

HISTORICAL ADDRESS AT BAPTIST CHURCH

Delivered at Centennial Celebration by Hon. Mendel L. Smith, and Recently Published in Pamphlet Form for Distribution. — Worthy of a Place Among Your Files.

Brother Lawson, Members of the Camden Baptist Church, Ladies and Gentlemen: In attempting to perform the part which the kindness of the committee on programme has assigned to me in these very interesting exercises, I am apprehensive that I have yielded too much to the attractiveness of a wider field of historical investigation than was contemplated in the object before me, and as a very natural result have failed to do justice to either.

I am also fearful that a lack of time due to engagements of a more or less urgent nature, particularly the preparation and trial of causes in Court, whose sessions have not yet been concluded, will wholly preclude any attempt to do more than merely relate a plain, unadorned historical narrative. I am comforted by the thought, however, that for a relief from the dullness and dryness which a popular estimate generally associates with such discourses, I am justified in relying upon a very natural and warm personal interest in the subject by those to whom it shall be my purpose to present it. In the preparation of what I shall say to you, and it shall not be my purpose to present anything more than a brief compilation, I must gratefully acknowledge as sources of valuable information, without further reference, Wood Furman's History of the Charleston Association, J. C. Furman's Sketch of Richard Furman, Ramsey's History of South Carolina, Benedict's History of the Baptists in America, Newman's Century of Baptist Achievement, records in the office of the Clerk of Court of Kershaw County, a mass of interesting and valuable data which was placed at my disposal by Mr. Thomas E. Goodale, a deacon of the church, who has pursued the collection of this material for quite a long time with splendid care and discrimination, and whose labors have, to a large extent, relieved the burden of securing accurate information with regard to the early history of the church, the reminiscences of Mrs. S. E. Goodale, who has been a member for over fifty years, Mr. John Arrants and other sources of information to which definite reference will be made when used. From these sources I have drawn freely and, in many instances, have adopted such parts of their narratives as were directly applicable to the limitations of the subject under discussion, as I shall endeavor to present it.

There can be no ultimate survival of any people whose life is conformed to a radically false conception of God. Whatever pertains to the promotion of the true conception is essential and constructive. This is the great purpose and mission of the Church, regardless of what name any sect or denomination may conceive.

Origin of Name "Baptist."

The term "Baptist" as it is used to designate the religious denomination to which we of this church belong is not by any means one of ancient origin. During the early days of the Reformation it was applied by certain people to the Anti-pedobaptists in derision for the great stress and importance which they placed upon believer's baptism. Pedobaptists are those, as you well know, who believe in the baptism of infants. It is certain that the Anti-pedobaptists never applied this term to those of their belief during the 16th century. We are told they designated themselves as "Christians," "Brethren," "Disciples of Christ," "Believing," "Baptized Children of God." It was not until some time after the middle of the 17th century that the English Pedobaptists adopted the term "Baptist," as a denominational designation, repudiating the name "Anabaptist," which Dr. Newman tells us their adversaries sought diligently to apply to them with its "worst continental application."

The first person to advocate Baptist doctrines in this country was Roger Williams, who also established the first Baptist church on American soil at Providence, R. I., in the year 1639. In many respects no man has ever exercised a more salutary influence upon American civilization than this zealous and Godly man. To the untiring devotion, sublime purity, uncompromising courage of conviction, the unalterable stand for liberty of conscience of this man and his great companion and collaborator, John Clarke, is due the fact that in the entire history of the Province and State of Rhode-Island the product of their years of hardship, toil and perseverance, no one has ever suffered because of his worship of God according to the free and unrestrained dictates of his own conscience.

Every school child knows something of the history of Roger Williams, but there are some incidents in his life of a distinctly religious character that may be here briefly summarized. He was a native of Wales, and was born about the year 1598, Dr. Newman says 1600. In early life he became the beneficiary of the very generous patronage of Sir Edward Coke, one of the most fortunate endowments that could have come to a youth of that day and time. Sir Edward Coke observed, while at church services on one occasion, that Young Williams was taking notes of the sermon. He became very much impressed and attracted thereby and called the youth to him. He noticed that the notes were not only taken with great care and judgment but that they embodied the loftiest sentiments of the discourse. Sir Edward immediately sought out his parents and secured permission to control his training and education. He was first educated as a lawyer, but he soon gave up his work that he might turn his attention to divinity. The progress in his chosen field was so remarkable that Sir Edward secured for him episcopal orders.

