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## Religious.

### HOW OLD ARE THE BAPTISTS?

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A YOUNG friend of mine was told the other day by a minister of the Church of England that the Baptists were but three-hundred years old. If this be correct we frankly yield the palm of seniority to the church to which that good man belongs, which as we all know was established in 1547, under the constitution drawn up by Crommer in the reign of Edward VI., and possesses, therefore, an historical claim to an antiquity of three hundred and twenty-seven years. If it date its existence from Henry's Act of Royal Supremacy in 1534 it will be thirteen years older. Still, as we ought not to be beholden to others for information so intimately concerning our own affairs, we will endeavour to answer the question for ourselves by tracing back our pedigree.

Our existence in the present century is not likely to be questioned. We need only point in evidence to our twenty-two thousand churches with their one million eight hundred thousand members, about a quarter of a million of whom reside in Great Britain; to the £150,000 we expend every year in our various societies, exclusive of the cost of the maintenance of public worship in our churches; and to such names (not to mention living men) as Knibb, Judson, John Foster, Robert Hall, which are not unknown outside the limits of our own denomination. Has all this organisation sprung up like a mushroom in a night, or did we exist in the eighteenth century?

In the end of the eighteenth century the pioneer movement for foreign missions was commenced. Carey, Fuller, Pearce, and other God-inspired men organized the Baptist Missionary Society, which has since been followed by so many noble kindred organisations. Soon afterwards the Baptist Home Mission was formed for evangelising the dark places of our own land. Were we in existence before this time?

In the seventeenth century Kiffin was sixty-one years pastor of the Baptist Church in Devonshire Square, London; much persecuted in the way of fines and imprisonment by the dominant Episcopalian church. Yavasor Powell, an apostolic name well known in Wales, was imprisoned in English prisons for several years till he died in his cell—Koch, pastor of the Baptist church in Southwark (the same which now worships in the Metropolitan Tabernacle), was pilloried for writing in support of believers' baptism. Dalaune, a scholar and a Baptist, for writing his masterly "Plea for the Nonconformists," was thrown into Newgate and left there till he died. "I am sorry to say," Defoe observes, "he is one of near eight thousand Protestant Dissenters that perished in prison in the reign of that merciful prince, King Charles II., and that merely for dissenting from the church on points which they could give such reasons for as the 'Plea' assigns; and for no other cause, were stifled, I had almost said murdered, in jails for their religion." It is hardly needful to mention John Bunyan as another example of firm adherence to Baptist principles, nor his incarceration in Bedford jail as an additional instance of the persecution to which the maintenance of those principles subjected men in the seventeenth century. Had we any existence before that time?

The church at Hill Cliffe, in Cheshire, on the banks of the Mersey, existed in the sixteenth century; its earliest certain date is 1523; it is said to have been already an old church then. Leonard Bouwens, in Holland, baptised during his lifetime upwards of ten thousand persons; his countryman, Manno Simon, introduced multitudes into the churches. Between the Elbe mountains on the Rhine and Moravia, not less than fifty Baptist churches existed at this period, some of them having six hundred members. The Baptist church has been unfairly identified with the monstrosities perpetrated at Munster, in Westphalia, in 1534; the truth being that certain persons who held Baptist sentiments fell into absurd millennial theories, from which their brethren were free. These fanatics, who for the time seized upon the name of Munster, were, virtually, armed Anabaptists. They indulged in a plurality of wives, expected Christ to reign for a thousand years, and imagined themselves commissioned to take forcible possession of the earth in his name. Motley calls them "furious lunatics who deserved the madhouse rather than the scaffold." They entail no stigma on the Baptist churches; they stand or fall alone. This was a century of persecution; Sebastian Franck records that within a few years two thousand Baptists had testified their faith by imprisonment and martyrdom. At Salzburg eighteen persons were burnt in one day. A maiden of sixteen was carried in the arms of the executioner to the horse trough, thrust under water, and there held till life was extinct. Such scenes mark the existence of the Baptist church in the sixteenth century.

