

The Dissent and Nonconformity Series

Number 12



History of the Donatists

David Benedict

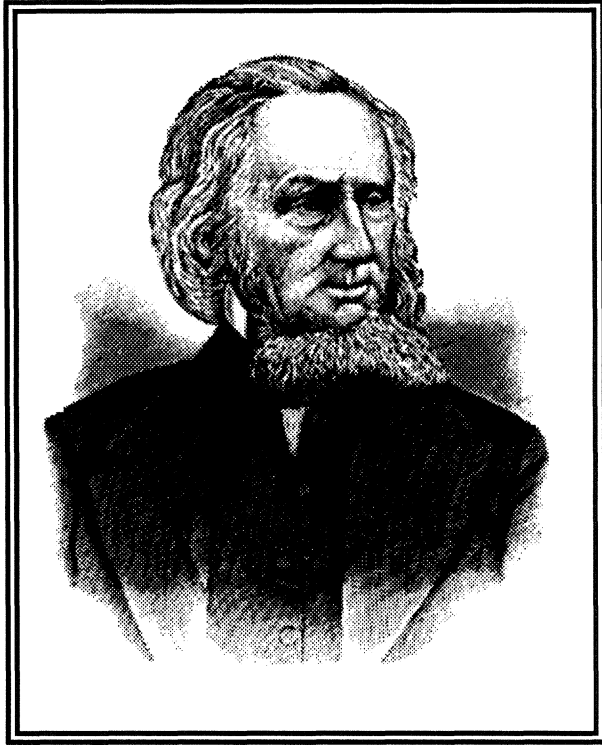


Non dilexerunt animam suam usque ad mortem.

The Latin, *Non dilexerunt animam suam usque ad mortem*, translates, "... they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:11

On The Cover: *Massacres at Salzburg* took place in 1528 when Prince-Archbishop Cardinal Matthaus Lang of Salzburg issued mandates sending police in search of Anabaptists. Many were captured and killed. This engraving illustrates the sufferings and sacrifices these Dissenters endured when their government, in conjunction with established religion, attempted to coerce and impose uniformity of religious belief. Hence, this picture is a reminder of the cost of religious liberty and the ever-present need to maintain the separation of church and state. We use this art to represent our Dissent and Nonconformity Series.

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS



DAVID BENEDICT

1779-1874

HISTORY OF THE DONATISTS

WITH NOTES,

BY REV. DAVID BENEDICT, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS; HISTORY OF ALL
RELIGIONS; FIFTY YEARS AMONG THE BAPTISTS; ETC.

With a Sketch of the Life and Work of Dr. Benedict,

BY REV. HENRY C. GRAVES, A.M.

MEMORIAL EDITION.

PRINTED FOR MARIA M. BENEDICT, PROVIDENCE, R.I.

By Nickerson, Sibley & Co., Pawtucket, R.I.

1875.



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

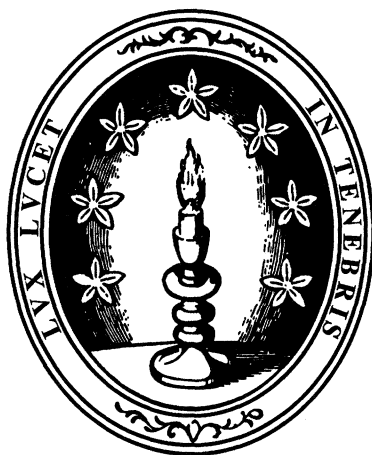
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Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth.
-- *Psalms 60:4*

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by*

THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.

No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive
Paris, Arkansas 72855
(501) 963-3831



THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM

lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

ISBN #1-57978-995-1

SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND WORK
OF
REV. DAVID BENEDICT, D. D.

MANY eminent men in different Christian countries have borne the name of Benedict. Of Latin and ecclesiastical origin, it is supposed to have been adopted as a proper name out of regard for some individuals distinguished in religion. The Benedicts of America do not, however, trace the line of their ancestry to any patron saints. "The bones of the good old ministers and deacons, who bore the name, would hardly lie quiet in their graves should any attempt of that kind be made."

The authentic history of the family begins with Thomas Benedict of Nottinghamshire, England, who was born in 1617. He was an only son, and the name, according to the tradition, had been confined to only sons in the family for more than a hundred years. In the spirit of his time, impatient of civil or ecclesiastical oppression, preferring voluntary exile rather than to endure the cruelties of the Stuarts and Lauds, Thomas Benedict came to New England in 1638. He resided for a time in the colony of Massachusetts Bay, then on Long Island, and afterwards became an influential man in the Connecticut colony.

