

A Historical Survey of Baptism*

(as pertaining to the mode of baptism and its ramifications)

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There is no instance of infant baptism recorded in the New Testament, either by Jesus, the Apostles, or any other Christian. This is generally conceded by scholars.

Dollinger, a Catholic scholar, Professor of Church History in the University of Munich says: "There is no proof or hint in the New Testament that the apostles baptized infants or ordered them to be baptized" (John Joseph Ignatius Dollinger, *The First Age of the Church*, II. 184).

Dr. Edmund de Pressense, a French Senator and Protestant, says: "No positive fact sanctioning the practice (of infant baptism) can be adduced from the New Testament; the historical proofs alleged are in no way conclusive" (Pressense, *Early Years of Christianity*, 376. London, 1870).

The form of baptism was dipping, or an immersion in water. John Baptized in the river Jordan (Mark 1:5); and he baptized in Aenon near to Salim "because there was much water there" (John 3:23). Jesus was baptized in the Jordan (Mark 1:9), and he "went into the water" and he "came up out of the water" (Matthew 3:16). The symbolical passages (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12), which describe baptism as a burial and resurrection make it certain that immersion was the New Testament act of baptism.

This, indeed, is the meaning of the Greek word baptizen. The word is defined by Liddell and Scott, the secular Greek lexicon used in all colleges and universities, "to dip in or under the water." In the lexicon of J. H. Thayer, the standard New Testament lexicon, the word is defined as an "immersion in water." All scholarship confirms this view. Prof. R. C. Jebb, Litt. D., University of Cambridge, says: "I do not know whether there is any authoritative Greek-English lexicon which makes the word to mean 'sprinkle' or to 'pour.' I can only say that such a meaning never belongs to the word in classical Greek"

Dr. Dosker, Professor of Church History, Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, says:

Every candid historian will admit that the Baptist have, both philologically and historically, the better of the argument, as to the prevailing mode of baptism. The word Baptizo means immersion, both in classical and Biblical Greek, except where it is manifestly used in a tropical sense (Dosker, *The Dutch Anabaptist*, 176, Philadelphia, 1921).

Nothing is more certain than that the New Testament churches uniformly practiced baptism by immersion, and there is no evidence of anyone but regenerated persons being baptized.

Second and Third Centuries

Believer's baptism continued to prevail in the churches. Infant baptism was of slow growth.

The Apostolic Fathers require that faith shall precede baptism and hence they know nothing of infant baptism. Dr. Charles W. Bennett, Professor of Historical Theology in Garrett Biblical Institute, Methodist, says: "The Apostolic Fathers contain no positive information relative to the practice of the church of their time respecting infant baptism." (Bennett, *Christian Archaeology*, 391. New York, 1889).

The appearance of infant baptism was largely unknown until late in the second century, or early in the third. It became popular with the rise of the state church, after Constantine, around 312 A. D.; however, it was the fifth century before it came to be in general use.

In New Testament times baptism had been celebrated in a very simple and straightforward way. Then in the next three or four centuries of Christian history, the rite of baptism developed from a very simple performing of the baptismal washing into an elaborate mystery drama. This process reached its culmination in the elaborate paschal baptisms of the fourth and fifth centuries. . . . The candidates for baptism came to the church to recite the Creed; then that night the paschal vigil began. Toward dawn those who were to be baptized were taken into the baptistery, a building especially designed for baptism. The bishop consecrated the water of the font with a long prayer. . . The candidates disrobed, they were anointed with oil, and then, after renouncing the Devil and all his works and confessing their faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they were immersed in the baptismal font (Huges Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century*, 1992).

As we see in this description, this was a baptism of adults, upon a confession of faith, and by immersion.

Until the Reformation

There were those who refused to become part of the state church. Soon, these became the target of persecution from the early Catholic Church. They are known by various names: Montanus, Novatians, Cathari, and Donatists. Among the beliefs of these churches were: a regenerated church membership, that is, only those who had repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, could be

members of these churches. As well as, believers baptism by immersion. They would re-baptize any who were baptized as infants and had come to join themselves to these churches. Because they would not accept infant baptism, they were call Anabaptist.

