

## Some notes on a study of Baptism\*

Brian Gordon

(This study is available from Blessed Hope in booklet form.)

The contents of this booklet are the result of a study of baptism I began some time ago. This was prompted by a friend of mine who was a Pedobaptist (believed in infant baptism), when he asked me to explain why I believed in believer's baptism and why it had to be by immersion. Studying the Scriptures and preparing some notes for that discussion, I began to be more deeply drawn into this study and the history of infant baptism as well. This is not an attempt to present these notes as any great thing, but they are offered with the hope that they might be helpful to some.

### The contents of this booklet are:

1. [Excerpts from Philip Mauro's book: \*Baptism\*](#), where he discusses the significance of baptism in signifying our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.
2. [An overview of the Scriptural teaching on baptism](#), including the London Baptist confession on baptism and excerpts from Spurgeon's Catechism.
3. [A brief study on the Greek word "Baptizo."](#)
4. [Some of A. H. Strong's comments on infant baptism.](#)
5. [A discussion of household baptism](#), as found in the New Testament, and the lack of evidence for infant baptism in those passages.
6. [A historical survey-New Testament baptism and infant baptism.](#)

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

Philip Mauro

### BAPTISM AND THE RESURRECTION

We turn now to the Epistles, which teach us the spiritual significance of baptism.

The first, and the fullest of all, is Rom. 6:3,4. Baptism is there given prominence in answer to the question, "Shall we continue in sin?" The answer is given in the emphatic form of another question, which in effect is this: "How is it possible for us to continue in sin, seeing that *we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*" "*Baptized into Christ Jesus,*" "*Baptized into His death!*" Do we grasp the tremendous import and deep solemnity of these words? What can possibly signify more to us, while yet in the mortal body-conversion alone excepted-than to be immersed\*into the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? How is it possible, in the light of this Scripture, for any to regard baptism as of little importance? or for any to entertain the thought that baptism could be for others than those who have been born from above, and hence have received life from Christ? This Scripture says, "So many of us," that is to say, saints, believers in Christ, "as were baptized." The terms of this Scripture exclude all who are not "of us."

To be immersed into all that the death of God's Son effected! Mighty fact. But the full significance of baptism has not yet been stated; for a greater fact has yet to be mentioned. "Therefore we are (were) buried with Him by baptism into death; that *like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the*

*glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

We, believers who have been baptized, were *buried with Christ* by baptism into death (the place into which He went, but of which *He now has the key*), to the end that, *like as* He was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, *even so* we also should walk this present scene in the newness of His resurrection life. The "we should walk" obviously designates the same persons as the "we are (were) buried." Since it is manifestly impossible that infants or other unconverted persons could walk in newness of life, this Scripture makes the baptism of such persons an impossibility. They may be put into water, or have water sprinkled upon them, but such ceremony would not be baptism.

The words "baptized into *His* death" pour a flood of light upon the meaning of baptism. To be baptized into our own death would leave us for ever in the place of the dead, that is to say, in the place of eternal condemnation. But we have been baptized into the death of Another, Who died in our stead, even the death of that One Whom God has already *raised from the dead*. The Gospel that is preached to perishing sinners who are under the power of sin and death, announces Salvation through One Who died unto sin, and whom God has raised from the dead. They who, through the preaching of the Gospel, come to believe on the Risen One for their salvation, are forthwith baptized into His death, and are made sharers of His Resurrection. The rite thus corresponds perfectly with the facts; and, therefore, Christian baptism is the entrance, by the gateway of Christ's death, into the domain of *His* righteousness and life. The sins which were laid upon Him, and for which He suffered on the Cross, have all been dealt with judicially. Those sins were ours. The death **He** died was **our** due. He not only suffered for our sins, but He was "made sin for us," and died to *sin*. By baptism we were buried with Him into death, in order that, like as Christ was raised up from among the dead ones by the glory of the Father, **we also** should no longer continue in sin or in the state and place of *death*, but should walk in newness of *life*.

Baptism, then, is not a symbol merely of burial with Christ, but of *resurrection also* with Him. In fact, the being joined in the likeness of His resurrection ("*like as*") is the principal thing.

The wondrous truth revealed in this Scripture is contained in the Lord's parable of the "corn of wheat" (John 12:24). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He, of course, was that Corn of Wheat. So long as He lived in this world as a Man of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14), He lived alone. None shared, or could share, His life and His perfect human nature. There could be no "baptism into Christ" until He had become the antitype of the kernel of wheat that falls into the ground and dies. Having submitted to the deep humiliation of death and burial, He is able not only to rise from among the dead, but also to "bring forth" from the place of death "much fruit." He Himself is *the* Resurrection and *the* Life (John 11:25).