David Benedict, of the sixth generation from "the first settler," was born in Norwalk, Fairfield county, Connecticut, October 10, 1779. He was the eldest son of Thomas and Martha Scudder Benedict. His father, who served as a soldier in the war of the Revolution, was an enterprising farmer and a man of gentlemanly bearing. He removed from Norwalk to Saratoga county, New York, afterwards to New Lisbon, Otsego county, and in 1833 to Rhode Island, where he died, leaving a large family of children affectionately united to each other and revering the paternal name. The mother died in 1786, while her eldest son was a boy of six years of age. Her memory was to him ever grateful as that of a pious and devoted Christian woman, who did much even in his earliest years to mould his character and develop the principles of truth, virtue and piety which so distinguished him through his long life. Fourteen years were passed in the country home and amid the routine of farm life. The boy was early taught to work, and had only the ordinary advantages of education which a few months in each year and in a country school-house of the last century afforded. Christian influences, the pious order, the regular discipline and simple habits of a New England home, were the constant agencies giving form and strength to character and direction to mental and moral powers suited to whatever position might be occupied in mature years. At the age of fourteen he left home and was apprenticed to a shoemaker in the town of New Canaan, adjoining Norwalk. Here he remained for seven years and wrought well, until he won the deserved reputation of a skilled workman and master of his trade. At the close of his apprenticeship he went to the city of New York, and

was employed for one year as a journeyman in a large shoe establishment, when the opportunity was soon afforded him of entering into partnership with his employer in an extensive and profitable business. Much to the disappointment, however, of his expected partner, and at "much sacrifice in a worldly point of view" to himself, the young man determined upon a change of pursuit and to commence a new course of life. At a very early age he had a fondness for books. Historical books, such as were within his reach, were carefully read, and habits of mental culture and application were formed which appeared in all his subsequent history. In a brief autobiography he writes: "On a review of the limited space between my leaving the shoemaker's bench and graduating at college, the following things are to be observed: In the first place, my studies were commenced in a small way while on my bench, with a book on a shelf before me; in the next place, when I entered fully on my work I remembered a remark of the late Dr. Judson, whose room was next to mine in college, namely, that 'no man ever succeeds well in any enterprise unless his whole soul is in it'; again, I had two specific objects in view from the first, which were, the ministry and authorship; and finally, a kind and beneficent providence most evidently favored my laborious efforts."

This new course of ministerial and literary life was entered upon deliberately and heartily, for its own sake, as the calling of God for him who was to pursue it. The last year of work in New York was passed in the endeavor to procure means of support while preparing for college, and with the one hundred dollars thus earned he began his preparatory studies. His father, who had removed to Saratoga county, New York, was unable to

give his son pecuniary aid, and the young man, now at his majority, began in earnest his life work. The discipline of childhood and youth fitted him for close and continuous application. In 1802 he became a student in the academy at Mount Pleasant, now Sing Sing, New York, under the tuition of Rev. Stephen S. Nelson, a graduate of Brown University of the class of 1794. Here he entered at once upon classical study. Having resolved to enter the junior class in college, he gave himself to study with intense application, and at the end of two years was prepared to enter the university, then called Rhode Island College. Of this period he writes: "Most of the time I was with Mr. Nelson I paid my way by assisting him in his school, which contained some quite young scholars, and among them was Francis Wayland, afterwards President of Brown University, but then a mere lad, whom I taught his first lessons in reading. On account of my advanced age, and for economical considerations, I was very anxious to prepare for two years advance in college, and with this end in view I studied so hard day and night that I almost broke down in health." The object was gained, change of scene and rest restored the physical and mental vigor which was to the end of his life his abiding heritage. He left Mount Pleasant in the summer of 1804, and, by the kindness of the captain of a trading vessel, was granted a free passage by way of New York to Gloucester, Massachusetts; thence by another vessel he went to Boston, where he spent some days with Drs. Stillman and Baldwin and Rev. William Collier, his former pastor in the First Baptist Church in New York. These men gave him encouragement and help in preparing for his entrance at college. He next proceeded by stage to

Providence and to the house of Dr. Gano, "then and always the pilgrim's home." At once the eager student entered upon his further preparation for an advanced standing in college. To use his own words: "My studies were assiduously continued till the close of the vacation, when," he modestly adds, "by some special grace my name was entered on the catalogue of students. I graduated in 1806, and wherein I was then deficient in scholarship, I have been endeavoring for the past sixty-two years to supply." This was written in 1868. From the record he made for himself during the two years spent in college it is evident he held no mean rank in his class, nor forgot the purpose and work before him. At the junior exhibition he delivered an oration on "Religious Toleration," and his theme at graduation was "Ecclesiastical History," in which he discussed particularly the character of the period of the Crusades, in an oration marked by "the originality and characteristic enthusiasm of the speaker."

Here ended the preparatory course on September 3, 1806, and the young man of nearly twenty-seven years of age, furnished by patient toil for other and higher toil, lost no time in seeking for place and opportunity. He had written a few months before these words: "Where I shall go, should I live to get through college, I know not. I wish to be resigned to the will of God, and to go where he shall open a door in his providence, and appear to call me." This indicates the controlling motive and the governing principle which had been studiously followed from the time his decision was formed to leave secular business and engage in literary and intellectual pursuits. Much as he loved learning and culture, these were not the end. They were means and aids to

the ministry of the gospel and ecclesiastical authorship, the two-fold purpose of his active religious career.

