tregoss, an evicted clergyman, who in 1665 was known at Budock as a great conventicle keeper, lately imprisoned, made no application. Yet two places were put under the king's protection, the long loft in Park Hellen, belonging to Thomas Smales of Penryn, and the house of William Hocker of St. Breock, Wadebridge. The former at least testifies to the permanence of the work of the erst-while Vicar of Milor and Mabe, still represented in the Falmouth church.

Back towards the eastern border of Devon lies Honiton, where the homes of Samuel Searle and Peter Cole were licensed. Cross-

ing into Dorset we reach Chideock, where the house of Robert Scott was open, and Peter Jule was licensed. At Dorchester there were John Dibnam and Francis Gie. The Poole Baptists made no application, but up the Stour there was Wimborne, where John King preached at home; Corfe where John Maynard was licensed; Tarrant Keynston where Thomas Ball protected his house, while John Persons of Blandford who had leave to preach at home was probably the minister; and Faringdon where again only a house was licensed, belonging to John Holland. It may be mentioned that in this county had worked the eccentric Francis Bampfield, who now defied all classification, but took out a general licence as a nonconforming minister; in after days he found his bearings as a Sabbatarian Baptist, preaching in London and imprisoned in Newgate.

The next river of any note is another Avon. Going up this we pass Downton, where the ancient church ignored the declaration of indulgence, and come to Salisbury. Here under the eyes of the bishop, James Wise qualified to preach in the house of Thomas Batt. At Broad Chalk, on an affluent, the episcopal register had noted that a husbandman called Henry Pen ministered to ten Anabaptists; he now protected himself and his house. In the parish of South Newton, John Alchurch took out licence to preach at the residence of the widow Blake in Stowford. Up the main stream was Amesbury, where the bishop knew of Thomas Long as a pillar; he now registered himself and his home. A little beyond was Bulford, in which John Lydiard's house was made available. Rushall yet higher up, a General Baptist church, made no application.

Up the other stream lay Porton, where Colonel John Rede had his mansion, whence he evangelized the country around. So obnoxious was he to the authorities, that he met with the rare experience of a repulse when he applied; but eventually he obtained a general license for himself, with leave to assemble meetings at his manor in Idmiston. Across the Hampshire border was Broughton, where Henry Abbott's house was licensed, and Over Wallop where John Kent provided both room and preaching. Further up was St. Mary Bourne where dwelt Richard Bunny, another pillar of the cause; he licensed his own home, and obtained leave to preach at John Dozzell's house in Whitchurch. Down near the coast at Bishop's Waltham, Edward Goodyear's registered his house; while in Southampton, where the bishop of Winchester had been annoyed at Richard King, Thomas Frod. and William Harding for entertaining conventicles, a fact notorious as to the first in our annals, we are amused to find

Harden and King labelled Presbyterian in the Entry Book, and only John Alchurch licensed as Baptist. The Isle of Wight seems to have been most popular with the denomination. At West Cowes, Michael Aldridge and Edward Knight and James Wise all qualified, the meeting being at Knight's house, while the others ranged afield, Wise being known at Salisbury. Newport was another home, which remained unregistered. At Carisbrooke, under the shadow of the castle, Mark Wight took license for his house. Portsmouth Baptists paid no attention to the king's offers.

The bishop of Winchester looked after Surrey, where he knew of three causes, none of which took advantage of the declaration. Five places, however, did shelter themselves. John Wheeler registered for the house of Edward Billingham at Elstead. John Bernard declared himself at Gadbrook near Reigate, preaching in the house of Richard Humphrey. At Effingham, not far away, William Wilkinson harboured the congregation of Thomas Strickland. On the river at Chertsey, Arthur Squibb had one meeting at home, and William Burnett ministered to another in William Longhurst's house. Francis Smith the Cornhill bookseller, qualified a second time to preach at West Croydon in what had been a malthouse.

The Sussex Baptists, numerous as they are, were very wary of the license system. At the city of Chichester itself, they certainly deemed it wise to claim protection, so George Upton of the Manhood, and William Fletcher of St. Pancras parish, registered for the house of the latter outside East Gate. At the other end of the county, Richard Bacon qualified to preach at the house of Mark Wright in Hastings, while at Mountfield, just north of Battle, Thomas Martin ministered to a congregation in the house of Richard Spencer.

