

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 6: The Baptists

A People Called Baptist

The Baptist movement was born in the midst of the ferment and evolution of the English Church in the seventeenth century. Originally a collection of hole-in-the wall dissenters who were easily confused with Seekers, Ranters, Quakers, and political anarchists, Baptists rose to positions of prominence and respectability by 1700 in England and Wales. Along the way their leaders made major contributions to the theory and practice of religious liberty and the theology of the believers' church. The principle ordinance of their faith, adult baptism by immersion, became the symbol for a people who dared to take the Bible seriously and specifically.

The Baptist faith soon spread to other lands by individuals and entire congregations. In America Baptists at first encountered persecution and yet thrived in an unusual way. In fulfillment of their legacy, 25 million Baptists live in the United States, as of 1985, of the 45 million Baptists worldwide. There are important reasons for this success.

Baptist principles were especially well adapted to the American experience. In a frontier society, qualities such as individualism and self-government were important. Baptist preachers stressed individual accountability before God and the responsibility of congregations of believers to Jesus Christ, the head of the church. Church decisions were made by group consent, and churches could be organized wherever a small band of believers agreed to meet regularly. In a society where there were few educational opportunities for a learned ministry, Baptists placed high value upon a personal call to the ministry and evidence of the gifts of preaching and teaching. While clusters of churches did form associations, every congregation with its pastor as bishop was complete in itself with or without a comfortable meetinghouse, music, or a standard form of worship. Finally, Baptists in America were loud exponents of religious liberty for all, in a land where liberation from the shackles of the past was on everyone's mind.

Black Americans—slave and free—found the Baptist persuasion very attractive. Mostly nonliterate, the slave communities found that Baptists laid great stress upon the spoken word, and black preachers memorized large portions of Scripture, which they embellished in sermons and lessons. The freedom of Baptist worship allowed African converts to retain the style and temper of native songs and expression, and the importance of singular leadership within clans and families was the precursor to the strong pastor role in black Baptist polity. In a colonial society where deliberate attempts were made to fragment Afro-American communities, the autonomy of Baptist congregations served to unite Christians in a very intimate way. No wonder that the second largest group of Baptists in the world is presently the National Baptist Convention of America, Inc., a black denomination with seven million members.

Because Baptists also emphasized evangelism and missions, their perspective became a worldwide phenomenon in the nineteenth century. From a single baptism in 1834 of Johann G. Oncken, Baptist churches cropped up in Germany, Scandinavia, France and Southern Europe by 1860. European Baptists still live with the legacy of Oncken, that indeed "every Baptist is a missionary."

British and American Baptists concluded at the close of the eighteenth century that missionary service was an important responsibility of the churches acting together. Through voluntary societies, persons commissioned to preach the gospel, translate the Scriptures, and treat the sick were sent first to India, then Burma, China, Japan, and Africa where sturdy communities of Baptist adherents developed. Baptists even managed to penetrate Latin America where Roman Catholicism was the state church by

law. The record of accomplishment on all seven continents includes not only churches of baptized believers but scores of schools, colleges, hospitals, and publishing houses.

From small and rude beginnings, the people called Baptist have grown through persecution, struggle, and misunderstanding. Their flowering is perhaps due to, as much as anything else, their sense of freedom and their specific attention to the Bible as their sole authority in matters of faith and practice.

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The Baptists - A People Who Gathered to Walk in All His Ways: From the Publisher

U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT in its May 14, 1984 issue reported on a survey of citizens around the country who were asked to rank the most influential persons in America outside of government.

Three ordained ministers were mentioned in the top ten. Jerry Falwell, Jesse Jackson and Billy Graham, who were ranked number 7, 8 and 9 behind such familiar names as Dan Rather and Lee Iacocca and ahead of such notables as Michael Jackson, David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger.

The three ministers are all Baptist preachers. What this suggests about the strength and diversity of Baptists we will leave to your reflection. Ponder also as you read this issue the observation of the eminent church history scholar, Kenneth Scott Latourette that: "It has been the special privilege given to Baptists, more than to any other body of Christians of comparable size, to preach the gospel to the poor. For the most part, the poor leave no written traces of their lives. The historian is often baffled when he seeks to reconstruct what they have said and done. For this reason, no history of the Baptists can ever be complete."

This edition attempts to trace at least the basics that can be established in the early history of the Baptists. While each issue of this publication is designed to stand on its own, you will occasionally see some continuity. The issue on Zwingli was logically followed by one on the Anabaptists and then this one on the Baptists.

Other issues planned for this year will treat Jonathan Edwards and C.S. Lewis. Your letters continue to be a source of great encouragement.

William Kiffin

"... for you baptize children, and that is not agreeable to God's Word: If you say it is, how do you prove it by scripture?"

Dr. John Clarke

"... that a most flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained ... with a full liberty in religious concernments."

Johannes Oncken

"Every Baptist a missionary ..."

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The Baptists: Did You Know?

Baptists were at first erroneously called the "Anabaptists" because they called for believer's baptism. and their enemies wanted to associate them with the behavior of the sixteenth-century Münster radicals.

As of 1985 there are **over 45 million Baptists** in over 175 groups worldwide. In the United States alone there are over 30 recognized groups claiming the name "Baptist." Together they form the ***largest category outside of the Roman Catholics.***

One of the reasons why **King James I called for a new version of the Bible** was to put an ***end to the use of the Geneva Bible***, which the king felt contained translations that led to ***political criticisms of his authority*** by the Baptists and Independents!

The first Baptist college was founded at Bristol, England in 1679. Graduates of Bristol helped to found the College of Rhode Island (now Brown University), in 1764, the oldest Baptist college in the United States.

Harvard College president, Henry Dunster, was fired from his position in 1654 and his house confiscated because of his Baptist beliefs!

Baptists do not celebrate the sacraments as many other Christians do. Instead, the ***two ordinances, the Lord's Supper and believer's baptism***, are administered. Many Baptists also practice a service of ***infant dedication but without the use of water.***

Most early Baptists preferred to be baptized in "living waters," that is, water that ***flows in a river or stream*** as opposed to water in a pond or baptistry.

In the Baptist tradition each church has a preacher. There are no bishops or superintendents. The leader is bishop, shepherd, elder, and pastor. ***The congregation calls the leader and may terminate the leader's services.***

Some churches may form groups or clusters for fellowship, service, and/or advice. Baptists call these associations conventions, connections, or fellowships. Such groups have no power over individual congregations.

Baptists helped in the ***founding of the colony of Liberia.*** Lott Carey, a Virginia Baptist and a former slave, was the first missionary there. A century and a half later, Liberian president William Tolbert was elected the first Black president of the Baptist World Alliance. He was assassinated in 1982.

It is impossible to generalize about Baptists. Some hold to the doctrine of ***general atonement***; others to a ***limited view.*** Some practice ***open Communion***; others ***closed.*** Some are ***ecumenical***; others are not. Some ***ordain ministers***; others do not. Some ***allow musical instruments*** in worship services; others ***only singing.***

The largest group of Black Christians in the United States are Baptist. In three major groups,

Black Baptists total almost **15 million!**

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Baptists Emerge Out of a Century of Testing and Turmoil in the English Church

1509–1547 King Henry VIII

The Pope's refusal to annul the marriage of Henry and Katherine of Aragon leads to separation of English Church from Rome.

1534 Act of Supremacy declares Henry "... the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England."

Tyndale's Bible, the first English translation to be printed, placed in every church.

Henry dissolves monasteries and annexes their revenue to the state. The Ten Articles (1536) include reference to the authority of the Scripture and justification by faith but much of the Roman faith remains, including prayer to departed saints, concepts of purgatory, transubstantiation and celibacy of clergy.

1547–1553 King Edward VI

Changes begun under Henry are realized: images removed from churches, devotional life stressed, marriage of ministers legalized, priests become ministers.

Thomas Cranmer's prayer books (1547, 1552) provide major theological reforms in worship.

Parliament takes responsibility for Book of Common Prayer and the King issues the official doctrinal position of the Church of England.

1553–1558 Queen Mary

Mary attempts to restore Roman Catholicism to England.

Cranmer and other Reform leaders burned at Oxford.

Exiles from England in Geneva and Strassbourg influenced by Calvinistic Puritanism and other Protestant principles.

1558–1603 Queen Elizabeth

Catholicism again rejected and Romanizing bishops deposed. Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer* reinstated and all clergy required to subscribe to the *Thirty Nine Articles* of the Church of England.

Puritans emerge among the returned Marian exiles striving to "purify" church life and establish patterns in accord with Scripture. The Puritans seek to reform the church from within along Calvinistic Presbyterian lines.

Another grouping called "Separatists" see no hope of adequate reform for the church from within and **separate** to set up their own congregations. They call for a believers' church membership and are the forerunners of the congregationalist style churches. The Separatists are persecuted and some of their leaders hanged in 1593.

1603–1625 King James I

Hopes rise among the Puritans that this Scottish King will introduce Presbyterianism into the English church but James will have none of it declaring "A Scottish Presbytery as well agreeth with the monarch as God and the Devil."

300 Puritan clergy are ejected from parishes in the opening years of James' reign.

The first Baptists appear among the Separatists, led by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys.

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To Walk in All His Ways

REV. ROGER HAYDEN AND STAFF Roger Hayden, M.A., B.D., is a Baptist pastor in Reading, England and Secretary of the British Baptist Historical Society.

Baptism is accepted and practiced, and always has been, by just about every group in whatever place that has called itself Christian. Thus, it is somewhat ironic that a specific Christian group would emerge that would come to be identified as "Baptists." The issue of baptism—who should be baptized and by what method—would become important enough to them that they would endure persecution, social ostracization, even death, if necessary, to maintain their convictions.

Where did the Baptists come from? Why did their movement arise? The traceable historical roots of the Baptists as we know them today are to be found in the English church of the early 17th Century.

The chart entitled "Baptists Emerge..." cites some of the highlights of over 70 years of turmoil from the Act of Supremacy in 1534, and King Henry VIII's separation from Roman Catholicism, to the Hampton Court Conference in England in 1604 when the hopes of the Puritans within the church were thwarted by King James I.

During that tumultuous 70-year period, the English church was inescapably intertwined with the shifting affairs of the state and monarchy. Intense and often violent struggles ensued as the reform movement progressed. Fundamental questions related to the nature of the church, its doctrine, polity, practice and relationship to the state were tested and debated in the crucible of a rapidly changing society.

It was the English Baptists and the European Anabaptists that would put the church and its whole self understanding to the a more severe test than any other group as they embraced a collection of doctrines and principles that shattered the old world synthesis.

The Baptists originated among the Separatist movement. The Separatists themselves had come from the Puritans. The Puritans were loyal members of the established church and sought to advance the reform movement and "purify" the church from within.

The "Separatists" became impatient with the possibility of the established church ever being purified and called for a "separation" from the state church to form congregations that would pattern themselves after New Testament teaching and practice.

From the Separatists during the reign of James I would emerge the Pilgrim fathers who went to America, and the first Baptists. The two figures who can be identified as among the earliest Baptists are John Smyth (1570–1612) and Thomas Helwys (?–1616).

Smyth was an ordained Anglican priest who progressed through Puritan and Separatist stages. He studied at Christ's College, Cambridge from 1586 and among his tutors was a later Separatist leader in Holland, Francis Johnson. In 1594 he was ordained by the Bishop of Lincoln and was elected a Fellow at Christ's College.

He became the leader of a group at Gainsborough, on the borders of Nottinghamshire in the English Midlands. Gainsborough had become a gathering place for a number of ministers who had been in trouble with the authorities for their Puritan beliefs.

This Gainsborough group, according to William Bradford (who would later come to America on the Mayflower), formed a covenanted church and "as the Lord's free people joined themselves ... in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all his ways, made known or to be made known unto them (according to their best endeavors) whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."

Most Puritans had high hopes for change when James VI of Scotland came to the English throne in 1603. But following the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, Puritan hopes were thwarted by the approval of a new set of canons and disciplines for the government of the church. The Puritans had hoped to persuade the Anglican bishops to reform the church. However, James himself presided over the conference and threatened to "make the Puritans conform or else harr[y] them out of the land." This strengthening of Anglicanism was felt at Gainsborough. After a year of meeting with great difficulty in 1607, the leadership decided that they should leave for Holland, as quickly as possible. The emigration took place in small parties, with Thomas Helwys playing a leading part in making arrangements for the momentous journey for Smyth's congregation.

Little is known about the early life of Thomas Helwys except that he hailed from Nottinghamshire on an estate which had been in the family for several generations. Helwys received a good education at Gray's Inn and after some years in London, he returned to his country home, Broxtowe Hall. From Puritan references it is known that Helwys' home was a haven for early dissenters and Helwys himself probably aided their cause financially. At some point Helwys was introduced to John Smyth and with Mrs. Helwys joined the Separatist congregation at Gainsborough prior to 1607.

The relationship between Helwys and Smyth was very deep. Helwys reflected: "Have we not neglected ourselves, our wives, our children and all we had and respected him? And we confess we had good cause to do so in respect of those most excellent gifts and graces of God that did abound in him." Even later, when Helwys and Smyth had parted, Helwys could write: "All our love was too little for him and not worthy of him."

The voyage to Holland took place in 1608. When they arrived in Amsterdam, a welcome haven for 17th Century prisoners of conscience, they were given hospitality by the Mennonites and housed in the great bakehouse of Jan Munter. Here they were free to worship according to the dictates of their conscience as guided by the New Testament and also free, as one historian observed, to experience "all the evils of overcrowding, from exacerbated tempers to the plague."

The congregation in exile energetically examined basic conceptions regarding the true nature of the church as set forth in the New Testament. Smyth came to the view that baptism should be administered only to believers. This led Smyth to baptize himself and then the rest of the group beginning with Helwys.

By this move, the group had removed themselves from the state church on the grounds that they had not been validly baptized as infants. It also marked a separation from their fellow Separatists. Indeed it would not be many years hence when William Bradford and his companions would decide in 1620 to emigrate to America where they would establish Plymouth Plantation on strict Separatist principles.

About February 1610 Smyth and about 31 others came to the conclusion that they had been in error baptizing themselves and sought fellowship with the Mennonites in Holland.

Thomas Helwys and about a dozen others disagreed, rejecting totally the idea of any necessary succession in the Church of Christ. It was "contrary to the liberty of the Gospel, which is free for all men

at all times and in all places: yea, so our Savior Christ doth testify—wheresoever, whosoever, and whensoever two or three are gathered in his name, there is he in the midst of them.”

Helwys and his small band became convinced that they had been wrong to leave England. Though parting with Smyth caused him great personal pain, Helwys believed that the “days of great tribulation spoken of by Christ” had now arrived. He must get back to England and appeal to James I to stop persecuting the faithful.

