

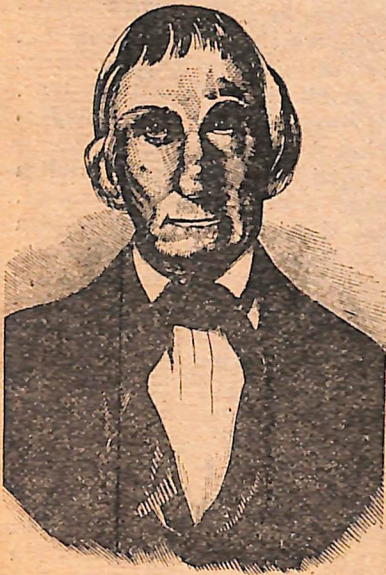
# The Biography Of The Great ✕ Elder John Miller

EDWARD L. BAILEY

It will be unnecessary to present more than a brief outline of the active life and abundant labors of the venerable subject of this sketch. To do more would necessarily embrace a history of the Baptist cause in northeastern Pennsylvania, so intimately interwoven were his life and labors with its origin and progress. He was one of the first to erect the Baptist standard in this region, and among the foremost to rally to its support and defense. In the Abington Baptist Association he was the moving spirit and acknowl-

the evil of wicked examples and erroneous doctrines, and to instill into his tender mind correct principles of morality and religion. Her maternal care and counsels were not without their salutary influence; the seeds of correct principles, thus early sown, germinated and sprung up in subsequent years, and yielded an abundant harvest.

He continued to live with his parents at Voluntown, Connecticut, until he was fourteen years of age, when they moved some four miles distant to Plainfield, in the same state. While at this place, in the summer of 1793, in his 18th year he was brought under special religious influence, and awakened to a sense of his lost condition. An extensive revival was enjoyed in the vicinity, and a large number of persons hopefully converted. John Miller was among the number. Awakened under the pointed  
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ELDER JOHN MILLER

edged leader for nearly half a century. It was organized in his house, and received the impress of his mind; in subsequent years it was fostered by his anxious care and guided by his prudent counsels.

John Miller, born February 3, 1775, in Voluntown, now Sterling, Windham County, Connecticut, was one of six children—five sons and a daughter. His parents were not wealthy, but were worthy citizens. His father a Universalist, and his mother a Baptist. His paternal grandfather was a Presbyterian clergyman and preached the Gospel for nearly half a century.

Little is known to the writer of his early life; of his opportunities or associations; of his favorite pursuits of future promise. On the farm with his father, he was early inured to honorable toil, and trained to agricultural pursuits. Thus early habits of useful employment, were formed and fostered, and his physical faculties and powers developed and disciplined, laying a broad basis and firm foundation for a hardy constitution and honorable character. The education he received was comparatively limited; a knowledge of the branches usually taught in common schools was its utmost extent. His moral and religious culture was not forgotten or neglected. He enjoyed the watchful care and judicious counsels of a pious and prayerful mother, when they were most necessary to shield him from

## "WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD TODAY?"



Mrs. Sarah Laymen Hallstrand, associate in ministry at First Baptist Church of Syracuse, and parish associate at Plymouth Congregational Church was ordained to the ministry in a special service Sunday, Feb. 29.

presence felt strongly at those schools.

At Harvard Divinity School and Boston University's School of Theology, the number of women stands at a record 40 per cent and is rising, according to a Boston Globe report.

Women comprise nearly half the student body at Andover Newton Theological School, and about 30 per cent of the population at the Episcopal Divinity School, according to the report.

OAKLAND, Calif. (EP)—In an Oakland Court House jail here, former Information Minister and co-founder of the militant Black Panther movement, Eldridge Cleaver, received Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour.

Chaplain Glenn L. Morrison of Follow Up Ministries headquartered in Haywood, Calif., said Cleaver asked for a personal interview after being encouraged by a cell mate (and former enemy) during nine years at San Quentin to read the Bible daily.

News of Cleaver's conversion came from Pastor Shadrach Meacham Lockeridge who told some 100 Baptist ministers in Jackson, Miss., of the turnaround for the former radical. Mr. Lockeridge is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in San Diego. A deacon in that church, a former Panther himself, learned of Cleaver's conversion first during a visit.

