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A Fake Founder of the Baptist Faith

THE TRUE AUTHOR OF OUR FAITH. His name is Jesus. Christianity's first great apology said so. It calls our Savior "the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. 12:2. Truer to the Greek original would be, "looking unto Jesus the Founder and Finisher of the faith." The word "our" is neither present nor suggested in the Greek. The Bible Union Version, the work of Baptist scholars such as Broadus, Hovey, Weston and Hackett, translates: "the author and perfecter of the faith." Jesus is just that. Any other founder of a faith is a rival to Jesus, and the faith so spawned is not Christianity, but open revolt and apostasy from revealed truth. The Baptist is definitely set to follow Jesus, not Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Campbell or either popes or theologians, where they lead away from Christ and the New Testament. Our Founder lives.

WHO DO THE BAPTISTS BELIEVE TO BE THE REAL FOUNDER OF THE BAPTIST FAITH? Jesus. We have had no other and we want no other. George W. McDaniel, as President of the greatest of Baptist Conventions, has said: "Baptists are justly proud of their beginnings; they have an ancient and Scriptural origin. Certain characters in history are named as founders of various denominations. Not so with the Baptists. There is no personality this side of Jesus Christ who is a satisfactory explanation of their origin. The New Testament churches were independent, self-governing, democratic bodies like the Baptist churches today. We originated, not at the Reformation, nor in the Dark Ages, nor in any century after the Apostles, but our marching orders are the Great Commission, and the first Baptist church was the church at Jerusalem. Our principles are as old as Christianity and we acknowledge no founder 'but Christ.'" That fact led Dr. Edward A. McDowell, successor of A. T. Robertson, to write, in *THE REVIEW AND EXPOSITOR*, on the subject: *The "First Baptist" Church of Jerusalem.* It led Robertson himself to say, in the second meeting of the Baptist World Alliance: "Given an open Bible, a regenerate heart and an unprejudiced mind, the inevitable result is a Baptist. If you are not a Baptist, why not?" I was there and heard him.

We want no man-invented founder of our faith. As said Spurgeon: "I am not ashamed of the denomination to which I belong, sprung, as we are, direct from the loins of Christ, having never passed through the turbid stream of Romanism and having an origin apart from all dissent or Protestantism, because we have existed before all sects." And I heard F. B. Meyer say similar words, to the Southern Baptist Convention, met in Baltimore in 1910. In his farewell letter to the Baptist World Alliance, the venerable John Clifford wrote: "One of the primary needs of Europe, in my judgment the primary and most urgent need, is the Baptist interpretation of the Christianity of Christ Jesus in the New Testament." Dr. W. T. Whitley, writing on the Bible and the Baptists, said: "First, it has called them into being", (series of articles in *THE BAPTIST QUARTERLY*, in 1912). And he says in his *History of British Baptists*, p. 12, "Thus in every land where the Scriptures are available to the people, there has been spontaneous generation of Baptists."

Dr. W. O. Carver (*Collier's Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, in the article on *Baptists*) said: "As a modern evangelical denomination with organized churches, the Baptists are the spiritual and ecclesiastical heirs of the Anabaptists, one of the four great dissident sects which arose during the Reformation on the Continent; it is also descended from some of the evangelical sects of the preceding age during which the Roman and the Orthodox Churches dominated all Europe and suppressed all dissent. There is, however, no organic connection between the Anabaptist groups and the Baptist churches." Though denying this organic connection, Dr. Carver quotes with approval "the United States Census of Religious Bodies (1936)" to the effect that "it is a distinctive principle with the Baptists that they acknowledge no human founder, recognize no human authority and subscribe to no human creed. For all these things Baptists of every name and order go back to the New Testament." Space fails me to quote Broadus, Mullins, Truett, Gambrell, Carroll, Dement, Lee, Hamilton and many, many others, in the same tone. T. T. Eaton used to say: "If the Baptists are right then everybody ought to be a Baptist, because everybody ought to be right. If the Baptists are wrong, nobody ought to be a Baptist, because nobody ought to be wrong." Spurgeon, at the opening of the Tabernacle,

said virtually the same thing and avowed that he would leave the Baptists if he did not believe them to be right.

YET WE SEE APPEAR A RECENT MANIA TO INVENT A BAPTIST FOUNDER, OTHER THAN OUR LORD, AND A RIVAL TO HIM. This build-up of a fake founder of the Baptists is a drive destined to destroy our people, if it wins, and is meant, by some, to destroy faith in Baptist truth, beget an indifference to all doctrinal duties and differences, and lead the people out of the Baptist denomination and into the New Catholicism of the World Council of Churches. It is a sinister propaganda.