Roger Williams.

He embraced the views and sentiments of the Puritans, and as a result was made a victim of bitter persecution; and, at a great personal sacrifice, he cast his lot with his persecuted countrymen and came to America when about the age of 32 years. He arrived in this country and was called to the ministry of the church at Salem, in the Massachusetts Colony, in the capacity of an assistant to the pastor, who was a Mr. Skelton. We are told that the Governor and his council were not favorable to the selection and the call was withdrawn. He then received a call to the church at Plymouth, where he preached with great favor and success, when he again received a call to the Salem church. Many of the congregation at Plymouth objected to his accepting the call to the Salem church. There was, however, a Mr. Brewster, who finally prevailed upon the congregation to dismiss him, his reason being that if Williams remained with them that he would spread too widely and firmly the Anabaptist idea. So the second call to the Salem church was accepted. While here he preached the doctrine of liberty of conscience, which seems to have been his favorite topic, and also against the privilege of the civil magistrates interference in church affairs. He proclaimed the doctrine that in these matters Christian people are subject to no laws or control except those of their Master. These doctrines immediately involved him in a series of bitter controversies with members of his congregation and the magistrates, which finally resulted in his banishment from the colony. He left with some of his sympathizers and first settled at a place called Rehoboth, which was beyond the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts colony, but the Plymouth colony, having heard that he had settled there, informed him that he was in their jurisdiction, and gave him peremptory orders to depart. There was nothing for him to do but seek refuge in the wilderness of the savage, among whom he dwelt on peaceful terms and whose good and elevation he always sought. The relation existing between Roger Williams and the savages was one of respect and kindness towards each other. His effort to elevate them to a kindly and peaceful intercourse not only constituted a beautiful part and effort of his life, but resulted in much material benefit to his colony and its neighbors. Williams and his great friends and collaborators, Thomas Olney, Thomas Angel and a hired servant, were told, came over the river in a canoe and settled at a certain place. Realizing now that he had been the beneficiary of the kindness, mercy and protection of God, and in commemoration of his gratitude for this Divine manifestation, he called the place at which he settled Providence, which was the beginning of the city of this name, now the capital of the State of Rhode-Island. Williams had evidently for some time entertained hostility to the doctrine of infant baptism, and to him was now presented the opportunity to give full expression to his views and to organize a church whose ordinances would embody the same. He and eleven associates, whose names now appear in the records of this ancient church, had become thoroughly convinced of the form, symbolism and design of baptism, but there was no one authorized to administer the rite. In this emergency they selected one of their number, Ezekiel Holliman, whom we are told was a man of "gifts and piety," to baptize Williams by immersion, who thereafter baptized Holliman and his other associates, and thus was planted on the American continent our first Baptist church. I wish it were possible to give a more extended account of this organization, its early history, hardships and its struggles.

Early Baptist Churches.

In the year 1641, Dr. John Clarke who has been already referred to as a collaborator of Roger Williams, established a church at Newport, Rhode-Island. "Benedict" assigns 1644 as the date. In 1637 Clarke arrived in Boston and the first

sound that greeted his ears was the groans and cries of a bitter persecution. He unhesitatingly allied himself with the persecuted party and led them to seek more peaceful homes and scenes. He received a grant from the Indians, through the influence of Roger Williams, to Aquidneck Island, which name was afterward changed to the Isle of Rhodes, or Rhode Island. Here they formed a colony and government in which the "headship of Christ" was thoroughly recognized. It was the union of this colony with the Providence colony, and the combined influence and activity of Clarke, Williams and Mrs. Anne Hutchinson in their behalf, which finally resulted in the formation of

the province and present State of Rhode-Island. In 1693, John Myles, a Welsh Baptist preacher, who emigrated from England with his church, secured a grant of land near the Rhode Island frontier and established a church, which they called Swansea.

