

Historical Statements Concerning Baptists and their Origins

Historians testify that local churches; which hold the doctrines, beliefs, and practices of today's Bible-believing, separatist Baptists; have had continuous existence since the days of Christ. This cannot be said of any other church, churches, or religious organization. Here are a few statements by historians and religious leaders (only one of them a Baptist) regarding the history of the Baptists:

C. H. Spurgeon on Baptist History

"We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the reformation, we were reformers before Luther and Calvin were born; we never came from the Church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect, yet there has never existed a Government holding Baptist principles which persecuted others; nor, I believe, anybody of Baptists ever held it to be right to put the consciences of others under the control of man. We have ever been ready to suffer, as our martyrologies will prove, but we are not ready to accept any help from the State, to prostitute the purity of the Bride of Christ to any alliance with Government, and we will never make the Church, although the Queen, the despot over the consciences of men."

A Piece of Baptists History

Taken from "The Story of the Baptists," 1881

Mr. Charles Spurgeon has expressed himself upon English Baptist history. He says; "It would not be impossible to show that the first Christians who dwelt in this land were of the same faith and order as the churches now called Baptist. All along our history from Henry II to Henry VIII. There are traces of the Anabaptists, who are usually mentioned either in connection with the Lollards or as coming from Holland. All along there must have been a great hive on the Continent of these 'Reformers before the Reformation'; for despite their being doomed to die, almost as soon as they landed, they continued to invade this country to the annoyance of the priesthood and hierarchy." Spurgeon quotes the following statement from W. J. E. Bennett, of Frome, a ritualist, whose hatred of the Anabaptists rendered him least likely to manufacture ancient history for them. Mr. Bennett says; "The historian Lingard tells us, that there was a sect of fanatics, who infested the north of Germany, called Puritans. Usher called them Waldenses; Spelman, Paulicians, (the same as Waldenses.) They gained ground and spread all over England; they refused all Romish ceremonies, denied the authority of the Pope, and more particularly, refused to baptize infants. Thirty of them were put to death for their heretical doctrines, near Oxford; but the remainder still held on to their opinions in

private, until the time of Henry II. 1158; and the historian Collier tells us that wherever the heresy prevailed, the churches were either scandalously neglected, or pulled down, and infants left unbaptized." "We are obliged to Mr. Bennett for this history, which is in all respects authentic, and we take liberty to remark upon it, that the reign of Henry II. is a period far more worthy of being called remote, than the reign of Henry VIII., (the founder of the Episcopal Church,) and if Baptists could trace their pedigree no farther, the church of Thomas Cranmer, (the Episcopal,) could not afford to sneer at them as a modern sect. Concerning the poor, persecuted people that are referred to in this extract, it seems that under Henry II. They were treated with those tender mercies of the wicked, which are so notoriously cruel. "They were apprehended and brought before a council of the clergy, at Oxford. Being interrogated about their religion, their teacher, named Gerard, a man of learning, answered in their name, that they were Christians and believed the doctrines of the apostles. Upon a more particular inquiry, it was found that they denied several of the received doctrines of the church, such as purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the invocation of saints; and refusing to abandon these damnable heresies, as they were called, they were condemned as incorrigible heretics, and delivered to the secular arm to be punished. The King, (Henry II.) at the instigation of the clergy, commanded them to be branded with a red hot iron on the forehead, to be whipped through the streets of Oxford, and having their clothes cut short by their girdle, to be turned into the open fields, all persons being forbidden to afford them any shelter or relief, under the severest penalties. This cruel sentence was executed with its utmost rigor, and it being the depth of winter, all these unhappy persons perished with cold and hunger.' "

Usher says ; "The Berangarian or Waldensian heresy, had, about the year 1180 A.D. generally infested France, Italy, and England.

Sir Isaac Newton said,

"The Baptists are the only body of known Christians that have never symbolized with Rome."

SINCE THE APOSTLES

Ypeij and Dermout, eminent historians of the Dutch Reformed Church said,

"The Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community that has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society has preserved pure the doctrine of the Gospel through all the ages."

Alexander Campbell, founder of the Campbellites (Christian Church or Disciples of Christ) who rigorously opposed Baptists during the 19th century, wrote,

"The sentiments of Baptists and their practice of baptism from the apostolic age to the present, have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced."

Robert Barclay, a Quaker historian, says of Baptists,

"We shall afterward show that the rise of the Anabaptists took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the continent of Europe, small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the times of the apostles. In the sense of the direct transmission of divine truth, and the true nature of spiritual religion, it seems probable that these churches have a lineage or succession more ancient than that of the Roman Church."

John Clark Ridpath, doubtlessly the greatest historian the world has ever produced and a Methodist by denomination, said,

"I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as 100 A.D., although without doubt there were Baptist churches then, as all Christians were then Baptists."

Mosheim, an outstanding Lutheran historian, said,

"Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secreted in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists... the origin of Baptists is lost in the remote depths of antiquity... the first century was a history of Baptists."

Zwingli, a Presbyterian co-laborer with John Calvin, said,

"The institution of the Anabaptists is no novelty, but for 1300 years has caused great trouble in the church."

Catholic Cardinal Hosius, President of the Council of Trent from 1545 to 1564, said,

"Were it not for the fact that the Baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past 1200 years, they would swarm greater than all the reformers. If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man or any sect shows in suffering, then the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be truer and surer than those of the Anabaptist, since there have been none for the

1200 years past that have been more generally punished or that have been more cheerfully and steadfastly undergone, and have offered themselves to the most cruel sort of punishment than these people:'

"Crossing the Centuries" edited by William C. King, says,

"Of the Baptists it may be said that they are not reformers. These people, comprising bodies of Christian believers known under various names in different countries, are entirely distinct and independent of the Roman and Greek churches, and have an unbroken continuity of existence from apostolic days down through the centuries. Throughout this long period they were bitterly persecuted for heresy, driven from country to country, disfranchised, deprived of their property, imprisoned, tortured and slain by the thousands; and yet they swerved not from their New Testament faith, doctrine, and adherence."