Joe T. Odle, editor of The Baptist Record in Jackson, Miss., relayed the information to EP News Service following the pastors' meeting where the local press did not pick up the story.

Cleaver's sister, Helen, a committed Christian believer, regularly attends Bible Study Fellowship sessions in Pasadena, Calif. His wife, Kathleen, and their two children, returned with Cleaver on November 18, 1975 following seven years abroad in Cuba, Algeria and France. He had jumped a \$50,000 bail in 1968 following a Panther-police shootout in Oakland.

The friend in whom Cleaver confided said the prisoner did not publicly announce his conversion for fear it would appear to a judge as an attempt to secure special treatment in his upcoming trial.

WASHINGTON, D. C. (EP) — The U. S. Supreme Court has re-

jected an appeal by a Tennessee congregation to allow its members to handle dangerous snakes and to drink poison as part of its religious ritual.

In a unanimous decision, the U. S. Supreme Court let stand the Tennessee Supreme Court ruling that "the state has the right to protect a person from himself and demand that he protect his own life."

The case began in 1973 after two members of the Holiness Church of God in Jesus Name, Carson Springs, Tenn., drank strychnine and died. Tennessee courts subsequently barred the practice of drinking poison and handling dangerous snakes.

WASHINGTON, D. C. (EP) — The birth rate in the U. S. dropped in 1975 for the fifth consecutive year, according to a report by the National Center for Health Statistics.

There were an estimated 3,149,000 live births in 1975, a drop of 1 per cent from the 3,159,958 births in 1974.

ATLANTA (EP) — Total receipts of the National Council of Churches for 1975 were \$32.2 million — an increase of \$8 million over the 1974 figure.

Marion deVelder, stated clerk of the Reformed Church in America and a member of the NCC's Finance and Administration Committee, told the organization's Governing Board here that 1975 was "one of the best years we've had financially."

He attributed this largely to what he called the "magnificent response of churches to world hunger," and reported that most of the funds went to Church World Service for programs in the areas of the world hunger and resettlement of Vietnamese refugees.

Dr. deVelder pointed out that in 1971 and 1972, contributions were under \$14 million. By 1973, that figure rose to \$14.3 million, and to \$22.6 million in 1974. Other income from sales, royalties, services, and investments was included in the total receipts figures for each year.



### Elder John Miller

(Continued from page one)

appeals of the Gospel and powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, he was led to see himself a ruined sinner, and to cast himself on the divine mercy. Peace was given and pardon granted. He was soon after baptized, on a profession of faith, by Eld. Nathaniel Cole, and became one of the constituent members of a Baptist church, organized in that place.

He lived at Plainfield until he was nineteen years of age, when his parents emigrated with their children to the State of New York, and settled at North Norwich, in the Chenango Valley. He also became one of the constituent members of a Baptist church, organized in that place. At the age of twenty-two, he was united in marriage with Miss Polly Hall, of his native place, February 18, 1797.

Soon after, with his youthful companion and limited means, he moved with his parents to Hardwick, Otsego County, New York. He united by letter with the Baptist church in that place. After remaining here a few years, he emigrated with his family to Pennsylvania, and arrived at Tunkhannock, now Abington, Luzerne County, on the fifth anniversary of his marriage, February 18th, 1802, and in the twenty-eighth year of his age, in the vigor and strength of his early manhood. Here he settled, and has since lived and labored until his decease, February 19, 1857, aged 82 years and 16 days.

His wife was the fifth female in the settlement. This region was

then an almost unbroken forest — the haunt of the wild beast and the hunting ground of the savage. A few families had preceded him in the settlement, and others subsequently followed. At various points in the surrounding wilderness, openings were soon made and settlements commenced; the ancient forest slowly retired before the sturdy stroke of the woodsman's axe, and the deer and the elk, the wolf and the panther, were startled from their lairs by its echo among the hills, and gradually driven from their lurking places by the advancing tide of an enterprising population. Waving fields of "golden grain" now rejoiced the heart and rewarded the toil of the hardy pioneer. A comfortable log-cabin sheltered his growing family and welcomed his weary steps; the log-barn with open doors and thatched roof, garnered his hay and grain and protected his flocks and herds from the whirling sleet and wintry storm. Mr. Miller, in common with others, participated in the trials and triumphs, the privations and privileges connected with the origin and progress of the Abington settlement.

