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etc., etc. etc.

*A mini-history
of Baptists from
the New
Testament
through the
future*

By Dr. Paul C. Fedena

Apostles
Early Christians
Anabaptists
Puritans
Separatists
Mennonites

Baptist Roots & Offshoots

“BAPTIST ROOTS”

INTRO: The Mormons spend literally millions of dollars to trace their ancestry and store the information on microfilm under a solid rock mountain. (They do this because of a doctrinal deviation which teaches they can be baptized for their ancestors and thus earn God's favor.)

The foundation of the Roman Catholic Church is based on the erroneous teaching of the “Apostolic Succession of the Popes.” They teach that they can trace an “unbroken line of Popes” from today’s Pope back to the Apostle Peter, whom they teach was the first Pope.

The Baptists do not see a need for “baptizing for the dead” nor for some kind of Apostolic Succession (though the Southern Baptists generally teach Baptists can trace their origin back to John the Baptist in some sort of blood line of believers. See their booklet titled “The Trail of Blood.”)

While we have no desire to lay claims upon some sort of “unbroken line” of Baptists back to John the Baptist, we do believe there have always been true believers in church history all the way back to the primitive New Testament Church. These have not necessarily been “Baptist” in all their beliefs and practices, but have been genuine, born-again Christians who have held to many of the beliefs and doctrines Baptists claim today. God has never been completely without a witness and there has usually been one or more groups who have held to what we today refer to as “Baptist Distinctives.”

It is our desire to set forth Bible doctrines which “Baptists” believe and practice today and to trace the origin of those doctrines to God’s Word and the N.T. Church. It is also the purpose of this study to attempt to locate in church history peoples who have believed these same truths, though not always called “Baptists”. Thus we shall begin our study of “BAPTIST ROOTS”...

I. THE CHURCHES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: (33-100A.D.)

A. The Great Commission: Mt. 28:19,20

1. The seed plot of the church age
2. Contained 3 of the “Baptist Distinctives”
 - a. Regenerate body of believers: “make disciples”
 - b. Baptized believers: “baptizing them”
 - c. Instructed membership: Authority of Scripture

B. The Day of Pentecost: Acts 1:8ff

1. “Marks the beginning of the definite, organic life of the followers of Christ”
2. The “Kingdom of God” is essentially spiritual, and thus “invisible, but it has an outward bodily manifestation, an institutional as well as an incorporal existence” known as the local church.

- a. All believers collectively are referred to as the “Body of Christ”.
- b. That “Body” is only visible in the local assembly.

NOTE: Both are referred to as the “Church”, but the overwhelming number of Script. refs. concern the Local Church!

C. The Book of Acts:

1. Outlines the beginning and building of the N.T. Church.
2. Paul and Barnabas are the first missionaries to spread the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire.
 - a. They establish churches wherever possible.
 - b. They instruct in sound doctrine.

NOTE: The “Baptist Distinctives” are taught in the early church and are nothing more than Bible truths. (For easy retention I have listed them as an acrostic which spells the word “BAPTISTS.”) The Foundational truth of all true believers and especially historic Baptists is that of: the supremacy of the scriptures (II Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:15,16)

1. Born-again church membership: Acts 2:41; 8:37
2. Autonomy of the local churches: Acts 15
3. Priesthood of every believer: Rev. 1:6
4. Two offices: Pastor and Deacons: Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-13
5. Individual soul liberty: Acts 5:29
6. Separation of Church and State: Mt. 22:21
7. Two Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper: Acts 2:41; I Cor. 11:23
8. Security of the believer: Jn. 10:27-30

NOTE: “...the only apostolic succession worth having (is) a succession of faith in the Lord Christ and obedience to him... our reliance is on the New Testament, and not on antiquity; on present conformance to Christ’s teachings, nor on our ecclesiastical pedigree, for the validity of our church organization, our ordinances, and our ministry.” (Henry C. Vedder, A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS, p. 7)

D. The New Testament Church and Pastoral Epistles:

1. One of the first deviations from pure doctrine was the infiltration of Legalism and Judaism into the Gospel of Grace.
2. The abuse of spiritual gifts was a major problem in the Corinthian church.