The state had previously persecuted Christians because they would not conform to the state religion. After Constantine, the state religion was Catholic Christianity and the church began to persecute pagans and non-conformist Christians. In fact, 40,000,000 Anabaptist would be killed before the Reformation, by the state church.

Of the history of these groups of Christians, we have little but what their enemies wrote of them. When they were found, they were killed and their writings burned, thus most of what they wrote about themselves is lost. However, some of their writings have survived, we will give a couple of examples that bear on our discussion.

The law and discipline we have received from our Master will not appear contrary to the Gospel or apostolic institutions, if carefully looked into. This discipline consists in leaving the world, in bridling carnal concupiscence, in providing a livelihood by the labor of our hands, in hurting nobody, and affording our charity to all who are zealous in the prosecution of this our design. . . .

But if any man shall say, that some sacrament lies hid in baptism, the force of that is taken off from three causes: the first is, Because the reprobate life of ministers can afford no saving remedy to the persons to be baptized. The second, Because whatsoever sins are renounced at the font, are afterwards taken up again in life and practice. The third, Because a strange will, a strange faith, and a strange confession do not seem to belong to, or to be of advantage to a little child, who neither wills nor runs, who knows nothing of faith, and is altogether ignorant of his own good and salvation, in which there can be no desire of regeneration and from whom no confession of faith can be expected (Allix, *The Ecclesiastical Churches*, 104).

In the beginning of Christianity there was no baptizing of children: and their forefathers practiced no such thing and we do from our hearts acknowledge that baptism is a washing which is performed in water, and doth hold out the washing of the soul from sin. (Mehring, *Der heiligen Tauff Historie*, ii, 738). -This confession is credited to the "Paulicians", A. D. 1024.

The great American, used by God in the first "Great Awaking," Jonathan Edwards, says of these Christians:

In every age of this dark time, there appeared particular persons in all parts of Christendom, who bore a testimony against the corruptions and tyranny of the church of Rome. There is no one age of antichrist, even in the darkest time of all, but ecclesiastical historians mention a great many by name, who manifested an abhorrence of the Pope and his idolatrous worship. God was pleased to maintain an uninterrupted succession of witnesses, through the whole time, in Germany, France, Britain, and other countries, as historians demonstrate, and mention them by name, and give an account of the testimony which they held. Many of them were private persons, and many of them ministers, and some magistrates and persons of great distinction. And there were numbers in every age, who were persecuted and put to death for this testimony.

Even in these "dark ages," God was not without a witness. He had thousands who had not bowed their knee to the Church of Rome. Though Baptist are usually considered "Protestant," this is not a true description of them for they never were part of the Catholic Church. Their aim was never just to reform the existing state church, for they were patterned after the New Testament Church, composed only of those who had been baptized and gathered themselves together as believers.

The Reformation

When the reformation started, these persecuted and despised Christians, joined Luther and the other reformers; however, this was not long lasted. It soon become evident that the reformers only wanted to reform the Catholic church, and not return to the New Testament model.

Luther and Zwingli were magisterial Reformers-that is, they introduced reform in cooperation with the magistrates or rulers. They did not wish to break the link between the church and the state. Their aim was not to found a new church but to reform the old one. While there was reform of doctrine, the ideal of the state church, to which all citizens belonged, remained. But there were others for whom this was only half a reformation. . . . The "evangelicals" were the largest and most important group. They desired a more through reform in the light of the Bible. They rejected the idea of a state church and infant baptism, which inevitably accompanied it. Their opponents seized on their practice of "rebaptizing" those baptized in infancy and called them "Anabaptist" or "Rebaptizers". This was a convenient label as rebaptism was already a capital offense. The Anabaptist were bitterly persecuted [this was by Protestant churches] and largely exterminated, but their ideas survived and have become steadily more influential. (Tony Lane, Christian Thought, 121, 1992).

The word Reformation is usually referred to the Lutheran movement, the word Reformed to the Zwinglian and Calvinist. The word "restored" would be the most appropriate to apply to those who by opponents were called Anabaptists. Their great word was "Restitution." Much more drastically than any of their contemporaries they searched the Scriptures in order to recover the pattern of the early church. (Roland H. Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 95, 1952).