The small group led by Helwys returned to England in late 1612 and established themselves at Spitalfields near London. Helwys wrote a moving appeal to King James in his own hand titled ***The Mystery of Iniquity*** in which he boldly called upon the monarch not to impose laws upon the consciences of his subjects. “The King,” he said “is a mortal man, and not God, therefore he hath no power over the mortal souls of his subjects to make laws and ordinances for them and to set spiritual Lords over them.”

For such fearless courage Helwys was thrown in prison, and had died in Newgate by 1616. Helwys gave to religious toleration the finest and fullest defense it had known till then. He believed that persecution of even the most serious spiritual error was itself iniquitous. He gave the magistrate fullest authority in civil affairs, but in the church the magistrate had no greater power than any other layman.

The Helwys congregation has been called the first General Baptist Church. These Baptists, who believed that no person was destined by a divine decree to damnation but that all people might repent and believe the Gospel, drew the inference that to destroy a person for mistaken beliefs might defeat the purpose of God. The small group grew in numbers and by 1626 the London congregation was associated with others at Lincoln, Coventry, Salisbury and Tiverton. It could not have been easy: for Calvinism was orthodoxy in England, Arminianism a heresy. Certainly they were distinct from those Calvinists who came to be known as Particular Baptists, a distinction which lasted in England until 1891.

When seven London Particular Baptist churches published a Confession in 1644, the second stream of Baptist life was clearly visible. Its source was in the family of congregations that had originated in the work of the Independent minister, Henry Jacob. Jacob had founded in 1616, near Southwark at London, a congregation based on the gathered church principle, and following his departure to Virginia, the original group evolved even further. Under John Spilsbury, one of the offshoots adopted believer’s baptism while another branch differed as to who should administer baptism. By 1640 both of these churches concluded that immersion was the only mode of Scriptural baptism. Thus by 1644 when they issued the London Confession, seven congregations could be clearly identified as Baptists holding the particular or limited view of Christ’s atonement.

The Calvinist Confession of the Particular Baptists had several distinctive emphases. Baptism was the ‘door’ into church fellowship and should only be administered to persons professing faith in Christ. The ministry was placed firmly in the immediate control of members of the covenanted Christian community. In political matters the ‘king and parliament freely chosen by the kingdom’ had legitimate powers, but there should be no state interference in church matters. The mutual cooperation of all churches was stressed, particularly as this related to church planting, financial assistance and resolution of controversial matters within a local church.

It was in 1649 that John Myles and Thomas Proud were dispatched by the London Baptists to spread the Gospel in Wales. Myles was the son of a prosperous farmer, educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, and he founded the first Particular Baptist Church in Wales at Ilston, near Swansea in 1650. Twelve years later he and a number of members emigrated to America, settling at a place they designated Swansea, even taking their church book with them.

During the Civil Wars and Interregnum (1630–1660) Baptists grew numerically, as many who served in the Parliamentary Army planted small churches as they moved from place to place. It was a generation in which many Baptists experienced the reality of political power. Parliament took power from the King; Parliament was replaced by the Army; and finally there was Cromwell's military dictatorship. But it must be said that in a time when the Anglican Church lost all its state power, Baptists were especially concerned with religious freedom.

After Cromwell died, the monarchy was restored to Charles II in 1660 by a Parliament which was strongly royalist and high church. King Charles had offered "liberty to tender conscience" declaring that none would be "called into question for differences in matters of religion which do not disturb the general peace of the kingdom." Parliament, when it met, comprising royalists who were Archbishop Laud's successors, had no such scruples. They were convinced that one church in one state was the only answer to the troubled society left by Cromwell. Church and state were wedded in such a way that loyalty to the crown was expressed by loyalty to the revived Anglican Church.

From 1660 to 1689 those who refused to conform to the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* were increasingly persecuted by a number of laws, the so-called 'Clarendon Code' after Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and chief adviser to Charles II. Baptists, along with other nonconformists, experienced extreme harassment, restraint of goods, and fines. This reached a climax when nonconformist supporters of the ill-fated uprising in support of the Duke of Monmouth in 1684 were dealt with by the infamous Judge Jeffries. In the West of England he sentenced 300 to be hung and deported nearly a thousand to Barbados.

During this period of persecution, the experiences of the Broadmead Baptist congregation in Bristol were recorded in the Church Book by one of their elders, Edward Terrill, who by his will left money to found what is the oldest Baptist College in the world (1679). One of the pastors, Thomas Hardcastle, wrote regular letters to be read to the congregation instead of sermons while he was imprisoned. Many of them are concerned with the meaning of faith in an age of persecution. Hardcastle believed persecutions were "a precious season of grace" whereby Christian hearts are purified and given deep and lasting joy. Faith is a shield for the Christian pilgrim as he overcomes the world on his journey. Another Baptist pastor also reflected on this theme in another prison. John Bunyan in Bedford jail produced the spiritual epic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, which would fuel the fires of faith for Christians in generations yet to come.

When James II fled the throne and the Protestant William of Orange became King, not only did active persecution cease, but those who dissented from the Church of England were given a recognized place in English society. The Act of Toleration, as it came to be known, allowed for toleration to trinitarian Protestants, whose ministers subscribed to all but three of the Thirty Nine Articles, so long as tithes and church rates were paid to the Established Church. Meeting houses could be licensed on condition that oaths of supremacy and allegiance to the Crown were taken. But all public offices in society were closed to any who would not take the Lord's Supper in the local Anglican church.

The situation for Dissenters after 1689 could be epitomized in the experiences of Bunyan's pilgrim. Vanity Fair was now passed, Christian was traveling "the delicate plain called Ease," toward the silver mine in the hill Lucre, and beyond that, "Doubting Castle." The 18th Century opened uncertainly for Dissenters who were concerned to build chapels and license places for worship. After the death of Queen Ann in 1714, Baptists and others felt more secure under the protection of the ruling House of Hanover. Baptists constituted at least 1% of English population, mainly living in towns. The Particulars numbered 40,520 in 206 chapels, and the Generals were 18,800 members in 122 chapels. Baptists were found mostly in the Midlands and the South, especially in London and Bristol.

The General Baptists went into a serious decline in the 18th Century. They became very inward in perspective, denying membership to any who married outside the General Baptist community, and

obsessed with such differences as the rightness of hymnsinging in their churches. They also lacked an educated and trained ministry, which left them open to anti-trinitarian views. Many General Baptist churches became unorthodox in their view of the person of Christ, and by the end of the century had become Unitarian.

The 18th Century opened for Particular Baptists with the threat of doctrinal deviation also. Particular Baptist Associations were reformed on the basis of the 1689 Confession of Faith, subscribed by over a hundred congregations at a meeting in London. In the west country, Bristol Baptist Academy, from 1720 onwards, produced a steady stream of able and evangelical ministers to serve the churches in England, Wales, Ireland and American Colonies. Bernard Foskett and his successors at the Academy kept alive an evangelical Calvinism when many Baptists were succumbing to the "high" Calvinism propounded by London Baptist minister, Dr. John Gill (1697–1771). His interpretation reduced the need for evangelical efforts since it assured the elect of salvation.

Apart from the theological differences between the more radical General Baptists and the Particular Baptists, who were closer to the mainstream of the Puritan movement, other issues divided early Baptists. Some were Seventh Day Baptists, worshipping on the Old Testament Sabbath or Saturday. More troublesome was the issue of mixed communion: should they practice 'strict' or 'closed' communion, confining membership to those baptized as believers, or have open membership for all believers, leaving the issue of baptism to the individual conscience? Most Particular Baptists practiced strict communion, but there were some important exceptions, like Henry Jessey's church in London, John Bunyan's at Bedford, and Broadmead, Bristol.

If the church was to be a community of believers, it demanded godly lives of its members. They had to set themselves apart from the world; they must themselves be beyond reproach. This discipline of church members who "walked unruly" was a matter of communal concern, and the records of church meetings show sad examples of those punished for immorality, drunkenness and debt.

Although Baptists stressed the independence of the local church, they were ready to work together for the common good. In 1644 seven London Particular Baptist churches issued a joint Confession of Faith, and in 1651 thirty General Baptist churches in the Midlands produced their first Confession. By the 1650's Particular Baptists were active in regional associations in several parts of England, South Wales and Ireland. After the Toleration Act of 1689 Particular Baptists from England and Wales began to hold an Assembly in London, although their involvement in the regional associations remained more important to them. General Baptists also grouped in district associations; from 1654 their General Assembly became important, with increasing authority over the member churches.

By the end of their first century, Baptists had developed a definite identity and yet a variety about themselves. Through good times and bad, one small congregation had evolved into three main streams and Baptists were recognized as part of official Nonconformity. Their churches stretched from London to Wales to Yorkshire—and to America. Their ranks had swelled with artisans, commonfolk, military officers, and men and women of property. Their preachers were well known for their gifts of elocution and some of their learned spokesmen were considered among the most widely read authors of the century. Truly the seed of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys had borne fruit in what Baptist historians would consider as the logical conclusion of the Reformation in England.

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The Dippers Dipt: Not Quite So, Reverend Featley!

What Is a True Particular Visible Church? The Great Debate at Southwark Rejoined.

WILLIAM BRACKNEY, PH.D. Dr. Brackney is Executive Director of the American Baptist Historical Society.

From the first appearance of the English Baptist congregations in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, Baptists were poor, persecuted, despised dissenters who were considered outside the mainstream of English church life. Early on, many of them fled the country, while others met in clandestine conventicles to worship, pray, and teach their beliefs. With intensified persecution in the 1620's the major leaders and preachers were imprisoned and ridiculed. All of that began to change in the 1630's. With more converts and even some members with wealth and social standing, Baptists grew bold and published their opinions more widely and engaged in public discussions, sometimes formal debates, to argue their doctrinal positions. Among all of the public activities perhaps none was more significant than the great debate in Southwark which was publicized then and since as a turning point for the struggling sect called Baptists.

The circumstance was this: two prominent English churchmen squared off against each other in what was to become one of the most celebrated religious debates of the seventeenth century. In a large hall (perhaps the famous Guild Hall) in Southwark, the two men presented their respective cases for the nature of the true church: passionately an Anglican denounced the practices of the sly opponent, and boldly the Baptist retorted the premises of logic and tradition. The occasion was a public disputation outside London: the protagonists were Daniel Featley, D.D., and William Kiffin; the date was October 17, 1642.

In an age already characterized by great social and political upheaval (not to speak of the changes wrought in the Church of England), the pot was yet boiling. Earlier in that year Oliver Cromwell had forced the Stuart Dynasty to flee London, and he assumed control of their ecclesiastical machinery. His success was due largely to the cooperation of an army that was predominantly Independent and of Baptist sentiments in particular. Much to the surprise of the Free Churchmen, however, the Presbyterian hegemony turned about-face and practiced restrictions on the sects and slandered the teachings of Baptists, Seekers, Diggers, Quakers and Fifth Monarchists alike.

The response of these groups was to publish a spate of pamphlets and air their grievances in public debates that would draw wider attention to their presumed legitimacy. It is hard to realize in the twentieth century that very many persons would read the turgid argumentation in the tracts, much less pay attention to public quarrels between religionists. Yet debates were spectacles not unlike the public hangings and military parades common to London Society in the early seventeenth century: they were amusing, entertaining, and, many times, educational. If the great debate at Southwark is a fit example, the sects gained many new converts from the credibility gained in public disputation. The defenders of orthodoxy thus played right into the hands of their opponents by agreeing to debate.

The choice of Southwark is worth noting. The first haven for the persecuted Nonconformists had been the rural countryside in England and Wales. Next when Archbishops Abbot and Laud stepped up persecution, several congregations fled to the Low Countries. That alternative proving to be unpalatable, the dissenters cautiously returned to England and, following the lead of Henry Jacob in 1616, many settled in Southwark, just across the Thames from London proper. The borough was a pocket of lower-class artisans, laborers, and ne'er-do-wells. The area boasted several prisons and theatres; not to be

forgotten were the official residences of many leading church officials. (Noteworthy for the colonies, several New England divines hailed from the "Southside," including John Norton and John Davenport; Lewis du Moulin, son of the French reformer and refugee, preached at a Southwark church.) If there was anywhere in Greater London where outspoken dissenters were relatively secure, it was in Southwark, sheerly because of the numbers of dissenters there.

Speaking in defense of the Establishment was Daniel Featley (1582–1645). Featley was an influential and respected scholastic, sometime pastor and lecturer in the Anglican tradition. While his loyalty to King Charles was never in question, he was able to temper his politics with a strong affirmation of John Calvin, which made him less offensive to the Puritans. He had many friends in Parliament among the Presbyterians, and he was one of the few Anglicans chosen to sit in the Westminster Assembly in 1643. His training at Oxford helped him to earn the reputation of an unmatched controversialist, largely due to his command of the mechanics of logic and biblical languages. From his book, **The Dippers Dipt or the Anabaptists Ducked and Plung'd over Head and Ears at a Disputation in Southwark**, we gather that Featley was unbending in his theology, relentless in his attacks upon heterodoxy, and, above all else, excessively arrogant. He especially disliked Baptists who **"preach and print and practice their impieties openly...they flock in great multitudes to their Jordans...the presses sweat and groan under the load of their blasphemies."** There was perhaps no one more inclined to dispute the "Dippers" than Daniel Featley.

The Baptist William Kiffin (1616–1701) was twenty-four years the junior of Featley. A Southwark native (Featley referred to him as "Cufin"), Kiffin was born the same year that Henry Jacob the Separatist transported his church to Kiffin's neighborhood, a fact that was to hold great sway over Kiffin's religious sentiments. In contrast to Featley, Kiffin was an artisan, self-taught in the Scriptures, yet very articulate for a person of little or no social stature. In 1633 Kiffin concluded from his own study of the Scriptures that he should join the Separatist congregation in Southwark which Henry Jacob had founded. Further study led him to a Baptist position in 1641 for which he was imprisoned. Apprenticed as a brewer, the Baptist Kiffin learned through practical experience the work ethic of John Calvin. In him, Daniel Featley would find a stalwart opponent.

According to Featley, the purpose of the debate was to confute altogether the "baptists." The proceedings began with a prayer by the Anglican divine, followed by the opening query from a Baptist "Scotchman":

Mastor Doctour, we came to dispute with you at this time, not for contention sake, but to receive satisfaction: We hold that the baptism of Infants cannot be proved lawful by the testimony of Scripture, or by Apostolical Tradition; if you can therefore prove the same either way, we shall willingly submit unto you.