In the fifteenth century great numbers of the Lollards, the disciples of Wycliffe, held the doctrine of believers' baptism. Wycliffe himself had not professed it, though he denied that infant salvation hinged on infant baptism. He held that the value of a sacrament must depend on the mind of the recipient, and not on the external act of the priest. This doctrine needed little improvement, and accordingly many of the Lollards pursued their great master's teaching to its legitimate conclusion. Historians expressly affirm that they refused to baptise their infant children, for which obstinacy they were made to smart. Where there any who held believers' baptism previously to this?

In the fourteenth century these doctrines were professed by the Waldenses of Bohemia. Some indeed retained infant baptism; the majority rejected it, and among them the practice of believers' baptism prevailed. They suffered in the fires at Prague. In this century also the Council of London employed itself in the condemnation of Baptist heretics.

In the thirteenth century the Waldenses bear the lamp amid the surrounding gloom. Many treatises written against them in that century are still extant. We discern no uniformity in these free churches; a small number retained infant baptism; some in their recoil from superstition entirely rejected both ordinances; the larger part held believers' baptism.

A Waldensian confession of the twelfth century is thus expressed: "We consider the sacraments as the signs of holy things. We regard it as proper and necessary that believers use the symbols when it can be done. Notwithstanding which, we maintain that believers may be saved without these signs when they have neither place nor opportunity of observing them. We acknowledge no sacraments as of divine appointment but baptism and the Lord's Supper." This confession needs no comment. In this century the Council of Toulouse and the two Councils of Lateran condemned those heretics who denied infant baptism because of the absence of faith in the child. Henry of Lausanne, an ex-monk, preached like an apostle in Switzerland and France with astonishing success, baptising believers. He died in prison about the middle of the century. Peter of Bruys laboured in the south of France, and was martyred in 1120. "Baptism," said he, "performed in infancy is no baptism, since it lacks the essential ingredient, faith in Christ." Was believers' baptism held previously to this?

In the eleventh century Berengar, a famous teacher, taught thus at Tours: "Christ requires of thee that in the faith that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son as a propitiation for our sins, thou shouldst submit to outward baptism to represent how thou oughtest to follow Christ in his death and in his resurrection." "As far as it is in their power, they overturn the baptism of little children," so said the Bishop of Liege of Berengar and his pupil Bruno. Berengar died in 1088, and it is said that in the next century there were 800,000 persons who professed his doctrines.

In the tenth century, the darkest age, there existed a numerous body of scriptural believers, the Paulicians of Thrace. They had their rise three centuries before, and were named from their adherence to the teachings of the apostle Paul. Unanimously casting off baptismal regeneration and transubstantiation, they were divided into two parties, whereof one rejected outward ordinances entirely, as the Quakers, do the other held the ordinances as pertaining to believers.

In the ninth century lived Sergius, a great Paulician preacher. When a young man he had been asked by a Christian woman why he did not read the gospels and epistles. "It is not lawful," said he "but for the priests." She enlightened and interested him; he read, believed, devoted himself to Christ, and preached for thirty years in Western Asia. In the fourteen years from 832 to 846, 100,000 Paulicians were put to death, and Sergius was one of the victims in this great holocaust.

The eighth century. The sect of the Paulicians, which in this century was numbered by hundreds of thousands, was the candlestick from which the light of truth beamed across the surrounding darkness. We have already given sufficient account of their belief.

To the seventh century belongs the story of Constantine, the founder of the Paulicians. In 653 he entertained, at his house in Armenia, a stranger, who had in his possession a copy of the gospels and epistles. This treasure the stranger left with the host in return for his hospitality: Constantine found in these books, as in a casket the pearl of great price; he became a Christian, and preached for twenty-seven years with vast success the truths he had received, living a noble life, which was, as usual in those days, crowned with martyrdom. The officer who executed the warrant for his

apprehension was converted and became his successor. Were there any who practised believers' baptism before this time?