WHO IS THIS FAKE FOUNDER OF THE BAPTISTS? His name is John Smith, Smyth, or Smythe. I should like for the founder of my faith at least to be able to spell his name, but it has all three forms: Smith (Kirby, Ferm, Ronald Knox, Shipley, the title of one of his own books and his degrees of A.B. and A.M., according to the record of Cambridge University), and Smyth (Dosker, Moelhman, Weaver, Griffith, Payne, Whitley and Newman), and Smythe (Mead and, I believe, certain encyclopedias). Nobody knows when he was born but he received these degrees in 1576 (others say 1575) and 1579. The late Dr. H. E. Dosker, of the Presbyterian Seminary in Louisville, whose funeral I attended with Dr. Sampey, says in *The Dutch Anabaptists*, p. 290: "1641 then is the natal year of the great Baptist Church." Of course such a thing does not exist and never existed, but it is very hard to teach that to a Protestant theologian. E. Roberts-Thompson (*Baptists and Disciples of Christ*, p. 11) said: "Some time in 1611, he"—(Thomas Helwys) and John Murton—"formed the first Baptist church on British soil." And Ernest A. Payne declares (*The Free Church Tradition*, p. 42) "Thus (in 1609) there came into existence the first (English) Baptist Church"—in Amsterdam. J. C. Carlile (*The Story of the English Baptists*, p. 72) wrote: "In 1612 was formed the first Baptist Church of Englishmen on English soil."

Dr. J. H. Shakespeare (BAPTIST TIMES of London, Dec. 22, 1922) called John Smyth "the founder of the modern Baptists"—fake founder, if ever there was a fraud and a fake, serving the ends of tendential propaganda, heading out with Shakespeare himself toward an amalgamation of nominal Christianity. It is interesting to note that Dr. R. H. Pitt, one of the founders of the Baptist World Alliance, protested in THE RELIGIOUS HERALD, in an editorial of Feb. 22, 1922, very vigorously against the English looseness of Shakespeare and of other British propaganda, and of that pretended amalgamation. That looseness has assumed the proportions of a colossal apostasy from the New Testament faith and practice. M. E. Aubrey, in THE BAPTIST TIMES of April 30, 1942, declares that "early Baptists did not baptize by immersion, but by pouring and affusion", and that "Baptists are impenitent High Churchmen". That is more nauseating than life in a skiff on the high seas in a tidal wave.

In an erratic, frivolous and 'smart Aleck' booklet, that somehow got published by our Sunday School Board, Frank S. Mead says: "There were many Baptists before Smythe, but their origin as a denomination began with him in 1608" (*The Baptists*, p. 8). And Conrad H. Moehlman, of Colgate-Rochester Seminary (in Ferm's *Encyclopedia of Religion*), says: "The Arminian English Baptists began in 1609, when John Smyth poured some water on himself." W. T. Whitley (*A History of British Baptists*, p. 7), speaks of "the foundation of the first Baptist Church in 1609."

See this confusion worse confounded. Dosker dates the Baptist birth certificate in 1641, Payne just as certainly in 1609, Carlile in 1612, Mead in 1608, Moehlman in 1609, "when John Smyth poured some water on himself", and Whitley also. Poor baby! What conflicting birth certificates! Now, my friend, suppose we had a school of American historians, out to advance some ideology, and they affirmed the origin of American Independence, not on July 4, 1776, but one in 1762, another in 1781, another in 1793, another in 1804, another in 1812, and so on. How much faith would you put in that history or in those historians? This fraudulent history of John Smyth, as "founder of the great Baptist Church"—High Church, note—is just worthless.

NOW LET US STUDY THIS FAKE FOUNDER, WHO ROBS THE LORD JESUS OF HIS TITLE AND GLORY, AS THE TRUE FOUNDER AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH. The history shows that Smyth (we shall call him) was successively a sabbatarian, an Anglican priest, a grafter in municipal politics, an exploiter of the union of Church and State by forgery, expelled twice from such priestly emoluments for misconduct, then a Puritan, then a Separatist, then a factional disturber of nascent Congregationalism, then an emigrant divider of a Pedobaptist group, then a Se-Wetter, in spurious baptism, then a rejected suitor of the Dutch Mennonites, then excluded by a minority faction of his own tiny split-off, then out in No Man's Land religiously, then dying in this abandon, repudiated of all men and himself repudiating all he had ever said and done against the Anglican Church, and agreeing with all and sundry, in fellowship with any

thing and any body in any kind of an ecclesiastical lineup. This poor fraud never said most of the best things that are attributed to him.