In 1665 the first Baptist church of Boston was organized and for years suffered most grievously at the hands of its persecutors. So unbearable were the indignities and sufferings to which the members of this church were subjected that many of them left and settled in Maine, where they formed a religious organization in Kittery, on the Piscataque River, in the southwest part of the district. The constituents of this church were: William Scriven, elder; Humphrey Churchwood, deacon; Robert Williams, John Morgandy, Richard Cutts, Timothy Davis, Leonard Brown, William Adams, Humphrey Azell, Geo. Litten and several sisters. This church did not last long. Scriven and others went to Charleston, S. C., and did a noble work, which will be referred to a little later on. In all times and everywhere the human being has yielded to an in-

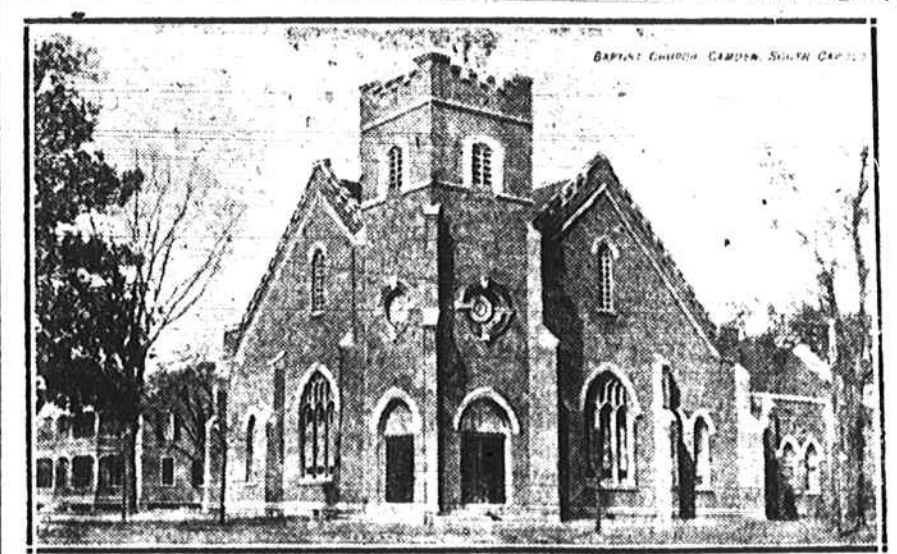


HON. MENDEL L. SMITH.

example of cruelty and bigotry; when innocent men and women were subjected to unwarranted executions and imprisonments, deprived of civil rights and the abjuration of their faith, strong enough to send them to the stake, was sought at the hands of rough and insolent dragoons, the willing tools of a haughty tyranny, thousands of her best citizens were driven out with their charming refinement, culture, skill, industry and wealth to make their homes in other lands.

It was this condition and motive that prompted the Admiral Coligny to conceive the idea of founding a colony in the New World, and which inspired Jean Ribault to undertake the perilous command of that colony of determined Huguenots who in 1562 were driven by the winds into that beautiful and placid harbor which they named, yielding to the impression and impulse of the moment, "Port Royal," which name has ever been retained. History does not present in the pioneer life of this country filled with its thrilling adventures, difficulties and dangers, or elsewhere, a more sublime picture than that which followed. Sublime, because it portrayed the true dignity

and worth of man—his assertion of a privilege beyond the control of his fellow creature and an humble, obedient recognition of God. This little band moved up the stream, which empties into the harbor, a short distance to an island, and there disembarked. Here in the middle of the wilds of this unexplored country, with the cruel and treacherous savage, no doubt, thickets of the foliage, they planted a stone upon which was engraved the court-of-arms of their country, which had denied them a safe refuge, and far away from the world's civilization, beyond its favor and protection, at the mercy of the wilderness, the man stood in line with uncovered and bowed heads, while a grateful prayer was offered and a psalm sung. There



hon perhaps produced more serious contention and vindictive bloodshed than any other one cause in the world's history. Religious Freedom. It may not in some respects be foreign to the subject, before us to submit the observation that many of those agencies, influences and powers which have been largely instrumental in working out the destiny of our Commonwealth were first manifested in a glorious defence of liberty of conscience. When France was rent with a bitter religious intolerance, with ceaseless strifes and conflicts, which for two centuries destroyed its resources and retarded its progress, and gave to the world a shocking

In the stillness of the forest, in which I imagine the roar and the dash of the waves about them and the howl of the beast were silent—nature paying an awe-inspiring tribute to their splendid devotion and endurance—could be heard the words of the gallant commander, "Here I hope we shall build a new France where no man may seek to hinder our conscience in what we consider God's true service."

