

Baptists and the Rewriting of History

Taken from, "The Battle For Baptist History," by I. K. Cross

It has been the burden of this work to make it clear that Baptists of our day are indeed rewriting their history, just as other historians are rewriting the history of America. In doing so, they too, are cutting loose from their roots and presenting the facts in a manner that will accommodate their philosophies. Therefore we need to be extremely careful today lest we take into our Baptist churches Protestant programs that have Baptist dressings, and one day wake up calling ourselves Protestants, infested with Protestant beliefs. This has already happened to the major "Baptist" denominations, and it can happen to us. We must be aware of the *truth* of Baptist history if we are to avoid this same catastrophe. Modern religious evolution has no absolutes concerning who we are, from whence we came, or where we have been, and they are leading a generation that will, therefore, have not the foggiest idea as to where we are going.

It is not necessary to show from history that the church of Jesus Christ has continued from the time it was founded until the present. His promise alone makes that certain. However, it puts iron in the blood of real Baptists to be able to demonstrate it from history; to witness the progress of that promise as it is kept under all conditions as history progresses. It is totally unfair, if not completely dishonest, for modern day historians to reject those so-called "sects" prior to the sixteenth century Reformation as not being Baptists simply because they had no set of teachings upon which they all completely agreed, when Baptists today can certainly do no better. The truth is there is less agreement among so-called Baptists today than there was among these groups. In writing about Christianity and culture in this country in the South, Paul Gillespie edits a book in which he says, "The Baptists were everywhere, in all kinds of churches with diverse doctrines and varying practices. Southern, Independent, Missionary, Regular, Separate, and Two-seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptist (to name only a few) might vie for the souls of the southerners, but all were Baptists, and the Baptists had southern religion sewed up (or washed up as their opponents might suggest)." True he is writing about the early days in America, and perhaps making a little light of the many brands of Baptists, some of which would not be recognized by many regular Baptist churches. But this is just the point. Why should historians demand of their predecessors what they cannot deliver themselves.

And just in case the latest historians want to say we have overcome all this, I would remind them of the introductory statement in this same book under the section called *Baptists*: "Nationally, there are at least fifty different religious groups who call themselves Baptists. This collectively large denomination therefore is extremely diverse and, except for a *few important and central beliefs*, can rarely agree on religious doctrine. True, many of these will not bear the searchlight of history, but who are historians of the twentieth century to exclude *everyone* from the records of Baptist history that does not fit their own standards, when most of the pre-Reformation groups agreed on more basics than most Baptists today? This is the whole point to the importance of the study of Baptist history. If we don't know what their true history reveals we can be swallowed up by most any of these fifty groups that wear the name today. If modern Baptist historians want to identify themselves as Protestants let them so declare themselves, but don't corrupt the heritage of Baptists by attempting to make us all wear the denominational title and cut us loose from

these *real* Baptists who died by the millions in defense of our heritage before the Protestant Reformation was ever born.

Jesus Christ called out His church while here on earth, commissioned it to go into all the world with the gospel message, and promised it His presence through it all, assuring them that the gates of hell would not prevail against what He had begun. That faith is here today, and has been here through all the ages in between, and will be here when our Lord returns to gather us home. No amount of rewriting church history can change the heavenly record, and when we get there we may well find that those whom the modern historians rejected as “sects” are whom the Lord will reward as the faithful, while the rest look on with wonder.

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