In the sixth century we meet with the Novatians, whose founder had lived three centuries before. They separated on the ground of church purity, holding that the church should consist of godly persons. They were Puritans. They baptised all who joined their churches on profession of faith, treating any former baptism in those corrupt times as null and void.

Boniface, the bishop of Rome, wrote in the fifth century to Augustine of Hippo in much perplexity respecting the application of the baptismal service to infants. It had been composed for believers. Boniface wondered how the sponsor could justly reply on behalf of the infant. "I believe," when not only was the babe unable to believe, but no one could tell whether it would believe when it should become able. The good bishop was in the same difficulty with the school boy whose clergyman examined him in the catechism. Question: "What is required of persons to be baptised?" Answer: "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God." Question: "Why, then, are infants baptised, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?" Said the boy, "Why, indeed."

In the fourth century the Donatists had their rise. Like the Novatians they separated on the ground that the church should consist of godly persons, and baptised or re-baptised on profession of faith all who joined their churches.

The third is the century of Novatian. He had been baptised during a dangerous illness, by having water poured on him as he lay in bed. This hydropathic treatment resulted in his complete recovery. He was afterwards nominated to the bishopric of Rome, but his strict views of church purity being well known, his clerical baptism was made a pretext for opposing his election. Many seceded and elected him their pastor, thus constituting the Novatian church. The Novatians and Donatists being dissenters suffered accordingly; the prisons were crammed with them, and many were put to death. Infant baptism began in the middle of this century, being established at the Council of Carthage in Africa, the darkest part of the church at that time. Its first practitioners had the consistency to administer to infants the Lord's Supper as well as baptism. Tertullian indignantly protested against the spread of the error.

In the second century the practice of the church regarding baptism is sufficiently clear from the account given by Justin in his Apology. "As many as are persuaded and believe what we teach is true and undertake to conform their lives to our doctrine, are instructed to fast and pray, and treat from God the forgiveness of their sins, we fasting and praying with them. They are then conducted by us to a place where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner as we ourselves were regenerated, for they are washed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." This use of the word "regeneration," though objectionable to our minds, is probably no more than an allusion to Titus iii. 5, and it does not obscure the testimony respecting the belief in those days as to the subjects and mode of baptism.

In the first century the practice of the apostles as described in the New Testament is clear. They baptised those who professed faith in Christ. The jailor and his rejoicing believing household, Lydia with the "brethren" of her household (Acts xvi. 40), Stephanas and his household, "the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ," "adding themselves to the ministry of the saints," were all baptised. The eunuch on profession of faith, even Simon, on a like profession, though it afterwards appeared to be a mist aken one, and the believers at Pentecost, were baptised; nor do we read of a single case of baptism in which there is no evidence of faith preceding. Thus careful were the apostles to observe their Master's rule, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."

The Baptist church is so old, therefore, as Christianity; and the practice of believers' baptism has been held in unbroken continuity from apostolic times. There was more than a writtlen in the speech of a certain good man who said he had not been able to discover any traces of other denominations in the Bible; he did not read of Peter the Primitive Methodist, nor of John the Presbyterian, nor of Thomas the Independent, nor of James the Episcopalian, nor of Matthew the Wesleyan; but he did read of John the Baptist.

For the Christian Messenger.

### THOUGHTS FOR THE TIMES.

No. XIV.

#### HOW OFTEN SHOULD THE LORD'S SUPPER BE OBSERVED? Part 3.

When corruptions have so long existed as to form a part of the established system of the communities in which they are found, any attempt to restore primitive purity will be looked upon with a jealous eye. Objections, some of them, perhaps, very specious, will be started, and strenuous endeavours will be made to check or destroy the presumed novelty. Opinions and practices supposed to be new must pass through many a fiery ordeal ere their validity can be established. Nevertheless, the interests of truth lose nothing by this. The progress of right sentiments may be gradual, but the slowness of advance ensures a more fixed and permanent superiority. In the mean time it behoves their adherents to embrace every opportunity of stating and defending their opinions, and, in doing so, to manifest the temperate firmness of the philosopher, and the "meekness of wisdom" of the Christian.