With this motive also came other Huguenot families, who made their homes on the Santee and Cooper rivers. Joseph Morton's expedition of English dissenters, who refused their allegiance to the Established Church of England, most of whom settled on the banks of the Edisto River in 1681; also hundreds of others who swelled the population of the ancient city of Charles Town, and whose homes dotted the coast from that city to the mouth of the Edisto.

Among the early settlers were found many Baptists. One colony came about 1683 from the western coast of England under Lord Cardross and Mr. Blake, and settled about 1683 the first Baptist church in this State, which was known as the Charleston Church. In 1693 this church was moved to the City of Charleston. This is the oldest Baptist church in the South.

Charleston Association.

The early Baptists did not seem to make very much progress. The Charleston Association was founded in 1751 and at that time only consisted of four churches, to which brief references will be made. The first in the order of constitution was the Charleston Church, to the organization of which I have already referred. The Ashley River church, which was located at Ashley River, was the next. This church was for some time a branch of the Charleston church, but on May 21, 1736, was constituted a separate organization, with the Rev. Isaac Chandler as its first pastor. In 1737 a company of Welsh Baptists came from what is known as the Welsh tract of the Delaware River to South Carolina and settled on the Pee Dee River. In January of the following year they constituted a Baptist church on the Welsh Neck of the Pee Dee River, which was the third church. The fourth church comprising the Charleston Association was organized at Eutaw in May, 1746. This church was originally a branch of the Charleston Church, and maintained this relation over fifty years. It was composed of members who resided principally on Edisto Island. The Rev. Francis Pelot was ordained the first pastor of this church. It was located about eighty miles southwest of Charleston. From this church the Pipe Creek, Black Swamp and Beaufort churches were formed.

In 1778 the membership of the Charleston Association had increased from four to seventeen. In the year 1778 four churches were admitted, viz, the Savannah River (or Pipe Creek) church, constituted in March, 1775, with the Rev. Joshua Lewis as its first pastor; the High Hills of Santee, constituted January 23, 1772, with the Rev. Richard Furman as its first pastor; Lynch Creek, constituted May 4, 1777, with the Rev. John Cowan as its first pastor, and Ebenezer, at Jeffers Creek, constituted January 19, 1778, with the Rev. Tim Dargan as its first pastor. It is in the constitution of the High Hills of Santee Baptist Church that the members of this church are most interested. This church was organized by the Rev. Joseph Leese in 1770. He conducted a great revival at this time, and succeeded in interesting the people very much in the subject of religion.

Tribute to Richard Furman

It is becoming that we pause here long enough to pay a feeble tribute to that great and good man, Richard Furman, who, as stated, became pastor of the Hills Church in 1772. It is indeed very doubtful, when fairly judged, if the State has ever produced a greater orator, patriot and divine than he. In the distressing days when our liberties were assailed and the outlook was dark and seemingly hopeless; when our fathers were fighting desperately to protect their freedoms and freedom, this man's eloquence was so inspiring, his patriotic devotion so energetic, his prayers so faithful and ardent that he became a terror to the Tories and the latter declared he "feared the prayers of that Godly youth more than the armies of Sumter and Marion," and offered a reward of a thousand pounds for his head, forcing him to seek refuge in the American camp.