Dr. Benedict's Christian life, it may be said, began in 1799. The religious influences of his boyhood had been salutary, exerted by a mother's early training and a father's constant habit. Occasionally, as the young man began to accustom himself to independent thought, he would seek answers to various doctrinal questions of the clergymen of the town. At length, to use his own words, "I became convicted of my sin and found the Saviour; as I read my Bible, the question of baptism arose; I went to the minister to inquire for the passage which taught that baptism takes the place of circumcision. He disappointed me by a paraphrase, but failed to point me to the chapter and verse. I wrote to Dr. Baldwin of Boston for advice, and he directed me to the scriptural teaching, and I was baptized and joined the Stratfield Baptist Church in Fairfield, Connecticut, December 8, 1799, eight days before the death of George Washington." From this time the Christian ministry began to be his aim and purpose. In June, 1804, he received from the Stratfield Church a license to preach, and soon after he entered the university he was invited to supply the pulpit of a small Baptist society in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. By the advice of President Messer, and Dr. Gano, pastor of the First Church in Providence, the invitation was accepted in September, 1804, and during all the college course the Sabbaths and vacations were spent with what the student called his "informal pastoral charge." The divine favor at once marked his ministrations. He prayed to be faithful and successful, he sought after the spirituality and simplicity of the gospel, and to experience so much of the meek

and lowly spirit of the Redeemer as to walk in his footsteps. Such was the desire which breathes in the words of the student minister, and which record his experiences of that time. The first winter spent in Pawtucket was distinguished by a powerful work of the Holy Spirit; about forty persons were converted and baptized. In the following summer, August 27, 1805, the First Baptist Church in Pawtucket was recognized, and the young minister continued to preach, do pastoral work and preside over the social and business meetings until the end of his college course.

During this time, a period of two years of incessant work in college and in Pawtucket, the young man had made a place for himself in the newly-organized church and in the hearts of the people of the town. Immediately after his graduation the church invited him to formally accept the pastorate. He complied with the invitation, and on the 16th of October, 1806, was "set apart by the solemnity of ordination for the work of the ministry." A sermon was preached on the occasion by Dr. Gano. Then began a ministry which continued for twenty-three years, or until the summer of 1829. The prayer of the pastor, in prospect of ordination, was answered, and the Lord blessed the connection of minister and people for his glory and their mutual good. In the outset he prayed to be faithful and successful. The record of the quarter of a century's pastorate is full of proof of fidelity and success. How fervently he prayed let the recorded words attest: "O thou Eternal Spirit quicken my languid devotion, make me more watchful, more prayerful, more engaged to maintain the power of religion in my own soul, and more zealous and successful in recommending it to others. May the Lord revive his work

throughout the world, and in the place where my feeble labors are spent. O that he would return again and revive the hearts of his drooping saints, reclaim backsliders, and turn sinners to repentance." Again he prayed, and the power of his long ministry appears in the prayer: "O Lord pardon the sins of thine unworthy servant; forbid that they should rise to his present shame or his future condemnation. O that thou wouldst erase the remembrance of them from his mind, place them on the head of the scapegoat, that they may be borne away to the land of forgetfulness. O Lord forbid that thy servant who is engaged for the defence of the gospel should become a stumbling-block to others, but O that thou wouldst enable him to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called. He has sinned against light and love, and has no excuse to offer, and no merit to plead but the merit of thy beloved son. For his sake wilt thou look upon him in compassion, and restore unto him the joys of thy salvation, grant him the light of thy countenance, preserve him from temptation, deliver him from evil, for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen." In the spirit of these prayers he worked, and the divine blessing followed; frequent baptisms and additions to the church showed its healthy and prosperous condition. He anticipated the administration of the ordinance of baptism for the first time with solicitude, but wrote immediately after: "God was better to me than my fears. I felt a peculiar satisfaction in the performance of the duty, and the candidates evidently found it the answer of a good conscience towards God. I desire to say—

‘When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise.’”

Thus the young pastor is absorbed in his labor, and sustained by abundant blessing. He identified himself with his people, studied or found out by a quick intuition their spiritual wants, and met their necessities with the far-reaching provisions of the word of God. On one occasion a young man wishing to justify himself in the practice of dancing, against the wishes of his pious mother, quoted the 31st chapter of Jeremiah. The mother referred the matter to the pastor. He made it the subject of discussion at a conference meeting which was largely attended by the young people. "I endeavored to show them," he writes, "that the dancing here spoken of, as in many other places in the Bible, was a religious exercise intended to express joy and gladness for divine goodness; that it was a mere extemporaneous movement of the body as the effect of religious joy, and that these examples would not justify those dances which had no other object than carnal pleasures and vain amusements." Equally clear and definite in his own views of what the Scriptures teach on all practical questions, he preached to the understanding and conscience of his hearers; fervent in spirit and of quick sensibility to feel for others, he won hearts to himself and to Christ.