The "Scotchman" thus reduced the Baptist identity to a single issue: believer's baptism. The idea that the church was to be composed only of true believers who had professed repentance and faith in Christ and experienced New Testament baptism had clear roots in the ministry of John Smyth, who in 1609 announced his intention to separate from other Separatists on that basis and build an entirely new doctrine of the church. There were older instances of the position to be sure: Anabaptists in Europe reached similar conclusions in the prior century, and at least one Englishman baptized himself prior to 1600. To most observers in 1642 however, the principle was only about three decades old, and it was not supported by Catholics, Anglicans, Puritans, Separatists, or others in the major Christian traditions.

Featley's response indicated his insensitivity to the situation and his underestimation of his opponents. **"Are you anabaptists?"** he retorted, using the guilt-by-association principle that had discredited Baptists by connecting them with the Muensterites of the 1540s. He then arrogantly suggested that his purpose was to defend the Communion book (a Presbyterian revision of the Book of Common Prayer)

and to illustrate how both the Latin and the Greek churches had dealt with the heresy of anabaptism. He was sharply critical of the Baptist party: "***I could have wished also that you had brought scholars with you who knew how to dispute, which I conceive you do not.***" He quickly engaged in a condescending lecture about the mechanics of debate.

Thinking to gain the upper hand, Featley queried the Scotchman about the nature of the Trinity as evidenced in the original Greek language texts that Featley believed to be beyond the comprehension of the unlearned Baptists. The Anglican reasoned that since baptism is made in the name of the Holy Trinity, it was an appropriate question. Baptists saw it as a ploy to cause them to err by misdefining the Godhead theologically as not coequal in divinity. At the end of this the first round of the dispute, Featley confidently barked that the Baptists had committed blasphemy, and the Baptist company turned to William Kiffin. The Auditors or official judges of the debate agreed with Featley and requested that he answer his own question regarding the Trinity, which he did quite adroitly. For the moment at least, it appeared that Baptists were ill-qualified to serve as teachers in matters of religion.

Kiffin opened the second round with the classic question, "***What is the nature of the visible church?***" As Featley defined the church in Reformation terms, Kiffin pressed further, "Is the Church of England such a church?" To which the Anglican replied with a lengthy defense of the biblical bases of the Book of Articles. The crowd must have roared when the brewer's apprentice quipped, "***For the Thirty-Nine Articles I know not what they are, I never saw them that I remember!***"

A third unnamed Baptist then picked up the discussions and asserted, "The true church compels none to come to church, or punishes him for his conscience as the Church of England doth." Featley's answer indicated his belief from a variety of Old Testament passages that civil magistrates do have the right to compel persons to the true worship of God because the Law of Moses commanded it. While that line of reasoning might have seemed valid to others, it was anathema to the Baptists. From the time of Thomas Helwys, the founder of the first Baptist congregation on English soil in 1612, they had maintained that kings, magistrates, or clergy had no power to dictate to the conscience of anyone and that every human being was entitled to complete liberty of conscience without appearing to be seditious. While Featley had perhaps won the round, he had uncovered another major Baptist tenet, that being liberty of conscience.

Following a lengthy exchange about the nature of children's baptism, the debate focused upon the nature of ministry. The Baptists put forth the proposition that only those who are designated by a congregation ought to preach, because others may be appointed by ungodly men. The force of this position lay in its linkage with religious liberty since the Baptists reasoned that it was ungodly to persecute anyone for religious beliefs as the Anglican bishops had done. Therefore the bishops were ungodly men, and their appointments were invalid. Featley's response was to disclaim any knowledge of the persecution of any **godly** persons.

Couched in this discussion was the important issue of the empowerment of all believers. Kiffin took issue with Featley over the latter's designation of the church membership as "laity." Baptists held that the distinction was not borne out in Scripture and that, in fact, members of the congregation acting as deacons and other officials of the church could preach and administer the sacraments. While Featley would not allow that deacons were mere laymen, he did concede that some laymen had been instrumental in spreading the gospel. Kiffin, ever the gifted layman **par excellence**, responded, "This is all we desire to do!" in defense of every Christian's responsibility to proclaim the gospel and expound the Scriptures.

The final round of the Southwark Disputation centered on the understanding and use of Scripture. Throughout the exchange, Featley had sought to embarrass his opponents by demonstrating their inability to use the Scriptures in the original tongues. In several passages of the Geneva Bible he demonstrated what he called erroneous translations which became the basis of poorly conceived attacks upon the bishops and clergy of the Church. In a legalistic fashion, the Anglican position was that the

approved text was, in fact, the essence of Holy Scripture.

In contrast, the Baptists asserted, **"The letter of the Word of God is not Scripture, without the revelation of the Spirit of God; the Word revealed by the Spirit is Scripture."** With a logic that presaged a twentieth-century Baptist posture, the Baptist spokesman went on to argue that the Word of God becomes operant in human experience: **"Experience is the best Doctour that teacheth us."** For early Baptists, the Bible had come to be a dynamic tool in the making of individual Christian experience and the reordering of the church. Scripture was not a textbook of syllogisms; with the illumination of God's Spirit, it was a commentary on human affairs to be applied personally and corporately, specifically and with authority. And because God's Spirit could deal with anyone, every person could participate in the ministry of the Word.

As the debate drew to a weary close, Kiffin thrust a final sword with the suggestion that he, the illiterate artificer, was more lawfully called to preach the Word than his opponent, for, as the Baptist put it, **"You are called by bishops who live in known sins."** Featley's reply: **"He who ordained me was a learned, grave and religious Bishop who lived and died without spot or taint and I cannot sufficiently admire your boldness..."** Kiffin's last recorded response placed his focus squarely on the Separatist/Baptist *raison d'être*: **"Whoever he was, he was but a particular man and Christ gave the power of ordaining to his Church, not to any particular man."**

The fundamental principle illustrated in the Great Debate at Southwark and unleashed in the Baptist reordering of English Protestantism was that the true church of Jesus Christ is a body of regenerate baptized believers, informed by the Word and empowered by the Spirit for all necessary work pertaining to the gospel. No form of ecclesiastical or individual tradition could overrule the authority which Christ had rightly given to his church.

The debate lasted for upwards of five to six hours given the amount of discussion that Featley later reported in written summary fashion. Featley remembered that the **"Knights, ladies and gentlemen gave him a great thanks"** and that some of the Anabaptists desired a second meeting which never occurred. He had, after all, used **"the conquering force of truth to still the vaunting brags of the upstart sectaries."** Kiffin, though his recollections were not recorded, must have been satisfied that his co-religionists had dealt effectively in the marketplace of ideas and, moreover, had acquitted themselves admirably in the face of one of England's most capable controversialists. The Baptists had come of age during the probing debate in Southwark and had demonstrated that they were biblically articulate, theologically sophisticated, and a socio-economic force to be reckoned with.

Less than two years after the Great Debate, Daniel Featley was accused of collusion with Archbishop Ussher, and it was charged that Featley had been with the royal entourage at Oxford during the military campaigns in 1643. For this he was imprisoned as a spy and died in that condition in 1645. As a final appeal for freedom he compiled his book, ***The Dippers Dipt***, which was published posthumously. William Kiffin helped to organize the first Particular Baptist Church at Devonshire Square and served as its pastor for over sixty years. He was a signer of the First London Confession in 1644, and after entering the woolen trade, he became one of the wealthiest merchants of his day. In fact he gave King Charles II £10,000 to help the royal treasury and was thus able to use his influence many times on behalf of his Baptist interests and friends.

Though Daniel Featley's book remains his personal statement of achievement, the victory at Southwark in October 1642 rightly belongs to the Baptists. Their emphasis upon the local church as a visible body of believers signified in believer's baptism by immersion, affirmation of the ministry of all believers, and the authority of Scripture in all matters, had a profound impact upon Baptist development and all of Christendom.

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Baptism: A Radical Act

Believer's baptism by immersion was no insignificant step when Baptists championed it in the 17th Century. This radical and public act was a break with over 1300 years of recognized practice in Christian society and it won few converts in the early years. Why was it so unpopular?

Infant baptism was important to almost everyone. With it came a Christian name, a recognized family and community relationship. For the church it meant another communicant who would obey its teaching and support it financially, either through offerings or taxes (or risk severe punishments!). Since church and state were wed across Europe, infant baptism was significant because it was the first point of accountability and authority which a person met.

Baptists, on the other hand, saw no scriptural basis for infant baptism and no need to succumb to the authority of the church in this way. Dedication of children to the Lord was permitted, but scriptural baptism was something else. A believer's baptism by immersion was a profession of his faith in Christ as Savior and Lord ... it was a picture of his death, burial and resurrection. When Baptists immersed new converts, the believers knowingly and voluntarily sought baptism and church membership, thus exercising each individual's precious liberty of conscience. Believer's baptism was an act that no parent, guardian or sponsor could do on one's behalf. It was a personal, public witness of faith.

For those who defended the baptism of infants, the public spectacle of immersion was disgraceful, unbecoming and unhealthful. More than that, believer's baptism was an affront to church tradition, control and authority, and certainly the continued well-being of both church and state.

Believer's baptism by immersion ... a radical act indeed!

"Baptistification Takes Over"

The above claim appeared not in a Baptist publication but in the September 2, 1983 issue of Christianity Today. It is the headline of a major article by noted Lutheran Church historian, Dr. Martin E. Marty, Professor of Modern Christianity at The University of Chicago. He coins the word "baptistification" to describe what he calls the "most dramatic shift in power style on the Christian scene in our time, perhaps in our epoch."

"Baptistification" refers to the Baptists and their spiritual kin as an alternative Christian expression to the Catholic, or a more traditional and liturgical approach.

Marty sees the two alternatives as both opposed yet complementary and "urges the need for both styles if the church is to be healthy ..." He observes that: "For the moment, baptistification is the more aggressive and effective force, and the circumstances that make it so could prevail for a long time to come. It may succumb, as the worst in Catholicism did, to the temptations that come with its new power and prestige. If so, God could raise up the latent Catholic Christians to be the voice of prophetic upset."

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The Gallery of Leaders, Evangelists, Thinkers and Movers in Baptist History

Baptists have no single historical figure like a Luther or Wesley as founder and leader. But since its beginnings men and women of faith and courage have been instrumental in developing its theology and extending its witness. A selection of examples is presented.

Hanserd Knollys ?1599–1691

Educated at Cambridge, he took Anglican orders, becoming a Puritan and then a Separatist. He emigrated to Massachusetts in 1638, but returned to London in 1641. By 1645 he had become a Baptist and led a church in London the rest of his life. Interested in education, he published Hebrew, Greek and Latin grammars, and also an exposition of the Book of Revelation. He had Fifth Monarchist sympathies, which brought him into tension with the state, leading to several spells in prison. Differences in political understanding did not prevent Knollys and William Kiffin working together as leaders among the Particular Baptists.

Benjamin Keach 1640–1704

A tailor by trade, Keach became pastor of the General Baptist church at Winslow, Buckinghamshire. He published a primer for children's education, and was tried in 1664 for its attitude to the *Book of Common Prayer*. Keach was pilloried and all copies of the book were burned. He rewrote his *Child's Delight*, and it ran to several editions.

Keach moved to London in 1668, and became a Particular Baptist, and Pastor at Horslydown, Southwark—the church which many years later was to call the young Charles H. Spurgeon to London.

Keach was an enthusiastic advocate of congregational hymn-singing. Horslydown was probably the first church in England to sing hymns, as opposed to psalms and paraphrases. Keach's hymnbook, published in 1691, provoked heated debate in the 1692 Assembly of Particular Baptists.

Dr. John Gill 1697–1771

Dr. Gill was the foremost theologian of the first two centuries of Baptist history. He was the learned pastor of a London church for 50 years. A high Calvinist, his *Body of Divinity* was "considered as almost an essential part of the library not only of ministers, but of private Christians of the Baptist denomination who could afford to purchase them. They were read almost exclusively to the neglect of other works of divinity."

His works did not appeal in the same way to the next generation of Particular Baptists, who were keenly evangelical. Robert Hall was to describe Gill's works as "a continent of mud," so much had theological outlook changed.

Andrew Fuller 1754–1815

"Tall, stout and muscular, a famous wrestler in his youth," this self-taught farmer's son became a

champion for Christ, “the most creatively useful theologian” of the Particular Baptists. His book ***The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation***, 1785, restated Calvinist theology for Baptists influenced by the Evangelical Revival. His Doctorate of Divinity was bestowed by Brown University, Rhode Island. Fuller was minister at Kettering, where the Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792, with Fuller as the energetic first Secretary.

Dan Taylor 1738–1816

Dan Taylor worked in a Yorkshire mine from boyhood. He was converted by the Methodists, and began to study Greek, Latin and Hebrew in his spare time. In 1762 he left the mines to become the minister of a local church in Lancashire, which left the Methodists and became Baptist, forming links with the surviving Arminian Baptists which led to the New Connexion of General Baptists in 1770. Taylor remained a leader of the New Connexion, moving to a London church in 1785. He believed in education for the ministry, and founded the Midlands Baptist College in 1797. His Methodist background and its emphasis on revivalism equipped him to be a vital force for evangelism.

William Carey 1761–1834

Carey was a minister within the Northamptonshire Association which became a center of evangelical activity among Particular Baptists. In 1792 Carey published ***An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens***, in which he concluded that Christ’s command to teach all nations remained binding, and considered in detail the religious state of the nations of the world and the best way to tackle missionary work. In that year too, he preached his “Deathless Sermon,” with the famous lines, “Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.” Soon Carey went to India as first missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society. He was himself evangelist, teacher, translator, social reformer and botanist, while his first colleague was a doctor. Carey believed missionary activity should be wide-ranging.

Roger Williams 1599–1683

The “gentle radical” prepared for the Anglican ministry at Cambridge University where he had matriculated in law. Following his ordination to the priesthood, Williams developed strong opposition to the liturgy and hierarchy of the Church and embarked for Massachusetts in 1631. There he became an extreme Separatist and spent time at Boston, Plymouth Plantation, and Salem. Although he had the support of his congregation at Salem, colonial leaders labelled him a schismatic and summoned him repeatedly to appear before the General Court. After a lengthy debate over the issue of liberty of conscience, Williams was banished from Massachusetts in 1635. In search of a haven free from persecution, Williams and others settled at a place he called “Providence” and gave birth to the colony of Rhode Island, based upon the principle of complete religious freedom. He adopted Baptist sentiments and, with Ezekiel Hollimann, established a Baptist Church at Providence in 1638, usually thought to be the oldest in America. Williams later despaired of ever seeing the true visible church and moved away from a close relationship with any formal group. He returned to England to plea for a charter and published his major work, ***The Bloody Tenant of Persecution*** (1644), in which he made an eloquent statement in favor of the total liberty of conscience for the sake of peace. His legacy includes the first published lexicon of an Indian language and generations of congenial relations with Native Americans. Though perhaps a Baptist for only a short time, Roger Williams agreed with the principle of believer’s baptism and the irenic spirit of the group.

