

**THE WORKS
OF JOHN SMYTH**

W. T. WHITLEY, EDITOR

VOLUME 1

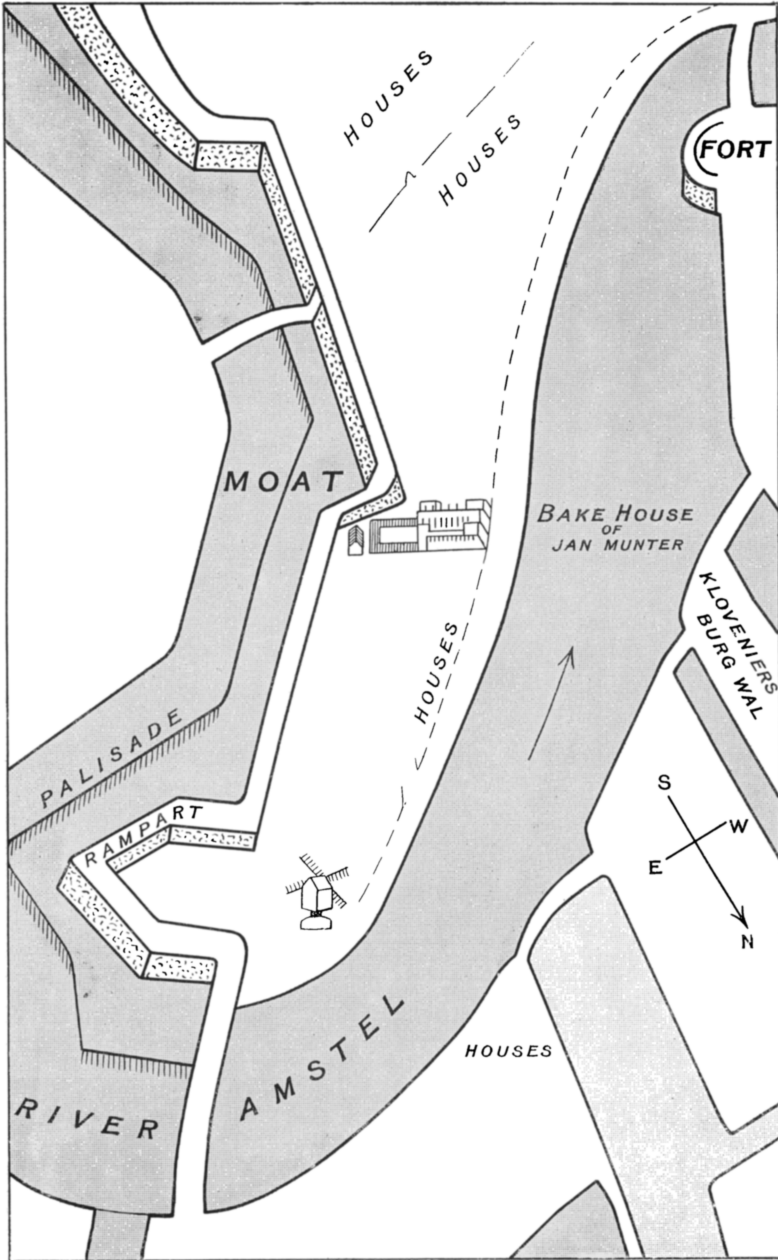
THE WORKS OF
JOHN SMYTH
FELLOW OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, 1594-8

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

Men whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,
Would have been held in high esteem with Paul,
Must now be named and printed heretics.

JOHN MILTON.



From a map in the Amsterdam archives

THE WORKS OF
JOHN SMYTH

FELLOW OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, 1594-8

TERCENTENARY EDITION FOR THE
BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WITH NOTES AND BIOGRAPHY BY

W. T. WHITLEY

M.A., LL.D., F.R.Hist.S.
Sometime Exhibitioner of King's College

None of the English Separatists had a finer mind
or a more beautiful soul.