NOTE: During the Apostolic era doctrinal matters were settled infallibly through the inspired pen of the Apostles themselves.

3. The soon-abused practice of immediate baptism by immersion was an obvious scriptural tenant.
4. The N.T. practice of regenerate church members only was strictly adhered to.

NOTE: “Under this Old Dispensation a child was an heir of promise according to the flesh, but under the New Dispensation natural birth does not make him a member of the Kingdom of God; he must be born from above... a child might be born a Jew, but he must be born-again to become a Christian.”
(BID, p. 26)

5. The only Ordinances (not Sacraments!) in the N.T. churches were baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

NOTE: P. 55 “The Characteristics of the Jerusalem Church.” What Is A Baptist? “Surely it is the succession of the truth that matters supremely. The standing of a church today does not depend upon ecclesiastical pedigree or historical lineage. The only sure touchstone is adherence to the doctrines of Holy Scriptures.” AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BAPTISTS, Erroll Hulse, p. 6

6. The most marked feature of the N.T. churches was their “spontaneity and freedom from the bondage of formalism!”

II. THE CHURCHES OF THE POST-APOSTOLIC ERA: (100-313 A.D.)

A. The Period of Persecution and Dispersion: (“Religio Licita” vs. “Religio Illicita”)

1. Ten persecutions, three of special bitterness, are mentioned by the Christians and Historians of this period.
2. Diocletian, the Emperor, began the last great persecution, which raged from 303-311 A.D.
3. Diocletian ordered all churches destroyed and all Bibles burned: p. 38 Vedder
4. The Dispersion resulting, aided Christianity’s spread.

B. The Period of Toleration: p. 39 Vedder

Early in the fourth century it became apparent that Christianity was stronger than the Caesars, and could not be destroyed. The long contest ended with the surrender of the emperors. In 311 an edict of toleration was published, confirmed in 313, and with the triumph of Constantine in 323 as sole emperor, Christianity became practically the established religion of the empire. In spite of the persecutions to which they had been subjected, the Christians had come to number, according to the most trustworthy estimates, about ten million in the Roman empire or one-tenth of the entire population.

1. By 311 A.D. Christians numbered about 10 million! (1/10th of total population)
2. The attack of the sword failed, the attack of the Philosophers began: The sword of the pen?
3. The most successful attack was Emperor Constantine’s Edict of Toleration in 311 A.D.

- a. Adversity had kept the church relatively pure.
- b. Prosperity brought decadence of spiritual life and a departure from the simplicity of apostolic doctrine and practice.

III. THE CHURCHES OF THE CATHOLIC ERA: (313-1500) (The Dark Ages!)

A. Toleration and Acceptance Swept Many Pagans Into the Churches:

1. All pre-Christian religions had one thing in common: Salvation by works and rituals.
2. Converts assimilated into the churches brought the idea of salvation by an outward rather than an inward act.
3. The natural result was the substitution of formalism for spiritual-devotion to the externals of religion taking the place of living faith in Christ.