Thus we reach Kent, a stronghold of Baptists, sprung from two or three different centres, but all at one in being again of the General type, not represented on the lists for the south elsewhere. In this county alone did they outnumber all other dissenters. In the Isle of Oxney, the house of Thomas Barnes was opened for Henry Peene. At Hawkhurst, William Worsley ministered at the dwelling of Henry Paine. Rolvenden was apparently refused a license, and the reason doubtless would be its connection with Cranbrook, where it was reported that hundreds of Baptists had drilled to rise in rebellion against the king. The archbishop knew they were very numerous here, and that their leader though imprisoned, had been set free by the jailor. Yet at Cranbrook Richard Gunn obtained a license, and though

refused for one place he at first desired, the home of Theophilus Beath was registered and that of Alexander Vines also. As there were quite four hundred Baptists here, according to the archbishop's roll, it is not surprising that Nathanael Row also had leave to preach at John Miller's house. Tenterden was another dependency, and here James Blackmore was host and preacher. Biddenden saw George Hammond, the great evangelist, licensed for James Harding's house. Another mainstay of the cause was the Kingsnoth family; Thomas licensed himself and his home at Frittenden; Richard and his home at Staplehurst qualified; Henry preached at Smarden in Walter Gilham's house; while Daniel went a little distance to Thomas Hills at Charing. He had to pass Headcorn, where Robert Knight preached at John Hopper's house. Slightly to the west lay Marden, where Francis Cornwell, known to the archbishop as a husbandman, preached in his own house. In this same district the houses of Elizabeth Hopden and Samuel Turke at Goudhurst were licensed, but the denomination was not declared. Near Charing were three other places: at Lenham in the house of John Henicer, Daniel Kingston preached; at Wye Thomas Glover taught at John Searle's, Norton Munden at George Wadlow's, John Jarman at Michael Hadlow's. Mersham saw Thomas Jarman preaching at Thomas Heritages'. Some of these families so intermarried that Searles Jarman afterwards was well known. On the coast there was an important set of Baptist sailors and officers; they were ministered to by Richard Hobbs, at Dover in Samuel Taverner's house, at Deal in Joan Colemar's. Feversham had been an early Separatist centre; close by, at Boughton Monchelsea, where the widow Sanders had sheltered a church lately, Henry Snoath now took license to preach at Thomas Hooker's. Chatham with its dockyard was another Baptist stronghold, where Thomas Arkenstall had begun defiant worship even in 1660 in a house used continuously ever since; perhaps it owed its immunity to its ownership by the Morecock family, in great power at the yard. Now it was licensed, and Benjamin Bowyer was declared as preacher. Close to Gravesend, at Milton, Thomas Terry took out a general license, and William Sexby registered his house. Further west, inland at St. Mary Cray, the house of William Bowers was registered for Edward Delamaine: this is the cause known also as Sevenoaks, Bradburn, Bessels Green. At some place disguised as "Norgame," Matthew Sanders qualified himself and his home.

Wales to-day teems with Baptists; it is remarkable that they showed so scantily at this time. In Monmouth at Aber-

gavenny, John Edwards and Christopher Price, a shoemaker and an apothecary, as the bishop of Llandaff knew them, qualified themselves and their homes, while William Prichard who had been pastor there, registered himself and his home in Llantilio Pertholey. Across the hills at Bedwellty, Thomas Jones was host and preacher to another company. These all applied in a group.

In Brecon there was but a single place, at Llanafanfawr, where Thomas Evans held a license. Further inland in Radnor, William Greene at the same time applied for himself and his home at Llandrindod. Beyond this to the north, Baptists were silent.

Glamorgan even then was the centre. At Bridgend, Thomas Joseph provided home and preaching. Four miles south is St. Brides Major, and this is apparently the place where widow Williams registered her house. Five miles south-west is Newton, and from its subsequent association with Nottage we can identify this as the place where William Andrews opened his house and Howell Thomas preached.

The application for the house of Llewelin Morgan at "Llangewyth," made on the same day, probably points to Llangynwyd, also near Bridgend. Swansea had been a Baptist centre since the days of John Miles; it is natural that William Dykes opened his home, and Lewis Thomas registered to preach.

Eight miles north-west, across the Loughor, lies Llangennech in Carmarthenshire. This is apparently the place meant by "Llangennyth" or "Llangennijth," where Robert Morgan qualified to preach in the house of Joshuah Franch, on the same day. Professor Lyon Turner, whose exact reproduction of the Entry Book here is most welcome, indeed supposes that Llangennith in the Gower peninsula is meant. But thrice is the county stated alongside other entries for Glamorgan; and Robert Morgan had been at work in Carmarthen for twenty years, as Joshua Thomas showed in 1795. It is true that in 1690 he was elder of Swansea, jointly with Lewis Thomas, and even went as far East as Gelligaer or Craig-yr-allt on the Monmouth border, but this is explained by the statement that Carmarthen was now dissolved. We therefore prefer to correct the spelling here as is so often needful, and to adhere to the geography. And this is confirmed when we see that four licenses were issued in a group, for Anabaptist meetings in the house of William Dykes at Swansea, John Morgan at Llannon in Carmarthen, Joshuah Franklin and Edward Williams at this place in question; Llangennech lies between Swansea and Llannon, while Llangennith is in quite another direction.

