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Stinton's Historical Researches.

THOMAS CROSBY, brother-in-law and deacon to Stinton, has left two candid testimonies as to the source of his own well-known volumes. In his fourth volume, on page 365, he wrote of his pastor:—"He had been for some years collecting materials, in order to write an History of the English Baptists, from the beginning of Christianity down to the present times, but did not live to digest in order even those he had collected, except the Introduction, giving an account of the different opinions concerning the first rise of the Baptists, which I have published in the preface to my first volume entire." The first volume had originally been all that he contemplated, a work complete in itself; and references in these pages are to it unless the contrary is indicated. In that volume of 1738, he had made frank acknowledgment of Stinton as his chief informant, but he had rather a different idea of the scope. At page xvii he wrote:—"The design of the reverend Mr. Benjamin Stinton's History being to give an account of the English Baptists only, he thought it might not be improper, and did intend to introduce it with some account of the origin of their opinion, and who have been reported to be authors of it." It is quite possible that Stinton, like Stennett, had not thoroughly decided on his plan. And the conjecture is tempting, that Stinton had inherited, not only the vagueness of Stennett, and his general plan, but also his materials. In any case he collected many papers, as will presently appear, and on his death they passed to Crosby, as the latter avows on page i. Crosby in turn employed his spare hours, in the best manner he could, "to digest the materials in their proper order, and supply the vacancies; till at length, at the request of two worthy Baptist ministers, both since deceased [Mr. Wallin of Flower-de-luce and Mr. Arnold of Goat Street] I communicated them to the Reverend Mr. Neal . . . and he had them in his hands some years. . . . But I was surprized to see the ill use Mr. Neal made of these materials . . . in less than five pages of his third volume." Neal's work was issued in 1731-2, professing to deal only with the Puritans, Baptists were over his horizon; but Crosby was so offended at his neglect that it "revived my resolution to compleat this Treatise, in the best manner I could, for a publication." Hence Crosby's work is avowedly based upon the materials collected by Benjamin Stinton.

This is an age when we like to go back to sources. Luke's work has been dissected, with the help of one known source; Chronicles has been subjected to the same treatment; a more complicated problem fascinates many, to separate the Hexateuch into component parts by different schools or individuals, all unknown and of undeclared existence. The study of Crosby's work from this stand-point is inevitable.

We are fortunate in possessing some of the very MSS. used by him. What appears to be a revision, not far removed from the actual copy sent to the press, was discovered and studied some years ago by the present writer, who, as far as he knows, is the first to make generally known that it may be seen at Dr. Williams' Library, where other modern students have certainly studied it. It is a quarto, "tub" size, bound in parchment, and lettered on the side, No. IV; after eleven blank leaves, follow 173 pages written on both sides. They are unlined, though a red line marks off a margin on either side, the outer being occupied with dates, and the upper centre containing the page number in red. The title runs:—"A | JOURNALL | Of the Affairs | of the ANTIPÆDOBAPTISTS | Begining with the Reign of King George, whose Accession to ye Throne | was on ye First of August, 1714 | As the same was kept, | By Benjamin Stinton." The present writer proposed to make a transcript for the Baptist Union, but after copying a large part, found that Crosby had followed it so closely, that it was practically in print already. Indeed while the MS. Journal is in the first person, Crosby often contented himself with the briefest change into the third—and once forgot to make even that! Page 107 of his fourth volume is slightly varied from "On the 4th of August, A Letter Sign'd by Mr. Tonge of Salters Hall, was sent to Mr. Allen, Mr. Hodges & my self desiring us to meet &c."

Stinton proceeds to give the rules of the monthly club; but Crosby omits, and on page 109 states that it soon dwindled and came to nothing. (This was a plain error, as the Minutes prove; in 1736 the society was flourishing so far as to obtain a new folio book for its records. Crosby reflects that the society would have done better had it added laymen to its numbers; a matter on which Ministers' Fraternal have their own opinion.) But while Crosby omitted here and there, and inserted other matter, this book makes it quite clear that he was accurate in acknowledging that his work was mainly founded on Stinton, both order and words being generally retained. Pages 113, 114, 115, with their want of connection, are all due to Stinton's journal, while 117-141 are almost verbatim from it, though Crosby omits the letters that