B. Three Major Tendencies Toward Degeneration May Be Traced: At first Parallel, then Converging.

1. The idea of a Holy Catholic (Universal) church: outward unity stressed, thus formal oneness was paramount. Whatever error the majority held, the minority must follow or be guilty of schism! Unity within the church + unity with Christ!
2. The ministry a Priesthood: to concentrate power in certain men separated from the "Laity" - Pagan practices of state religion incorporated into "Christianity".
3. The error of Sacramental Grace:
 - a. Baptism Corrupted:
 1. Obedience in Baptism for believers was initially stressed, as in the Scriptures.
 2. More importance placed on Baptism (probably due to Scriptures like John. 3:3; I Peter 3:21 and Acts 22:16)
 3. When insufficient quantities of water available for immersion, substituted pouring as much as possible three times upon the head, thus counterfeiting immersion.
 4. An identification of the symbol with the thing symbolized.
 5. Equation of terms "Baptize" and "Regenerate" used in early writing of "Church Fathers" in this period.
 6. If Baptism saves, then the next step is to conclude that God's grace could work with a little water as well as with more.
 7. Next, if those unbaptized were unregenerated, all who died in infancy were lost - thus must be baptized (or sprinkled).
 - a. After the 6th century, the practice of infant baptism was nearly universal.
 - b. This admitted to the church a whole host of unregenerated members.
 - c. Since their hearts were unchanged, worldly views prevailed, hence power sought and self-importance magnified.

8. For adult “converts” elaborate classes of instruction for Baptism were conducted by “Clergy”. Intellectual assent instead of heart belief emphasized.

b. The Lord’s Supper Corrupted:

1. With the decrease of saving faith, the increase in formalism kept pace and the simple ceremony of the Lord’s Supper became a mysterious ritual.
2. With the development of power of a clerical priesthood, the Lord’s Supper became another tool or rather threat to hold over the ignorant and unregenerate church members.
 - a. To be “ex-communicated” was to be denied Communion.
 - b. Since the Priests alone served Communion, they could also deny it.
3. With the decrease of genuine believers and true spiritual discernment, the next deviation was to make the elements themselves mystical and the words, “This is my body... blood”, were taken literally.

C. Other Corrupt Tendencies and Doctrines Followed:

1. Asceticism:

- a. If priests were a higher class of “Christian”, then they must be more “spiritual”.
- b. Celibacy was seen to be a higher state than marriage.

NOTE: Celibacy soon led to the foundation of the exaltation of Mary above her Son!

- c. Fasting and prayers were used to overcome sin, thus earning more grace and merit with God (a natural trend if salvation is by works).
- d. Mortifying the flesh by flagellation (beating), silence, poverty, etc.

2. Sainthood:

- a. The “super-spiritual” among the Clergy were soon elevated to privileged positions.
- b. Their good works became a storehouse for others to earn by merit, prayers, and of course, money!

C. The Struggle For a Pure Church During the Period of Corruption:

1. Corruption outlined above was a gradual process over several centuries.
2. The Truth was not truly eclipsed at first, only obscured.
3. Some men and movements attempted to reclaim the purity of the church.

- a. Montanists: Mid 2nd Century - Montanus proclaimed himself a prophet.
 -Tertullian = “Church Father” leading spokesman for Montanists.
 -Believed in Regenerate Church Membership.
 -Believed in Priesthood of every believer (led to abuses of Prophecy, Revelation).
 -Believed in Holy living (led to Asceticism).
 -Believed in speedy return of Christ as King (led to Fanaticism).
 -Had women evangelists (Prophetesses - Maximilla and Priscilla - left husbands).
 -Spoke in Tongues (1st Post-apostolic “Charismatic” group).
- b. Novatians: 249-250 A.D. - Period of Decian Persecutions
 -Novatian was a Roman Bishop - said those who denied the Lord in persecution should not be allowed in Church membership - high view of Scripture.
 -Novatians were a separatist group - believed they were the only pure church.
 -Novatian was called an “Anti-Pope of the Puritan Party with the church”.
 -Novatian... 1st recorded “clinic baptism” (couch baptism).
 -Novatian was ex-communicated by a Synod at Rome - believed in Separation of Church and State.
 -Novatians were the first Anabaptists (Re-baptizers).
 -Novatians continued to 6th or 7th century.
- c. Donatists:
 -Donatist split with Catholicism over Regenerate Church Membership.
 -Defenders of religious liberty and separation of Church and State.
 -Believed in “coming out” of apostate churches - Separatists.
 -St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo argued against separatism from “Holy Mother Church”.
 -Augustine argued for “love” not separation (but love obeys God!).
 -Donatist property was confiscated by Roman Catholic Church.
- d. Saint Patrick of Ireland: Born about 360 A.D.
 -At 16, sold into slavery.
 -Six years later escaped and later became a Missionary to those in slavery.
 -Wrote the “Epistle to the Irish”.
 -Baptized thousands of believers.
 -Believed in Supreme Authority of Scriptures.
- e. Paulicians: 1100’s
 -Another sect along with Albigenses, Bogomils, etc., which were more or less “Evangelical” p. 102 Vedder France 1300’s
 (Peter of Bruys) + (Peter Waldo) (Petrobrucians, Waldensians) p. 123 Vedder
 Ignored the Pope, ex-communication and decrees.
- f. Arnold the Roman: 11th century
 -Boldly denounced the debauchery of the Roman Catholic clergy and their luxury.
 -Held to Regenerate Church Membership, separation of Church and State.
 -Pope Adrian IV had to withdraw from Rome due to Arnold’s strong preaching!
 -The Pope laid an interdict on Arnold and Rome thus won!