Some of the reformers at first, agreed with the Anabaptist, but later changed their minds, when it became apparent that there could be no state church without it. Not only did they change their position on infant baptism, they also had anyone drowned that refused to have infants baptized, or rebaptized those who had been baptized as infants.

In the early years of the reformation, Zwingli worked hand in hand with a group of radicals-Conrad Gerbel, Felix Manz and others. They maintained a common front until 1523. But the issues of the state church and infant baptism divided them. It seems that Zwingli himself opposed infant baptism for a time-but drew back when he realized that it is essential if a state church is to be maintained. The radicals' opposition to infant baptism hardened and in 1525, after a public disputation with Zwingli, they began to (re)baptize believers. The town council responded by ordering the exile of all those rebaptized, and in the following year the death penalty was introduced for rebaptizing. In January 1527 Felix Manz was executed by drowning. (Tony Lane).

This is also seen in Germany, with Luther. At first, he had the following of the common people, but later they turned from him.

. . .The peasants and artisans . . . looked no more to Luther for guidance. Instead, great numbers of them joined one or other of the numerous little sects which now formed as independent groups apart from both the Catholic and Lutheran churches. Luther's example had been more potent than he could have wished, especially now that he was the active head of a triumphant state church. In the days when he was in rebellion against the Catholic Church, he had confidently asserted the right of the individual man to interpret the Bible and religion generally in the light of his own reason and conscience. And though he later denied that right to others in practice, and though the Lutheran Church, like all other Protestant state churches, persecuted dissenting opinion. . . .

In Germany the sectarian revolt took a variety of form. . . . they all shared a few common characteristics, and since most of them refused to recognize the validity of infant baptism and insisted on rebaptizing their converts, they were generally known as Anabaptist. . . . They refused obedience to the state church and sometimes to the state; they founded their doctrine, whatever it might be, on a

literal, unhistorical interpretation of the Bible with a view to restoring the simplicity of primitive Christianity; and they were cruelly persecuted everywhere by Catholic and Protestant state alike. Ignorant they may have been, but they were deeply pious and their history is ennobled by an inspiring record of heroic constancy in the face of persecution. Despite every effort of the persecuting state churches, they continued to exist, and their modern descendants are to be found in the Baptist, Mennonite, Moravian, and other churches. (Wallace C. Ferguson, A Survey of European Civilization).

The Anabaptist were guided only by Scripture. It was their first and their final place of appeal. The Reformers cried, "The Scriptures alone" but in infant baptism, they could only appeal to tradition. In fact, the Roman Catholics would throw this back at them, "If you argue that only the Scriptures and not tradition are to be our guide; then why do you not agree with the Anabaptist?"

To attempt to refute the charges made against them, the Anabaptist (the -Ana- was soon dropped and they were called Baptist) published a Confession.

The early Anabaptist leaders had little opportunity to write. Most of them survived only a few years, on the run. The most important and authoritative statement of early Anabaptist faith is found in the Scheitheim Confession. A number of Anabaptist leaders met in February 1527 at Scleitheim, not far from Schaffhausen. They produced seven articles of faith. The main author appears to have been Michael Sattler, a former prior who spent some time at both Zurich and Strassburg (where he discussed with Bucer and Capito). In May 1527 he was apprehended by the Roman Catholic authorities and burnt at Rottenburg, near Tubingen. His wife was drowned a few days later.

The articles are not a comprehensive statement of faith, but cover the main points of difference between the Anabaptist and the Reformers. . . .

1. Baptism is not for infants, but for those who have already consciously decided to be Christians.
2. Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with him in death, so that they may be resurrected with him, and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope. In this you have the foundation and the testimony of the Apostles (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Acts 2,8,16,19).
3. Baptized believers who fall into sin and refuse correction are to be banned from fellowship.

4. The breaking of bread is a fellowship meal in remembrance of Jesus Christ and is only for baptized disciples.

5. Believers are to be separate from this wicked world-which includes the Roman and Protestant state churches as well as military service. Pastors are to be chosen from men of good repute in the world. They are to be supported by their flock.