Adoniram and Ann Judson

Adoniram (1788–1850) was the son of a Congregational minister in Massachusetts. Judson was educated at Brown University and Andover Seminary and early expressed an interest in foreign missions. The zeal of Judson and other New England students led to the formation of the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions which, in 1812, appointed Judson and five others to be America's first foreign missionaries. On board ship during the long voyage to India, Judson studied the Scriptures and was converted to a Baptist position and, upon arriving in India, was baptized by William Carey. Judson soon found that he could not remain in India and that he lacked the support of any American group since his change in views. This led to the establishment of the Baptist General Missionary Convention and Judson's own removal to Burma, a new field. He concentrated his efforts on preparation of linguistic tools, but political opposition soon set in and Judson was imprisoned for nine months. Eventually he was quite influential in concluding a peace between Burma and England in the War of 1824. He finally completed a translation of the Bible in Burmese and trained countless indigenous workers at the mission. Judson became the role model for overseas missionaries.

Ann Hasseltine Judson (1789–1826) was the first wife of Adoniram Judson and exerted a profound influence upon the role of women in the nineteenth century and the proclamation of the gospel in Burma. Her roots were in Massachusetts, yet she shared the global vision of her spouse when he was appointed in 1812. She agreed with his change in attitude about baptism, and she, too, was immersed by William Carey. She assisted in the preparation of Judson's Burmese Bible, and during his incarceration in Burma, she made numerous attempts to secure his freedom and to continue his work. Her sacrifices were recaptured in several books and were widely read in nineteenth-century America. One writer has asserted that Ann Judson provided an ideal role model for young Christian women and a catalyst for organized women's endeavors though most of her life was spent outside the United States.

John Clarke, M.D. 1609–1676

Born in Suffolk, England of an ancient family, Clarke was university-trained and took up medical practice for a profession. His early religious sentiments were strongly Puritan, and under a wave of persecution, he emigrated to Boston in 1637. In Massachusetts he also found religious persecution, and he with several friends resolved to plant a colony beyond Massachusetts Bay, predicated upon full religious liberty. In 1638 Clarke and his company settled on Aquidneck Island (now Newport), and Clarke wrote the frame of government and gathered a gospel church. In 1651 he returned to England to fight for charter rights, and he secured in 1663 a guarantee for a "lively experiment" in which full religious liberty would be enjoyed. He was active in evangelistic endeavors, and this led to the establishment of a Baptist Church at Boston and the first free school in America. His personal confession of faith illustrates a strongly Calvinistic bent with a persuasive argument for believer's baptism.

Obadiah Holmes 1606–1682

Little is known of Holmes' early life except that he emigrated to America about 1639. From his diary it is known that he became a Baptist about 1650, probably under the influence of Dr. John Clarke. For the next three decades Holmes was active in the affairs of the Newport Church and a pastoral figure amid controversy with Quakers, Six Principle advocates, and Sabbatarians. Holmes is best remembered for the foray into Massachusetts that he and others made in 1651 to visit a friend and hold evangelistic services there, for which they were arrested. Unlike his two companions, who were released on payment of fines, Holmes was detained for several months and publicly whipped with thirty-nine lashes in Boston Common. He turned the spectacle into a testimony of his faith.

Issac Backus 1724–1806

Backus grew up in a home that had deep religious sentiments and opposed the compromises of the Saybrook Platform. He was converted in 1741 during the Great Awakening and later responded to a call to preach. He was ordained in the Separate (Congregational) Church at Middleborough, Massachusetts in 1748, where he soon began to struggle with the issue of baptism. After his own baptism, he labored as an evangelist until 1756 when he organized a Baptist congregation in Middleborough. Active in the Warren Baptist Association, Backus was chosen their agent in 1774 to write a defense of religious liberty which he and others presented to members of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Following the Revolution he worked tirelessly for the separation of church and state and wrote a bill of rights for Massachusetts. Backus was a towering figure in New England Baptist life in part because of his prolific writings, the best remembered of which were his histories of New England and the Baptists, first published in 1777.

Morgan Edwards 1722–1795

Born in Wales and educated at Bristol College, young Edwards preached in Ireland and England for nine years before he came to First Baptist Church, Philadelphia in 1761. Edwards was an advocate of strict congregational discipline, and under his leadership, the church prospered. He was also active in the Philadelphia Association where he promoted evangelism and the establishment of a Baptist institution of higher education. This latter dream was realized in 1764 when he helped to obtain a charter for the College of Rhode Island (now Brown University). At the outset of the Revolution, Edwards served as an itinerant evangelist and collected materials toward writing a history of Baptists in America. During the War he was known as a Loyalist, which nearly destroyed his reputation. Edwards was remembered as an eloquent preacher who also designed the first plan for a comprehensive union of Baptists in America.

Women have played an important part in Baptist history. Some are well known, such as Ann Hasseltine Judson and Lottie Moon. Others are not as well known but worthy of note.

Elizabeth Bunyan's courageous defense of her husband, John Bunyan, and of her beliefs, gives her a place in the early history of the Dissenting Churches. During Bunyan's six year imprisonment for preaching without a license, Elizabeth was his most persistent advocate. In 1661 she managed to appear before the Court of Assize, and the poverty-stricken, uneducated young mother gave a spirited testimony before the hostile judges.

In the new world, William Bradford reported in his journal in 1639 that it was through the influence of Catherine Scott, sister of Anne Hutchinson, that Roger Williams was persuaded to make public his Baptist beliefs. A century later, ***Rachel Scammon*** distributed copies of John Norcott's ***Plain Discourse upon Baptism***, believing that she was laying the groundwork for a future Baptist congregation in Stratham, New Hampshire. Her effort was rewarded at least twenty years after her death when a local physician, Samuel Shepherd, converted after reading Norcott, became pastor of a Baptist congregation in Brentwood. By 1775 the first Baptist church in the colony was organized at Newton, and by 1770 Stratham had its Baptist church.

At the same time, ***Martha Stearns Marshall*** was preaching in Virginia and North Carolina. She was the sister of Shubal Stearns and the wife of Daniel Marshall, two great figures of the Separate Baptist movement. During the mid-eighteenth century, when women preachers were usually ignored or denounced by their churches, Martha Stearns Marshall was a role model for Separate Baptist women, who preached and prayed in public more freely than their Regular Baptist sisters.

Mary Webb (1779–1861), frail and confined to a wheelchair, nevertheless was the driving force behind the formation in 1800 of the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, the first missionary organization for women in America. The Female Society engaged in both city mission work and the support of foreign missions, and was a forerunner of the national women's mission societies formed later

in the century

Lulu (Louise Celestia) Fleming (1862–1899), the daughter of a slave and Civil War veteran, valedictorian of her class at Shaw University, became the first Black person appointed a career missionary by the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society of the West. She sailed for Africa in 1887; then, while in the States to recover her health, she received a degree in 1895 from the Pennsylvania Woman's Medical College. She returned to Africa, and for the remainder of her brief life was a pioneer medical missionary in the Congo.

Helen Barrett Montgomery (1861–1934) was both a reflection of the gains made by Baptist women in the 19th century and a precursor of change in the 20th century. A licensed minister, social activist, author, and lecturer, she published a translation of the Greek New Testament and was the first woman president of the Northern Baptist Convention (1921–22). Her lifelong work for missions included world travel and the presidency of the Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, and her support of ecumenism led to her involvement in the establishment of what has become the World Day of Prayer.

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John Bunyan

For many people, John Bunyan (1628–1688) is an enigma. A statue of Bunyan as a denominational figure adorns the headquarters of the Baptist Union in Great Britain; yet Bunyan is claimed also by the Congregationalists. During his lifetime, his denominational affiliation, at best, was misunderstood.

A tinker by trade, Bunyan in his early life was a blasphemous, profane individual known for his misdeeds in his native Elstow in Bedfordshire. His stint in the Parliamentary Army (1644–1647) probably did little to improve his behavior, though it did expose him to Baptists and others who took their religious profession seriously. About 1653 he experienced a conversion and sought believer's baptism from Andrew Gifford, pastor of a Particular Baptist church in Bedford.

In the later 1650s Bunyan began to preach publicly and was well received for his abilities to make gospel truths plain and to put his hearers under the spell of his stories. When King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, nonconformist preachers came under renewed persecution, and Bunyan was imprisoned. During his twelve-year confinement, he read extensively and wrote some of his most famous works, including ***Grace Abounding to the Chiefest of Sinners***. When he was released in 1672, he became more active in the church and succeeded Gifford as pastor.

For the remainder of Bunyan's career, though he served as a highly gifted pastor and achieved renown as a writer, he was a problem for many Baptists who desired sharply defined distinctions when it came to the ordinances. Bunyan, while he owned baptism to be God's ordinance, "would not make an idol of it." This meant that Bunyan would not deny anyone participation in the Lord's Supper because that person lacked the proper baptism. Early in 1673 Bunyan pressed his viewpoint in a book titled ***Differences in Judgement About Water Baptism No Bar to Communion***, which irritated many of the Particular Baptists. But Bunyan, and his church after him, remained steadfast in the open Communion stance and maintained fellowship with both Baptists and Congregationalists.

His chief literary work, ***The Pilgrims Progress*** (1678), is a classic in English literature. An allegory that narrates the difficult path of "Christian" through the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and Vanity Fair to the Celestial City, ***Pilgrims Progress*** is an account of the Christian experience, perhaps Bunyan's own. En route, the main character encounters unforgettable folk like Worldly Wiseman, Talkative, and Facing-both-Ways. Many literary critics believe that the places and figures in the epic are but a mirror of Bunyan's Bedfordshire with an ironic twist of the author's sense of humor. Whatever the case, within ten years of its publication more than a dozen reprintings were called for, and the book has now been printed in over one hundred languages and is second in sales only to the Bible as the all time best seller.

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The Baptists: Christian History Timeline

The seventeenth century was an age of bold contrasts, change, and disintegration. Social forces strained at progress, and old dynasties were tested. While politicians autocratically tried to dictate the course of church and state, dynamic forces unleashed in parliamentary bodies indicated great disaffection with the old order and old ways.

Upper classes flaunted wealth and status with snuff boxes, perfume, paint, gloves, canes, and powdered wigs. Working classes, landless peasants, and New World natives remained subject to exploitation and conquest.

Ruling houses in France, Russia, and Austria underwent severe trial and made concessions. New states emerged in the Rhineland and Low Countries. In England civil war and revolution led to permanent limitations upon the hierarchy.

Scientific experimentation flourished, and medical knowledge increased with the developments of Newton, Galileo, Descartes, Hooke, and others. Yet at midcentury the plague spread devastation, and three-quarters of London was destroyed by fire.

Even as the Reformation took hold in unexpected places, thousands fled to America to escape religious persecution. Ironically many, in turn, oppressed later arrivals in their quest for religious freedom.

At the forefront of change, the Baptist movement was born out of persecution and ridicule. Baptists stood in vehement opposition to any king's "divine right" and any church's determination of their lives. Their call for freedom of conscience between an individual and God opened a door to both conflict and opportunity.

Religion / Reformation

1604 James I orders Roman Catholic priests banished from England, resulting in pro-Catholic Gunpowder Plot to blow up the House of Lords.

1611 Publication of the King James Bible

1620 Pilgrim Fathers found Plymouth Colony

1621 Huguenot rebellion against Louis XIII

1633 Inquisition condemns Galileo advocating theories of Copernicus

1633 Plague in Bavaria leads to passion play vow in Oberammergau; first given in 1634, re-enacted every 10 years

1637 New liturgy in Scotland causes riots

1638 Slaughter of Japanese Christians wipes out Christianity in Japan. Foreign books and contacts prohibited

1641 Catholic rebellion in Ireland; 30,000 Protestants massacred

1642 Theatres in England closed by Puritans' orders (to 1660)

1646 New England Puritan theocracy enacts laws requiring church attendance and belief in the Bible

1647 Lutherans acknowledge Calvinists as coreligionists

1655 Cromwell prohibits Anglican services

1661 First American Bible edition—Algonquin translation by John Eliot

1667 Publication of *Paradise Lost* by Eng. poet John Milton

1670 Charles II (Eng.) and Louis XIV (France) make secret treaty of Dover to restore Catholicism to England

1673 Test Act passed in England to bar Catholics and Nonconformists from public office

1676 Observance of Sabbath protected by law in England

1678 False accusations of Catholic "Popish Plot" to murder Charles II

1681 William Penn receives land grant from King; considers Pennsylvania a "holy experiment," where persecuted minorities could live in freedom

1685 Louis XIV revokes Edict of Nantes, thus forbidding all religions but Roman Catholicism; 50,000 Huguenot families leave France

1686 James II disregards Test Act, appoints Catholics to office

1687 James II grants toleration to all religions

1689 Toleration act grants freedom of worship in England

1692 Salem witchcraft trials in New England

1703 John Wesley born

1703 Jonathan Edwards born

The Baptists

1607 Two Separatist congregations flee England for Amsterdam

1609 John Smyth dialogues with the Waterlander Mennonites and baptizes himself and forty others by

affusion

1612 Thomas Helwys, formerly of Smyth's congregation, returns to England and forms the first General Baptist church. His classic, ***A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity***, is the first claim for freedom of worship in the English language

1633 John Spilsbury organizes the first "particular" Baptist church in London

1639 Baptists persuade Roger Williams and Ezekial Holliman to accept their view of the church, and thus the first Baptist congregation in America is formed, in Providence, Rhode Island

1644 Seven English churches draw up the First London Confession to distinguish themselves from Anabaptists and General Baptists

1648 George Fox founds Society of Friends

1653 First meeting of the General Assembly of General Baptists at London. Baptists are prominent in Parliament and Cromwell's New Model Army

1654 Henry Dunster, first president of Harvard College, is forced to resign his office because he accepted Baptist views

1661 Members of the Seventh Day Baptist congregation at Bull-Stake-Alley in London are jailed at Newgate Prison and their pastor, John James, is hung, drawn, and quartered

1661–1664 Parliament passes a series of acts that exclude Baptists and other Nonconformists from holding public offices, forcing them out of schools and penalizing them for not attending Anglican services and for preaching without a license

1663 John Myles, founder of the first Baptist church in Wales, persuades most of his congregation to emigrate to the colonies, and they settle at Swansea, Massachusetts

1665 Thomas Goold refuses to allow his children to be baptized in the Puritan church and is banished from the colony. Later in the year he helps to organize the first Baptist church in Boston

1677 English Particular Baptists write the Second London Confession to show their agreement with the Westminster Confession on most points except baptism

1678 The first Baptist meetinghouse in the colonies is raised in Boston

1678 English General Baptists produce the Orthodox Creed that seeks to unite all Protestants against the Catholic tendencies of King Charles II

1689 Catholics barred from the throne in England

1690 General Six Principle Baptists, who practice the laying on of hands, organize the first Baptist association in America in the environs of Providence, Rhode Island

1702 Baptists in colonial Carolina send seven pounds, 12 shillings to the English General Baptists for either a minister or books.

