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The Spanish Baptist Churches.

REQUESTED by the editor to write an article about the Baptist work in Spain, I hasten to comply with the request for the benefit of the beloved readers of the periodical. I shall try to give an exact idea of the origin and development of the Spanish Baptist churches.

The Baptist work in Spain is old, but has not always been pushed with the same faithfulness, and for this reason the number of actual members is not larger than it is. To-day we have a thousand members in our churches. Nevertheless, we are not satisfied with this number. The Baptist message is well received in Spain. This has been recognised even by our brethren of other denominations, and there would be many thousands of Baptists in Spain if the country had always been worked with the same constancy. The Spaniard who leaves the Roman Church abhors clericalism. The ritualistic service does not impress him. The Baptist churches with their simple services, their baptism which speaks to the conscience, do impress, and these give a light which cannot be confused by a people which have seen the deception of Rome. The work has always been done in sincerity, by simple methods, for the bringing of souls to Christ; there have been good results in Spain. Two examples may be given.

The Old Baptist Mission of Catalonia. This work was carried on by Mr. Henry Lund and his Spanish helpers from 1890 to 1900. An itinerant work in the towns gave origin to a good number of small churches with two or three hundred conversions. These were apostolical conversions of simple men and women, people who worked for and gave all to Christ. To walk from five to seven hours in order to hear a sermon was no great sacrifice for those veterans of the faith, some of whom I have had the privilege to know.

But the opening of new fields with larger opportunities and greater liberty to preach the gospel diverted the attention of the mission board which sustained the work in Catalonia. The small, poor, and isolated churches could hardly maintain themselves, but they continued several years with the work of one native, Don Gabriel Anglada. This brother was unable to do the work he desired because of delicate health brought on by a previous imprisonment in a damp cell, when the charge against him had been the preaching of the gospel. On the death of this

self-denying worker, his nephew by marriage, Don Ambrosio Celma, took charge of the work which has grown much in these last years. Señor Celma has had a special tact in animating and instructing his young members in order that they might help him in the Lord's work. With only his books and advice, he was able to produce a good number of apt workers for the work, until the opening of the Baptist Seminary in 1923 which came to our help.

The Swedish Mission in Valencia. This work was begun by a Swedish missionary, Mr. Charles Haglund, and was continued by Mr. John Uhr. The early history of this Mission is a series of struggles and difficulties, as in all parts of fanatical Spain. In the Convention last year the older brethren in Valencia related to us how fanatical women from the balconies of their houses threw dirty water and other dirty things on the missionaries as they passed in the street. Thus was planted the large Baptist Church of Valencia, which in 1908 inaugurated a beautiful chapel in the centre of the city. Churches were planted in several towns of the province.

The New Baptist Era in Spain. In 1922 the Board of the Southern Baptist Convention assumed the task of evangelising the Iberian Peninsula. The old Mission of Catalonia, the Mission of Valencia, and the new churches of Madrid and Alicante founded by another Swedish missionary in 1918 and 1920, formed the Spanish Evangelical Baptist Union. We can call this act the beginning of the "New Era" for the Baptists in Spain. The larger churches which compose the Union are eight.

The church of Barcelona, with one hundred and fifty members, under the care of the pastor who served so long in the Mission of Catalonia, and who is the secretary of the Baptist Mission in Spain. The church pays all of its expenses, including the rent for the chapel, which is quite a sum in a city like Barcelona. The members are evangelising some districts of Barcelona by holding weekly services in private homes and in a small hall.

The church of Tarrasa, which began in 1923 with sixteen members, and grew until it had one hundred in 1926. The growth called for the building of a house of worship, and we made it with Spanish money. To-day we have here one hundred and fifty members. Among them are some remarkable cases showing the power of God. One case was that of an intelligent anarchist who came to church in order to dispute the existence of God. To-day this man is one of the leaders of our young people. Another member studied five years for the priesthood. One young Mohammedan, the son of a leading family in Con-

stantinople, was offered exceptional advantages by the Romanists if he would let them baptise him, but he did not care to leave the religion of his fathers until he later heard the gospel in our church and was converted; then he wished to be baptised and that without any material inducement naturally.

Sabadell. This church was a small spark, still burning, from the old Baptist Mission when Señor Celma took charge of the Mission in Catalonia in 1914. To-day the church has ninety members, and has a spacious hall. This steadily-growing church has for its pastor the celebrated young poet Don Antonio Almudevar.

Figueras and Palamos. These two churches are very near the French border. The pastor in Figueras, Señor Muniesa, besides pastoring his church and two neighbouring towns, makes a monthly trip to France that he might evangelise thousands of Spaniards residing there. We have three groups of Spanish Baptists in the south of France.

Valencia. There are in this city two important Baptist churches each having one hundred members.

There are also good churches in other towns. In Carlet there was inaugurated last year a beautiful temple built by the brethren of the church. A curious and worthy thing to be noted is that all the water used in the construction of the church was carried in jars by the women of the church, for there is little water in the town. In this way they saved quite an expense, as all the cement blocks were made by the members.

Alicante. This is another city along the Mediterranean coast where there is a Baptist church of some ninety members. There are mission stations in neighbouring towns which are visited by the pastor of the city.

Albacete. The city is located between Alicante and Madrid with a church of some forty members, under the care of Don Francisco Pais, a Spaniard educated in Cuba. Lately there has been an awakening among the young people, resulting in conversions.

Madrid. The capital of Spain has a church with more than a hundred members and two chapels. Both chapels are insufficient for the needs of the growing church. The central hall especially is very small, because of which the church has begun a subscription list for funds to build, and already 15,000 pesetas have been collected. Although it is impossible to do anything with this amount (say £500), the members are working and trusting the Lord.

The Baptist Mission has suffered by the last financial crisis of the Mission. Five pastors had to take up secular work, and the Seminary had to close because of the lack of funds. Also

we lack liberty in Spain. There is less liberty in Spain than in Italy.

Recently the Church of *Badajoz*, supported by the Pioneer Mission of England under the care of D. Lorenzo Elder, has joined the Spanish Baptist Convention.

The Spanish Gospel Mission is working also with great sympathy with Baptists, in provinces of central Spain where the Union has no station. The Headquarters of the Mission is *Valdepeñas*, where is a very important church. The Director is D. Percy Buffard.

In spite of the difficulties it is pleasing to us to see that the Spanish people receive the gospel. Continually souls are joining the ranks of Baptist believers, and frankly the future presents itself with optimism.

Pray for Spain.

SAMUEL VILA.

PEN PICTURES OF LONDON YEARLY MEETING,
1789-1806.

IN these 120 pages, Dr. Norman Penney has well edited the notes of Richard Cockin and James Jenkins. Scarcely any other body of Free Churchmen had such annual meetings, and none had its proceedings so well recorded. We may be thankful for the unofficial reporters who set down the opposition to a Women's Yearly Meeting because "it will be giving to one body, two heads"; and the way it was conciliated by throwing out "a tub to a whale." Fancy a Baptist minute-secretary to-day being so affected by a discussion as to weep and "defuse a tending influence over the Meeting"! Yet even in those days there were young Friends in the gallery needing reproof for behaving in a light unbecoming manner. The original pictures are embellished by the notes of Dr. Penney, who seems to know intimate details of every Friend at every period, were he a shepherd, a lessee of Castle Chambord for a boarding-school, or the inventor of bathing machines at Margate. This part and its successor may be had from Friends' House for ten shillings the pair, now.