6. The [magistrate's] sword is ordained by God to be used by worldly magistrates to punish the wicked. In the church, the only weapon to be used is excommunication. Jesus Christ forbids the use of violence so the Christian cannot accept the office of magistrate.

7. It is wrong for Christians to swear oaths.

One of the few Anabaptist leaders to have a lengthy ministry (25 years) was Menno Simons (founder of the Mennonites). This allowed him to write extensively. These are some excerpts from his writings concerning baptism:

We have not a single command in the Scriptures that infants are to be baptized, or that the apostles practiced it, therefore we confess with good sense that infant baptism is nothing but human invention and notion, a perversion of the ordinances of Christ, a manifold abomination standing in the holy place where it ought not to stand. (Foundation of Christian Doctrine).

It sounded very strange to me to hear of a second baptism. I examined the Scriptures diligently and pondered them earnestly, but could find no report of infant baptism.

. . . We are informed by the historians, ancient and modern, also by the decrees, that baptism was changed both as to its mode and time of administering. In the beginning of the holy church, persons were dipped in common water on their first profession, upon their own faith, according to the Scriptures.

In commenting on their persecution, he said:

Some they have executed by hanging, some they have tortured with inhuman tyranny, and afterwards choked with cords at the stake. Some they roasted and burned alive. Some they have killed with the sword and given them to the fowls of the air to devour. Some they have cast to the fishes. . . . Others wander about here and there, in want, homelessness, and affliction, in mountains and deserts, in holes and cave of the earth. They must flee with their wives and little children

from one country to another, from one city to another. They are hated, abused, slandered and lied about by all men.

After recording the deaths of 2173 of the brethren, another Anabaptist chronicler proceeds:

No human being was able to take away out of their hearts what they had experienced. . . . The fire of God burned within them. They would die ten deaths rather than forsake the divine truth.

They had drank of the water which is flowing from God's sanctuary, yea of the water of life. Their tent they had pitched not upon the earth, but in eternity. Their faith blossomed like a lily, their loyalty as a rose, their piety and candor as the flower of the garden of God. The angel of the Lord battled for them that they could not be deprived of the helmet of salvation. Therefore they have borne all torture and agony without fear. The things of this world they counted only as shadows. They were thus drawn unto God that they knew nothing, sought nothing, desired nothing, loved nothing but God alone. Therefore they had more patience in their suffering than their enemies in tormenting them.

This Anabaptist hymn describes their situation:

Sheep without shepherd running blind

Are scattered into flight.

Our house and home are left behind,

Like birds we fly by night,

And like birds, naught overhead

Save wind and rain and weather,

In rocks and caves our bed.

We creep for refuge under trees.

They hunt us with the bloodhound.

They show us off to everyone

As if the peace we'd broken,

As sheep for slaughter looked upon,
As heretics bespoken.
Some in heavy chains have lain
And rotting there have stayed.
Some upon the trees were slain,
Choked and hacked and flayed.
Drownings by stealth and drownings plain
For matron and for maid
Fearlessly the truth they spoke
And were not ashamed.
Christ is the way and Christ the life
Was the word proclaimed.
Precious in Thy sight, O God,
The dying of a saint.
Our comfort this beneath the rod
Whenever we are faint,
In Thee, O God, In Thee alone
Are earthly peace and rest.
Who hope on Thee, eternally
Are sustained and blessed.

Commenting on the Anabaptist, Cardinal Hosius, President of the Council of Trent and a Catholic historian said:

If you behold their cheerfulness in suffering persecution, the Anabaptist run before all the heretics. If you have regard to the number, it is like that in multitude

they would swarm above all others, if they were not grievously plagued and cut off with the knife of persecution. If you have an eye to the outward appearance of godliness, both the Lutherans and Zuinglians must needs grant that they pass them. If you be moved by the boasting of the Word of God, these be no less bold than Calvin to preach, and their doctrine must stand aloft above all the glory of the world, must stand invincible above all power, because it is not their word, but the word of the living God.