1707 Baptist congregations in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys unite to form a regular associatio

Politics / Discovery

1600 Wigs and dress trains come into fashion

1603 James I succeeds Elizabeth I of England;

1603 Plague in England

1605 *King Lear* and *Macbeth* by Shakespeare (This is his most productive decade)

1607 Union of England and Scotland rejected by English Parliament;

1607 Founding of Jamestown, Va.

1608 First checks—"cash letters"—used in Netherlands

1609 German astronomer Johannes Kepler publishes his first two laws of planetary motion

1609 Tea from China first shipped to Europe

1610 Henry Hudson discovers Hudson Bay

1612 Tobacco first planted in Virginia

1618 Outbreak of Thirty Years War between Catholics and Protestants; conflict in Europe until 1648

1619 First Negro slaves in North America

1621 Potatoes first planted in Germany

1622 Jan. 1 adopted as beginning of year by Papal chancellery (previously Mar. 25)

1623 Patent law protects inventors in England

1626 Peter Minuit buys Manhattan from Indians

1628 Charles I forced to accept Parliament's petition of civil rights

1629 Charles I dissolves Parliament

1635 Italian Jesuit Giulio Alenio publishes first life of Christ in Chinese

1635 Tobacco in France sold only on doctor's prescription

1637 Russian explorers cross Siberia, reach Pacific Ocean

- 1642** Charles I attacks Parliament, leading to civil war
- 1644** *Areopagitica*, for freedom of the press, by John Milton
- 1648** Treaty of Westphalia ends Thirty Years War
- 1649** Charles I executed; England declared a Commonwealth
- 1650** Overture emerges as a musical form
- 1653** Cromwell dissolves 'Rump' Parliament and becomes Lord Protector of England
- 1657** Cromwell rejects title of "king"
- 1660** Convention Parliament restores Charles II to throne
- 1665** Great Plague of London kills over 68,000
- 1666** Great Fire of London
- 1670** Watches first have minute hands
- 1677** In Paris ice cream becomes popular
- 1679** Edward Terrill leaves a considerable sum in his estate for the training of Baptist ministers. Eventually this fund will evolve into Bristol Baptist College, oldest in the world
- 1679** England passes Habeas Corpus Act—imprisonment without trial forbidden
- 1680** Dodo bird extinct
- 1687** Sir Isaac Newton experiments with gravitation
- 1688** Glorious Revolution in England: William of Orange comes to save England from Catholicism
- 1689** Parliament issues Bill of Rights; Constitutional Monarchy in Britain
- 1689** William III and Mary II joint monarchs of England and Scotland
- 1695** Government press censorship ends in England
- 1702** Serfdom abolished in Denmark
- 1704** Daniel Defoe begins weekly newspaper *The Review* from his prison cell

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 6: The Baptists

Religious Liberty: An Emotional Issue Still Not Settled

When Baptists set forth a call for religious liberty, they were seeking freedom to hold their religious beliefs as an alternative to the doctrines of the established church. But there was a risk involved. Total freedom of religion could become freedom from religion. For many religious liberty *really* means the opportunity to choose what form of religion one wants, assuming that biblical Christianity is correct and will in the Providence of God always predominate. It must be asked whether any Christian, most of all the Baptists, could by choice want to live in a society where "secular humanism" is the prevailing world view. A variety of statements by Baptists on religious liberty both historical and contemporary consider the subject area.

Roger Williams

Roger Williams fled Massachusetts and founded Rhode Island colony in pursuit of religious liberty.

It is the will and command of God that, since the coming of his Son, the Lord Jesus, a permission of the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or antichristian consciences and worships be granted to all men in all nations and countries: and they are only to be fought against with that sword which is only, in soul matters, able to conquer: to wit, the sword of God's Spirit, the Word of God.

God requires not a uniformity of religion to be enacted and enforced in any civil state; which enforced uniformity, sooner or later, is the greatest occasion of civil war, ravishing of conscience, persecution of Christ Jesus in his servants, and of the hypocrisy and destruction of millions of souls.

The permission of other consciences and worships than a state professeth only can, according to God, procure a firm and lasting peace ...

Source: (1644) *The Bloody Tenant of Persecution*

Thomas Helwys

Thomas Helwys wrote the first defense of religious liberty in the English language in 1612.

Early Baptist leader Thomas Helwys made the first plea in the English language for religious liberty in his book ***A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*** (1612). Shown below is his handwritten preface to King James from this work.

W.A. Criswell

W. A. Criswell is pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas.

Religious liberty consists of the civil magistrate's comprehending and acknowledging that it has no rightful authority over a man's soul. A proper understanding of religious liberty requires the civil

authority to understand that a man's religious beliefs are beyond the purview of the state. Consequently, the state authority does not merely tolerate religious beliefs and activity, nor can it grant the right of religious freedom. All that the state can do legitimately is to acknowledge man's inherent God-given right to worship God in his own way, as well as the right not to worship at all.

One of the great Baptist gifts to the Reformation Heritage is a full awareness that for individual believer priests (I Pet. 2:5,9) to "work out" their "own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12) they must be unhindered by governmental interference. Early in the seventeenth century the great English Baptist, Thomas Helwys, penned the first published plea in the English language for religious liberty in his ***Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*** when he declared in 1612 that the King of England was a mere man and had no authority over men's souls "for men's religion to God is betwixt God and themselves."

In New England, Roger Williams took up the plea for religious liberty which led to the establishment of a colony, Providence Plantations (later Rhode Island), where men enjoyed complete religious liberty. The Baptist concept of religious liberty was buttressed and fortified by a deep-seated belief in the New Testament, with its lack of church-state entanglement, rather than the Old Testament, as the manual for faith and practice in the New Covenant of Christ and His Church.

The commitment to religious liberty and the consequent belief in the separation of church and state need not, however, imply that religious views should not inform political issues. Religious liberty requires an absolute separation of the institutions of the church and the state. However, the biblical dictums concerning the Christian's obligation to support civil magistracy (Lk. 20:25: Rom. 13:1-7) guarantee the absolute inseparability of religious values and political issues. The Christian not only has the right, but also the duty to bring his or her religious convictions to bear upon the political issues of the day. Religious liberty means freedom for religion, not freedom from exposure to religious activities. To argue that a person's views are disqualified from the political and social arena because they are based on religious convictions is not state neutrality, but government censorship.

Jerry Falwell

Jerry Falwell is pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia.

Mixing religion and politics can mean many things. It could mean that one advocates a theocratic state. I certainly do not. Such a merger of religion and politics is as far removed from my position as its opposite, namely, a political system like communism which represses religious thought and expression.

I firmly believe it is a religious duty to be a good citizen. It is one's duty as a good citizen to participate in politics, but I can be true neither to my country nor to my God if I separate my religious convictions from my political views. If I am to be whole, one with myself and with God, I must infuse my life as a political being with beliefs I learned from the Divine Being. This is not radical, fundamentalist Christian theory. It is the basic belief which first drove the Pilgrims to our shores and later inspired the Founding Fathers to proclaim our independence from Britain "with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence." It is the notion which infused the antislavery movement of the 19th century, and in which the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., took his message of racial harmony.

Why should we not permit moral values to influence our thinking about important contemporary issues? To say that spiritual values or morality are at the heart of our society is not to establish a state religion. Far from it. It is only to say with the Constitution that we guarantee the fundamental right of free exercise for all religions throughout our society...

My position—and I believe it is the position of the majority of Americans today, just as it has been for

200 years—is that it is not only legitimate to advocate basic religious values in the political arena, but it is absolutely essential for the health of our republic that believers participate in the political debate of our days.

Edwin Gaustad

Edwin Gaustad is Professor of History at the University of California, Riverside.

Some recent discussion has suggested that the founding fathers thought they were guaranteeing only a freedom for religion, not a freedom from religion. This is surely true of neither Madison nor Jefferson, nor of Baptists who followed in their train. John Leland, an eighteenth-century Baptist itinerant in Virginia, argued that whether a man believed in one god, twenty gods, or no god was not the concern of the state. Religion is not in any direct way the concern of the state, he further declared. The law should not favor ministers, nor should it penalize them. "The law should be silent about them: protect them as citizens, not as sacred officers, for the civil law knows no sacred officers."

In the inevitable interaction between the civil and the ecclesiastical estates, what is a legitimate entanglement and what is an excessive or totally inappropriate entanglement? What are the boundaries that must not be overstepped, whether on theological or moral or Constitutional grounds? Supreme Court justices over the years, and especially in the last four decades, have not found easy answers to those questions. Nor have the leaders of virtually all denominations in America found the lines clear and the answers easy. The application of principle is more difficult than the assertion of it.

On theological grounds, the state has no right to be the armed avenger against "false" religion nor the armed defender of "true" religion. On Constitutional grounds, the state has no right to be either religion's foe or religion's patron. On theological and moral grounds, the churches have no right to coerce the consciences of others: on theological and moral and constitutional grounds, the churches have every right to organize, propagandize, persuade, influence, lobby and cajole. In between such broad declarations of principle, there is room for much disagreement and discord and litigation and confusion and (in the words of Chief Justice Burger) "play in the joints."

Gerhard Claas

Gerhard Claas is General Secretary of The Baptist World Alliance.

...Almost every country in Europe guarantees religious liberty in its constitution. There are many countries where freedom of religion is limited to meetings within the walls of registered churches and mosques. Wherever religion is considered to be a private matter, no public meetings or conferences of religious groups are permitted and any kind of propaganda is prohibited.

The so-called Evangelical Free Churches as well as the government of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe always called for total separation of church and state. However, in Europe today, we still have three major or mainline churches—the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Orthodox Church. All the other Christians belong to minority churches: they suffer minority complexes, they very often are overlooked or maybe even treated as second class people.

I am speaking as a member of an Evangelical Free Church, that is, the Baptist Church. We are strongly working for a full separation of church and state. We think that the church should never be involved in political affairs. And the same way, the state should never interfere in church activities.

Having said this, I must confess however, that to my understanding there never can be an absolute freedom. Let us turn back to the biblical text and we will discover that there are certain limitations of freedom...

A limitation of freedom is given by the fact of fellowship because the individual is created for community. No one lives alone from the fact that he has a father or a mother. Each comes from the communion from father and mother and is born into the family. Each individual person needs community and fellowship in order to learn to grow and to live. This is already clear when one observes a small child. The child cannot live without any person's help. Every person is dependent upon another person. Whoever says "person" says at the same time "community".

Limitations are set by the community. The life of the community is regulated by law and order which I have to accept. Even more, the individual person has not only to integrate into the community, but also has to be a servant of the community he is called "to serve."

What are we really looking for? Do we want freedom for ourselves? Do we just want to be absolutely independent? Even free of any kind of responsibility? Are we looking for religious liberty because we and our church just want to make our own way? Or do we really seek the welfare of the people? Do we want to help the oppressed—those who suffer oppression and limited possibilities?

Our call for freedom including religious liberty always must have a double goal.

1. The freedom of the individual—so that he can live according to his own conscience and to the glory of God.
2. The freedom of society—so that we can build for the future and serve the people for the welfare of the city.

Stan Hastey

Stan Hastey is Associate Executive Director, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Religious liberty is the theological principle, rooted in Holy Scripture, that every person is made in the image of God and is endowed with a free conscience to make spiritual and moral choices. Because it is a gift of God, religious liberty belongs universally to all God's children as an elementary human right.

In the United States, the political corollary of religious liberty is the constitutional principle of separation of church and state, a principle adopted by the nation's founders to insure that neither government nor religion should gain dominance over the other.

Although Baptists cannot claim all the credit for the triumph of religious liberty and separation of church and state in the United States, they played a key role throughout the nearly two-century struggle to enshrine these principles in the nation's basic documents of freedom.

As Anson Phelps Stokes, perhaps the most renowned church-state historian of this century wrote, "No denomination has its roots more firmly planted in the soil of religious freedom and Church-State separation than the Baptists." George W. Truett, in an historic address on the subject delivered in 1920 from the steps of the U.S. Capitol, called religious liberty "the supreme contribution" of America to the rest of the world, and declared that "historic justice compels me to say that it was preeminently a Baptist contribution."

Because religious liberty is the chief contribution Baptists have made to the social teaching of the church and because its continuity is essential to proper church-state relations, each generation of Baptists is obligated to contend for it and to extend it to the next generation.

The chief impediment to religious liberty in our generation is the renewed effort to make of the United States a theocracy rather than the constitutional democracy the founders set in place. With increasing frequency the founders' church-state views have come under attack, particularly Thomas Jefferson's conception of separation of church and state. The views of Jefferson and James Madison, father of the Constitution, are now labeled by some of the leaders of the so-called Religious Right as aberrations and the notion is advanced that the founders actually sought to establish a kind of holy commonwealth in which, while government would not dominate the church, the church could well dominate the state.

Closely connected to this historical revisionism is the view that America occupies a special role in God's plan for the ages, that the United States is the successor to the covenant people Israel, that she is God's own possession among the nations of the world. Although this kind of nationalistic messianism is not new to the contemporary Religious Right, it remains as morally bankrupt today as ever, amounting really to a form of national idolatry.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 6: The Baptists

Baptist Distinctives

Five key convictions that have been essential to Baptists from their beginnings

The Supreme Authority of the Bible

The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

We acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church which are common to human actions and societies and which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

Thomas Helwys (1611)

Believer's Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispersed only upon persons professing faith. The way and manner of dispensing this Ordinance the Scripture holds to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water. It is a sign as follows: first, the washing of the whole Soul in the blood of Christ; second, the interest that the Saints have in the death, burial and resurrection; third, a confirmation of our faith that as certainly as the body is buried under water and rises again, so certainly shall the bodies of the Saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of resurrection, to reign with Christ.

The London Confession (1644)

Local Church Autonomy

Each particular church has a complete power and authority from Jesus Christ to administer all gospel ordinances, provided they have sufficient, duly qualified officers ...to receive in and cast out, and also to try and ordain their own officers, and to exercise every part of gospel discipline and church government, independent of any other church or assembly whatever. Several independent churches where Providence gives them a convenient situation, may and ought for their mutual strength, counsel, and other valuable advantages, by their voluntary and free consent, to enter into an agreement and confederation.

Benjamin Griffiths (1746)

Preaching and Evangelism

The work of the Christian ministry, it has been said, is to preach the gospel, or to hold up the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as the only way of a sinner's salvation. This is doubtless true; and if this be not the leading theme of our ministrations, we had better be

anything than preachers. Woe unto us, if we preach not the gospel! It will not be denied that the apostles preached the gospel: yet they warned, admonished, and intreated sinners to repent and believe; to believe while they had the light; to labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life; to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out; to come to the marriage-supper, for that all things were ready: in fine, to be reconciled unto God.