Lowrey produced from Scotland, and moralizes for nine pages following. At page 150 he avowedly returns to his history and copies seven pages of this Journal, just inserting a fling at Neal, who was much on his nerves. A few transpositions also occur, for the sketch of Ebenezer Wilson promised by Crosby on page 160 actually occurs at the corresponding point in the Journal, and when it does come at page 326, is simply Stinton's account slightly enlarged. On page 160 Crosby introduces a correspondence with the Pennsylvanian Baptists: the Journal here has six pages blank, evidently to contain the English letter, while the signatures are given in the Journal, though Crosby omits them on page 164. The American letter he had transposed to his first volume at page 122, where it is quite out of place. These letters will prove to be of interest on another question. The Journal continues with an arbitration at Angel Alley, Thomas Ridgway's church, which Crosby omits here, as also a list of Hollis's gifts to Pennsylvania; but practically everything else is in Crosby's fourth volume, and if that volume were deprived of what is taken from the Journal, the second and third chapters would barely exist.

Now this Journal of Stinton's does not absolutely profess to be the autograph, when the title-page is closely examined; it may well be only a transcript. But it does profess to be only the fourth volume of a set. The enquiry is natural where the other three volumes are; unhappily the answer is not yet known.

The quest for more Stinton material is, however, not in vain. Dr. Angus had acquired a mass of valuable books which he bequeathed to Regent's Park College on condition (beside a pecuniary consideration) that it should be catalogued. Fulfilling this condition in 1903, Principal Gould discovered among them another small quarto, with almost exactly the same title, but varying in the last clause "Kept by me, Benja: Stinton." It proved to be the original of the copy in Dr. Williams' Library; but it also proved to contain a continuation by Crosby to February 1719, and was in the writing of the two men. Now in this autograph, the reference to the Pennsylvanian correspondence includes a statement that Stinton had put a copy of it "in my Collection of Historical Matters."

From these phenomena in the Williams Library and the Angus Library, the present writer and Mr. Champlin Burrage independently turned attention to a third manuscript now the property of Principal Gould, having been copied by and for his father, George Gould of Norwich. After careful study of this, the important parts of this were copied by the present writer line for line early in 1905. On the first page is the title:—"A

REPOSITORY of Divers Historical Matters relating—to the English Antipedobaptists. Collected from Original Papers—or Faithful Extracts.—Anno 1712—I began to make this Collection in Jan: 1710-11.— Each student at once inferred, on finding that number 26 in the collection was this very American correspondence, that the "I" of the Repository was Stinton.

Confirmation of this theory poured in abundantly. The collector was evidently a Baptist, for the material is not such as an opponent would select and preserve. He was a London Baptist, since except for one document dealing with Keach and another dealing with his friends at Aylesbury, the horizon is London; the exceptions point direct to Keach's circle. In the years 1710-1712 there were only two London Baptists who were betraying any interest in history, now that Stennett was dead; the other man, James Richardson by name, was confining his attention to the history of the General Baptists, whereas this collection relates to both denominations; Stinton has placed himself on record as trying to bring both together. Stinton had received a poor education, corrected by private study in languages; this manuscript has just those slips in grammar and spelling, when the collector himself furnishes titles, that accord with such a limited education. The twenty-third document tells of a church often confounded with the Independent church in Deadman's Lane, and the collector shows how it became extinct in 1705: Stinton helped baptize the Independent minister in 1715, and his own funeral sermon was preached in that building: Crosby was at some pains to show the absurdity of confusing the two churches.

Further, we can compare the sources acknowledged by the anonymous collector in the titles printed below, with the sources available to Stinton, and note frequent correspondences. Documents one, two, and four were obtained from Richard Adams: Adams was not only a member of the same Fraternal, but was associated with Stinton in several exceptional occasions. Number three is not acknowledged, but points to the London Particular churches, including that church of which Adams was the pastor. Number five is taken from Strype. In these days a Londoner might be content with knowing that Strype was ready in the Museum whenever wanted, but there was no such public library then, and a Baptist who got the loan for a time might be glad to extract at once a paragraph. The same remark holds as to number six, taken from Wall's History of Infant Baptism, published in 1705, and D'Assigny's Mystery of Anabaptism Unmasked, published in 1709. Numbers eight and nine are from Tombes'