Against the practice of weekly communion it may be possibly objected by some that it is an innovation. The reply to such an objection is, that "it is an innovation, in no other sense than the doctrine of justification was in the days of Luther" (Dr. Erskine). These who maintain that we have no express precept on this subject, and that the frequency of communion is a matter to be determined by human discretion, are referred to the observations made in the first of these papers.

Some will probably assert that if weekly communion be admitted, the same principles will lead us to the adoption of some other practices which were observed in the apostolic churches, but have long since fallen into disuse. No objection can be made to this. The stated and universal practice of the first churches is to be regarded as the law of Christ, and still binding on his servants.—If, therefore, besides weekly communion, it can be proved that the apostles instituted any other observances, which are now neglected, let them be by all means restored. Inconvenience, different habits, and other objections, must not be mentioned in opposition to the will of the Saviour. Every church ordinance, as it existed in the times of the apostles, ought, undoubtedly to be still observed.

But all the practices of the first Christians were not church ordinances, nor universally prevalent. The supposed community of goods, for instance, at Jerusalem, was nothing more, as is evident from Acts. v. 4, than an extraordinary effort of voluntary liberality, and was confined to that time and place. The daily observance of the Lord's Supper, which some think was practised in the same church, did not continue long, nor did it reach to other stations, for at Troas and Corinth, the first day of the week was the regular time for the observance of the institution. With local and temporary customs we have nothing to do. But weekly communion was not one of these. It formed an essential part of the regular and universal practice of the first churches, and ought therefore to be revived.

"But," it is said, "so frequent a celebration of the Lord's Supper is inconsistent with the solemnity of the ordinance, and will bring it into contempt." Certainly, all religious services should be carried on with becoming seriousness. Yet it will not be denied

that superstitious reverence ought to be carefully avoided, and it deserves inquiry whether the less frequent observance of the Lord's Supper has not tended to produce a wrong feeling, and to invest the repast of love with unnatural gloom and terror. This divine institution is a feast, and "joy becomes a feast"—a chastened, holy joy—a humble gladness—a pleasure that elevates and sanctifies the soul, but does not in the least diminish the solemnity with which divine truths and ordinances ought to be regarded. But the objection here referred to is best met by the fact, already established, that the Christian church in the days of its primitive simplicity commemorated the Lord's death every week, without perceiving the inconveniences alleged.

The following observations, by an eminent Scotch divine, will be perused with interest:—

"But the argument on which most stress is laid is, that frequency will lessen the solemnity of the ordinance, and bring it into contempt. To this I reply—

(1.) If frequent communicating is a duty, then danger of doing it with less advantage does not lessen our obligations to that duty. For whatever danger there is, God foresaw it, but yet did not see meet to guard against it by enjoining us to communicate seldom. Shall we then pretend to be wiser than God? Have we found out better means for securing the honour of his institutions, than the means prescribed and practised by those who were under the infallible guidance of his Spirit. Have not attempts of this kind proved the source of the worst corruptions of Popery? Reason has no power to dispense with, or to derogate from the positive laws of God, on pretence of doing them a service. It is blasphemous presumption, though it may put on a cloak of humility, to judge that a sufficient reason to hinder thee from frequent communicating, which our Lord did not judge a sufficient reason to hinder him from commanding it. 'If thou thus judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.' Is there, in the whole Bible, any express or tacit dispensation from frequent communicating, if we happen to imagine that frequency will lessen our reverence. Disobedience to Christ is no part of the respect we owe to the Lord's table. 'To obey is better than sacrifice.' Our Lord did not say, 'Honour the sacrament, or dread it, or admire it, or adore it, but 'partake of it.' We are not therefore at liberty, to substitute any other mark of respect to this ordinance in room of partaking of it. How singularly unfortunate is the command, 'Do this in remembrance of me'—to be disobeyed from too much regard!