Andrew Fuller (1785)

Separation of Church and State

As religion must always be a matter between God and individuals, no man can be made a member of a truly religious society by force or without his own consent, neither can any corporation that is not a religious society have a just right to govern in religious affairs.

Isaac Backus (1781)

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 6: The Baptists

Where are the Lions When We Really Need Them?

EDWIN S. GAUSTAD Dr. Gaustad is Professor of History at the University of California, Riverside

In these latter days of the twentieth century, the denominational problem of identity is a genuine one for many groups besides Baptists. Baptists, however, appear to have more problems than most as we endeavor to locate that distillation, that essence, that defining difference which constitutes being Baptist.

For example, many groups can locate their identity geographically. If one is a Presbyterian, then the direction in which one should travel to locate the essence of that tradition is immediately clear: to Geneva or, perhaps even better, Scotland. If one stands in St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, one feels the pride of origins, if not of ownership. Or if one visits a country church on the Isle of Mull or experiences a totally Presbyterian sabbath in the rural Highlands, a comforting assurance envelopes the pilgrim who knows that indeed John Knox is in his heaven and all's right with the world. Or the Episcopalian can make his or her way like a homing pigeon to Westminster Abbey or Canterbury or Coventry; sitting in St. Paul's on an Easter Sunday morning one instinctively knows why one is of the Anglican persuasion and why one is never tempted to depart from it.

The Lutheran may undertake the journey to Marburg, or Copenhagen, or anywhere in Scandinavia for that matter. When visiting the magnificent cathedrals one's spirit can rise with the arches to the vaulted ceilings and beyond. With satisfaction and a sense of belonging, the Lutheran walks all through the cathedral, back and forth, up and down. It is easy to do this because, of course, no one else is there, even on a Sunday. Nonetheless, one has the feeling that somebody very important *once* was there!

If one wishes to reaffirm his Dutch Reformed identity, where better to go than to ... Grand Rapids? Well, yes, but perhaps one is made even more firmly secure by a visit to Amsterdam or Rotterdam or Leyden.

But if you are a Baptist, it's a problem not only of identity but also of direction. Where to go? I do not recommend a trip to Zurich where in the 16th century Felix Manz was drowned for administering believers' baptism. Nor to England where Baptists were exiled or jailed or burned, all such activity leaving little leisure for erecting noble monuments to the memory of Smyth or Helwys or Murton. But surely in America, where Baptists have flourished far beyond the dreams of early founders, there will be monuments and statues of impressive dimension. No doubt. A few years ago, while doing a book on a forgotten Baptist hero, I spent some weeks in Newport, Rhode Island. Here at last I was on home ground, if not actually sacred Baptist soil. I looked forward to being surrounded by and ever-reminded of the likes of John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes, Mark Lucar, Joseph Torrey, John Crandall, the Peckhams, the Weedens, the Hiscoxes and others.

I walked down to the handsomely restored brick market along the edges of the Narragansett Bay where the Chamber of Commerce distributed brochures and maps for Newport's large tourist population. One brochure treated religion in Newport. Excellent! Here at last I would see Baptist history come into its own, in this colonial town where Baptists (Calvinist, Arminian, Seventh-Day) set the pace for Baptists in all of North America. And so I read the brochure, coming first to the Quakers. Well, yes, the Quakers (thanks to Roger Williams' stand on religious liberty) did in the second half of the 17th century become a major presence in Newport. I read on: Jews in Newport. To be sure, the oldest synagogue building in all North America stands next to the Newport Historical Society. Then the brochure told of the Congregationalists; after all, the presence of Ezra Stiles (later president of Yale) in Newport gave this persecuting church a

certain panache. Then, Episcopalians, trying desperately to adjust to their unaccustomed role of being just another sect: disestablished, unfavored, unprotected, competing for members in the open market.

But where were the Baptists? How clever of the authors, I thought, for they were obviously planning to save the best for last, to build to an impressive climax with the vital story of Baptist statesmen and martyrs. It was John Clarke, after all, who spent twelve long years in London making certain that Rhode Island, after the Restoration, had a valid and secure charter. So I read rapidly, racing toward that dramatic denouement.

But then I came to the end. I turned the brochure over, upside down, inside out. The Newport Chamber of Commerce tourist folder on religion contained not one single word about the Baptists. Standing in the midst of Newport's brick market on that October afternoon, I had—not a conversion experience, not an enlightenment—but an identity crisis!

I had come home to Baptist beginnings in America only to discover that nobody was home. My geographical quest had failed. "Where does one go to find a Baptist identity?" had been my first question, and to it I had found no answer.

A second question then arose: "When does one find the essence of the Baptist heritage fully revealed?" To what marvelous moment of the past do we as Baptists instinctively and collectively turn? In 1983 Lutherans all over the world joined in celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther. The United States Postal Service even cooperated by issuing a special commemorative stamp so that Lutherans throughout America might collectively reaffirm their origin and their fount. In the Spring of 1984 Methodists gathered in Baltimore to celebrate their bicentennial; their commemoration of that famous "Christmas Conference" of 1784 when Francis Asbury, Thomas Coke and others assumed the leadership of a newly born, newly invigorated American Methodist Church. The celebration, unfortunately, was not all that happy as the Methodists found themselves distracted and concerned: membership was down; financial receipts were down; homosexuality was up. None of this led to great joy. Surely, I reflected, this will not be the case when Baptists gather to celebrate their ... bicentennial? centennial? tercentenary? sesquicentennial?

Frantically I began to search our past for that revered date, that critical juncture, that historic pivot which all Baptists, European or American, Northern or Southern, black or white, male or female, would want to remember and hold dear. I searched. How sad it is, I said to myself thinking once again of the Methodists, to hold a bicentennial that is not filled with rejoicing. But how sadder still, I concluded, to be able to hold no bicentennial at all!

Oh, we do have lots of dates: Smyth's self-baptism in 1609; Baptists in Rhode Island in 1638 or '39; the Philadelphia Association in 1707; the Triennial Convention in 1817; the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845; the National Baptist Convention in 1895 or earlier; and so on. The only problem is that to mention any one of these dates does not cause the heart to sing or the eyes to mist; it only causes the mind to wander. No one date has the ring of 1066 or 1492 or 1776. So the temporal search for a Baptist identity proved as rewarding as the geographical one. One knows neither where nor when to go to escape the crisis of identity.

Just when the situation looks bleakest and most unpromising, God moves in mysterious ways to rescue us. The early Christian church was assisted in refining its theology, its ecclesiology, and its canon—in other words, its identity—by the fires of persecution. Where are the lions when we really need them?

Baptists have had a long history of being deliberately misunderstood in order to be violently attacked. Continental Anabaptists were, of course, persecuted by everybody: Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, princes. Therefore, when English Baptists came along, the simplest way to deal with them was merely to tag them with the epithet of "Anabaptist." Let the discredited name alone pull them down. English

Baptists were regularly imprisoned, fined, and deprived of social and political rights.

When Massachusetts wanted to stamp out the minority movement trying to scramble for a pathetic foothold in Rhode Island, the Bay Colony passed a law in 1644 which stated:

Forasmuch as experience has plentifully & often proved that since the first arising of the Anabaptists, about a hundred years since, they have been incendiaries of commonwealths & the infectors of persons in main matters, and the troublers of churches in all places where they have been, and that they who have held the baptizing of infants unlawful have usually held other errors or heresies together therewith...

Baptists in New England suffered many things, but no crisis of identity haunted them. They always had plenty of enemies to let them know who they were.

In the colonial South, Baptists were despised and condemned even when they were in remote places and could not successfully be banished. The dominant Church of England felt no more kindly toward these incendiaries of commonwealths, infectors of persons, and troublers of churches than the dominant Congregationalists in New England did. One travelling minister of the English church, Charles Woodmason, journeyed to the Carolina backcountry just before the American Revolution to see how religion fared in those rural parts. He found New Light Baptists there, worshipping in their brush arbors and their open air tabernacles. Woodmason stopped, looked, listened; and everything that he saw or heard or imagined absolutely horrified him.

But another vile Matter that does and must give Offence to all Sober Minds is what they call their Experiences. It seems, that before a Person be dipp'd, He must give an Account of his Secret Calls, Conviction, Conversions, Repentance &c &c. Some of these Experiences have been so ludicrous and ridiculous that Democritus in Spite of himself must have burst with Laughter. Others, altogether as blasphemous, Such as their Visions, Dreams, Revelations—and the like; Too many, and too horrid to be mention'd. Nothing in the Alcoran, Nothing that can be found in all the miracles of the Church of Rome, and all the Reveries of her Saints can be so absurd, or so Enthusiastics, as what has gravely been recited in that Tabernacle Yonder—To the Scandal of Religion and Insult of Common Sense.

That was the golden age for Baptists: identity was clear and scorn was everywhere.

In the 19th century, the denominational focus grew more clouded as Baptists were no longer persecuted or oppressed. Rather they prospered and flourished, growing rapidly in New England, in the South, in the states in between, and most dramatically all along the expanding frontier. Baptists did well on the farmlands and also in the cities: they appealed to the poor and to the well-to-do; they recruited great numbers of whites and great numbers of blacks. And as they multiplied and expanded, so did the number of separations and recriminations, the schisms and the protestations; in other words, the identity crises. Baptists opposed slavery; Baptists supported slavery. Baptists were free; Baptists were enslaved. Baptists launched missions; Baptists opposed missions. Baptists rejected Darwin; Baptists incorporated Darwin. Baptists employed literary criticism; Baptists renounced literary criticism. Baptists were modernists, and Baptists were fundamentalists, and millions were somewhere in the middle.

In the 20th century, nothing grew simpler. We knew we still had enemies, but were far from agreed on where to look for them. Within or without? In the political and economic realms or in the theological and ecclesiastical circles? In the Moral Majority or in the National Council of Churches? In hedonism or humanism? In accredited seminaries or in unaccredited Bible institutes? In order to answer these questions, what we obviously needed was some persecution.

Perhaps we can find our way through or even out of the current crisis of identity if we understand what our past persecutors found so objectionable. There are two points, I believe, that were consistently opposed: 1) the Baptist emphasis on the individual and his or her own faith experience, and 2) the Baptist resistance to the dominating culture (or state).

First, the individual's own experience—the experience of grace or wonder or finitude or forgiveness or acceptance or being made whole. Charles Woodmason was right: that “vile matter ... what they call their Experiences” Baptists do tend to take seriously. In his letter to the London Baptists in 1651, Obadiah Holmes spoke of his “experimental knowledge.” And in his Testimony written in 1675, he described how his own evangelical commitment grew directly, inevitably, out of his prior, personal, individual experience with Jesus Christ. “That which first moved me to entreat and beseech them to be reconciled to God was the consideration of God’s mercy showed to my poor soul.” A century later, Isaac Backus observed: “Much of what I have here written I knew experimentally before I did doctrinally.”

Doctrine does not make the Baptist, but the personal faith experience does. The creed does not bring one to grace; it is by way of grace that a creed, if any be needed, must come. Baptists in the 18th century were ridiculed for their non-creedal position. Only heretics, it was said, resist creeds. To which John Leland, the Virginia itinerant, had a sharp response: “It is sometimes said that heretics are always averse to confessions of faith. I wish,” Leland wryly added, “that I could say as much of tyrants.” In the history of Christianity, creeds have far more often been used to compel a faith than to elicit one, and Baptists—in the 18th century, at least—knew that lesson well. Backus spoke of that intimate, sacred relationship between the believer and Christ, a relationship based preeminently upon personal faith experience and therefore a relationship “with which no human authority can intermeddle.”

Many a Baptist pulpit, north and south, black and white, rings with the appeal to personal experience: “I know Whom [not what] I have believed ... Once I was blind but now I see ... Let no man trouble me, for I bear on my body ...” Sometimes these appeals are not taken as seriously as they should be, and sometimes the rhetoric is only that, as the demands (from either left or right) for conformity in belief or behavior promptly forget or ignore that ultimate court of appeal: a personal faith experience.

Such an emphasis is seen as anarchy by our enemies, but as the guarantor of relevance and vitality by ourselves. Experience requires that a certain pragmatic test be applied to our ideas and our claims: i.e., pragmatic in the sense that we must test the consequences in order to determine what real difference **this** idea versus **that** idea will surely make. Personal experience also gives an existential aspect to our professions of faith: i.e., in the sense that we know we are not mere spectators of or commentators on life; not idle observers at the theatre, we recognize that we, with all the rest of humanity, are on the same stage. In addition, experience and the steady appeal thereto ensures that our ideas and our actions are constantly being reshaped, are always undergoing revision—like the streets of Philadelphia.

If only we had kept our eyes on the centrality of personal spiritual experience with Jesus Christ, how many unprofitable quarrels and struggles and schisms in Baptist history might have been avoided! Millennialism (post, pre-, a-, and aha! [“Aha” is when the Advent occurs before one’s very eyes.]) Revelation (verbal, mechanical, virtual, natural, rational, plenary or progressive). Baptism (pedo- or re-, alien or domestic, triune or single, total or partial, effusion or aspersion). Communion (open or closed, at pew or at table, fermented or Welch’s, weekly or monthly or quarterly—or “I think it’s been a long time since we’ve done it”). In Kansas City in June of 1984 Baptists even debated hotly about the Garden of Eden: who did what to whom—first. (Eve lost the debate.) Then there’s dancing and drinking, movie going and lipstick wearing, dice throwing and card playing (in Texas, dominoes are okay), and countless other exciting chapters in Baptist history. It is a history that Thomas Helwys or John Clarke or Isaac Backus might have some trouble recognizing and even more difficulty identifying with.

Second, our persecutors do accuse us of being, one way or another, “incendiaries of commonwealths,” to

use the language of that 1645 law against Anabaptists. Another somewhat gentler way of making the same point is found in an early Puritan tract by Edward Johnson. Johnson names New England's several religious enemies with whom the Puritans must "never make league." And in naming each one, he provides the defining essence of that particular group. For the Baptists, the essential feature is not their mode or subject of baptism, not their opposition to a paid clergy, not their "enthusiasm" or "antinomianism." Baptists are the enemy because they "deny Civil Government to be proved of Christ." Baptists, that ungodly lot, treat government as though it were a strictly human invention: no divine right of kings, no bishops in the councils of state, no magistrates as God's appointed instruments, no baptized foreign policy or sanctified political platform. Government, Baptists would agree, is to be obeyed, but government, Baptists would assert, is not to be bowed down before. Isaac Backus is relevant again: "... we dare not render homage to any earthly power which I and many of my brethren are fully convinced belongs only to God." And Backus was speaking here in 1774 not of foreign and imperial England, but of local and meddling Massachusetts.