IV. THE CHURCHES AND THE REFORMATION ERA: (1500 -)

NOTE: The word “Re-formation” connotes the original thrust of this movement. It never originally desired to split from “Holy Mother Church”, simply to reform her. But the gaps were too wide and reform was not acceptable to the Hierarchy. Often the reformers were thrust out of the Roman Catholic church, they did not leave voluntarily.

When Hildebrand became Pope Gregory VII (to 11th century), the Papacy reached the height of power. He claimed universal supremacy - not over “Christians” alone, but a moral superintendance of the nations.

A. Early Reformers:

1. Savonarola: (Girolamo) 1452 - Florence, Italy (3 centuries later) At 23, entered Dominican Monastery. Became a student of the Word and is said to have memorized the whole Bible! Eloquent preacher. Pope Alex VI tried to silence him by offering him the Archbishopric of Florence and a Cardinals hat. Savonarola refused and continued to attack the Papacy - as usual, the Pope won and Savonarola was hanged and burned with two friends.
2. Wyclif, John: 1370 A.D. - England “A Protestant before Protestantism”. More radical than Luther. Followers called Lollards. Held to Authority of Scripture - two offices - Separation of Church and State. Opposed indulgences, monks, images, confessions and celibacy. Condemned as a Heretic in 1415 at the Council of Constance.
3. Hus, John: 1400 A.D. - Prague (Bohemia - Czechoslovakia). An echo of Wyclif, but greater in eloquence. Denounced clerical sins, pronounced alleged miracles in the Roman Catholic Church as spurious and encouraged men to return to the Scriptures. Declared the infallibility of the Pope blasphemous. In the Council of Constance, Hus declared his expectations and agreed to submit to its rulings. At first things went well: Pope John XXIII (the Scoundrel) was deposed and other reforms adopted. But Hus was delivered to the civil power of execution. Hus preached as he was tied to the stake, and when fire kindled, began to sing: “Jesus, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me...” His ashes were cast into the Rhine river.

B. Other Reformers:

1. Zwingli: (Ulric) Switzerland - paved the way for the Anabaptists.
2. Luther: (Martin) Germany - kept the Roman Catholic church busy and off the “Heretics”.
3. Calvin: (John) Switzerland
4. Knox: (John)

NOTE: The Inquisition: p. 105, 107, 108, 109 - Vedder. An institution peculiar to the medieval church naturally suggested the fitting agents for this work—the mendicant orders, scattered over the whole of Europe, not under the control of the bishops, independent of the secular clergy, responsible only to the pope. Accordingly, on April 20, 1233, Gregory IX issued two bulls making the prosecution of heresy the special function of the Dominican order. From this time on, the institution rapidly developed, and by the close of the thirteenth century had become the most terrible engine of oppression

that the mind of man or devil ever conceived, before which kings on their thrones and prelates in their palaces trembled. Inquisitors could not be excommunicated while in the discharge of their duties, nor could any legate of the pope interfere with them or suspend them from office. While performing their duties they were freed from all obligations of obedience to their own generals, as well as to the bishops. Their jurisdiction was universal, and any one who refused obedience to their summons or opposed them became ipso facto excommunicated.