Thus we arrive at the fact that Baptism represents the Resurrection, that grandest and mightiest work of God, the work in which He put forth "the *exceeding greatness* of His power," "according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead" (Eph. 1:19, 20). Within the sweep of this stupendous "working of His mighty power" are included the countless hosts of the redeemed, who are "quickened together with Christ," they being the marvelous fruitage of that Corn of Wheat that fell into the ground and died.

This is the work foretold by the prophet Habakkuk (Hab. 1:5), quoted by the Apostle Paul (Acts 13:41): "Behold, ye despises, wonder, and perish: for I *work a work* in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

In the light of this truth, how marvelous are the foreshadowings of the Resurrection, God's mightiest work, which are to be seen in the "baptisms" of the Old Testament! We see the earliest shadow of it, and a strong one too, in the coming forth of the earth out of its burial-place beneath the waters, on

the *third day* (Gen. 1:9). We see it in the ark of Noah bearing its living freight through storm and flood, and depositing them in safety on Mount Ararat "on the seventeenth day of the month," *three days* later than the date of the Passover, which represents the death of Christ as the Lamb of God (Gen. 8:4). We see it in the passage of the Israelites, on the third day after the Passover, through the Red Sea, where (according to 1 Cor. 10:2) the "fathers" of Israel were baptized. We see it in the crossing of Jordan, where "*after three days*" the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord went before the people "until all the people were passed clean over Jordan" (Josh. 3:3,4,17). And we see it most clearly of all in the unique experience of Jonah, the man who was "three days and three nights" in the belly of the great sea monster, and was brought forth alive out of the waters, on the third day, to become a messenger of God to the Gentiles.

Thus the Hand of our God, in forming His Holy Word, has firmly knit together there Baptism and the Resurrection,-that foundation fact of Christianity and of Salvation; and this was done, and the truth was woven into the texture of scripture, long before Christ was born.

If we would ask what the resurrection means to God, we have only to pay attention to the fact that by resurrection He received back again from the place of death the Son of His love; and by resurrection He receives every one of the "many sons" whom He is bringing to glory, every one of the "many brethren" over whom the Son of God will preside as "the first-born." All these are "the children of the Resurrection" (Luke 20:36).

In the face of these facts of Scripture can we fail to recognize the towering importance of the rite of baptism? Is not the neglect of the rite an indication of the indifference which now prevails in many quarters to the mighty truth for which it stands?

Taking the passage in Rom. 6, just as it reads, without attempting to construe it, or to say it means this or that, we find the clear statement that those saints who are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into His death, and become partakers of His resurrection. They are the "much fruit" which He brings forth.

It would require a volume to set forth the importance of baptism as shown by the context of this doctrinal passage. For the present we must be content with pointing out that baptism stands here in immediate connection with the passing of the believer from under the dominion and bondage of sin into the service of God. And this relates specially to the "*mortal body*." It is the **body** that is put under water; and the saint who has thus passed in symbol through the waters of death is called upon to yield himself to God as one who is *alive from the dead*; and the members of his body as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6:13). Thus the burial by baptism is but preliminary to resurrection.

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## "BAPTISM"

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- 1) As administered by John- Mt 3:5-12 John 3:23 Ac 13:24 19:4
- 2) Sanctioned by Christ's submission to it- Mt 3:13-15 Lu 3:21
- 3) Adopted by Christ- John 3:22 4:1,2
- 4) Appointed an ordinance of the Christian church- Mt 28:19,20 Mr 16:15,16

- 5) To be administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- Mt 28:19
- 6) Water, the outward and visible sign in- Ac 8:36 10:47
- 7) Regeneration, the inward and spiritual grace of- John 3:3,5,6 Ro 6:3,4,11
- 8) Remission of sins, signified by- Ac 2:38 22:16
- 9) Unity of the Church effected by- 1Co 12:13 Ga 3:27,28
- 10) Confession of sin necessary to- Mt 3:6
- 11) Repentance necessary to- Ac 2:38
- 12) Faith necessary to- Ac 8:37 18:8
- 13) There is but one- Eph 4:5
- 14) ADMINISTERED TO
  - 14a) Individuals- Ac 8:38 9:18
  - 14b) Households- Ac 16:15 1Co 1:16
  - 14c) Only to professing believers- Ac 2:38 Mt 3:6 Mr 16:16 Ac 8:12,37 10:47,48
  - 14d) Scriptures that shed light on infant baptism- Pr 30:6
- 15) Administered by immersing the whole body of the person in water- Mt 3:16 Ac 8:38,39
- 16) Emblematic of the influences of the Holy Spirit- Mt 3:11 Tit 3:5
- 17) Typified- 1Co 10:2 1Pe 3:20,21

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## **The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**

### **Chapter 29**

#### **Of Baptism**

1. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death and resurrection: of his being engrafted into him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.

