

## Wales, the Cradle of Baptist Principles.

BY O. A. WILLIAMS, D. D.

The explorer is willing to spend years of toil and labor, to endure hardship and privation, to suffer hunger and thirst, source, and to discover the springs of its source, and to discover the springs of its many tributaries. It should not certainly be a less interesting task to the believer to trace the divine hand in the workings of Providence, and to search for the many influences and elements which have entered into the growth of the church and the development of Christ's kingdom. "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform." The evil which man proposes, God changes into good. "It was not you that sent me here, but God," is what Joseph said to his brethren. Paul is a prisoner in Rome, and the church received as the rich legacy of those years of imprisonment his letter to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and his second letter to Timothy. John Bunyan is confined within the walls of Redford jail, but the world as a result is blessed with the story of Pilgrim's Progress. The Roman legions invade Britain and conquer the barbarians. Their leaders are carried as prisoners of war to the Roman capital. It is over ruled by God to the inestimable good of the Britons, and to the extension of his kingdom. Above the clouds that settle over the islands, the Sun of Righteousness rises. With the Roman yoke, came the freedom with which Christ makes us free. It is generally accepted as an historical fact, that the gospel was introduced into Britain by one of these prisoners, by the name of Bran, who brought three others with him. The time is believed to be between the years 55 and 58. One of these three, whose name was Arwystyl, has been associated with Aristobulus of Romans 16:10, because of the similarity in names. I recently came across the following statement in a newspaper: "The church of Llantwit Major in the Vale of Glamorgan, which has just been re-opened by the Bishop of Llandaff claims to be the most ancient ecclesiastical centre in the British Isles. A daughter of Caractacus, mentioned by St. Paul under the name of Claudia, is said to have founded a Christian church there about A. D. 63. Around this religious settlement there grew up the famous University of Britain, in which both St. David and St. Patrick received their education." Eusebius, born between 260 and 270, records in his history that the apostles extended their labors as far as Britain; but it is probable that this was after Bran and his associates had introduced the gospel into the islands. The fragments of history extant clearly show that the divine truth was received into fruitful soil in Britain, and that many in the First Century embraced the new faith. It seems that toward the middle of the Second Century the fervor and zeal of the earlier Christians began to wane. But about the year 180 light again shone in the midst of the darkness, when the King of Sumia (Lucius) Lles Ab Coel, a great grandson of Bran embraced Christianity. He became deeply interested in the religious condition of the people. He sent two messengers to Rome, Rwy and Mowddwy, to ask for more missionaries. They returned, bringing four with them. The coming of these ambassadors of the cross imparted new life to the Christians of this land. It would be a matter of interest for us to know what were the practices of these early Christians. There can be no doubt that they adhered to many of the principles which Baptists have defended through all their history. It is said of the bishop or minister of Llandaff (It is here where the first house of Christian worship was erected in Wales) that he taught the necessity of faith and baptism. It was my privilege two years ago to visit the cathedral of the quaint old city of Llandaff, on which spot it is known that public worship has been maintained for more than 1300 years. Mention is made of one Dyfan Sant, who was made bishop in Rome, so that he might baptize those who believed in Christ among the Welsh nation. Moshim writes of the Christians of this country at that time, when they were baptized on Easter day, and that they baptized those who believed and who professed repentance and promised to renounce their sins, and that they were plunged under the water. It is evident that among the early Christians baptism of believers only was practised and that immersion was the mode. Owing to the isolation of the islands from the continent, these disciples were not subjected, during the third and the beginning of the fourth century, to the persecution endured by their brethren in the east. But the time came when these Christians in common with others suffered many trials and afflictions from their pagan persecutors. Their history would indicate that they endured such vicissitudes, as befell Christians in other parts of the world, having times of prosperity and times of adversity until about the year 600. A little before this, Austin the Monk was sent to England with forty others by Pope Gregory the Great to convert the pagans and to subject all the Christians of Britain to the domination of Rome. He met with much success among the Saxons, who had invaded the country nearly 200 years before. Ethelbert, the King of Kent, who had married a French princess who was a Christian, was won over by the successful monk together with his court and many