Review, a book of the previous century by a learned clergyman who adopted Baptist principles. Number ten from Edwards, eleven, thirteen, sixteen, twenty, from Fuller's Church History, twelve from Burnet's second volume published in 1681, are all from rare or expensive books which Stinton might borrow, but might not care to buy. Number fourteen is from Lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, "Vol 3. p.625." below which reference is another, "Fo. Edit: 1719. Vo. 3. p. 359." Now the folio edition was apparently (not certainly) published after Stinton's death, but the first reference is to the original edition of 1674 issued during his life time. Number fifteen is from Grantham who published in 1678; as in the case of number three, the passage is not extracted; obviously this book was on the collector's shelves: now the Confession and Grantham are exactly the sort of treatise that a Baptist would procure. Number seventeen is from a book published in 1676 by Edward Hutchinson. Number eighteen is quoted from Francis Bampfield's biography published in 1681. Number twenty-one is "Taken from Manuscript found among Mr. Keach's Papers after his Death, which as he informed me when alive &c." Now Stinton was Keach's colleague and son-in-law. Number twenty-two is taken from the London Gazette, which mis-spells the name of "Stanet": a marginal note corrects this to Stennett, exactly the sort of note Stinton could add. Number twenty-three is taken out of the book of a Southwark church which disbanded in 1705, some going to one church and some to another: Stinton was evidently in a position to get the loan of that book, he was a friend and neighbour of one of the pastors mentioned. Number twenty-four "I received from Mrs. Bowles, daughter to Mary Jackman . . . Apr: 10. 1715." Now George Jackman, a Baptist of the same type as those with whom the story is concerned, in 1715 was Elder at Lyndhurst, and was in London during June at the General Baptist Assembly, meeting Richardson the other Baptist antiquary. There is no direct contact of Mrs. Bowles and Stinton yet proved, but they moved in the same orbit, while Keach was another obvious medium through whom they might be acquainted, as his own punishment was akin to that of the twelve Aylesbury Baptists, in time and place and reason. Number twenty-five is a letter of 1651 signed by thirteen men including Thomas Patient, a friend of Kiffin's, and Edward Hutchinson, the source of number seventeen. Number twenty-six is the Philadelphia letter of 1715, mentioning the work of Elias Keach in America, and a previous letter to B[enjamin] K[each] replied to by Mr. B. Stinton. Number twenty-seven is a reference to the 1656 Confession, which is not copied: this is again the sort

of pamphlet that a Particular Baptist might be inclined to buy. Number twenty-eight is a General Baptist document of 1660, with no source acknowledged: but Adam Taylor refers to it at I. 188 as incorporated in a book of that date by Henry Jessey: thus it falls into the same group as documents one and four, ultimately due to him. Number twenty-nine is really extracted from a book by John Robinson of Leyden, published in 1614. Number thirty appears to be taken from the reply by J. Peirce of Exeter to a book by Dr. W. Nichols: the reply was issued in Latin during 1710, and in English during 1717.

The Gould manuscript contains two other collections of Baptist material, which however are not to our immediate purpose, the first thirty being obviously one collection, and numbered consecutively, unlike the remainder. It is these thirty which were entitled the Repository. Several of them are from people well known to Stinton; several are from books printed before his death but too expensive for a Baptist minister to purchase easily; all of them are from sources available to Stinton.

But when we note that practically all the thirty numbered documents in this Repository (to say nothing of some unnumbered sections following in the Gould manuscript) are worked up into Crosby's history, in just the same fashion that the avowed Journal of Stinton was worked up; when we observe that these cover 138 foolscap pages of small writing, and so bulk far more largely than that fourth volume of the Journal; when we remember that Crosby acknowledged he was indebted to Stinton as the collector of the materials of which a great part of his treatise was formed, and did not acknowledge any other source for his first volume—then we see the two ends of the argument meet, and Stinton to be undoubtedly the collector of the thirty numbered documents.

Meanwhile Mr. Burrage found among George Gould's books an anonymous quarto written in two hands, containing biographies of eminent Baptists, of which most were worked up into Crosby's history. From various considerations he identified the two hands as Stinton and Crosby. But the former referred to a certain letter signed H.H., and says, "I have therefore put it into ye Collection of Originals Numb: 7." As the seventh document in the Repository is this very letter, Mr. Burrage came to the same obvious conclusion that the collector was Stinton.

Every condition meets in this man, and no other name has been suggested as a possible collector. Hence it may be regarded as established that Stinton not only kept a Journal, of which part still remains to be discovered, but also in 1710-1 commenced to gather historical matters, which he began to copy out in 1712.