Rom. 5:3-5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27; Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:4.

2. Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36-37; 2:41; 8:12; 18:8.

3. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 8:38.

4. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance.

Matt. 3:16; John 3:23

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### **From Spurgeon's Catechism**

Q What is Baptism?

A Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by Jesus Christ, (Mt 28:19) to be to the person baptized a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death, and burial, and resurrection, (Ro 6:3 Col 2:12) of his being engrafted into him, (Ga 3:27) of remission of sins, (Mr 1:4 Ac 22:16) and of his giving up himself to God through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life. (Ro 6:4,5)

Q To whom is Baptism to be administered?

A Baptism is to be administered to all those who actually profess repentance towards God, (Ac 2:38 Mt 3:6 Mr 16:16 Ac 8:12,36,37 10:47,48) and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to none other.

Q Are the infants of such as are professing to be baptized?

A The infants of such as are professing believers are not to be baptized, because there is neither command nor example in the Holy Scriptures for their baptism. (Ex 23:13 Pr 30:6)

Q How is baptism rightly administered?

A Baptism is rightly administered by immersion, or dipping the whole body of the person in water, (Mt 3:16 John 3:23) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, according to Christ's institution, and the practice of the apostles (Mt 28:19,20) and not by sprinkling or pouring of water, or dipping some part of the body, after the tradition of men. (John 4:1,2 Ac 8:38,39)

Q What is the duty of such as are rightly baptized?

A It is the duty of such as are rightly baptized, to give up themselves to some particular and orderly Church of Jesus Christ, (Ac 2:47 Ac 9:26 1Pe 2:5) that they may walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Lu 1:6)

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### **The Greek word "Baptizo";**

From: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, by Spiros Zodhiates Th.D.

-To dip. Immerse, submerge for a religious purpose, to overwhelm, saturate, baptize (John 1:25).

-In contrast to the verb *Baptizo*, to dip, immerse, is the verb *rhantizo* to sprinkle, which must not be taken as equivalent to *Baptizo*.

From: *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine.

-To baptize, primarily a frequentative form of *bapto*, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc. Plutarchus uses it of the drawing of wine by dipping the cup into the bowl.

-On *Baptisma*- a noun, as opposed to *Baptizo*-a verb.-Baptism, consisting of the process of immersion, submersion and emergence (from *bapto*, to dip).

From: *Baptists-through Reformers*, by John Quincy Adams.

-By *baptized*, I mean *immersed believers*. "They that gladly received his word were *immersed*." This is the translation-in the common version we have only a transfer. Let me, on this point, give you a few authorities for this translation, as there are some who deny its correctness-none, however, of any eminence as scholars. The learned Bossuet says: "Baptism was performed by plunging. In fine, we read not in Scripture that baptism was otherwise administered; and we are able to make it appear, that for thirteen hundred years baptism was thus administered throughout the whole church, as far as possible." Dr. Doddridge says: "'Buried with him by baptism.' It seems the part of candor to confess that here is an allusion to the manner of baptizing by immersion, which was the primitive mode." John Wesley says: "'Buried with him,' alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion." Whitby, author of a commentary on the New Testament and more than forty other learned works, says: "It being so expressly declared here, that we are buried with Christ in baptism, by being buried under water, and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death, by dying to sin, being taken from hence; and this immersion being observed by all Christians for thirteen centuries, and the change of it into sprinkling without any allowance from the Author of this institution, being that which the Romanist still urges to justify his refusal of the cup to the laity; it were to be wished that this custom might be again of general use." Dr. Chalmers says: "The original meaning of the word baptism is immersion; and we doubt not that the general style of administration in the apostles' days was by the actual submerging of the whole body under water." . . .

Conclusion:

It is the general agreement of all, that the word *Baptize* means *immerse*. It is further agreed that this was the New Testament manner of baptism, as well as, the Apostolic church. It is a manner of history that even the Roman church baptized by immersion for 1,300 years. By what authority has it been changed to sprinkling? The answer can only be that we have substituted tradition for the Word of God in this matter.

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## Infant Baptism

A. H. Strong

This we reject and reprehend, for the following reasons:

(a) Infant baptism is without warrant, either express or implied, in the Scripture.

First,- there is no express command that infants should be baptized.