MANDELL CREIGHTON

Cambridge:
at the University Press
1915



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

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Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth.
-- *Psalm 60:4*

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THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM

lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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PREFACE

THIS edition of the works of John Smyth offers the opportunity for a pioneer to be studied at first hand. He had never been utterly forgotten, for when Americans who preferred to look to New England rather than to Virginia as the formative district of their nation, were telling its earliest story, they glanced casually at the friend of Brewster mentioned by Bradford; and when English Congregationalists were searching into their origins, they caught a glimpse of one who passed through their position. But in comparison with Browne and Robinson, Johnson and Ainsworth, or Jacob, Smyth has been but dimly known, chiefly by reflected light, even to Hanbury in 1839.

Fifty years ago, Benjamin Evans broke new ground and printed many documents long unknown to Englishmen, revealing Smyth's doings in Amsterdam. Further search by John Waddington, Robert Barclay and Henry Martyn Dexter was so far rewarded that a better background was afforded, and then the last named student earned thanks by recounting the *True Story* of Smyth "as told by himself and his contemporaries," and by exposing a stupid forgery which bade fair to confuse the tale. His posthumous work on the *England and Holland of the Pilgrims* reverted to the earlier treatment of Smyth as an appendage to those heroes, while John Brown and Edward Arber had naturally adopted the same standpoint.

The importance of Smyth's work had been discerned by Mandell Creighton, and when Henry W. Clark wrote the *History of English Nonconformity* to expound ideas rather than facts, a more sympathetic spirit was evinced. More errors were eliminated by J. H. Shakespeare in his study of *Baptist and Congregational Pioneers*, all too brief. When Walter H. Burgess prepared to publish on

Baptist Origins, he not only added to our knowledge of fact by his minute research; but placed Smyth in the forefront, both of the narrative and of the title. Next year, Champlin Burrage in his *Early English Dissenters* treated of him in true perspective with the attention to detail that is so conspicuous in all his work.

All students, however, who desired better acquaintance with Smyth, were seriously hindered by the difficulty of reading his works. Though seven books were published, only seventeen copies in all are known, and no town contains more than three works. At the very best, Cambridge, York, and Oxford must be visited; while Amsterdam must be added for manuscripts. Moreover, the typography of most of the books is trying in the extreme. So it has been far easier to read what Smyth's opponents said about him, or to copy some isolated sentence extracted for a purpose, than to consult the whole book and let Smyth speak for himself.

To rescue him from this predicament has long been the hope of the present editor, and means have been provided by the Hibbert Trustees (through the kind offices of Sir W. J. Collins), by Principal Gould and Sir George Macalpine, president and vice-president of the Baptist Historical Society, under whose auspices the edition appears. The librarian of Emmanuel College arranged for a transcript of the *Morning Starre*, a copy of the *Paterne* was lent by Dr Gould, Bodley's librarian permitted the *Paralleles* and the *Character* to be photographed page by page, the editor copied the *Principles* and the *Retractions* at York Chapter library, the *Differences* at the Bodleian, and supplied a slight defect in the *Character* from the Museum. The manuscripts at Amsterdam were consulted by the courtesy of Professor S. Cramer, and in their study the editor was aided by Carel J. Ströer, who arranged for transcripts. The archivist of the city of Amsterdam cleared up a long-standing obscurity as to the last home of Smyth, and produced a contemporary map showing its site and appearance; from this the frontispiece has been copied.

In preparing for the press, it was felt best to offer a text such as Smyth sent to the printers, reproducing

exactly except for obvious misprints; even these have been registered carefully, though it seemed needless to print all, and only a few are noted for the reader. Thus the vocabulary and orthography can be studied closely; those interested in the emergence of new words will find some not recorded in the Oxford Dictionary, and others at an earlier date than is there given; e.g. Pedobaptistry, Presbyterian; these he may have coined. For the accurate presentation of the text, in such typography as will no longer daunt the reader, the Cambridge University Press has spared no pains.