What hope was there for one who, charged with heresy, fell into the clutches of judges such as this system provided? The arrest was usually secret; all that the friends of the accused ever knew, in most cases, was that he had disappeared. It was not considered conducive to health to make any open inquiries about his whereabouts; it having been observed that such inquiries were followed by the disappearance of the too curious inquirer also. The accused was never permitted to have counsel; he was confronted by no accuser; he was not required to plead to any precise indictment. He could call no witnesses in defense; he was himself usually the chief witness for the prosecution—all principles of jurisprudence and all natural equity being set at naught by requiring him to testify against himself. Everything that human—no, everything that diabolical—ingenuity could do to entrap him into damaging admissions and to extract from him a confession of guilt was done. The inquisitor played on the conscience, on the affections, on the hopes and fears of his victim, with cynical disregard of every moral law and inflicting the most exquisite mental tortures, in the hope of securing a confession.

Finally, if all other means failed, the inquisitors had another device for encouraging (such was their grim word) the accused to confess. That was physical torture—the rack, the thumbscrew, the boot, cautery in various forms, every infernal machine that could be devised to produce the most excruciating agony without unduly maiming or killing. Sometimes solitary confinement in a dungeon was tried, as a means more effective than pain or breaking a stubborn will. Months lengthened into years and years into decades, and still the Inquisition's victim might find himself unconvicted, but with no better prospect of liberty than on the first day. The Inquisition had all the time there was and was willing to wait; its patience never wearied. If a prisoner's resolution gave way under torture or imprisonment, he had to sign a statement that his confession was not made because of love, fear or hatred of any one, but of his own free will. If he subsequently recanted, the confession was to be regarded as true, and the retraction as the perjury of an impenitent and relapsed heretic, who received condign punishment without further trial.

Though no effort was spared to obtain a written confession of heresy, the accused might in the last resort be condemned without it. Only in one way could he be certain of saving his life, and that was by a full confession at once, accompanied by a recantation of his errors and abject submission to the church. Then his life would be spared, but more likely than not it would be spent in some dungeon; only in rare cases was one who once fell into the clutches of the Inquisition suffered to return to his home and estate; and in those rare cases he was subject to lifelong espionage and harassment.

When the process was completed and the accused was found guilty of heresy—which was the normal ending of a case—the inquisitors handed the heretic over to the civil power for punishment, with a hypocritical recommendation to mercy. But woe to the secular authority that heeded the recommendation! If a magistrate failed for twelve months to put to death a condemned heretic, the refusal itself constituted heresy, and he became subject to the kind offices of the Inquisition. Even if he were excommunicated, the magistrate must do his duty. The church, with characteristic evasion of the truth, claims to this day that it has never put a heretic to death. The claim is technically correct, if we except those who died in its dungeons and torture-chambers; but the church coerced the civil power into becoming its executioner, and therefore its moral responsibility is the same. When the heretic was

dead, the vengeance of the church was not sated. All his lands and goods were confiscated, his blood was attainted, his family were beggared, if they did not share his fate, and his name was blotted out of existence—life, property, titles, all disappeared.

We must not think of the Inquisition as the instrument of wicked men solely, or even mainly, though its satanic origin seems to be stamped all over it. But saintly Bernard was a more bitter persecutor than the infamous Borgias; Innocent III, the purest of the medieval popes, must be called the father of the Inquisition. In fact, the more pious a medieval Catholic was, the more he believed with all his heart and soul in the church and her sacraments, the more he was impelled to persecute. Such men hunted down heresy, not because they loved the souls of men, whose eternal salvation they believed to be endangered. It is an awful warning to all the succeeding ages of the fathomless iniquity into which a perverted conscience may lead men whose greatest desire is the glory of God.