It was freely admitted by all that the lives of these rebapizers were lived in true humility and the holiness of their character was far beyond either the Catholics or Protestants. In fact, one of the ways which they gave themselves away was the piety of their lives. When someone was marked by a Godly life, the authorities would suspect them of being an Anabaptist and begin an investigation. It was for the crimes of a Godly life and holding to Scripture alone that sent so many to a cruel death.

The Reformation brought a much needed doctrinal reformation through the Protestant Churches, but retained the state church and its intolerance of any that disagreed with it. Thus, the despised and persecuted Anabaptist would continue to be followers only of the Lamb; and would fellowship in His reproach. What began with such high hopes for the Anabaptist, turned out to be more of the same. Though they would suffer, God would use their sufferings for His glory. History is only now beginning to view them through eyes other than that of their enemies.

And others had trial of [cruel] mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and [in] mountains, and [in] dens and caves of the earth. . . Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [us], and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

(Hebrews 11:36-38: 12:1)

The Reformation Period in England

England was also going through a reformation. The Catholic Church held sway in England until one of Henry VIII's marriages was annulled by the Pope, this led him to break away from the Roman Church and set up his own Church-the Church of England. This was a state church and retained much of the Catholic tradition, as well as Calvinistic Protestantism. One of the few things these two traditions had in common was the hatred of the Baptist.

The History of the Baptist of England, in the times of Henry VIII, is written in blood. He had scarcely come to the throne before proceedings were begun against them, and they were persecuted to the death. (John T. Christian).

Many of the Baptist in Holland migrated to England during this time.

The details are all gone, their names are gone. Poor Hollanders they were and that is all. Scarcely the fact seems worth the mentioning, so shortly is it told in a passing paragraph. For them no Europe was agitated, no courts were ordered in mourning, no papal hearts trembled with indignation. At their death the world looked on complacent, indifferent, or exulting. Yet here, too, out of twenty-five poor men and women were found fourteen who by no terror of stake or torture could be tempted to say they believed what they did not believe. History has for them no word of praise; yet they, too, were not giving their blood in vain. Their lives might have been as useless as the lives of most of us. In their deaths they assisted to pay the purchase for England's freedom. (Froude, History of England)

The above paragraph was written about a group of 25 Baptist that had come to England from Holland. Fourteen of them were condemned; a man and a woman were burnt at Smithfield; the other twelve of them were sent to other towns, there to be burnt.

The reformation in England ebbed and flowed; when the monarch was a Protestant (Henry VIII-1509-1547, Edward VI-1547-1553, Elizabeth-1558-1603, James I-1603-1625), the reformation flourished; but when the monarch was Catholic (Mary Tudor-1553-1558), it struggled and many were martyred. However, all of these rulers persecuted those who rejected infant baptism and practiced believer's baptism.

Let the punishment bear upon it the print of the sin, for as these sectaries drew one another into their errors, so also into the gulfe; and as they drown men spiritually by rebaptizing, and so profaning the holy sacrament, as also they were drowned corporally. In the year of our Lord 1539, two Anabaptists were burnt beyond Southwark (Featley, The Dippers Dipt).

"Only two Baptist were burnt during the reign of Edward VI . . . The first to be burnt in this reign was Joan of Kent, who was probably a member of the church at Eythorne. She was a pious and worthy woman, and a great reader of the Scriptures. She was arrested in the year 1548 on the charge of heresy and she was burnt April 30, the following year." (J. T. Christian) We have more information about the second martyred Baptist-George van Pare, who was by profession a surgeon.

He suffered with great constancy of mind, and kissed the stake and faggots that were to burn him. Of this Pare I find a popish writer saying, that he was a man of

most wonderful strict life, that he used to eat not more than once in two days, and before he would eat he would lie sometimes in his devotions prostrate on the ground (Burnet, History of the Reformation, II. i. 112).

Mary Tudor, known as "Bloody Mary" took the throne on July 6, 1553 and died some five years later (Nov. 17, 1558). Her first order of business was to re-establish the Roman Catholic religion. Whereas, both Henry VIII and Edward VI both burnt the Baptist, she burnt all who opposed Rome, Baptist and Reformers alike.