The editor has added notes on such points as seemed to need comment, and on such as had special interest for himself. He has also prefixed a study of the author's career. For this he has naturally used the works named, and the contemporary books that alluded to Smyth. He has accepted the assurances of the Registry of Cambridge and the late Master of Christ's that nothing more is extant there than is here incorporated. He has sought at first hand, in both the municipal and the diocesan records at Lincoln, profiting by the aid of W. S. Linton and of the vicar of Welton, as well as of the official custodians. He has consulted the Mennonite and the civic archives at Amsterdam. Yet he does not claim to have added much to the facts known, and such trifles as he did discover or sent others to discover, have been communicated to and published by the late Master of Christ's and by J. H. Shakespeare. He does claim to have brought together every fact at present accessible, and to have ignored or to have explicitly labelled, many fictions often repeated. One incidental re-interpretation of known facts he hopes may provoke other students to renewed research.

For the story of the Pilgrim Fathers has inevitably come up for mention; but whereas Smyth has often been touched upon in telling their story, the proportions are here reversed, and two points can only be mentioned, not treated at the length they deserve. Their history is usually begun with Scrooby; but the data of Morton Dexter prove that no more than seventeen of them hailed from that district, the home of Bradford, as against

thirty-two from Norfolk, the scene of Robinson's activity. It follows that all the wealth of learning accumulated by Brown, Arber, Dexter, etc., is really introductory not so much to Robinson's story as to Smyth's: had it not been for him the emigration from the north would not have taken place, and to him most of the emigrants adhered, those who passed over to Robinson being mostly relations and connections of the latter. It follows also that the main source of the Pilgrim Church has as yet been unrecognized and therefore neglected, that the career of Robinson in Norfolk—on which a little fresh light has recently been thrown—awaits treating with such loving care as has been already spent on the district around Austerfield. Further, in these pages is pointed out, what has escaped serious attention, the time, place, and circumstances when the Pilgrim Church was born. In the editor's opinion, the pre-natal and infant history of this church have been misconceived, and after due research will have to be re-written.

Apart from matters of fact, the editor hopes to have presented the subject afresh in three respects; the starting-point of Smyth's career, its consistency, and the permanent result of his work.

Scarcely ever has it been emphasized that Smyth was a Cambridge man. Like a greater alumnus of the same college, he was accustomed

To walk the studious cloister's pale
And love the high embowéd roof
With antique pillars massy-proof
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.

He is therefore not to be classed with the Legates and Muggletons, nor even with his saner followers Helwys and Murton. He ranks with Whitgift and Andrewes in his training; had they been cut off before the age of 45, as he was, their mark on their age would have been no deeper, and they would have left less of real permanence. Therefore some care has been given to show what actually was the training which they all received, to exhibit the foundations on which rested that which was peculiar to himself. It is as fitting as fortunate that

so much of the material for this has been brought together by a Head of his own college, and it is a kindness that the present Head has read the proofs of that section.

What makes Smyth almost unique in his time, is that he had the scientific spirit so strongly developed. He announced that he would be, as Bacon put it, a "true pioner in the mine of truth"; he was persevering in following every clue, in declining to bow to mere custom or tradition, in recurring to first principles, in acting on what he discovered. He is exhibited here on his own line of development, which apart from one amusing excursus appears singularly straightforward.

For a few years after his death, it seemed as though he had spent his life almost in vain, and the chorus of opposition died away with words of pity for his failure. In the next generation only Paget's brother recollected that he had been one of the *Grandeos* of the Separation. Not till 1738 was his name recalled to the memory of the churches that had arisen from his work; only when Adam Taylor, in 1818, published long extracts from the preface to the *Character*, did the nature of the man begin to emerge. When however, in 1908, European Baptists met in Berlin and a session was devoted to the *Pioneers in Liberty of Conscience*, by an American, a Frenchman, a Rumanian and a Bulgarian, it was pointed out that to the teaching of Smyth was due directly the founding of the earliest English Baptist churches, and this one man was thus placed in the vanguard of what is now literally an *Œcumenical* or Catholic communion.