The names of few of these martyrs have been preserved, but the complaints of their obstinacy and obduracy that abound in the Catholic writings of the period are the convincing testimony to their heroic constancy. They saw the truth clearly and were loyal to it at every cost. They were slain by tens of thousands; a remnant of them were driven into inaccessible mountain vastness where they maintained themselves and their faith for centuries; they became a “hidden seed” in many parts of Europe. By her system of vigor and rigor the Roman church won a temporary triumph: heresy was apparently suppressed; the reformation of the church was postponed for three centuries.

V. THE CHURCHES AND THE ANABAPTISTS: (1500 -)

NOTE: There were some lights in the Dark Ages, as we have seen! God and His Word are never totally without a witness. The Son is never totally eclipsed!

A. The Name Anabaptist: (16th century)

1. Anyone who rejected Catholic Baptism.
2. They were declared “guilty of rebaptizing,” thus a “Rebaptizer.”
3. It signified “rejection of the supposedly efficacious baptism of Rome, and of the Protestant (Reformed) groups as well”. Biblical Separation, Pickering, p. 43
4. It was also seen as a repudiation both of church and state.
5. The term “Anabaptist” was used by Lutherans, Zwinglians and Catholics of all the “radicals” who refused allegiance to these communions.

B. Their Origins:

1. The most biblical group grew out of Zwingli’s reform movement in Switzerland.
2. Some of his followers were disappointed with Zwingli when he lacked the courage of his convictions to stand up to the city council (in Zurich).
3. They broke with him (separation from a believer!) and begun a serious study of the Scriptures:
 - a. Found that a church, after N.T. pattern, must consist of believers only.
 - b. Thus only the baptism of believers was acceptable.

ILLUS: Zwingli, Luther and Calvin all stopped short of complete obedience to the Word. Their failure created antagonism for those who went beyond them. Zwingli, e.g. began to hate his former friend, Felix Maury. Maury was executed by drowning in Zurich, the city in which Zwingli was creating the model Christian state!

C. Their Distinctives:

1. God's Word the only Authority: "They preferred to make a radical break with 1500 years of history and culture if necessary rather than to break with the N.T."
2. Baptism for true believers only.
3. Believed in exercise of church discipline.
4. Condemned Roman Church as apostate. (p. 48, Biblical Separation)

ILLUS: Since the Anabaptists believed strongly in the purity of the church, it was important to them that impure persons—persons who were not living like Christians should—be barred from church fellowship. They called it "the ban". We refer to it today as church discipline. "These hardy believers taught that church membership, being a free response in obedience to Christ, had certain obligations. Members who were living loose lives should be banned from participation in the Lord's Table, or be completely removed from the church fellowship. Repeatedly, when Anabaptists were questioned by state church leaders... as to the reason for their separation from the official church they cited the lack of discipline. The state church could not be the true church of Christ because it tolerated in its midst all kinds of sin. It was this emphasis upon purity which also caused them to avoid interchurch fellowship with those who tolerated evil doctrine and practice.

5. Separation of Church and State.

D. Their Propagation:

1. The Anabaptists began spreading throughout Europe.
2. It was Grebel in Switzerland (where the first 'Baptist' confession of faith was issued in 1527), Hubmaier and Denck in Germany and others scattered throughout the Continent.

ILLUS: In Moravia, about the middle of the sixteenth century, there were seventy communities of Anabaptists, prosperous farmers and tradesmen, acknowledged to be among the most thrifty and law-abiding element of the population. In Strassburg, in Augsburg, in Bohemia, and in Moldavia, they were also found in large numbers, and wherever found they were marked men by reason of their godly lives and good citizenship. Fifty years later, however, persecution had done its work only too well, and early in the seventeenth century we find the Anabaptists disappear from the history of Germany. They survive somewhat later in Poland, where they became quite numerous, and a large section of them adopted the Socinian theology. The German Anabaptists committed the one sin that this world never pardons; they attempted a radical revolution, which would ultimately have transformed civil and social as well as religious institutions and—they failed. That is the real gist of their offense. Had they succeeded, the very men whose historians have loaded with execrations would have been held up as the greatest and noblest men of their age. The fame of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin would have been eclipsed by that of Grebeland Hubmaier and Denck, if the labors of the Anabaptists had been crowned