At the close of his first year's pastorate a well-established church stood lovingly around him; an invitation to remove to Boston was declined; God's place for him on earth he had found. But the evidence of overwork began to appear, and for some weeks he suffered from the only severe illness of his long life. With the renewal of strength and the exclamation, "O that it may be spent to the glory of him who hath given it," he entered again upon the varied round of duty and service. Dr. Bene-

dict was a most efficient pastor; no record can fairly represent his labors and usefulness in his pastorate of twenty-five years. His leadership was wise and good, the church was prosperous during his administration, and much was accomplished for the glory of Christ. Dr. Robinson, President of Brown University, whose boyhood was passed under the ministry of Dr. Benedict, gives this tribute: "Although I was between thirteen and fourteen years of age when I ceased to hear him, impressions were made upon my youthful mind which have never been erased. All his peculiarities of manner and speech come vividly to my mind. . . . An intelligent and appreciative congregation gathered around him, made up largely of men of solidity, character and intellectual ability, until the church came to be the second of our denomination in Rhode Island in strength and moral influence, and perhaps the third in New England. It is surprising how far extended has been the influence which went out from that church. The telegram which announced the death of Dr. Benedict awakened the sensibilities of hearts in New Haven, New York, Baltimore and other and more distant cities of our country. Strong men on whom he left his stamp were affected by the news. I cannot help feeling that the best part of his work was done in the pulpit; for the period in which he lived he took most respectful rank as a minister." His theological training was for the most part gained during the heat and pressure of service; following the custom of his time, he went at once from the college to the pastorate, for there was then no theological school of the Baptists to offer him its advantages. But he had learned to discipline himself in all sound doctrine; he stored up the gospel in his heart, and it

made him a true minister of Jesus Christ. His preaching was biblical, and therefore sound and true; experimental, and therefore practical, not speculative, theoretical, cumbered with human philosophies. He preached, as a living man, a living gospel, to hearers by nature dead in sin, that they might be made alive in Jesus Christ. There was great simplicity, clearness, directness in his sermons. The plans and sketches of them—for they were mostly unwritten—are models in these particulars. The impression of an early sermon on the text, "Adam, where art thou?" remains to this day vividly stamped on the minds of some who heard it and were convicted of personal sin and need of salvation, under its direct and forcible appeal. "They felt while listening as though personally addressed," and forced to give answer to God. The following are the points he discussed in a sermon on the text 1st Corinthians ii: 2: (1) What we are to understand by knowing the crucified Jesus; (2) the necessity of knowing him; (3) the effects of this knowledge. A printed sermon from the words, "Buy the truth, and sell it not," preached in 1821 before the Warren Association, has this outline: "I propose (1) to define the term truth, and mention a number of subjects respecting the truth of which we ought seriously to inquire; (2) illustrate the expression, 'Buy the truth,' and show the way in which it may be bought; (3) show the different ways in which truth may be sold." The sermon is filled with clear statements of biblical doctrine, and abounds in practical applications addressed to the common sense of both ministers and congregations.

But the pulpit was only one medium by which the minister sought to reach his people. He taught in an evening school young working men who came to him for

instruction ; he labored in the first Sunday School in the town, and brought it under the care and influence of the church ; he published one of the first Sunday School papers in this country, entitled the Sunday School Journal, and prepared a question book on the New Testament for gratuitous distribution among the younger children, for whom, in his wise judgment, catechisms and ordinary methods of teaching were not adapted. He did not overlook singing and the use of hymns in social worship, inviting the lovers of hymns to bring their favorites to him, adding some of his own composition. He selected and arranged a volume of conference hymns which passed through several editions and was extensively used in the prayer meeting.

Thus, in very inadequate outline, is the pastor's work of a quarter of a century reviewed. He was greatly aided and encouraged in it by his devoted wife. Nearly two years after his ordination, May 5, 1808, he married Margaret Hubbel Gano, with whom he lived "in love and unity" more than sixty years, until her death, November 28, 1868. Briefly, but in most appropriate words, the Rev. George Bullen, at her funeral, gave this summary of her life and character : "She was a person whom a stranger could easily know. She seemed to be what she really was. She possessed a peculiar mildness of bearing and voice, and a rare quietness of spirit. Divine grace, operating upon a nature delicately constituted, of great conscientiousness, of genial disposition and tranquil temperament, wrought a beautiful and symmetrical Christian character. At the age of twenty years she became a disciple of Christ and was baptized by her father, the late Rev. Stephen Gano of blessed memory. Her sphere was in her home. Here her character was

developed. Here in the presence of this family, this husband and these children, the picture was drawn by the divine artist, line by line, feature by feature, foreground and perspective all combining to make it the thing of singular beauty and completeness we to-day behold. Out of rare materials, by means or in spite of the pressing cares of a large family, and the varied experiences and discipline incident to one in her station, as well as those common to mortals, a rare character was produced. In her was realized the description of a true wife and mother given us by Solomon: She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. In her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household. Her children arise up and call her blessed."