of his subjects. He consecrated the River Swale near York, choosing it for his Jordan, caused to be baptized in a single day 10,000 converts. Having met with so much success among the Saxons in England, he turned his attention to the British Christians in Wales, whither they had fled to avoid the cruel ravages of the Saxons. The monk held a synod on the borders of Wales. He sent a request to the pastors of the churches to receive the Pope's commandment, but they utterly refused to listen to the monk or to the Pope, or to adopt any of their maxims. These Christians who, as we have already seen, practised immersion and believer's baptism, appeared now as the defenders of religious liberty. There were four things which the Welsh Christians were asked to receive and to practice:

- (1) To acknowledge the authority of the Pope.
- (2) To keep the Passover at the same time as the Church of Rome.
- (3) To assist the monk and his disciples to preach the gospel to the Saxons.
- (4) To preach infant baptism.

They positively refused obedience to these commands of the Pope, through his representative. When Austin realized that his repeated and compromising efforts proved futile, he warned these Christians of the war and the wretchedness that would come upon them. His warning became true. He used the sacraments as the instruments of his vengeance in making war on these faithful followers of Christ. There existed at this time two colleges in Wales, one at Bangor in the north, and one at Caerleon in the south. These colleges were enriched with valuable libraries. They seemed to be schools for the training of Christians, who had dedicated themselves to the work. Two thousand one hundred (2,100) were in attendance at Bangor, of whom 1,510 perished at the hands of the Saxons, at the instigation of Austin, the papal missionary; while the others were driven into the mountain fastnesses. Notwithstanding the bitterness of the persecution, they remained loyal to their convictions, and swerved not from the dictates of their consciences.

It was one hundred and sixty years after this, before Rome through the aid of the rulers succeeded, contrary to the will of the people in establishing its authority in Wales, and Roman Catholicism became the legalized religion of the country. With the establishment of popery, came religious apathy and indifference, and intense spiritual darkness. It was the beginning of that long period well designated as The Dark Ages. What a violation of the spirit of the gospel, when rulers formulate creeds, and enforce their acceptance upon the consciences of men; when they prescribe the forms and modes of worship to which all their subjects must conform, or endure the heavy penalty threatened against all offenders! Are these principles for which these early Christians defended, for which they suffered and died, and for which Baptists of later days endured persecution and imprisonment, and which the Baptists of to-day emphasize; we ask, are these principles likely to outlive the withering, blighting effects of a religion established by law? If during this long period Baptist churches existed as distinct and separate organizations, it must have been in secluded places, and their meetings must have been held in secret; for to maintain a visible organization separate from the state church meant the bitterest persecution and death. It is confidently believed by Welsh Baptists that their sentiments did exist through all of this long period in the retreats and seclusions of their mountains. There is but little doubt that there were heart altars on which the fires, not only of piety, but of those great principles, did burn during that long, dark night. In the works of their poets there are allusions during this period to some of the truths which they defended. Baptists appear in this country, ante dating the beginning of the Reformation, from which date we have authentic history. Benedict, in his history of the Baptists, says: "With the first dawn of returning light, before the ecclesiastical changes on the continent, or in England, we see the Welsh Baptists among the first reformers, and they did not appear to be novices in the business, but entered into the defence of their sentiments and the carrying out of the usual operation as to churches and associations, like those who had been familiar with the principles." Honored names appear among the early reformers who labored in Wales, such as Wyckliff and Tyndal and many others, and the divine word which they sowed found good soil in the hearts of the mountaineers. There is an authentic record of an organized Baptist church at Olchon in the year 1633, and of a second Baptist church at Illston in 1649, and of a third at Hengoed in 1650. These three churches entered into Associational relations, and held their first public meeting in 1650. Owing to the bitter opposition of the established church, and the oppressive and repressive measures of Parliament against the dissenting churches, no public meetings of the Association were held between the years 1656 and 1689, when the Welsh Baptist churches entered into Associational relations with the Baptist churches in London, and later with those nearer home. In 1700, however, the Baptist churches of the principality organized the second time a separate Association. Now it was

composed of nine churches. For ninety years, only one Association is reported; but in 1791, owing to the growth of the denomination and the increase in the number of churches, it was decided that it would advance the interests of the cause at large to divide into three separate bodies, according to geographical location.