Secondly,- there is no clear example of the baptism of infants. Thirdly,- the passages held to imply infant baptism contain, when fairly interpreted, no reference to such a practice. In Matt. 19:14, none would have "forbidden," if Jesus and his disciples had been in the habit of baptizing infants. From Acts 16:15, *cf.* 40, and Acts 16:33, *cf.* 34, Neander says that we cannot infer infant baptism. For I Cor. 16:15 shows that the whole family of Stephanas, baptized by Paul, were adults (I Cor. 1:16). It is impossible to suppose a whole heathen household baptized upon the faith of its head. As to I Cor. 7:14, Jacobi calls this text, "a sure testimony against infant baptism, since Paul would certainly have referred to the baptism of children as a proof of their holiness, if infant baptism had been practiced." Moreover, this passage would in that case equally teach the baptism of the unconverted husband of a believing wife. It plainly proves that the children of Christian parents were no more baptized and had no closer connection with the Christian church, than the unbelieving partners of Christians.

Dr. A. S. Crapsey, formerly an Episcopal rector in Rochester, made the following statement in the introduction to a sermon in defense of infant baptism: "Now in support of this custom of the church, we can bring no express command of the word of God, no certain warrant of holy Scripture, nor can we be at all sure that this usage prevailed during the apostolic age. From a few obscure hints we may conjecture that it did, but it is only conjecture after all. It is true St. Paul baptized the household of Stephanas, of Lydia, and of the jailer at Philippi, and in these households there may have been little children; but we do not know that there were, and these inferences form but a poor foundation upon which to base any doctrine. Better say at once, and boldly, that infant baptism is not expressly taught in holy Scripture. Not only is the word of God silent on this subject, but those who have studied the subject tell us that Christian writers of the very first age say nothing about it. It is by no means sure that this custom obtained in the church earlier than in the middle of the second or the beginning of the third century."

Dr. C. M. Mead, in a private letter, dated May 27, 1895- "Though a Congregationalist, I cannot find any Scriptural authorization of pedobaptism, and I admit also that immersion seems to have been the prevalent, if not the universal, form of baptism at the first."

All the traces of infant baptism which it has been desired to find in the New Testament must first be put into it. - Schliermacher Glaubensiebre

(b) Infant baptism is expressly contradicted:

First,- by the Scriptural prerequisites of faith and repentance, as signs of regeneration. In the great commission, Matthew speaks of baptizing disciples, and Mark of baptizing believers; but infants are neither of these. Secondly,- by the Scriptural symbolism of the ordinance. As we should not bury a person before his death, so we should not symbolically bury a person by baptism until he has in spirit died to sin. Thirdly,- by the Scriptural constitution of the church. The church is a company of persons whose union with one another presupposes and expresses a previous conscious and voluntary union of each with Jesus Christ. But of this conscious and voluntary union with Christ infants are not capable. Fourthly,- by the Scriptural prerequisites for participation in the Lord's Supper. Participation in the Lord's Supper is the right only of those who can discern the Lord's body (I Cor. 11:29). No reason can be assigned for restricting to intelligent communicants the ordinance of the Supper, which would not equally restrict to intelligent believers the ordinance of Baptism.

Circumcision is not a type of baptism: 1. It is purely a gratuitous assumption that it is so. There is not a word in Scripture to authorize it; 2. Circumcision was a national, a

theocratic, and not a personal, religious rite; 3. If circumcision be a type, why did Paul circumcise Timothy? Why did he not explain, on an occasion so naturally calling for it, that circumcision was replaced by baptism? -E. G. Robinson

Hereditary church-membership is of the same piece with hereditary priesthood, and both are relics of Judaism. -J. J. Murphy

These are excerpts from *Systematic Theology* by Augustus H. Strong. The normal size paragraphs are the words of Strong, those indented, are quotes from others.

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## **Household Baptism in the New Testament**

Brian Gordon

There are three instances of household baptism in the New Testament: Lydia's and the Philippian jailer's, both in Acts chapter 16, as well as the household of Stephanas, in first Corinthians, chapter one. It has been argued, that this at least makes possible, the baptism of infants in the New Testament. We hope to look at each of these three passages and see if we can discern the truth about this.

The first of these three passages concerns Lydia and her household. This household is the first recorded converts in Europe. The events are recorded by the Holy Spirit in Acts 16:12-15.

and thence to Philippi, which is a city in Macedonia, the first in its district, a Roman colony. And there we stayed some little time. On the Sabbath we went beyond the city gate to the riverside, where we had reason to believe that there was a place for prayer; and sitting down we talked with the women who had come together. Among our hearers was one named Lydia, a dealer in purple goods. She belonged to the city of Thyateira, and was a worshipper of the true God. The Lord opened her heart, so that she gave attention to what Paul was saying. When she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If in your judgment I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she made us go there.