W. T. W.

PRESTON,

November 1915

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The Last Home of John Smyth

from a contemporary map in the Amsterdam archives.

Frontispiece to Volume I.

The Lower Trent Valley

showing places whence emigrants went to Amsterdam in 1608.

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**Names of the English who applied in 1610 for union with the
Waterlander church in Amsterdam. Holograph of John
Smyth.**

Frontispiece to Volume II.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1586. John Smyth matriculates, sizar at Christ's.
1593. M.A. (First Conventicle Act.)
1594. Fellow. Ordained by Wickham of Lincoln.
1598. Vacates fellowship after Ladyday.
1600. Lecturer to the City of Lincoln.
1601. Preaches *The Bright Morning Starre*; page 1.
1602. Preaches *A Paterne of Trve Prayer*; page 67.
Inhibited, dismissed. Next two years spent in litigation and publishing.
1603. (Appeal of the Puritans to James for reform.)
1604. (Hampton Court Conference: new canons.)
1605. Practising as physician, lecturing at Gainsborough.
(Suspension of many clergy, ejection, visitations.)
1606. Conference at Coventry with Puritan leaders.
Bernard: Against Episcopal Authority; unpublished.
Letter to S[uffolk] replying to K[newstubs]; page 557.
Letter to A.S.; page 547.
Formation at Gainsborough of Separate Church.
1607. Bernard: Letter to Helwys; page 337.
Letter to Bernard; page 331.
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1608. Bernard: Separatist's Schisme.
Emigration of the church to Amsterdam.
Hall: To Smyth and Robinson.
Helwys: Letter on the customs of the Ancient Church.
Differences of the Churches; page 269.
1609. Ainsworth: Defence of the Scriptures.
Certayne reasons propovnded to Mr. Rich. Clifton; page 574.
Clifton: Answer on 14 March; page 575.
Reply written by 24 March.
Church disbanded, baptism of all by Smyth.
Paralleles published, and in a few days the
Character of the Beast, the two incorporating all that led up to them.
Bromheads: Letter to Hamerton.
Conference with Hetherington; conversation with Mennonites.

1610. Secession of Helwys and eight others.
XX Latin articles; page 682.
 Ries: XXXVIII articles.
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 Hetherington: Description of the Church of Christ.
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 Helwys: A declaration in XXVII articles; A short and plaine proof;
 Advertisement to the New Fryelers.
1612. Gerritsz. Dying wish for fusion.
Retractions and Confirmations, unfinished; page 751.
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 Smyth buried on 1 September. Last two MSS. published by
 Pigott in time to be criticised by
1614. Robinson: Religious Communion.
1615. Fusion of Smyth's church with that of Ries.

"John Smyth's courageous and pioneering spirit enabled him to break with old traditions and to blaze trails which were followed in later centuries by multitudes. The Baptists, allowing for wide differences and points of view within their fellowship, still stand for convictions which Smyth stood for in his own time, and which originally emanated from the spiritual pilgrimage of Smyth's own life. For identifiable historical reasons, of course, his Arminianism was soon abandoned among the great majority of Baptists. Yet his emphasis upon a regenerate church membership, upon the self-government of the church under Christ, his belief in the ministry of one rank, his belief that baptism is the badge of faith and is the constituting principle of church membership, his denial of infant baptism as a valid ordinance because infants are incapable of faith, his belief in religious freedom -- all these convictions of Smyth have been written indelibly into the Baptist heritage."

JAMES E. TULL

Shapers Of Baptist Thought

(Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1972), 30.

"*The Works of John Smyth* is a necessary read for every real student of Baptist History. His *the Character of the Beast* is a classic Baptist reading and his connection to the Waterlander Mennonites, specifically the defense of the confession of Hans de Ries, must be considered by anyone wishing to limit Baptist connections to 1641. Smyth's work is invaluable to any collection of Baptist material."

THOMAS WHITE

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