As we stumble toward the 21st century, Baptist identity in this counter-cultural area seems both serious and severe, especially in the United States of America. Now **everyone** speaks favorably of separation of church and state; **everyone** endorses religious liberty. Since these once frightening phrases have now become so respectable, so trite, it is important that Baptists not trivialize their own historic position. We are talking, please remember, about "incendiaries of commonwealths"—a phrase that black Baptists in recent years have understood more keenly than most white Baptists. In a large and brawling denominational family, the majority of us want to eat our cake and have it too. We wish to critique a culture even as we embrace it, to hold civil government ("not proved of Christ") at arm's length at the same time that we are prepared to baptize it.

Our denominational schizophrenia (and schizophrenia is **the** classic identity crisis) was painfully revealed in March of 1984 when the administration's prayer amendment finally got unbottled from committee to face a vote of the full and total Senate on the floor. There were 56 "yes" votes and 44 "no," but the proposal nonetheless failed because an affirmation by two-thirds of the Senators was required. A vast majority of the Baptist Senators voted "yes," thereby revealing their own identity crisis (and probably that of their constituents as well). John Leland speaks to us once more: "Experience ... has informed us that the fondness of magistrates to foster Christianity has done it more harm than persecution ever did. Persecution, like a lion, tears the saints to death, but leaves Christianity pure; state establishment of religion, like a bear, hugs the saints, but corrupts Christianity."

That early perspective is not altogether drowned out in our own day, though it is coming closer and closer to being lost. One agency dedicated to keeping that perspective alive, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, found itself struggling in 1984 to maintain its own life. At their 1983 Conference, attendees were urged to keep alive the tension between being a Baptist and being absorbed into the rest of the world: a **tension**, not a cozy alliance. "It is a fearful thing, that much of the current outrage regarding the great social and moral evils of our day have been registered by journalists, jurists, editors and lawyers rather than by the people of God in general and Baptists in particular."

Where has all the tension gone? Roger Williams labored to keep in good repair that fence which separated the garden from the wilderness. We have trouble today even finding where the fence line was once located. The Southern Baptist Convention may reveal this tendency more clearly than others but, if so, it is chiefly because the status of outsider and dissenter—so familiar to Baptists in the past—has largely given way in the South to a dominant, establishment, majority status. That novel and unfamiliar posture for Baptists aggravates an already difficult problem of identity. Baptists not only flourish in the South; to a large degree they **are** the South. Piety, which used to be private, has now gone public; the former sect has become the Church, with some spokesmen even aiming for it to become the National Church. Those who fought against old alliances with the State now seek new and more intimate alliances; those who resisted and rejected imposed creeds would now enforce a rigid orthodoxy. One would never accuse these leaders of being "incendiaries of commonwealths" or of relying chiefly on that "vile Matter" called

personal experience.

The modern Baptist incendiary or anarchist or merely critic, is not, however, one who is simply negative and carping, not one who rebels for the sake of rebellion, not one whose great role in life is to prevent any vote from ever being unanimous and any meeting from ever being brief. The Baptist counter-cultural force is critical, to be sure, but it is also constructive. There is a Christian Word to affirm as well as a Christian warning to proclaim. The Baptist dissenter is more than a member of the loyal opposition; she or he is a member of the loving opposition as well: a tough love when necessary, a softer one when appropriate. If there is no criticism, no dissent, no judgment, no prophetic voice, then America's churches fall into that trap of "playing at Christianity" that Kierkegaard found so repulsive. No one takes Christianity seriously enough even to attack it, Kierkegaard complained in his 19th century Denmark. "... for one certified hypocrite there are 100,000 twaddlers; for one certified heretic, 100,000 nincompoops." There you have it: a clear choice. Would you rather be an anarchist or a nincompoop?

We are told to pray for them that persecute us. I think we should go one better and give thanks for them that persecute us, for they help us to know who and what we are as Christians. On the other hand, we may also wish to pray for deliverance from our friends.

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Issue 6: The Baptists

From the Archives: The Move to Believer's Baptism

John Smyth was the first Englishman (of record) who declared himself dearly in favor of believer's baptism and organized a church based on the implications of that principle. Smyth, a graduate of Christ's College, Cambridge, made the pilgrimage from Anglican to Puritan through Separatist to a Baptist position. In 1608 Smyth and his Separatist congregation fled to Amsterdam where, with other exiled Englishmen, he began to work out his doctrine of the church. Early on he differed with the other Separatists, notably Richard Clifton on the issue of infant baptism, which Smyth held to be a fundamental error of the Church of England. In his book *The Character of the Beastor The False Constitution of the Church* (1609), Smyth traded arguments with Clifton on the issue of believer's baptism. An excerpt from his "Reader's Epistle" follows.

Be it known therefore to all the Separation that we account them in respect of their constitution to be as very an harlot as either her Mother England, or her grandmother Rome is, out of whose loins she came: and although once in our ignorance we have acknowledged her a true Church yet now being better informed we revoke that erroneous judgment and protest against her, as well for her false constitution, as for her false ministry, worship, and government: The true constitution of the Church is of a new creature baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: The false constitution is of infants baptized: we profess therefore that all those Churches that baptize infants are of the same false constitution: and all those Churches that baptize the new creature, those that are made Disciples by teaching, men confessing their faith and their sins, are of one true constitution: and therefore the Church of the Separation being of the same constitution with England and Rome, is a most unnatural daughter to her mother England, and her grandmother Rome, who being of the self same genealogie and generation, (that of the prophet being true of her, as is the Mother so is the daughter) she dare notwithstanding most impudently wipe her own mouth, and call her mother and grandmother adulteresses. Herein therefore we do acknowledge our error, that we retaining the baptism of England which gave us our constitution, did call our mother England an harlot, and upon a false ground made our Separation from her: For although it be necessary that we Separate from England, yet no man can Separate from England as from a false Church except he also do Separate from the baptism of England, which giveth England her constitution: For if they retain the baptism of England, viz: the baptism of infants as true baptism, they cannot Separate from England as from a false Church though they may Separate for corruptions. For the baptism of England cannot be true and to be retained, and the Church of England false and to be rejected: neither can the Church of England possibly be false except the baptism be false, unless a true constitution could be in a false Church which is as impossible as for light to have fellowship with darkness: It is impossible that contraries or contradictions should both be true: and so it is impossible that a false Church should have a true constitution or a true baptism: To say thus:

England hath a false constitution.

England hath a true baptism, is as much as to say thus.

England hath a false constitution.

England hath a true constitution, which is to contradict:

Therefore the Separation must either go back to England, or go forward to true baptism: and all that shall in time to come Separate from England must Separate from the baptism of England, and if they will not Separate from the baptism of England there is no reason why they should separate from England as from a false Church:

Now concerning this point of baptizing infants we do profess before the Lord and before all men in sincerity and truth that it seemeth unto us the most unreasonable heresy of all Antichristianism: for considering what baptism is, an infant is no more capable of baptism then is any unreasonable or insensitive creature: For baptism is not washing with water: but it is the baptism of the Spirit, the confession of the mouth, and the washing with water: how then can any man without great folly wash with water which is the least and last of baptism, one that is not baptized with the Spirit, and cannot confess with the mouth: or how is it baptism if one be so washed: Now that an infant cannot be baptized with the Spirit is plain, 1 Pet. 3:21. where the Apostle saith that the baptism of the Spirit is the question of a good conscience unto God, and Heb. 10:22. where the baptism which is inward is called the sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience: seeing therefore infants neither have an evil conscience, nor the question of a good conscience, nor the purging of the heart, for all these are proper to actual sinners: hence it followeth that infants baptism is folly and nothing.

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From the Archives: Worship in John Smyth's Church

Worship in John Smyth's church in Amsterdam, c.1611, was described in a letter by Hugh and Anne Bromehead, quoted in H. Wheeler Robinson, *Life and Faith of the Baptists*, 1946, p. 96.

We begin with a prayer, after read some one of two chapters of the Bible; give the sense thereof and confer upon the same; that done, we lay aside our books and after a solemn prayer made by the first speaker he propoundeth some text out of the Scripture and prophesieth out of the same by the space of one hour or three quarters of an hour. After him standeth up a second speaker and prophesieth out of the said text the like time and space, sometimes more, sometimes less. After him, the third, the fourth, the fifth, etc., as the time will give leave. Then the first speaker concludeth with prayer as he began with prayer, with an exhortation to contribution to the poor, which collection being made is also concluded with prayer. This morning exercise begins at eight of the clock and continueth until twelve of the clock. The like course of exercise is observed in the afternoon from two of the clock unto five or six of the clock. Last of all the execution of the government of the Church is handled.

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From the Archives: A Winter Baptism

The Broadmead Records contain this description of winter baptism, in 1666:

These 10 men and 4 women were all baptized together, one after another, the 6th day of March, in the Evening, at Baptist Mill, in the River, by Mr. Thomas, Minister.

Here behold the miraculous hand and worke of the Lord

Most of these persons now baptized, had neglected and omitted their duty all the Winter, for fear of the Cold; and then, about the beginning of February, it happened to be fine, warm weather; about which time they pitcht upon this day to passe under that Ordinance. And by reason our Pastor, by a fall that he received after he came forth of Prison, had a paine that did use to take him in the nature of a Sciatica, it was doubted for him to stand soe long in the Water might increase his said distemper; therefore the Brethren of the Church sent for Mr. Thomas, of Wales, to be the Administrator.

And the Lord in his wise Providence so ordered it, that when he came it was such Extreme Cold weather, the like had not been all that winter before, for Exceeding high and sharp piercing **Wind, Frost, and Snow**...One of the women to be baptized, in goeing to the place through the Meadows, her Handkerchief received some wet, being about her Neck, was frozen ... Her Maid that waited upon her told her if she went into the Water she would not come forth alive. Also another, Mr. Jenings, pained with the Toothache soe great that his face was very much swelled, bound up, and by reason whereof had not been out of his house near a weeke before, and that day very ill with it. Another of the men about a weeke before sprained his legge; not being able to goe, was carryed upon a horse to the place. Another man of them that was very weakly, thinn, and Consumptive. the relations of whom were very averse to the Ordinance.

Wherefore some did fear the Issue, seeing the terrible sharpnesse of the season. But the persons themselves that were to passe under the Ordinance, Acted faith in the Lord; and because the Administrator was come so farr on purpose, according to appointment, they would not deferr it any longer.

And the Lord, to declare his power, did, as it were, worke a **Miracle**, to give a Precedent to others that would fear the Coldnesse of any season to doe his will; but **the Lord preserved** them all; and not so much as one ill, but rather better by it; and are all alive to this day, being about 10 years since, to speake of the Lord's then goodness ...

Therefore from all, Praise, Praise, Praise, and Glory be to the Lord.

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From the Archives: Dippers: A Threat to Life and the State

Baptists joined other minorities in seventeenth-century England and America as a persecuted minority often misunderstood and caricatured in the press and religious literature. One of the frequent misrepresentations was the identification of those who practiced baptism with the radical reformers in Muenster of the sixteenth century. In a religious climate where most Christians presented children for water baptism at an early age, "re-baptism" was anathema and the guilt by historical association with the Munsterites provided a strong offense.

Among the most able controversialists, Thomas Edwards (1599–1647) was a standout. A Presbyterian who never held a permanent charge, Edwards was a product of the strict Puritanism of Queens College, Cambridge. During the early Civil Wars, he inveighed against the Church of England; later he was equally vehement in his attack upon all forms of sectarians. For Edwards, religious toleration was synonymous with the dissolution of the orthodox consensus which the Puritans had long struggled to achieve. His book *Gangraena* (1647) from which the following selection is taken, was described as "the most arrogant and logical defense of an exclusive church system ever advanced." The following selections illustrate the efforts to which opponents of Baptists would go to discredit the group with exaggerated reports of Baptist behavior.

I have received lately certain information, from some who are come out of Wales, that a Trooper in Colonel Rich's Regiment has been for some weeks past in Radnorshire, Wales and also Brecknockshire, preaching and dipping, where he has vented many doctrines of Antinomianism and Antibaptism, and rebaptized hundreds in those Countries. Among others, one woman whom he dipped, he held so long underwater, that with the water getting into her, and cold she died within a day or two. This trooper going from these Countries into Montgomeryshire, also in Wales to preach and dip, some military authorities seized him and committed him to prison; but within a while after this commitment, there came an order from higher Authority to release him, and so he was set free. A Commander who comes from thence tells me the preaching and dipping of this Trooper and other such, makes the Countries being newly reduced, have an ill opinion of the Parliament. Many, being ignorant people, think verily these men are sent forth by the Parliament to preach to them. This Commander tells me also there is a strong report in those Countries of Wales where he has been, that there are some who preach for Circumcision and that some have been Circumcised, but the truth of that he cannot assert.

There is also the case of Oats the Weaver, spoken of in the First and Second parts of *Gangraena*, being arraigned upon his life at Chensford the last court, for dipping one Anne Martin, who died some fourteen days after. Oats, being found not guilty, was bound by the Judge to his good behaviour, and told that he should neither preach nor dip; and yet notwithstanding the very next Lord's day he preached in Chensford, and goes on still in Essex preaching his errors.

Oats came lately to Dunmow in Essex, some of the Town hearing of it where he was, fetched him out of the house, and threw him into the river, thoroughly dipping him. A Citizen who was at Chensford during Oats' trial reasoned with him, that setting aside the dispute of the lawfulness of Rebaptization, in prudence it could not be well done, to do that which in ordinary reason would destroy the creature; *viz.* in cold weather to dip weakly persons: Unto which answer was made by one named Tench, an Anabaptist, and a companion of Oats, that God had made a promise in that case, "When thou goest through the fire, and through the water, I will be with thee." And when this Citizen said, that was not to

be understood literally, Tench insisted that it was to be taken in that sense.

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From the Archives: In Defense of the Baptized Churches

While Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Quakers all took their turns in defaming the Baptist position, Baptists were not without their own effective apologists. One of the most outstanding of these was Thomas Grantham (1634–1692), a General Baptist who was a pastor at Norwich, England, lecturer, and messenger in the General connection. Grantham did much to dispel erroneous opinions about the Baptists, and his classic treatises helped to define the theology and polity of General Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic. Following is a selection from his major work *Christianismus Primitivus* (1678) in which it was important to refute charges that Baptists were seditious.