In estimating the circumstances and conditions which finally resulted in the constitution of the Camden Church I do not believe that any influence was more potent, directly and indirectly, than the example and inspiration of this great servant of God, working upon the minds and hearts of the people. From J. C. Furman's sketch of Richard Furman we learn of a very interesting visit he made to Camden some time before the organization of the church. He says: "Near the commencement of the Revolution an appointment had been made for him (Rev. Richard Furman) in the Court House in Cam-

den, where the Gospel rarely if ever had been dispensed. A large audience assembled to hear the word of life, but were kept waiting out of doors. The sheriff, in whose custody was the key, refused to open the building or to give up the key, alleging as his reason that Mr. Furman was not a minister of the Established Church. A number of the most respectable citizens present were inclined to obtain an entrance by force, but the youthful messenger of peace begged them to desist, telling the congregation if they would retire to a spot at a little distance, where they could be accommodated better than where they stood, he would address them in the open air. He then preached on the vital doctrines of the Gospel, with a solemnity, pungency and pathos calculated to make a deep impression. And such was the effect, the discourse was long and affectionately remembered. The principal citizen of the place, by whose invitation, it was believed, the sheriff acted, was seen after the sermon coming from his house and showing the preacher marked attention. This he continued to do ever after and the use of the Court House was not again refused.

In a recent article in the Baptist Courier Mrs. Charles H. Ryland, secretary and treasurer of Richmond College, has published an article which has appeared in the Christian Secretariat, and was reproduced in the Religious Herald in 1859, which is such a splendid tribute to the eloquence in consecration of Dr. Furman that it is well worth a brief reproduction here.

The article in substance states that at the close of one of the first sessions of the Baptist Triennial Convention of which Dr. Furman was the first president, he stopped on his way home in the City of Washington. While there he met an acquaintance in the company of Mr. Monroe, who was then a minister of the Cabinet and subsequently President of the United States. He was introduced to Mr. Monroe, who was so much impressed with the name that he immediately inquired if Dr. Furman was of Charleston, expressing familiarity with the name and place, and also wanted to know if he had once lived on the High Hills of the Santee. Upon being informed that he was the one to whom Mr. Monroe referred, their meeting became very touching and we are told that Col. Monroe would not let him go until he had related to those present something of his Revolutionary history, and particularly the incident of having to seek refuge in the American camp in consequence of the reward which Cornwallis offered for his head. Through the influence of Col. Monroe, Dr. Furman at once became the chief personage in the National Capital. It was arranged for him to preach in the Congressional hall. With usual and becoming modesty he did everything he could to avoid the appointment, but all Washington insisted upon it. Probably never before or since has any minister of the Gospel been greeted with such a distinguished audience as faced him on this occasion. His devotion, courage, adventure and his eloquence had been flashed over the city. There were gathered to hear him, the President and his Cabinet, ambassadors, foreign ministers and the city's fashionable society. With characteristic boldness and desire to accomplish good, he took as his text, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized." (Acts 22: 16.) The central idea, which he pressed home with all the force and vigor he could command, in this thrilling discourse, was a rebuke to the conscience-stricken hearers." As he closed this remarkable discourse, he reached the climax of his peroration, in the repetition of his text, and it is said as he uttered with intense earnestness the word "arise" that a number of his spellbound hearers actually arose from their seats as if frightened. This was indeed a wonderful tribute to this great man's powers of eloquence and intense earnestness.

Furman's Visits to Camden.

After he had returned from exile at the close of the Revolutionary war he probably visited Camden several times and preached to the people. Kershaw's diary, as recorded in "Historic Camden," shows that he preached here on November 9, 1794.

From the High Hills of Santee Baptist Church several churches were formed, and I trust that you may indulge me to make a brief reference to some of these. The earliest church was the Upper Fork of Lynch Creek, and located about 35 miles northeast of Camden. This church was constituted in 1774, and was admitted to the Charleston Association in 1787, with Rev. Jephtha Vining as its first pastor. The next in order was Lynch Creek Church. There were three churches of this name. The first was constituted about 1755, and admitted to the Charleston Association the same year, but became extinct before the war. The Rev. Henry Ledbetter was its first ordained pastor. The second was constituted May 4, 1777, and admitted in the Association in 1778, with the Rev. John Cowan as its first pastor, to which reference has already been made. The third was constituted in 1808, and was admitted to membership in the same year, with Rev. Samuel Timmons as its first pastor. The second church is the one which is here referred to as having been formed from the High Hills of Santee Baptist Church. The next was Ebenezer, at Jeffers

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