

BAPTIST HISTORY AND HERITAGE

by
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INTRODUCTION.

Baptists have a very rich and lengthy heritage. This outline furnishes some of the highlights.

I. THE STORY OF BAPTISTS.

A. A Story of Bloodshed (because it follows a trail of blood).

Baptists have been hounded and slaughtered through the centuries because they would not compromise their convictions concerning salvation and baptism. During the Dark Ages, including the Crusades and the Inquisition, it is estimated that up to 50 million believers were martyred, most of whom were Baptists or held Baptist views.

1. Roman Catholic Cardinal Hosius, an enemy of the Baptists, and President of the Council of Trent, (1546) said: "Were it not that the Baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past twelve hundred years, they would swarm in greater number than all the Reformers."
2. Later, in 1560, Cardinal Hosius wrote these words: "If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man in any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptists, since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more generally punished, or that have more cheerfully and steadily undergone and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people."

B. A Story of Baptism.

1. The Baptist stand on Baptism is what makes Baptists, specifically their stand on baptism by immersion, and the rejection of baptismal regeneration, alien (foreign) baptism, and infant baptism.
2. Sir Isaac Newton said: "The Baptists are the only body of known Christians that have never symbolized with Rome."

C. A Story of Antiquity.

Baptist History dates all the way back to the New Testament. Even historians from other denominations proclaim the Baptist antiquity.

1. Methodist Testimony: John Clark Ridpath, Methodist, in his History Of The World, says: "In the year 100 A.D., all Christians were Baptist."

2. Lutheran Testimony: Mosheim, a Lutheran historian, says: "Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of Baptists." Again, he says: "The origin of Baptists is lost in the remote depths of antiquity."
3. Presbyterian Testimony: The Edinburg Cyclopaedia states: "It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the same sect of Christians that were formerly described as Ana-Baptists. Indeed, this seems to have been their leading principle from the time of Tertullian (140-220 A.D.) to the present time."
4. Dutch Reformed Testimony: Dr. Ypeig, professor at the University of Groningen, and Rev. J.J. Dermont, chaplain to the King of Holland, were appointed in 1819 to write a history of their church. In 1823, they published a volume from which this statement is taken: "We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and who long in the history of the church received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community which has stood since the apostles, and as a Christian society has preserved pure the doctrine of the gospel through all the ages."

II. BAPTISTS UNDER OTHER NAMES.

Down through the centuries, Baptists have been referred to by many names. Most of these names were derived from a particular leader or a particular geographical location.

A. Montanists. (160-700 A.D.)

1. They were very strong in Asia Minor and North Africa.
2. They were called "Ana-Baptists."
3. They have been charged with various errors, but most of these charges were an exaggeration by their enemies in an attempt to discredit them.
4. Historical evidence reveals that they held tenaciously to salvation by grace, and believer's baptism by immersion, and were strongly opposed to any alliance with the world, including the State.

B. Novatians. (250-700 A.D.)

1. They were called the "Cathari" because of their pure lives.

2. They rebaptized all that came to them from the Roman Catholic Church.
3. The doctrine of the Novatians was identical with the New Testament pattern.

C. Donatists. (300-600 A.D.)

1. Crispin, the French Romanist historian says: "They stood first for purity of church members by asserting that none ought to be admitted into the church but such as are true believers and real saints. Secondly, for purity of church discipline. Thirdly, for the independence of each church. Fourthly, they baptized again those whose first baptism they had reason to doubt."
2. They increased rapidly, until according to Orchard, they became almost as numerous as the Roman Catholics.
3. Jones says in his Ecclesiastical Lecture, Vol. I, pg. 474: "There was scarcely a city or town in Africa in which there was not a Donatist church."
4. Optatus, Bishop of Mela, a city of Numidia, wrote a book against the Donatists. In this book, he charges them with rebaptizing Roman Catholics as if they were heathens, and asserts, in opposition to Donatist views, that "all men that come into the world, though they be born of Christian parents, are filled with an unclean spirit, which must be driven away by baptism."

D. Paulicians. (600-1500 A.D.)

1. May have derived their name from the Apostle Paul, whose writings they considered central.
2. Seem to have originated in the Taurus Mountains near Paul's home town of Tarsus.
3. The evangelistic and missionary labors of the Paulicians were phenomenal. They reached all points in Europe establishing themselves in Italy, the Piedmont, southern France and Holland. In some areas, their converts outnumbered the adherents of Rome.