The ministry and authorship designate the two-fold object of the life and labors of Dr. Benedict. He began at an early period of his educational history to work in both directions. The ministry engaged him for twenty-five years, during which time he preached more than most ministers in the same length of time, while he prosecuted historical research and investigation with assiduity and zeal enough to quite absorb the powers of an ordinary worker. But the pen of the author he did not lay aside until a few months before the close of his life. Study was a habit with him; he lost no time; he was "not long without book or pen;" rest only so much as nature demanded, then work as much as nature could endure, divided his days. His first venture as an author was, during the closing scenes of his college life, in a pamphlet entitled "The Watery War, or a Poetical Description of the Controversy on the Subjects and Mode of Baptism, by John of Enon." For more than thirty

years the author was unknown, though the work was generally considered to be that of Rev. John Leland. It had a large circulation, was republished in 1843 in the first volume of the Baptist Library, and again by a clergyman of New York. It was after the style of the "Salopian Zealot, or the Good Vicar in a Bad Mood," a work on a similar subject by a Baptist minister in England. It sparkles with wit and wisdom, and treats the "ludicrous suppositions and arguments which do not merit a serious refutation" in a facetious and ingenious manner. True and catholic in spirit, he declares in all soberness:

"Yet when disputes may chance to rise,
Of whom and how we should baptize,
We think we have sufficient light
To show the path and guide us right.
The humble, godly and sincere
Of all communions we revere,
And hope at last to meet them where
We all shall free communion share.
And while we walk this vale of woe,
We wish with all the saints to go,
In all the paths the pious tread,
So far as we can be agreed."

Dr. Benedict had a great love for poetry, and possessed much of the poetical spirit. He collected hymns and sacred songs in large numbers, used them freely in his sermons, and committed many of them to memory. Even at the age of ninety years he gave himself to the study of modern hymns, which he was accustomed to repeat with all the enthusiasm of his earlier days.

Historical studies, however, occupied him for more than seventy years, and their results gave to his name its publicity and distinguished regard. In 1802 the idea of historical authorship seems to have entered into

his plans for future work. While a student in college in 1806 he wrote: "For some time past my mind has been much employed in contemplating a general history of the Baptist denomination, and I have been directing my energies to that object. I have a settled resolution at some future period to prosecute the business as far as my circumstances will permit." A short time before the date at which this was written he had seen and conversed with Rev. Isaac Backus, whose successor in the preparation of Baptist history he may in some sense be called. The interview he thus recalls: "I well remember the grave and venerable appearance of the man so famous in Baptist history, and the conversation we had on historical affairs." This was in the autumn of 1805, at a meeting of the Warren Association. The next year Backus died, and after his death a large amount of historical papers which Dr. Benedict considered of great value to him in his new undertaking fell into his hands. At length, in the autumn of 1809, he began the great work of collecting materials for his general history of the Baptists in America and other parts of the world. His method required him to travel extensively through the United States to collect facts and documents needed for his work. He spent more than a year in this way, traversing the States and Territories north, south and west, traveling more than four thousand miles on horseback and alone, never diverted from his purpose nor deterred by the hardships and discomforts of the undertaking. Often he found himself dependent upon the hospitality and benevolence of the poor Baptists in different parts of the country, whose contributions and good cheer encouraged and helped him on to his gratifying success. The narrative of his long journey is in-

teresting, and fills many pages of a carefully preserved diary. Intent upon his single purpose he yet preached many times, and seems to have exerted a happy influence on all whom he met. Upon his return to Pawtucket, near the close of the year 1810, he continued his preparatory work; he sent printed circulars to places he had not visited, wrote many hundred letters, and with wonderful ardor and incessant application he applied himself to his task. Rev. George H. Hough, afterwards a missionary to India, became his assistant; together they labored, and at the end of two years the work was printed. The preface bears the date April 16, 1813. The field had been explored with fidelity and care, "in the determination to preserve from oblivion facts worthy of transmission to posterity, and which at the same time might be edifying to the present generation." The author purposely laid aside all rhetorical embellishments, endeavoring to follow the motto, "perspicuity is half the battle, for if the sense is not so plain as to stare one in the face, but few people will take the pains to poke for it." He examined the records of more than two thousand churches; he gave brief histories of those most distinguished, and furnished many valuable biographical notices of ministers. He labored as a pioneer historian, love for the work was his inspiration, considering that the pleasure and profit afforded by it more than compensated for all the labor and anxiety it cost him. He aimed to place the history of American Baptists on such a foundation as easily to be continued by the future historian. The work was published by subscription in two royal octavo volumes. Five thousand copies were sold. The author superintended the distribution of the books, employing men

and fitting out an expedition, with which he went as far south as Georgia, arriving at Savannah just as the joyful news of the close of the war of 1812 had been received.