with success. The true Reformation was that with which they were identified. The Reformation that actually prevailed in the sixteenth century was a perversion of the genuine movement, resulting from the unholy alliance with the State made by those who are called “reformers.” Two centuries were required before the fruits of a real Reformation could ripen for the gathering; and it was in America, not in Germany, that the genuine Reformation culminated. p.182, Vedder

3. Not a few Anabaptists fled to America to escape persecution.

ILLUS: The colony that settled in Lancaster County, PA in 1715, though commonly called Mennonites, was really composed largely of Anabaptist refugees from Bern, Switzerland.

VI. THE CHURCHES AND THE MENNONITES: (1536 -)

NOTE: The Anabaptists did not disappear, they just took a different name.

A. The Founder of the Mennonites:

1. Menno Simmons was a R/C Priest (ordained in 1524), in the Netherlands.
2. He was godless and his life was dissipated.
3. The thought occurred to him that the bread and wine in the mass was not the body and blood of Christ, but he put away such “heretical thoughts”.
4. He heard of the execution of a re-baptized believer (March 30, 1531) and began to study the Scriptures.
5. He began preaching what he was learning from the Bible, and after about 9 months, he was saved, then finally separated from R/C/C, in about 1536.
6. He led a small group of believers at first but was eventually used of the Lord to preach and found churches across the whole of Northern Europe - from France to Russia.
7. Greater religious toleration in the Netherlands helped the “Mennonites” to spread and gain a solid foothold.
8. Many Mennonites came to America (where the majority are now).
9. Some fled to England to escape growing persecution.
10. The last Anabaptist was burned at the stake in England in 1612 (one year after the KJV was procured there!).

VII. THE CHURCHES AND THE ENGLISH BAPTISTS: (1610-)

A. After 1610 We Have an Unbroken Succession of Baptist Churches:

1. These “Baptists” had Anabaptist, Mennonite and Puritan roots.
2. Many of these “Separatists” from the church of England began to pour over the Scriptures resulting in break-away groups.
3. The history of English Baptists began in Holland, where a Rev. John Smyth led his group of Separatists to escape the persecution of King James I

- a. Smyth, Thomas Helwys and 36 others formed the first church composed of Englishmen standing for the baptism of believers only in about 1609.
 - b. Smyth died in 1612 and in 1611, Helwys and a John Murton with others returned to London and founded the first Anabaptist church composed of Englishmen known to have existed on English soil (later known as General Baptists). These General Baptists of England maintained close relations with the Mennonite churches in Holland.
4. The first particular Baptist Church was started in England in about 1616 and wholly adopted Baptist principles and practices by 1638.
 5. In 1644 the number of particular Baptist churches had increased to seven and united to issue a Confession of Faith having 50 articles, which is one of the chief landmarks of Baptist history!

B. After 1644 We Have Baptists Growing in England:

1. These Baptists were in the forefront of the fight for the separation of Church and State, and the doctrine of individual soul liberty.
2. Typical of these was John Bunyan, whose only crime was the preaching of the Gospel, for which he spent over 13 years in prison.
3. The English Baptists produced giants of the faith like William Carey (father of the Modern Missionary Movement) and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers.

VIII. THE CHURCHES AND THE AMERICAN BAPTISTS: (1639 - present)

NOTE: The history of Baptist Churches in America divides naturally into 3 periods or movements. There was the colonial period, the missionary period and the period of evangelism and education. Thousands of Puritans emigrated to the New World (New England) under the reign of Charles I of England (1625 - 1649). Their separation from their homeland provided somewhat easier separation from former religious ties. Also, the atmosphere in the new land was one of more freedom from oppression. The affiliation of Baptists in America are directly with our brethren of Great Britain.