The exact number of the martyrs among the Baptist, at this period, probably will never be known, but the large majority of those who suffered were of this communion. William Clark recently investigated this subject and gave the following testimony: "A considerable proportion of those who suffered under Mary were Anabaptist" (Clark, The Anglican Reformation, 328). This conservative statement is borne out amply by the original documents. (J. T. Christian).

Elizabeth followed Mary Tudor in 1558 and died March 24, 1603. She seemed to not be firm in her treatment of religion and could not be depended to follow a constant policy. "Although the Roman Catholics were constantly plotting against her throne and even her life, she treated them with great leniency. With the Baptist it was not so. From the beginning she was their enemy, and her hostility continued with increasing violence to the end of her life." (J. T. Christian). It was in the last years of her life that were the hardest for the Baptist. She had chosen John Whitgrift as Archbishop of Canterbury. This was a man consumed with making the Church of England the only Church on English soil.

Whitgrift choked the prisons with Baptist. He regarded the Baptist as heretics beyond any of his time. The doctrines of these men were fatal to the idea of a National Church. There could be no National Church if infants were not to be baptized, if priest did not by the magic of baptism make all children Christians. He made the pulpits ring against the Baptist. He preached in St. Paul, November 17, 1583, against the Anabaptist as "our wayward and conceited persons." The consequence was that some Baptist went to foreign lands, but the most hid themselves or under the cloak of conformity waited for better times. (John T. Christian)

After the death of Elizabeth, James I came to the throne and would reign for 22 years (1603-1625). During this time, the Baptist as well as others would gain constitutional and religious liberties never before seen in England. However, this did not come quickly nor easily, for many Baptist would yet add their sufferings to the price paid to purchase England's liberty.

The reign of James I was a wild time, an age of ceaseless conflict all around. The human mind, awakening from the sleep of Feudalism and the dark ages, fastened on all of the problems inherent in human society problems which even

at the present day are not half solved. In England during the seventeenth century, men were digging down to the root of things. They were asking, What is the ultimate authority in human affairs? Upon what does government rest? and, For what purpose does it exist? (Arber, The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers).

In 1610 the Baptist petitioned the House of Lords for wider liberty of conscience and greater privileges, but were rejected. They then submitted a "humble supplication to the King's majesty," titled Persecution for Religion judged and condemned, in 1615. They reprinted it in 1620 and 1622. In this epistle they say:

Yet our most humble desire of our Lord the King, is, That he would not give his power to force his faithful subjects to dissemble to believe as he believes, in the lest measure of persecution; though it is no small persecution to live many years in filthy prisons, in hunger, cold, idleness, divided from wife, family, calling, left in continual miseries and temptations, so as death would be to many less persecution; seeing that his majesty confesseth, that to change the mind must be the work of God. And of the lord bishops we desire, that they would a little leave off persecuting those that cannot believe as they, till they have proved that God is well pleased therewith, and the souls of such as submit are in safety from condemnation; let them prove this, and we protest that we will forever submit to them, and so will thousands; and therefore if there be any spark of grace in them, let them set themselves to give satisfaction by word or writing, or both. But if they will not, but continue their cruel courses as they have done, let them remember that they must come to judgment, and have the abominations set in order before them.

By Christ's unworthy witnesses, his majesty's faithful subjects commonly (but most falsely) called Anabaptist.

It was during this time (early 1600's) that the seeds of change were planted for those who rejected infant baptism, as Edward B. Cole says in The Baptist Heritage:

In 1606 a young man in poor health came to the home of separatists Thomas and Jane Helwys. He was made welcome and considered part of their family. The young man was John Smyth, an intellectually curious Cambridge graduate with a deep commitment to the authority of the Bible.

In 1600 he had been appointed pastor of the Lincoln Church, but because of his nonconformist views and life-style he had been removed from his position by the authorities. He had agonized for months in prayer and study prior to his decision, broken in body and spirit, he had sought fellowship with Thomas and Jane Hewys who were meeting with other families for Bible study and prayer in Gainsborough.

A few miles down the road, in the manor of Scrooby, there was yet another group of Separatists who felt close affinity to their friends in Gainsborough. Within the Scrooby congregation were William Bradford, William Brewster and John Robinson.