In 1817, Dr. Benedict published his "Abridgment of Robinson's History of Baptism" in one octavo volume. The original work was by Rev. Robert Robinson, a Baptist minister of Cambridge, England, who died in 1790. The book showed considerable scholarly ability, and was much esteemed by Baptists, both in England and America. It had, however, passed out of print, and few copies could be obtained. The Philadelphia Association, in 1806, had requested Dr. Samuel Jones to prepare an abridged edition. He died too soon to accomplish the task. Dr. Benedict was at length solicited to edit and abridge the work, which he did with much care, translating some notes from the Greek and Latin, and omitting such portions as were of least importance to the question discussed. An edition of nearly three thousand copies was circulated, and the book may be considered of real value, to which frequent reference has been made by writers on the baptismal controversy.

In 1820 appeared the "Abridgment of the General History of the Baptists" in one volume. The article on baptism was omitted, much of the matter in the first history was rewritten, many corrections made, and statements were added which covered a period of seven years beyond the date of the close of the first book. The author prefaces this volume with these words: "The denomination is gradually advancing to an important stand in Christendom; the grand distinguishing principle of believers' baptism is making a rapid and triumphant march in the Christian world. May the

prudence and piety of the denomination be as remarkable as have been their zeal and success."

The "History of All Religions," in one volume of four hundred and fifty pages, was published in 1824. Three thousand copies or more were sold by subscription. The object of the author was to exhibit the actual state of the different Christian denominations. "I resolved," he said, "to use the precise language of each in presenting their peculiar dogmas and rites, and let them speak for themselves in all that pertains to their distinctive characters." The work was full of interest and information, marked by candor and good sense, and pervaded by a catholic and charitable spirit.

In 1848 the last edition of Baptist history was published in one large volume of a thousand pages. Like each of the other works of its author, it had a wide circulation. It was a continuation of the first work, prepared thirty years before, from materials collected in a similar manner, by more extended study and research, and by repeated journeys through most of the States of the Union and in Canada. This the author considered the greatest labor of his life; to it he gave his time and thought for ten years. He had resigned his pastorate, and now bent his remarkable energy and activity to the task; vast numbers of circulars were distributed; a paper devoted to historical matters, entitled "The Historical Compendium and Enquirer," was edited; historical documents accumulated; an extensive correspondence was carried on with leading men in America and England, and the enthusiastic worker gained a wide reputation as the historian of the Baptists. He had well earned his rank and title; he had accomplished a service for the denomination of incalculable value; he had proved him-

self a marvel of industry, a man of indomitable energy, the worker of the century, without a peer, without a rival.

But the day of rest for this tireless toiler had not come; page on page of manuscript was written in preparation of a "Compendium of Ecclesiastical History." Twelve years was devoted to this work in the endeavor to furnish a popular record of the facts of history, and especially to give full and accurate "accounts of the various parties of reputed heretics of the early ages," thus presenting somewhat in detail the history of dissent in the religious world.

As "an episode in the severe historical studies" of this period, the historian prepared a volume entitled "Fifty Years Among the Baptists," which was published in 1860. In some respects it is the book of greatest interest produced by its author. It covers a period which marks the rise and growth of most of the enterprises which engage the Baptists of America; it is the story of one who participated largely in all these enterprises, and had familiar acquaintance with men and measures representing all the organized benevolent, missionary and Christian operations of the denomination. He tells the story which belonged to him of right to tell: "As I have outlived most of my contemporaries, and having from my youth a familiar acquaintance with Baptist people in all parts of the country, now in the evening of life I leave for perusal a few sketches of my experience and observations for the last fifty years." It is not the garrulous talk of a feeble old man, it is a book any student of the history of American Baptists may read with benefit, and any preacher may study with profit.

Although large progress was made in the compilation

of the "Compendium" it was never finished. But the author did not stop; authorship had become his normal condition. Like Neander, whose history he so much studied and loved, he must dictate what was in him to say until the latest evening hour; life's evening, like the evening of each day, was spent in close study; far into the night the lamp burned brightly on; men watched it as it shone through its window; one after another they retired, the light shown on alone undimmed and steady, the toiler thought not of rest. He had rounded out the circle of ninety years, had recorded much of contemporary history, had traversed the course pursued in the centuries by the Christian religion, going back like some Nile hunter nearer and nearer the source and fountain-head of our history in apostolical practice in the example and command of Jesus Christ. And now, with the same enthusiasm, and with not a particle of the natural force abated, the historical student gave himself to the task to prepare from original sources an authentic "History of the Donatists," who, in the fourth century, had expressed in emphatic terms their dissent from the errors and assumptions of the Roman Catholic Church. In his previous investigations the author had followed other writers on church history in their statements concerning this people. Now he brought his independent judgment to the case, weighed the conclusions of many authors, studied the questions at issue, and gave intelligent decision in favor of dissent and against the misjudgments, falsities and assumptions of the dominant power. In the ponderous Latin folios of Augustine and Optatus, the chief opponents and persecutors of the Donatists, the author found exact statements of the belief of the Donatists, detailed records of