Spurgeon said,

"History has hitherto been written by our enemies, who never would have kept a single fact about us upon the record if they could have helped it, and yet it leaks out every now and then that certain poor people called Anabaptists (Anabaptist was the name given to Baptists before the 16th century. "Ana" means "again," but the entire name, Anabaptist, was applied to those who believed and practiced what Bible-believing, separatist Baptists do today) were brought up for condemnation. From the days of Henry VIII to those of Elizabeth, we hear of certain unhappy heretics who were hated of all men for the truth's sake that was in them. We read of poor men and women, with their garments cut short, turned out into the fields to perish in the cold, and anon of others who were burnt at Newington for the crime of Anabaptism. Long before your Protestants were known of, those horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.' No sooner did the visible church begin to depart from the Gospel than these men arose to keep fast by the good old way. The priests and monks wished for peace and slumber, but there was always a Baptist or a Lollard tickling men's ears with Holy Scriptures, and calling their attention to the errors of the times. They were a poor persecuted tribe. The halter was thought to be too good for them. At times, ill-written history would have us think that they died out, so well had the wolf done his work on the sheep. Yet here we are, blessed and multiplied, and Newington sees other scenes from Sunday to Sunday. As I think of the multitudes of your numbers and efforts, I can only say in wonder, 'What a growth!' As I think of the multitudes of our brethren in America, I can only say, 'What hath God wrought!' Our history forbids discouragements."

Baptists before Luther

Other Names Baptist have been called: Albigenses, Anabaptist, Waldenses, Donatists, Beregarrians, Vaudios, Paulacians, Lollards

The modern Baptists formerly called Anabaptists are the only people that never symbolized with the Papacy. -Isaac Newton

The name “Anabaptist” was a name given to Bible believers by their enemies. This is why early “Baptist” groups sometimes rejected the name. For example, Thieleman J. van Braght writes in 1659:

The name ‘Anabaptist’ was really not accepted by them by choice or desire, but of necessity... The Martyr’s Mirror

Henry C. Vedder writes:

In the first Confession of Faith issued by the Particular Baptists in 1644, the churches that published the document described themselves, ‘as commonly (but unjustly) called Anabaptists.’...They had never chosen the name Anabaptist, and had always maintained that it was not properly applied to them. - (A Short History of the Baptists, 1892, pp.3, 184)

In fact, when John Clarke, the great Baptist forefather, was persecuted in America for Baptist views, he stated:

...in our examination the Governor upbraided us with name Anabaptists; to whom I answered I disdain the name; I am neither an Anabaptist nor a Pedobaptist, nor a Catabaptist...he told me in haste I was all. (p.31, Ill News from New England, 1652)

The term “Anabaptist” means “re-baptizer.” Since “Baptist” believers reject infant sprinkling, they do not see the immersion of a believer as a second baptism.

When Catholics and other groups demand to see “Baptists” before Luther, they are often looking for the NAME. But the believers who practiced immersion and rejected infant baptism were persecuted. They became the victims of the bloody Inquisition. To look for the history of “Baptists” in the Dark Ages, one must look for the persecuted Christians who denied infant baptism, rejected the Pope’s authority, declared Rome to be the Whore of Babylon, denied Purgatory and prayers to the dead, and declared that the Scriptures were the final authority, and were SLANDERED as occultists, etc. The early Baptists will be found in such groups as the Albigenses and Waldenses.

The enemies of the ancient Baptists have ironically helped established the fact of their existence throughout history! One opponent of the Baptists, Henry Bullinger (1504-1575) writes:

Now, I think it not labour lost to speak somewhat of anabaptisms. In the time that Decius and Gallus Caesar were Emperors, there arose a question in the parts of Africa of rebaptising heretics; and St. Cyprian, and the rest of the Bishops, being assembled together in the council of Carthage, liked well of anabaptisms... Against the Donatists St. Augustine, with other learned men, disputed. There is also an Imperial Law made by Honorius and Theodosius, that holy Baptism should not be iterated repeated. Justinian Caesar hath published the same, in Cod. Lib. I. Tit. 6, in these words. ‘If any Minister of the Catholic Church be detected to have rebaptised any, let both him who committed the unappeasable offence, (if at least by age he be punishable) and he, also, that is won and

persuaded thereunto, suffer punishment of death.’ – (Henry Bullinger, “Sermons on the Sacraments,” Cambridge, University Press for T. Stevenson, London, 1811, pp. 186, 187)

The Martyr’s Mirror (1660), concerning the ancient edict against Anabaptists, writes:

As those Christians greatly increased who valued only the baptism which is administered upon faith, and consequently rebaptized (as not having been baptized aright) those who had been baptized by unbelievers or in infancy, when they attained to the true faith, the Emperor Theodosius, A.D. 413, issued an edict, against the Anabaptists, commanding that they should be put to death. (p.190)

And perhaps the best testimony that could be demonstrated is provided by Catholic Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius (President of the Council of Trent from 1545 to 1564, designated by Pope Paul IV). He once stated:

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. (Hosius, Letters Apud Opera, pp.112, 113; The Trail of Blood)

The Anabaptists are a pernicious sect of which kind the Waldensian brethren seem to have been although some of them lately, as they testify in their apology, declare that they will no longer re-baptize, as was their former custom; nevertheless, it is certain that many of them retain their custom, and have united with the Anabaptists. – (Hosius, Works of the Heresatics of our Times, Bk. I. 431. Ed. 1584; John T. Christian in, the book “A History of the Baptists”).