At this time King James I was zealously carrying out his threat: "I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of this land." The growing violence, persecution, and harassment caused the Separatists to despair for their existence. They were indeed "harried" from the land.

Helwys and Smyth, harassed and wearied, emigrated to Holland in 1609 with their small congregation of 37 souls. . . .

It was not long after the Gainsborough congregation under Helwys and Smyth had emigrated to Amsterdam that the Scrooby congregation under John Robinson also emigrated to Holland, traveling through Amsterdam and on to Leyden. This, with certain additions, was to become the congregation which would ultimately board the Mayflower as the Pilgrims who came to the shores of America in 1620. (Edward B. Cole).

Though religious liberty would eventually come to England, the seeds of which were planted and watered by the blood of Baptist martyrs, many Baptist and other dissenters fled to the New World in search of freedom of conscience.

In America

Many groups came to the New World seeking religious freedom, Congregationalist, Presbyterians, Puritans, Baptist, Quakers, French Reformed, and others. Of these groups, only the Baptist and Quakers granted to others the freedom they sought for themselves. Groups such as the Puritans came to establish their own faith, and to exclude all others. "Intolerance was a necessary condition of their enterprise. They feared and hated religious liberty" (Dr. Ellis).

All who did not conform to their own views, were fined and imprisoned, and whipped and banished; and, as Baptist were especially opposed to religious oppression, the heaviest persecutions fell upon them. Hence, in 1644, a law was passed in Massachusetts against the Baptist, by which it was 'ordered and agreed, that if any person or persons within this jurisdiction shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptism of infants, or seduce others to do so, or leave the congregation during the administration of the rite, he shall be sentenced to banishment.' The same year we accordingly find that a poor man was tied up and whipped for refusing to have his child sprinkled; and on July 20, 1651, Obadiah Holmes, John Clark, and John Crandall, Baptist ministers, were arrested near Lynn, Massachusetts, while preaching on the Lord's day, taken to the parish church in the afternoon, sent to the Boston jail, and subsequently

fined. The fines of Clark and Crandall were, after a while, paid, but Mr. Holmes was kept in Boston jail till September, when he was tied to the whipping post and publicly whipped. His clothes were stripped off, and thirty lashes sunk into his naked flesh, which was so torn and cut that for weeks afterward he could only rest upon his hands and knees even in bed. (John Q. Adams).

The early Baptist were forced to attend pedobaptist (infant baptizing) churches. When they had to witness the baptism of infants, they would turn their back and face the other way as a form of protest. These separatist of Baptist persuasion, were for the most part, left alone-if they kept their opinions to themselves and outwardly conformed. However, for some, this was not possible, and they would be whipped or banished. The most famous case in point is Roger Williams.

In 1639, he became a Baptist, and in 1643 went to England from New York, because he had been banished from Boston. In March, 1644, he obtained the charter for the colony of Rhode Island, with power for the colony to make its own laws; and in September, 1644, under that charter was established the first government on earth that granted full religious liberty. It was the first spot the sun had ever shone upon where the rights of conscience were fully acknowledged, and it was founded by a Baptist; and it may be considered the germ of that religious liberty which all American citizens now enjoy, for up to the very dawning of the American Revolution, and even after that period, Baptists continued to struggle and suffer heroically for religious liberty. (John Q. Adams).

Apart from Rhode Island, and later Pennsylvania, the American colonies continued to persecute Baptist. In Virginia, a fine of two thousand pounds of tobacco was imposed on "those who neglected to have their infants baptized." A witness of this, Dr. Hawks, the Episcopal Church historian, wrote: "No dissenters in Virginia experienced harsher treatment than did the Baptist. They were beaten and imprisoned, and cruelty taxed its ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance."