We have noticed that in 1650 there were three distinct Baptist churches in the principality. In 1700, nine. It is probable that there were other organizations which convened in private houses. This was indeed the day of small things, and we can scarcely conceive it to be possible that the ratio of Baptists to the population was larger at this time in Wales than in England. But what do the figures of today reveal? We find today in the principality of Wales, including Monmouthshire, formerly a part of Wales, ten Welsh Associations, two English and seven English churches not connected with any of the Associations. The smallest of these Associations has 1,800 members, the largest 20,000. The area of this country is about one-tenth of the land area of Minnesota. The population is about the same, in the neighborhood of 1,800,000. In the Baptist churches of this little country are about 110,000 members, or about one in sixteen of the population. In England, Scotland and Ireland with a population of about 40 million, more than 20 times the population of Wales, including Monmouthshire, there are 224,000 Baptists, or one in 178 of the population. I would remind you of the fact that the practices of these Welsh Baptists and their views of doctrine are in perfect accord with those of American Baptists. We wish we could say as much to all English Baptists.—Western Recorder.

## The Coming Minister's Advantage.

BY PROF. E. H. JOHNSON, D. D.

In those long ago days when the minister was the foremost personage of his community, he owed his distinction in large part to the fact that he was better educated than his neighbors. In these later times, when the ministerial office counts for little, and ministerial authority is not worth mentioning, that decline in importance and dignity is largely due to the elevation of educational standards in other callings.

But the old pre-eminence of the minister promises to be renewed. When two educational establishments, so prominent as Harvard and Columbia, offer the bachelor's degree in arts for three or even two years of study at college nothing is more probable than that other colleges will shorten their courses; and they will do it simply because very many young men will be satisfied with a diploma so easily earned. Unless the great colleges now making the experiment withdraw from it, the average education for business and the professions will soon be very appreciably lowered. The information possessed by the best educated laymen about the learned pursuits will be distinctly more meagre than it now is; their minds will be contracted to an understanding and appreciation of their own callings only; in a word, professional bigotry will be fostered and the scholar's liberality sacrificed.

The one calling which cannot accept such a sacrifice is the clerical. Here, then, is the minister's new chance. And he is going to seize it, or he ought to. He knows that even with the most liberal education he is none too well equipped for leadership. He is well aware that he must understand the interests which occupy other men's thoughts, if thinking men are to be guided by him in spiritual things. The more thorough their special equipment, the more thorough must be his general equipment, and the advantage now about to be offered him is the incalculable advantage of being the best informed, the broadest-minded possibly the only widely educated man in his parish.

The minister has never shown a noticeable lack of ambition for the highest degree of influence which he can reach. He knows that he ought to reach the highest to which he can reasonably aspire. I congratulate the candidate for the ministry, who is just going to college, on the ease of a success which is abandoned to him like the spoils of a runaway army. He will presently become awake to his advantage; and his hearers will have an acute sense of it. Let him thank heaven that, when those who control the educational schemes of the largest colleges are turning students back from the high and varied attainments which, up to date, have been urged upon them, some smaller colleges will be left, generally denominational colleges, which we may hope will offer to the ministerial student a larger education than the lawyer, the physician, the scientist, the engineer, the editor, the diplomat is authoritatively told that he needs. Even before the astounding change in policy, before this announcement from the best known educators that our best trained men in secular pursuits need not seek to be by one-quarter or even by one-half as well educated as they had supposed they ought to be, even before this amazing announcement, this abrupt reversal of educational currents, it had undeniably come about that certain of the smaller colleges were the seats of the highest literary training, and that in this particular the great state colleges confessedly showed to special to special disadvantage.