On the whole question of Baptists in Wales, the important remark of Joshua Thomas is to be borne in mind, that they were in mixed communion with Independents, not only in the two churches of Montgomery and Denbigh, but in most, if not all, of our congregations in Wales. The criticism of the license returns from this stand-point really needs a Welsh expert, who will find the material in Professor Turner's three articles during 1905 for the Congregational Historical Society. Our elder sister, the Welsh Baptist Historical Society, might see to this matter.

The value of these licenses was from the first problematical. The moment Parliament met, in February, 1672-3, the constitutionality of the Declaration was impeached; and after some attempts to uphold it, and the failure of a bill to legalise the system, Charles cancelled the Declaration on 7 March. From that date the licenses were worthless, so that informers began again to trouble the meetings, and now had ample means of knowing some places and leaders. In the winter of 1674-5 the king sought the support of the bishops, and in February issued a Declaration to enforce the Conventicle Act, announcing that the licenses "were long since recalled," which probably only means, regarded as invalid. Archbishop Sheldon called for returns through the bishops as to the number of Popish Recusants and other Dissenters, as a preliminary to a systematic enforcement of the law. A copy of these, in the Salt Library at Stafford, is of much value when thoroughly criticised. Yet the breathing space of 1672-3 gave such respite and encouragement that it is no rare thing to find existing church-books beginning about 1676.

The general principle of licensing was followed seventeen years later by the Toleration Act. It provided that any person, who chose to make certain oaths and declarations should be registered and might take out a certificate, which certificate should be a sufficient defence to any charge under the conventicle and other specified Acts. It also provided that the places must be registered in like fashion, and certificates taken out. Although this legislation has been much modified, Reginald Winslow, a barrister, expressly summarising the law in 1886, warns us that unless the place is registered, there is no protection of worship against brawlers, nor is there any right to be exempted from rating; nor can the minister claim any exemption from juries, corporate office and militia. And on the other hand, when the place is registered, if a tradesman chooses to register himself as its minister, he can claim such exemptions. It does not appear that any one has a right

to object to any one else registering, and unscrupulous persons have before now registered themselves as ministers of a congregation which repudiated them, thereby acquiring remarkable rights. The principle of certificates has even been extended, for marriages can only be performed in places registered in due form, first for religious worship by a proprietor or trustee, and second for marriage by twenty house-holders habitually worshipping there during one year.

The following license is reproduced from page cxiii of the Rev. George Gould's "Open Communion and the Baptists of of Norwich," the transcript having been made by Dr. Gotch from the original at Bristol College. Italics mark words and letters that are written, the body of the license being in print. Gifford himself crossed out the word Presbyterian, and added Baptist.

Charles R.

[Seal] CHARLES, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c. To all Mayors, Bayliffs, Constables, and other Our Officers and Ministers, Civil and Military, whom it may concern, Greeting. In pursuance of Our Declaration of the 15th of March, 167 $\frac{1}{2}$, We do hereby permit and license *Andrew Gifford of our Citty of Bristoll* of the Perswasion commonly called *Presbyterian Baptist* to be a Teacher, and to teach in any place licensed and allowed by Us, according to Our Said Declaration. Given at Our Court at Whitehall, the 5th day of *September*, in the 24th year of Our Reign, 1672.

By His Majesties Command,

ARLINGTON.

Gifford A Teacher.

If we fill in the corresponding printed form for a place, with details from the Entry Book, chosen because they have been wrongly quoted as Presbyterian, and because they represent the oldest Baptist Church in Lancashire and Cheshire, we get after the introductory greeting:—

In pursuance of Our Declaration of Ye 15 of March 167 $\frac{1}{2}$ Wee have allowed and wee doe hereby allow of *the howse of John Leeds, at Manchester* to be a Place for ye Use

of such as doe not conforme to ye Church of England, who are of ye perswation Commonly called *Anabaptist* to meet and assemble in, in order to their Publick Worship and Devotion, and all and singular Our Officers and Ministers, Ecctical Civil and Military, whom it may concerne, are to take due notice hereof, and they and every one of them are hereby strictly charged and required to hinder any Tumult or Disturbance, and to Protect them in their said meetings and Assemblyes. Given at Our Court at Whitehall, the 25th day of *July*, in the 24th year of Our Reign, 1672.