Should the Principles of the Baptized Churches be censured, as of a State-seditious Nature, I see not how Primitive Christianity itself can escape. For whether we consider, first,

Their Principles in reference to the Deity, Christ's Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and second Coming to judge all the World in Righteousness: In all these Points, they hold in general with all sound Christians, both Ancient and Modern. Among whom, notwithstanding there hath been some differing Apprehensions about the Extent of the Ransom, occasioned, especially with respect to these latter Times, by Calvin's too much rigidity about Predestination, Election, and Reprobation; so that nothing from hence can be inferred to be of dangerous consequence to the Worldly Government, but it must equally reflect upon the first Christians. No, not that Point of their Faith concerning the Kingdom of Christ. to be established upon the Earth a thousand Years. For assuredly this was the Opinion. or Faith, of the Primitive Christians. And indeed, seeing we all believe that Christ shall come to Judge the World; and that till his coming, we are to keep the Word of his Patience; yea, to be patient until the coming of the Lord: How can it be offensive to any professing Christianity, (or any other Person) that some hold he shall judge the World in a short, and some in a longer time? But if any Man be impatient of Christ's coming, and would be doing any thing to the disturbance of the Civil Peace of Nations, as if he must usher the Lord Christ into his Seat of Judgment: We look upon Such Men to be more busy than wise, and do exhort them to study to be quiet, and do their own business, and let God Almighty, and His Holy Child Jesus alone, as to the accomplishment of what he hath promised in this behalf. And let it suffice us to do what we are allowed in this case, and that is, to pray daily, Thy Kingdom come; thy Will be done, as in Heaven, so on Earth, etc.

Meanwhile, let all Christians seriously consider, That the Scriptures seem not to be more express in anything, than in taking care that Christians be not of a State-disturbing Spirit, but to render to all their dues, Honor, Fear, Custom. Tribute, etc. Yea, that every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers; and that because there is no Power but of God; for by him Kings Reign, and he it is who putteth down one, and setteth up another; sometimes he doth this in Mercy, sometimes in Justice. Now the Christian Man is under a constant direction to pray for Kings, and all that are in Authority; to obey Magistrates, and to be ready to every good work: to speak evil of no Man,—but to shew all meekness to all Men. Yea, to be short, To fear God, and honour the King, are his indispensable Duties. In all Religious things God must have His due; In all Civil Obedience Caesar must have his due. And of this Doctrine care was taken by the Apostles, that the succeeding Ministry should put the Brethren in remembrance of these things.

For assuredly Christianity is never like to be acceptable to Magistrates who yet know not Christ, if once they have just cause to suspect it to be destructive to Civil Government; nor will the Christians themselves be comforted in their Sufferings, when their Provocations do procure them. Let none of you suffer—as an evil-doer, as a busy-body in other Men's matters. Yet if any suffer as a Christian, let him

not be ashamed, I Pet. 4:15, 16.

2. If we consider the Baptized Churches, with respect to their Principles touching a Church State, and the publick Worship of God, surely here also they are free from a Seditious Spirit. However, their Principles are innocent: for here they preach the common Doctrine of Christianity, Repentance from dead Works, and Faith towards God, as the first things to be learned by every Man that will be a Christian. The next, that Men be baptized with Water, in the Name of the Father, Son, etc. for the Remission of Sins, and thence to walk in newness of Life, according to the Doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ: An Epitome whereof we have in those six particulars, Heb. 6. And herein they follow Christ and his first Churches, as hath been fully shewed above.

For that Separation which we maintain, in the Treatise next following this, we trust it is clearly evidenced to be made upon warrantable and necessary grounds. However, here it may suffice to say, That all which hold any thing conscientiously, in reference to Christian Religion, do also maintain their Separations respectively. As the Papists, How severe are they for Separation from the Protestants, and all whom they are pleased to count Hereticks, may be seen in the Rhemists Testament, or their Annotations on 2 Cor. 6:14 where they make it utterly unlawful to have to do with such, especially in Religious Exercises. And as stiffly on the other side do the Protestants maintain their Separation from the Papists, to be necessary from the same Scripture. And the like is done by Presbyterians and Independents (at least many of them) from them both. And it must be granted by all that profess Christianity, that upon a supposition, that the things which we allege are true, on which we ground our Separation, it is more clear and rational, according to the Principles of Religion, than any of the Separations maintained by them: For No Baptism, no Church, is a Proposition so convincing, as very few have hitherto had the boldness to deny it. Whereas on the contrary, the Parties aforesaid do all acknowledge the same Baptism; and upon any Person coming off from one of these Parties to the other, they allow the Baptism fore-received to be valid. Yea, and if Ordination have been received there, they ordinarily so ratifie it also, and yet defend their Separations respectively with great vehemency. But the case is far more pressing on our part: And we do unfainedly profess, that did we believe that these differing Parties, or any of them, had lawful Power as Ministers, and true (or a valid) Baptism, we durst not (as now we do) maintain Separation from them; especially such as are of pious and sober Conversations. Wherefore we conclude, That it is not rational, or at least less rational, to charge the Separation maintain'd by the present Baptized Churches, with Sedition or Disturbance to Civil Government, than the Separation maintain'd by any of the forementioned Parties.

No less Irrational is it to charge our Preaching and Praying together with Sedition, (though we be forbidden by the present Authority) when it is most certain, that they have all done, and upon occasion. do frequently justifie the same thing; though for so doing they have suffered the loss of Goods, Liberty, and Life itself, as well as many of ours have done. And yet they rejoice in such their Sufferings respectively, counting it their Martyrdom. And surely, the Premises duely and impartially considered, we have no less. but rather much more cause to rejoice in our Sufferings, for meeting together to Preach, Pray, and edifie one another in the use of all the Holy Ordinances of the Gospel. Thus ad Hominem: which may very well abate the hard thoughts of many against us.

But we shall also shew some (as we trust) convincing Reasons why we cannot but uphold our Christian Assemblies, as of late we have done, notwithstanding the severity of human Laws against us in that behalf, in a Chapter by itself hereafter in this Treatise: But now shall proceed to shew the innocency of the Baptized Churches, as to the charge of Sedition, by reciting their Apologies in that behalf, printed upon occasion of some Emergencies requiring such Testimonies.

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From the Archives: A Day in the Life of William Carey

As described in a letter from Calcutta, quoted in J.B. Middlebrook, *William Carey, 1961*, p. 64–5.

I rose this morning at a quarter before six, read a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and spent the time till seven in private addresses to God, and then attended family prayer with the servants in Bengali. While tea was getting ready, I read a little in Persian with a moonshi who was waiting when I left my bedroom; and also before breakfast a portion of the Scripture in Hindustani. The moment breakfast was over, sat down to the translation of the Ramayana from Sanskrit, with a pundit, who was also waiting, and continued this translation till ten o'clock, at which hour I went to College and attended the duties there till between one and two o'clock. When I returned home, I examined a proof-sheet of the Bengali translation of Jeremiah, which took till dinner-time. I always, when down in Calcutta, dine at Mr. Rolt's which is near. After dinner, translated, with the assistance of the chief pundit of the College, the greatest part of the eighth chapter of Matthew into Sanskrit. This employed me till six o'clock. After six, sat down with a Telinga pundit to learn that language. At seven I began to collect a few previous thoughts into the form of a sermon, and preached at half-past seven. About forty persons present, and among them one of the Puisne Judges of the Sudder Dewany Adawlut. After sermon I got a subscription from him for five hundred rupees towards erecting our new place of worship; he is an exceedingly friendly man. Preaching was over and the congregation gone by nine o'clock. I then sat down and translated the eleventh of Ezekiel into Bengali, and this lasted till near eleven; and now I sit down to write to you.

From William Carey's "An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens"

As to learning their languages, the same means would be found necessary here as in trade between different nations. In some cases interpreters might be obtained, who might be employed for a time; and where these were not to be found, the missionaries must have patience, and mingle with the people till they have learned so much of their language as to be able to communicate their ideas to them in it. It is well known to require no very extraordinary talents to learn, in the space of a year, or two at most, the language of any people upon earth, so much of it at least as to be able to convey any sentiments we wish to their understandings.

The Missionaries must be men of great piety, prudence, courage, and forbearance; of undoubted orthodoxy in their sentiments, and must enter with all their hearts into the Spirit of their mission; they must be willing to leave all the comforts of life behind them, and to encounter all the hardships of a torrid, or a frigid climate, an uncomfortable manner of living, and every other inconvenience that can attend this undertaking: Clothing, a few knives, powder and shot, fishing tackle, and the articles of husbandry above-mentioned, must be provided for them; and when arrived at the place of their destination, their first business must be to gain some acquaintance with the language of the natives, (for which purpose two would be better than one) and by all lawful means to endeavor to cultivate a friendship with them, and as soon as possible let them know the errand for which they were sent. They must endeavor to convince them that it was their good alone, which induced them to forsake their friends, and all the comforts of their native country. They must be very careful not to resent injuries which may be offered to them, nor to think highly of themselves, so as to despise the poor.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 6: The Baptists

From the Archives: James R. Graves

An "Old Landmark Baptist" puts it on the line.

Many have trouble defining Baptists and Baptists themselves are not always clear about what they represent. But for James R. Graves there was no ambiguity. Graves was a 19th century author and editor of *The Tennessee Baptist*.

As Baptists, we are to stand for the supreme authority of the New Testament as our only and sufficient rule of faith and practice. The New Testament, and that alone, as opposed to all human tradition in matters, both of faith and practice, we must claim as containing **the** distinguishing doctrine of our denomination—a doctrine for which we are called earnestly to contend...

As Baptists, we are to stand for the ordinances of Christ as he enjoined them upon his followers, the same in **number**, in **mode**, in **order**, and in **symbolic meaning**, unchanged and unchangeable till he come ...

As Baptists, we are to stand for a spiritual and regenerated church, and that none shall be received into Christ's church, or be welcomed to its ordinances, without confessing a personal faith in Christ, and giving credible evidence of piety.

The motto on our banner is:

CHRIST BEFORE THE CHURCH, BLOOD BEFORE WATER ...

To protest, and to use all our influence against the recognition, on the part of the Baptists, of human societies as scriptural churches, by affiliation, ministerial or ecclesiastical, or any alliance or co-operation that is susceptible of being apparently or logically construed by our members, or theirs, or the world, into a recognition of their ecclesiastical or ministerial equality with Baptist churches ...

To preserve and perpetuate the doctrine of the divine origin and sanctity of the churches of Christ, and the unbroken continuity of Christ's kingdom, "from the days of John the Baptist until now." according to the express words of Christ ...

To preserve and perpetuate the **divine, inalienable**, and **sole** prerogatives of a Christian church—1, to preach the gospel of the Son of God; 2, To select and ordain her own officers; 3, To control absolutely her own ordinances ...

To preserve and perpetuate the scriptural design of baptism, and its validity and recognition only when scripturally administered by a gospel church ...

To preserve and perpetuate the true design and symbolism of the Lord's Supper, as a local church ordinance, and for but one purpose—the commemoration of the sacrificial death of Christ—and not as a denominational ordinance, or as an act expressive of our Christian or personal fellowship, and much less of **courtesy** toward others...

To preserve and perpetuate that primitive fealty and faithfulness to the truth, that shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, and to teach men to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded to be believed and obeyed.

Not the belief and advocacy of one or two of these principles, as the marks of the divinely patterned church, but the cordial reception and advocacy of all of them, constitute a full "Old Landmark Baptist."

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 6: The Baptists

From the Archives: This Is My Body... This Is My Blood...

To understand how Baptists approach the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, one needs to be reminded that Baptists originally were part of the Puritan-Separatist reaction against excess sacramentalism in the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. Early on, most Baptists followed the thinking of Huldreich Zwingli (1484–1531) who maintained that Communion was primarily a memorial through which the worshipers were bound together in an expression of loyalty to their Lord. This was consistent with Baptists' views on baptism, which they held to be symbolic in nature also. Generally, Baptists refer to the sacraments as "ordinances" which highlights their sense of obedience to Christ in remembrance of him.

From the beginning of the movement in the 1600s into the 1860s, Baptists used wine and bread, which were usually prepared within the church family, for Communion. In times of short supply, other staples, such as beer, brandy, biscuits, and cake, were also used. With the advent of the American temperance crusade, however, Baptists became suspicious of alcoholic beverages and looked for substitutes. By the 1880s when unfermented grape juice was introduced to the market, a debate was raging among Baptists about what Christ and his disciples used and how the word *oinos* should be translated. Baptists concluded (with the help of available technology) that grape juice was the only acceptable beverage for the Lord's Supper. Still today Baptists will refer to "wine" or "fruit of the vine" by which they mean grape juice.

Baptists also commonly distribute the "wine" in individual Communion cups. The use of these came about later in the history of the group. The medical profession in the 1860s came to understand, through the "germ theory," the origin of disease. Rochester, New York theologians wondered about the implications of this theory for the administration of the ordinance. They designed individual glass cups to be used to avoid "the maladies which are spread by mouth such as cancer, tuberculosis, influenza, and whooping cough," when the common cup was passed. (Indeed, with the gradual shift from wine to grape juice, there was some plausibility to the concern, from an historical perspective.) The first use of individual glass cups occurred at the North Baptist Church in Rochester, New York, in 1854.

Technology and science thus brought about fundamental changes which theologians then had to account for. The concept of the minister as priest serving the sacrament to people changed to the concept of the priesthood of all believers as deacons served individual members in a democratized Lord's Supper. And an entirely new school of biblical interpretation grew up around the meaning of "wine" in the Word.

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Issue 6: The Baptists

The Baptists: Recommended Resources

O.K. and Marjorie Armstrong, *The Baptists* .

William H. Brackney, ed., *Baptist Life and Thought: 1600–1980* (Valley Forge, Judson Press, 1983).

William H. Brackney, *The Traveller's Guide to Baptist Historical Sites* (Valley Forge: ABHS, 1982).

Clifton J. Allen, ed., *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* , 4 vols. (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1958–82).

Roger Hayden, ed., *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640–1687* (Bristol, The Record Society, 1974).

Lynn J. Leavenworth, ed., *Baptist Concepts of the Church* (Philadelphia, Judson Press, 1959).

Leon H. McBeth, *Women in Baptist Life* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1979).

William G. McLaughlin, *New England Dissent 1630–1833*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1971).

Robert G. Torbet, *History of the Baptists* (Valley Forge, Judson Press, 1963)

A.J. Underwood, *History of the English Baptists* (London, Carey Kingsgate Press, 1947).

Barrington R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London, Baptist Historical Society, 1983).

Barrington R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (London, Oxford University Press, 1971).

Some Baptist historians and theologians have argued that the essence of the Baptist witness and convictions can be traced back over the centuries directly to the New Testament church. This issue has not dealt with that argument. Church History Research and Archives has published many books long out of print dealing with Baptist history including those defending the line of argument mentioned above. For a listing of titles and prices available from them write to: **Church History Research and Archives** , **220 Graystone Drive, Gallatin, TN 37066**.

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