(2.) Conjecture is lighter than experience. Let us then see, whether the objection is verified or disproved by matter of fact, and here, on the one side, the history of the primitive church, for more than three hundred years, proves, that constancy and reverence happily conspire together to God's glory and his church's benefit. But, on the other hand, when succeeding ages attempted, by lessening the frequency to increase the reverence, the consequence was, that by degrees the very being of the ordinance was in danger of being lost, and a multitude of the most terrible mischiefs, and particularly a general decay of the power of godliness, overspread the Christian world.

(3.) Does not the Bible speak strongly on the solemnity of prayer, and the danger of rashness in speaking to God? And does it not tell us that the word, when heard unworthily, is 'a savour of death unto death?' Shall we then pray seldom, that we may do it with the greater solemnity, and hear the word seldom, and so not expose ourselves to the danger of praying unworthily, and hearing unworthily? Would not this way of reasoning be fallacious, if applied to prayer and hearing the word? And is it not equally so, when applied to the sacrament?

(4.) Prayer, hearing the word, &c., are not less useful by reason of their frequency. Those who abound in them most find most benefit in them.—The same may be said of meditation, self-examination, and other religious exercises. Why then, should it be supposed that rashness in remembering Christ's death in the sacrament should add to the effect of that ordinance. Novelty, it must be owned, adds a force to every thing. Fulness brings cheapness on the very bread of life; yet who would infer from this that it ought to be withheld till famine enhance the price? or, that we ought to be seldom in preaching the great and heart-affecting truths of the gospel, lest by oftener insisting on them they should affect us less?" (Dr. Erskine's Theological Dissertations, pp. 316-320).

Christians of all denominations are concerned in the discussion of this subject. It belongs not to one party, but to all. Neither can it be considered a trifling, unimportant matter, except by those who look upon the laws of the Redeemer's kingdom as vague and uncertain, and maintain that we are at liberty to make whatever alterations our wisdom may suggest. Well-instructed, conscientious Christians are of a different mind: their prayer is, "Make us to understand the way of thy precepts, teach us to do thy will." To such the word of exhortation may be addressed;—Weigh well the evidence now adduced—the historical facts—the opinions—the argument—the objections—and decide as the word of God shall direct. If these papers contain truth, acknowledge and yield—if error, let that error be exposed and confuted.

SENEX.

### Foreign Missions.

A LAY MISSIONARY.—Mr. Goolzar Shah, the Treasury clerk who acts as a missionary at Simla out of office hours, thus describes the effect of his preaching to the Jampanees outside the station church while waiting for their masters:—"Most of these simple people have heard us with rapt attention, and there have been occasions in which they have been so captivated with the free love of God to us sinners, that they have actually fallen down to worship us for delivering to them the sweet story of old, and that by grace, free grace alone we are saved. We have told them as Peter had to say to Cornelius, 'I myself also am a man' do not fall down before me; worship God in Christ." Mr. Goolzar Shah has been encouraged by Captain Walker, the commandant, to preach to the Sikhs of the Pioneer Regiment just outside the lines. He is welcomed by the men in hospital, and occasionally in their homes.

A DISCIPLE SECRETLY.—Dear Sir,—You make mention of a Mr. Johnson who was present when Baboo Mothoora Nauth Bose, B. A. was ordained. Which Mr. Johnson is this? I knew a gentleman of that name, who had been an officer in the British Army,—a Crimean hero—who gave up his commission so that he might preach the Gospel among my countrymen. He lived the life of a saint, was the very personification of humility and was everywhere received with the most sincere respect. I have lost all trace of him for some years, and shall be grateful to you if you kindly let me know where he is at present. Though not a baptized Christian yet my honest conviction is that, the time must come when the whole of the Indian Peninsula will be christianized, and that neither Brahminism nor rationalism will be able to arrest the progress