the discussions and arguments of Donatist and Catholic bishops assembled in council at Carthage, and such abundant material as enabled him, when he had translated and transcribed the record, to furnish an historical monograph of unexampled character, and worthy to stand beside the stories of councils and debates, as told by the most popular and authentic historians. The work was begun about the year 1864, and the writer gave to it the last strokes of his unwearied pen but a few months before his death, when ninety-five years of age. The manuscript was left complete and ready for the press, needing only that amount of labor to carry out the design of the author which so important and peculiar a work required. It is printed, and this sketch of the life and work of its author, prepared under the direction of one who comforted the father's last days with the promise that his purpose should be carried out, and this "Memorial Edition," is affection's tribute to one who never forgot to be affectionate amidst all the heavy toils and distracting labors of a busy life. The fine steel engraving accompanying the volume is from a photograph taken when Dr. Benedict was in his ninety-third year. It is a faithful picture of the beautiful old man as he was, endowed with the grace of the silver lock, the undimmed eye, the unabated force.

Thus, in imperfect outline, are the historical labors of the subject of this sketch reviewed. Like chips from his workshop he gathered up the materials for history, the accumulation of years, and in the closing days of his life distributed them among several historical societies which he had helped to form, or of which he was an honorary member. He contributed freely to the religious press during his life, and aided in founding many

churches, and in organizing associations for missionary, educational and philanthropic purposes as represented by the Baptist denomination in the United States. He was long in correspondence with the leading religious bodies in this country and in England, and the man of one church, one work and one home, who for fifty years lived in one house, won a world-wide reputation, and made a name which is a very household word in all the Baptist families in the land. Shurtleff College, Illinois, in 1851, conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1818 he was elected a trustee of Brown University in place of Rev. Lucius Bolles, who was transferred to the Board of Fellows. At the time of his death, Dr. Benedict had been for sixteen years the senior member of the Board of Trustees. For more than half a century he attended all its meetings; he was absent from only a single meeting during all that period. Thus was he faithful everywhere, and thus did he exhibit everywhere the genius of fidelity, the native force well-directed and constant that compels success. His own work is his own best monument, unfailling, enduring; his transparent life and character present their own summary; nature and God wrought together in him to make a perfect work. As the pictures of the old men of the Bible record are attractive, so is his picture attractive; nothing mars, nothing dims it. It bears the lines of completeness, the evidence of hopes realized, ends attained, plans perfected, work done, such as makes it a sober pleasure to contemplate it. Its subject realizes the divine promise:

“Because he hath set his love upon me
Therefore will I deliver him;
I will set him on high because he knoweth my name;
He calleth upon me and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him;
With long life will I satisfy him,
And show him my salvation."

In obedience to the divine order, Dr. Benedict realized the divine promise; he was satisfied with his years; not one too long, not one too short; he moved with the years and renewed his youth; the present was his time, and he was even with it at ninety-five as at twenty-five; in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as in the beginning of it. Until the last he worked with still some unfinished work at hand, believing that "perpetual work is the law of perpetual youth," yet to the last content, satisfied with the bounty of the years God had given him, holding the change we call death no matter of solicitude, itself an incident in his immortal life for which in early life he had made abundant provision by leaving it all to God, as in the changed words which he so often repeated, "for sudden death, Good Lord prepare us." And thus through all his life he kept at his grateful service, in front of any duty, saying "I'll try," and of every duty, "I just do as well as I can." He lived in a grand period of our country's history. He saw the nation in its infancy and its manhood, he shared in all its wonderful progress. He participated in the religious movements of the century, which are hardly paralleled in any other of the Christian centuries. A short time before his decease, the Warren Association, at its one hundred and eighth annual meeting, conveyed to him its appreciation of his labors in these words:

Resolved, That we desire to express our grateful recognition of the divine favor manifested in the long life and valuable services of one so identified with the interests and history of this Association, of the Baptists of Rhode Island and throughout the United States. We beg

to convey to him by this action our hearty appreciation of his long-continued labors, so intimately associated with a large portion of our history; to offer our deepest sympathy with him in his illness, and our prayers for the blessing of God upon the venerable father, who now stands, to use his own words, "just on the verge of time," in the calm trust and resignation of his soul to the will of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The verge at length was reached. This world's long week was done. On Saturday afternoon, December 5, 1874, the Sabbath and rest drew nigh. He had reached the age of ninety-five years one month and twenty-five days. He died as one might wish to die—those he loved near him, and ministering with filial devotion unto him. Appropriate notice of the event was given by the secular and religious press, extended biographical reviews were published, and sermons were preached in recognition of the abundant labors of this prince and father in our Israel. On the Wednesday following the day of his death the meeting-house of the First Baptist Church in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was filled with the friends and fellow-citizens of one who had so long dwelt among them, and to whose memory they desired to testify their respect and affection. Clergymen intimately associated with him and his family participated in the simple but impressive services. Scripture, hymns and prayer directed the thought and devotion of the solemn hour. Rev. Dr. Robinson, President of the University, in fitting eulogy reviewed the life and work of Dr. Benedict. Rev. Dr. Blodgett, pastor of the Congregational Church, spoke as the friend and neighbor of Dr. Benedict, and made tender allusion to his domestic life, sweetened as it was by the affection of his excellent wife and the love and honor of his devoted children. Rev. George Bullen, pastor of the First Church, described the closing

scenes, and alluded to the last interviews he had with him, in one of which, on being asked of the prospect before him, he repeated the stanza which he had some time previous committed to memory :

“ My heavenly home is bright and fair;
Nor pain nor death can enter there;
Its glittering towers the sun outshine;
That heavenly mansion shall be mine.”

