

Spurgeons View of Baptists

Taken from "The Story of the Baptists," 1881

Mr. 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 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, generally infested France, Italy, and England.

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