E. Waldenses. (400-1500 A.D.)

1. The word "Waldense" was derived from the word "valleys," and was used to designate those New Testament believers in the valleys of the Piedmont of Northwest Italy and the surrounding region. The words "Vaudois" (French for "valleys") and "Navarri" (Spanish for "valleys") were

also used to designate early Baptists.

2. No one can make a study of the Waldenses and fail to see very rapidly that they held the two doctrines essential to a Baptist church:
 - (1) Salvation by grace, and
 - (2) Believer's Baptism.
3. They were a great and noble people who flooded western and southern Europe, maintaining the true faith in the face of bitter and almost continuous persecution. The Roman Catholics called almost everyone who was not a Catholic, a Waldensian. Baptists need feel no shame in claiming kin to them.

F. Albigenses. (900-1500 A.D.)

1. The Albigenses can be traced to the valleys of France almost all the way back to New Testament times.
2. This people had the horrible distinction of suffering more than any other under the heavy, bloody hand of Rome during the Crusades and Inquisition, when it is estimated that at least 1,000,000 of them died.
3. They had strict moral standards, so much so that Lord Macauley, the great British historian, commented upon the positive and beneficial effects of the Albigenese influence.
4. They held the two doctrines necessary to a New Testament church:
 - (1) Salvation by grace and not by works, and
 - (2) Believer's Baptism, rejecting infant baptism.

G. Various Other Names: Bogomils, Paterines, Lyonists, Petrobrussians, Arnoldists, Berengarians, Henricians, Lollards, Mennonites, and others.

H. Anabaptists.

1. Anabaptist means to "rebaptize."
2. This is the all-inclusive name that can be given all these "groups," including ourselves, because their great distinctive was to "rebaptize" all that came from false churches.

III. THE ORIGIN OF BAPTISTS IN AMERICA.

A. Not Roger Williams.

1. Roger Williams has often been called the "Father of American Baptists," however, this is of comparatively recent origin. History indicates that

Roger Williams was never a Baptist.

2. "Roger Williams was a man of strong convictions – a great man in many respects: a religious reformer, a statesman, a champion of civil and religious liberty - but he was never truly a Baptist, and it is exceedingly strange, if not ignorant and naive, to call him the "Father of American Baptists." (W.R. Downing, p. 279)

B. The Historical Evidence Decidedly Points To Either Dr. John Clarke or Hanserd Knollys.

1. John Clarke established a Baptist church in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1638. This is recognized as the first Baptist church in America.
2. Hanserd Knollys, a graduate of Cambridge University, planted a Baptist church in Dover, New Hampshire, also in 1638.
3. Thus, there were two Baptist churches in the New England area before the "church" of Roger Williams, around 1639.

C. The More Immediate Roots of Local New Testament Baptist Churches.

1. 1845 - the Southern Baptist Convention was formed. This formation resulted from a division between Baptists in the North, and Baptists in the South, over ordaining slave-holders as missionaries.
2. 1929 - Dr. J. Frank Norris, pastor of both the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, and the Temple Baptist Church of Detroit, Michigan, each of which had a weekly Sunday School attendance over 5,000, broke with the Southern Baptist Convention over modernism in its seminaries and the dictatorial control of the "Program."
3. Hundreds, if not thousands, of independent Baptist churches have been formed because of that "split".

D. Some of the Greatest Missionaries and Missionary Statesmen in History Were Baptists!

1. William Carey (India) - recognized as the "Father of Modern Missions."
2. Adoniram Judson (Burma).
3. Joshua Marshman - first to translate the Bible into the Chinese language.
4. Luther Rice - organized the first American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

E. Some of The Finest Hymns We Sing Were Written by Baptists.

1. "Blest Be The Tie That Binds" - John Fawcett.
2. "Safe In The Arms Of Jesus" - W. H. Doane.
3. "How Firm A Foundation" - George Keith.
4. "He Leadeth Me, O Blessed Thought" - J. H. Gilmore.
5. "On Christ The Solid Rock I Stand" - Edward Mote.
6. "Shall We Gather At The River" - Robert Lowry.
7. "Come Thou Fount Of Every Blessing" – Robert Robinson.
8. "Sound The Battle Cry" - W. F. Sherwin.
9. "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand" – Samuel Stennett.
10. "My Country, 'Tis Of Thee" - Samuel F. Smith.
11. "Almost Persuaded" - P. P. Bliss.
12. "Bringing In The Sheaves" - Knowles Shaw.
13. "Wonderful Words Of Life" - P. P. Bliss.
14. "Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned" - Samuel Stennet.

CONCLUSION:

Let us use this wonderful heritage to glorify our Saviour, and bring many souls to Him.