Hundreds looked on the serene face when the service ended, and then the body was borne away to the quiet place prepared for it beside that of his life-long companion. An appropriate monument designates the place, with the inscription :

REV. DAVID BENEDICT, D. D.

Born October 10, 1779.

Died December 5, 1874.

A faithful steward of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Four sons and one daughter remain to honor his memory. By a singular providence the death of Dr. Benedict was almost immediately preceded by that of a sister to whom he was tenderly attached, and also by that of his eldest daughter, who, with single devotion, had long ministered to his wants. Thus in one week the family passed away,—the sister on Tuesday, the daughter on Wednesday, and the brother and father on Saturday. Another daughter, who had come from Illinois to bear her part in the burial of her father and sister, was suddenly overtaken with disease, and after a few days' illness followed them to the home of the blessed. There the majorities wait, but here they remain who, under the rod, cherish still the gentleness and kindness of the Heavenly Father's hand. Rev. William

C. Richards, a friend of the household, rendered into song these comforting thoughts :

PRO SOLATIO.

Stroke after stroke, blow upon blow,
Mourners, your heads and hearts lie low
 In most unwonted sorrow;
Yet God will lift them up, I know,
 In some sweet, soon to-morrow.

It cannot be that death has shut
One hallowed home and thereon put
 Of his dread power the token—
And Heaven makes no sweet answer—"But
 Death's bonds shall yet be broken."

That promise, whispered in the gloom
Which veils the dark insatiate tomb,
 Is Faith's supreme Evangel;
Look up, ye mourners, and give room
 To God's consoling angel.

The reverend head we reverent saw,
Its snows all melted in the thaw
 Of Heaven's seraphic summer:
The saints see now, though bent with awe,
 Who welcome the new comer!

His work well done, his faith long proved
Of earth—yet more of Heaven—beloved,
 He went through grace to glory;
With humble emulation moved;
 We linger o'er his story.

And the dear, tender hearts that stopt
Their beating close to his, and dropt
 Their mortal robes about him;
Gone, who their loving arms had propt,
 What could they here without him!

Their earthly house is dark to-day,
Nor sheds upon our path one ray
 From Death's funereal hatchment;
Its treasures have been borne away
 By Heaven's divine attachment.

Look up, ye weeping ones, and see
How empty is Death's victory,
 In all your lost ones capture;
Look up and wait in faith to be
 Sweet sharers in their rapture!

Here ends our grateful task, the life and the work of the good man have passed before the delighted vision. It is no hard thing now to look up and in faith to see him among the blessed, to believe that the earnest mind and the devout spirit have found satisfaction, and are forever to find delight in the contemplation and fellowship of him who is the beginning and the end of all history, in whom the eternities unite. It is easy to conceive of him already entered upon the reward of his patient toil for Christ and his cause, and to have already heard the words from the Saviour he loved, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

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The coalition of church and state (corpus Christianum) has continually had outspoken opponents since its inception in the 4th century under Constantine. All through the long medieval night of papal terror and up to the present day of accommodation and compromise, there has never been a time when the voice of dissent and nonconformity was not heard, protesting against established religion and coerced uniformity. The most prominent target of that protest has been the arrogant usurpation of Christ's Kingly Authority and Headship over His churches and the souls of men, whether that usurpation was Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or any other. As it has been, so shall it ever be. This enduring testimony of dissent, this genuine Christian nonconformity arises as the inevitable response of the Christian soul to the internal witness of the Spirit toward the truth and supreme authority of God's Word. Consequently, the origin, nature and history of Christ's churches can never be adequately discerned or explained apart from some grasp of the Biblical Truths advocated and defended throughout the history of genuine Christian Dissent and Nonconformity. As Dr. J. S. Whale, former Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Mansfield College, Oxford University and President of Cheshunt College, Cambridge University, said, *"Dissent, not only from the centralized absolutism of Rome, but also from the State establishments of Protestantism in the Old World is an historic fact of enduring influence. To account for the tradition of liberty in the 'free world' of today without reference to dissent would be to read modern history with one eye shut."*

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It is not affiliated with, or financially supported by any association, convention or particular denomination. It is financed by individual donations, foundation grants, bequeathed inheritances, annual society membership dues, but primarily by the sale of its own publications.

ISBN 1-57978-995-1



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