FACTS ABOUT SMYTH AND HISTORIANS WHO STATE THEM. Here are the facts.

1. Anglican priest and grafter. These were the piping times of the successors of Henry VIII, assassin ever and unequalled robber of church patrimony, who had all the faults and nearly all the doctrines of the popes, but chose to be their English rival and successor. "By 1600 we find him holding the post of cathedral preacher in the city of Lincoln." Such a position was that of Zwingli in Zurich and of Calvin in Geneva. "Smyth, however, was neither a Zwingli nor a Calvin, but, at that immature period (he had been a quarter of a century out of Cambridge, W.C.T.), a somewhat heady pulpiter, embroiled in municipal feuds and rivalries, with an insecure appointment and a growing family." But why "insecure"? The historian speaks of Smyth's "unpromising and unprophetic" "factional partisanry", "personal preaching", "pulpit reflections", "pugnacious indiscretions", complicated by the "zeal of his friends". He was right much of a Carpetbagger, and in 1602 "Mayor Dynnys, who had originally sponsored his appointment, 'broke open the city chest, took out the seal, and affixed it to numerous grants, contrary to custom'—among them a grant appointing friend Smyth city lecturer (preacher) for life. Whereupon there were new accusations, lawsuits, disalderings and general municipal uproar, in the course of which Smyth found himself out of employment" (Gwilym O. Griffith, in *A POCKET HISTORY OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT*, pp. 64, 65). Would you want a Baptist founder who was a grafter, a forger or the beneficiary of the art?

2. Dr. Carlile cites public accusations against him as a factious man and a false witness (*The Story of English Baptists*, p. 67). And this is not the rashness of youth. He has been an A.M. of Cambridge for about a quarter of a century. Is this the founder you aspire to?

3. He practices medicine also and, by hook or crook, crookedness seemingly, he gets another job as a priest, a sort of supply ministry in Gainsborough, in 1606. But "he was brought to book for officiating in the church without due authority", says Griffith. More graft, chicanery and disgrace because of shabby conduct in public office. He had denounced all Separatists in 1605, says Dr. Carlile, then joins them, renouncing Anglican orders.

4. Griffith says he founded a Separatist Church, "an independent congregation", composed of "three country gentlemen, three university students, a bricklayer's laborer, a shipmaster, four bombazine workers—and so forth, with their families" (p. 66). But Payne says that "he joined himself about 1606 to the Separatist Church in Gainsborough". Now in that nascent Congregationalism there were William Bradford, later Governor of our Plymouth Colony in New England, the famous "Elder" William Brewster and the pastor of our Pilgrim forefathers, John Robinson, and some 300 others, by 1608. By a strange plagiarism, credit has been given to Smyth for their policy of having "as the Lord's free people joined themselves together by a covenant of the Lord, into a Church Estate in the fellowship of the Gospel to walk in all his ways made known or to be made known, according to their best endeavors". Ernest A. Payne cites this and adds a note saying: "The words are William Bradford's", (*The Free Church Tradition*, p. 4). These Congregationalists complain bitterly of his quarrelsome nature and heady factionalism in their midst, and A. J. Grieve says of him (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition): "Smyth was the bondservant of logic and wherever he saw the beckoning hand of a properly constructed syllogism, he was ready to follow."

5. He and 36 others led off a group, in 1608. Never stable, he repudiated his past of two years and became the famous Se-baptist(?), whom I prefer to call the Se-wetter, for pouring doesn't suddenly become baptism because this poor freak and fraud happened to pour water on himself and later repudiate the act as senseless and no baptism. I agree with him in that conclusion. An affusionist is no Baptist, in any century.

6. Tiring of this bauble, he turned to the Mennonites and tried in vain to join them. They wouldn't have him. The Mennonites, then as now, were a varied group of denominations, some immersionist, the most using pouring instead of baptism. Now a Baptist needs to have his head examined if he repudiates pouring today as baptism, in noble Protestant friends and brethren, but accepts that pouring as baptism in this crackpot of the long ago. Smyth now goes all out for both Arminian false foctrines and for Socinianism then regnant in Holland, and that is about as far as a man can get from real Christianity. The Mennonite movement itself had degenerated, and then wallowed in the mire of current unfaith, in the midst of intellectual factionalists, and was splitting over "the ban", a type of discipline whereby every church meddled in the discipline of every other church and treated an excluded member with utter boycott and break of all human relations. The main Mennonites were and are adepts of episcopacy, the false baptism of pouring,

the doctrine of apostasy, salvation partly by works and a lot of other falsehood. What Smyth wanted to be, but couldn't get in, was no New Testament Christianity. He is the perpetual turncoat.