Having come to Philippi, Paul and his companions sought out a place of prayer, for the Sabbath. There, they began to teach of Christ and the gospel. One who's heart was opened by the Lord was *Lyda, a dealer in purple goods.*

Though this is a short passage, there are some things we can learn about this woman and her family.

- She was a wealthy woman. Lydia was a seller of purple, (v. 14) which would bring her a good income. Also, she was able to provide quarters and provisions within her house (v.15). Later, in verse 40, we see that the church would meet at her house.
- She was the head of her household (v. 15). This would seem to indicate that she was either a widow or unmarried. This would make it unlikely that there were any infants in her family.
- There is no mention of faith, concerning those of her household. However, neither is there any reason to believe that faith had not been wrought in their hearts as well -the Scriptures are silent about it.

The second text we wish to look at is in Acts 16:23-34.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

After the earthquake, the jailer saw that the doors were all open; fearing that all the prisoners had escaped, prepared to kill himself. Paul yells out, "*Do thyself no harm: for we are all here,*" and saves the jailer's life.

The loud cry out of the dark and the sudden recall from the brink of death, following close upon the shock of the earthquake, completed the overthrow of the jailer's nerves. *He called to his servants to bring lights* and he, himself *sprang into* the prison; there *shaking for fear* he first *fell down* as an act of reverence or worship at the feet of *Paul and Silas*, and then *brought them out* into the courtyard. He had now regained sufficient self-possession *to secure the rest of the prisoners*, and then returning to Paul and Silas asked *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* Paul and Silas were well known at Philippi as 'slaves of the Most High God,' and they had openly proclaimed 'a way of salvation.' Only within the last twenty-four hours they had been cruelly and shamefully treated on the very ground of their religion, and now there could be but one conclusion. The Most High God had avenged his servants: they were no impostors but true messengers of God. The jailer himself may have been, like Cornelius, a seeker after salvation; at any rate he would be terrified at the harsh treatment he had meted out to the 'slaves of the Most High' and earnestly crave to be delivered from the divine vengeance. No wonder then that he asked how he could be saved.

The answer was ready, *Believe on the Lord Jesus*. This was Peter's message to Cornelius: Like that, it would need explanation, nor would Paul and Silas lose any opportunity. Accordingly, tired, sore, unwashed as they were, *they spake to the jailer and all his establishment* of warders, slaves, and family, who had gathered round, the same *word of God*. That word embraced the sending of Jesus to be the Christ, his life of good works, his crucifixion and resurrection, the promise of forgiveness and of the gift of the Spirit to all who should repent and be baptized. Their audience received the word; nothing hindered them from being baptized, and the whole company went to the prison well or fountain. (Richard B. Rackham, a turn of the century Anglican.)

Thus we see that in the case of the Phillippian jailer's household, they came to faith and were *then* baptized. "But surely there must have been at least one infant in that household," you say. I will answer that with a statement made by an Anabaptist pastor discussing baptism with one of the reformers. "No, there was not an infant in that house, in fact the youngest child was a sixteen year old boy," to which the reformer asked, "And just where did you get that?" "The same place you got your infant," replied the Anabaptist.

From this passage, we learn:

- The Philippian jailer was baptized only after coming to Christ.
- The "Word of God" was proclaimed to the household and from verse 34, it seems that the entire household believed in Christ.
- It was after this presenting of the "Word of God" that the household was baptized.
- There is absolutely nothing in this passage to support infant baptism.

We will now turn our attention to our third passage-I Corinthians 1:14-16.

I give thanks to God that no one of you did I baptize, except Crispus and Gaius- that no one may say that to my own name I did baptize; and I did baptize also Stephanas' household-further, I have not known if I did baptize any other.

This is a very brief passage. We only learn that Stephanas and his household had been baptized by Paul. However, we gain some insight later in the Epistle-I Cor. 16:15:

And I entreat you, brethren, ye have known the household of Stephanas, that it is the first-fruit of Achaia, and to the ministration to the saints they did set themselves.

We are told that the *household of Stephanas was the first fruits of Achaia*, and that *they ministered to the saints*. These are descriptions of regenerated believers, not just visible Church members. Again, there is strong evidence of this being believer's baptism, and no evidence of infant baptism.

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### **A Historical Survey of Baptism**

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

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 Awakening," 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 become 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 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 Scheitheim, 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 Tübingen. 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 *rebaptizers* 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.

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