In spite of the persecutions, the Baptist continued to grow. In 1682, a small band of Baptist, including some from Boston, formed an organization at Kittery, Maine. Soon thereafter, they migrated to South Carolina and established a Baptist Church in Charleston, in 1691. "Its founding pastor was William Screven, who was born in Somerton, Somersetshire, England (1629)." (H. Rondel Rumburg, *Some Southern Documents*, 1995). He fled England in 1668, and went to Massachusetts. He joined the small band of Baptist in Boston in 1681 and was licensed to preach in 1682. These early Baptist were "Particular" Baptist, the word "particular" referring to their view of the atonement, that is, they "Believed in a particular redemption which was a Calvinistic soteriology [the doctrines concerning salvation], as opposed to General Baptist who believed in a universal atonement which was an Arminian soteriology." (H. R. Rumburg).

Baptist were also forming churches in Philadelphia, by 1688 two churches had been formed there. Over the next decade, several other churches were added and in 1707 five churches formed the Philadelphia Baptist Association. Like the Charleston church, they were strongly Calvinistic and would heavily influence the theological direction Baptists in America would take.

At the time of the Great Awakening (1733-1744) the entire Baptist membership in America was not much over 500. Though the Baptist did not greatly participate in this time of revival, the thousands of converts that would come over the next 20 years mostly went to Baptist or Congregationalist churches. By the Revolutionary War, the Baptist in America had grown to 35,000. In the south, "the Baptist. . . threw themselves zealously into the revolutionary cause and won the popularity of the masses" (Edward B. Cole). However, in the north, they were less forthcoming in their support of the Revolution until the war began. After the war began, they passionately fought along side all other American patriots, and gave their full support.

Even after the war, the Baptist were not granted religious liberty in many of the states. "In Virginia, for four years after the Declaration of Independence, marriages performed by Baptist were unlawful, their children declared illegitimate, and their inheritances lost" (John Q. Adams). It wasn't until 1785, that religious liberty was fully established by law in Virginia. The man who had authored that bill was Thomas Jefferson, whose father was a Baptist. Later, in 1809, he would write to the members of Buck Mountain Baptist Church: "We have acted together from the origin to the end of a memorable revolution, and we have contributed, each in the line allotted us, our endeavors to render its issues a permanent blessing to our country."

When the National Constitution was adopted in 1787, there was no guarantee of religious liberty. The Baptist General Committee of Virginia, in 1788, were greatly concerned with this omission and after consultation with James Madison, wrote to President Washington.

They feared that liberty of conscience, dearer to them than property or life, was not sufficiently guarded. Washington gave them a kind and encouraging reply, in which occurs the following language: 'While I recollect with satisfaction that the religious society of which you are members have been throughout America, uniformly, and almost unanimously, the firm friends of civil liberty, and the persevering promoters of our glorious Revolution, I cannot hesitate to believe that they will be the faithful supporters of a free yet efficient general government' (John Q. Adams).

The next month the first Amendment to the Constitution was adopted by Congress: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the

press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Baptist have not changed since the Reformation, or the days of Washington. Their principles are still the same; and these principles bind them to the propagation of religious liberty. The very constitution of a Baptist church is compatible only with enjoyment of such liberty. It is composed of those who have exercised an intelligent choice, and who, in the possession of liberty to go elsewhere unmolested, have preferred to unite with it. Like true philanthropists they desire that all others may enjoy equal freedom with themselves. They would use their liberty in endeavoring to liberate others. Infant baptism they regard as one great source of the destruction of religious liberty; in laboring therefore to lead its adherents to abandon it, they are seeking to effect a reform which will leave the conscience free to act according to its own convictions of God's requirements, which Pedobaptism prevents it from doing. (John Q, Adams).

I would like to close with a quote from Jeronimus Segerson. Both he and his wife were martyred in September, 1551, one by burning, and the other by drowning, for the sin of being Baptist. When this was written, they were separated from each other, both being in prison and awaiting martyrdom.

We must likewise wrestle with enemies; that is, we must wrestle here in this world with emperors, with the powers and princes of this world. We must in this world suffer, for Paul has said, 'that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.' We must completely conquer the world, sin, death, and the devil, not with material swords and spears, but with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and with the shield of faith, wherewith we must quench all sharp and fiery darts, and place on our heads the helmet of salvation, shod with the preparation of the Gospel. Being thus strengthened with these weapons, we shall oppose and overcome all our enemies.