FURTHER FREAKISH ODDITIES THAT UNFIT SMYTH TO BE CONSIDERED FOUNDER OF ANYTHING ON EARTH.

7. He wrote *Principles and Inferences* in 1607, *Differences in the Churches of the Separatists* in 1608 and *Character of the Beast*, in 1609—the “Beast” being the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church, and their baptism the “mark of the beast”. His “Confession” was another plagiarism, for Dr. Carlyle (p. 70) says that it was only the translation of a work by Hans de Rys. He added now a creed of 20 articles, in Latin, to try and get in the Mennonite churches and expanded these into 100 doctrinal items. At one time or another, he insisted that men should never preach from translations of the Bible, but only from the original Scriptures, reducing translations to the level of the Apocrypha.

8. Similarly he at one time contended that a congregation should not sing a Psalm to any tune unitedly, for that might limit the Spirit of God. Suppose the Spirit told me to sing one tune and you another.

9. He poured forth a tirade against the “worldly attire” of the wife of his former Congregational colleague and Cambridge tutor and fellow-exile, Johnson, in this “personal” preaching.

10. He denied the Fall of man, or “accepted the Pelagian view of the Fall”, saying: “The Fall did not lose for man any natural power or faculty which God created in his soul.”

11. So he “dismissed the doctrine of original sin”, “there being no such thing as men intend by the word.”

12. The sacrifice of the Cross “doth not reconcile God unto us, which never did hate us, but reconciled us unto God”. Quite up-to-date modernism.

13. So the efficacy of Christ's death “is only derived to them which do mortify their sins”.

14. Infants are held to be born in innocence.

15. He accepted Mennonite episcopacy, as it was not sacerdotal but administrative.

16. Magistrates are tolerated but must not administer the death penalty, imprison or spoil the goods of any citizen.

17. He accepts Mennonite pouring as signifying the “outpouring of Christ's Spirit.”

18. No disciple may go to law or, 19. take an oath, or 20. marry outside the church.

21. “In the necessities of the Church and poor brethren, all things are to be common.”

22. “Justification implies a vital and not a legal operation—the quickening of Christ in the soul.” The looser Anabaptists all rejected the doctrine of justification by faith. But to say that justification is the same as regeneration is merely stupid, a baneful ignorance of gospel vocabulary. God is Judge as well as Father and he can be “just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus”.

23. He seems to teach baptismal remission, in his very cloudy language: “The visible Church hath only one baptisme whereby men are admitted into this faith, submitted unto this Lord, baptized into this Spirit, incorporated into this bodie”.

24. He says, in continuance, “It is not the work of Officers of the Church to convert souls, but to fede and edifie them being converted”—a rather overt Hardshellism.

25. The Mennonites he aspired to join were soul-sleepers. He now set forth a series of “*Certain Demaundes*”, of which Griffith, from whom much of this is quoted, says: “It is a restless and tormented Smyth that we have seen up to now, grown old before his time and full of cranky censurès, ‘demaundes’ and ‘distinguishing treatises’.” The historians spare him and us the enumeration of further follies.

“Hostile critics laughed”, says Whitley, “at five different sets of ‘English Anabaptists’” and finally redoubtable John Hancock “had a separation all to himself.” Then Smyth repudiates all he had ever believed or disbelieved in a *Retraction* (where he seems to spell himself “Smith”), but even here he is almost plagiarizing, at least in name and style, the “rectoral valedictory” of Arminius, who was in so many things his last mentor. The above citations are mainly from Griffith, confirmed by Carlile, Whitley, Payne, Newman, and various encyclopedias. The infatuation that this Smith saga has for some church historians is almost incredible.

My appeal is directed to your heart and conscience, as a saint. All the saved are “saints”, in the New Testament sense, so this once delivered faith is your personal responsibility, and mine. It was delivered to keep true, intact and missionary, passing it on. Don't let a fake and charlatan founder of the Baptist faith be put over on our people. It is a harmful and deceptive propaganda. Hail to our true Founder, Jesus.

Faithfully yours,

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