But pleasant families and comfortable homes were not the only blessings to be desired or to be sought. The comforts of the body or culture of the mind will bear no comparison with the conversion of the soul or claims of God, in their real interest or vital importance. Moved, doubtless, by these or similar considerations, the attention of Mr. Miller was arrested and turned from secular pursuits to the sacred work of preaching the "glorious Gospel of the blessed God." In obedience to his own convictions of personal duty, without "consulting with flesh and blood," he entered at once upon the responsible work in June of 1802.

His first efforts were attended with cheering tokens of divine approbation and a large number of persons, considering the sparseness of the population, were hopefully converted. But thus far they had no organized church or ordained minister. This want was soon met and supplied. On the 18th of November, 1802, the Abington Baptist Church was recognized with fifteen constituent members, and Mr. Miller ordained as its pastor, with appropriate religious services by a council of ministers and members, called for that purpose.

He continued the esteemed pastor of this church until 1853 — upwards of half a century. During that time his labors were arduous and abundant. Few have lived and labored so long on the same field with an equal degree of efficiency and success. Doubtless many imperfections have mingled with his efforts and often marred their fruits, but God has been pleased to employ him in His service, and graciously own and greatly bless the labors of His servant.

Mr. Miller diligently cultivated an extensive field. It formerly embraced the northern part of Luzerne, and portions of Wyoming and Susquehanna counties, commencing at the summit of the Moosic mountain on the northeast, and extending down its southwestern slope, over the Abington hills and beyond the waters of the Susquehanna. His preaching stations were scattered over this extensive field; they were quite numerous and often many miles distant from the place of his residence. He was accustomed to preach frequently at Benton and Blakely, Clifford and Carbondale, Eaton, and Exeter, Newton and Northmoreland, Pittston and Providence, Greenfield and Tunkhannock, and at various other points within and beyond the limits of this extensive field. East and West Abington, however, were his principal stations—centers of effort and influence. Here his appointments were more frequent and the fruits

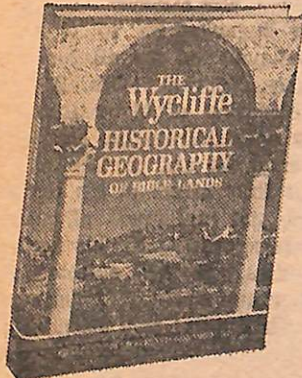
of his labors most apparent.

The old church at Abington Center has enjoyed an unusual degree of numerical prosperity under his protracted ministry. At an early period a numerous membership was gathered into his church, and gradually augmented, with occasional reverses, until he resigned the pastoral charge in 1853. His ministerial labors, however, were not devoted exclusively to the spiritual interests of this church or the immediate vicinity, but during the earlier portion of his ministry, he was accustomed to travel on foot or ride on horseback from three to thirty miles through the wilderness, following meandering paths or guided by marked trees, to preach the Gospel and plant churches in distant and destitute settlements. These long and lonesome journeys were not only attended with many hardships from the length and roughness of the way, but often by much danger from the wolf, panther, and other beasts of prey that still infested many portions of this wild region and prowled over its craggy heights or skulked through its dark valleys and dismal swamps. But not shunning hardships or shrinking from dangers, the man of God pursued his solitary way to seek the lost and save the ruined. The sacrifice was accepted, souls were converted and saints comforted through his efforts and instrumentality.

Marked results have followed his ministerial labors both at home and abroad. He sowed "precious seed" and gathered a bountiful harvest. He stated to the writer a few months previous to his decease, that the church, while under his pastoral care, had enjoyed fourteen general revivals and received large and frequent accessions. He had baptized on a profession of faith, not far from two thousand converts, attended about one thousand eight hundred funerals and solemnized the nuptials of nine hundred and fourteen persons or four hundred and fifty-seven couples. During that time six whole churches and parts of six

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