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# Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

## Sheppard, John

(1785–1879)

E. I. Carlyle, revised by Mari G. Ellis

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**Sheppard, John** (1785–1879), religious writer, born on 15 October 1785 at Frome, Somerset (where his family had lived since the Restoration), was the son of John Sheppard and his wife, Mary Kelson, daughter of John Banger of Piddletown, Dorset. He left school in 1800 to enter the wool trade, in which most of his relatives worked. In 1806, after his father's death, he and his mother joined the Baptists, a body to which many of his family belonged. With John Foster (1770–1843), Baptist minister in Frome from 1804, Sheppard developed a lasting friendship. The death of his uncle, Walter Sheppard, who made him his heir, enabled him to give up his business. Deciding to study medicine, he matriculated at Edinburgh University in late 1812, but was soon diverted to the study of philosophy and Hebrew. During two years' residence at Edinburgh he formed friendships with Thomas Chalmers and with John Pinkerton, the antiquary. In 1816 and 1817 he made tours through France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, and studied for some months at the University of Göttingen. On his return he published *Letters on a Tour of France* (1817).

In 1823 Sheppard published his most successful work, *Thoughts Preparative or Persuasive to Private Devotion*, which went through five editions in as many years. From that period until his death he devoted himself to writing religious works, lay preaching, and foreign travel. His last work was *The Christian Harp* (1858). He died at Frome on 30 April 1879, and was buried in the dissenters' cemetery. He was twice married, and his second wife, Susan Anne Dawe, survived him.

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*CGPLA Eng. & Wales* (1879)

## Wealth at Death

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under £20,000: probate, 16 June 1879, *CGPLA Eng. & Wales*

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