A. The Colonial Period: (1639 -)

1. New England Baptists:

- a. Roger Williams: A Puritan separatist before leaving England who came to America seeking greater religious freedom.
 1. Williams was called to minister to a church in Salem, Massachusetts.
 2. With great zeal and eloquence, he preached for religious liberty, and was condemned to banishment from the colony.
 3. Williams made his way to Narragansett Bay, now known as Providence, RI, and in 1633, this colony received the Royal Charter from King Charles, II guaranteeing Religious Freedom.

ILLUS: “Thus, was founded the first Government in the world, whose cornerstone was absolute religious liberty.” Vedder, p. 290

4. Till now, Williams was not a Baptist, but in March 1639, Williams was baptized by one Ezekiel Holliman and there upon Williams baptized 10 others and the first Baptist Church on American soil was formed

NOTE: Williams was very unstable and after only a few months, he left the church and became a “seeker”. He remained unconnected with any religious body for the rest of his life.

b. Dr. John Clarke: Also left England in search of Religious Liberty.

1. In 1644, a church (later described as Baptist) was organized in Newport, RI, and Dr. Clarke became its Pastor.
2. Dr. Clarke was instrumental in securing a charter from Charles II, guaranteeing civil and religious liberty.
3. Dr. Clarke was probably the most eminent Baptist of his time and served as Deputy Governor in 1669 and 1671.

c. John Myles: Was the founder of the first Baptist Church in Wales and immigrated to Massachusetts.

1. Religious persecution continued in America and the “Act of Uniformity” was issued by the Church of England.
2. Myles and his followers formed a Baptist Church in Rehoboth, Mass. in 1633, and it has continued uninterrupted as such til today (this church was strongly Calvinistic).

NOTE: Though persecution was heavy at times, in 1691, a new charter was granted by William and Mary. Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay were consolidated into the one colony of Mass., and assured “Liberty of Conscience to all Christians, except Papists.” Baptists were henceforth exempt from persecution, but not from taxation to support a state church. Vedder, p. 301

2. Philadelphia Baptists:

NOTE: “The most important and influential of the early Baptist centers was the group of churches in the vicinity of Philadelphia. It was the Phila. Association that turned the tide (towards Calvinistic Doctrine), and decided the course of American Baptist history.” Vedder, p. 304, 306

3. Other Baptist Churches in America:

- a. There were 47 Baptist Churches we know of before the Great Awakening.
- b. All but seven of these were north of the Mason-Dixon line.

B. The Period of Expansion: (1734 -)

1. The first Baptist Schools were established during this period.
2. The first Baptist Missionary Society est. in Mass.
3. The first Baptist Military Chaplains entered service in the Revolutionary War.

NOTE: Involved in the beginning of all of the above organizations was a Baptist preacher named Hezekiah Smith. Smith gained the friendship and esteem of Gen. George Washington as a Chaplain.

4. The Baptist Churches spread throughout the colonies, including the southern states.
5. The reasons for this spread of Baptist Churches was 3-fold:
 - a. Granting of Religious Liberty in all the states.
 - b. Missionary activity of the pioneer preachers.
 - c. The congregational polity of the Baptist Churches.

ILLUS: The hardships faced by American pioneers and their preachers are difficult for us to conceive of in these days of plenty and luxury. The preacher's library was a Bible and hymn book (carried in saddlebags). The preaching was rough and ready, not always scrupulous of the King's English and strongly evangelistic. Their services were often held in woods and prairies.

6. The Louisiana Purchase annexed the Mid-West and Western states and opened up a new, but hostile mission field.
7. Missionary Societies, often with much opposition, began sending out Baptist Missionaries, even to foreign lands.

C. The Period of Evangelism and Education: (1790 -)

NOTE: Baptists have also had periods of hot debate and bitter controversy. The very structure of Baptist doctrine and polity lends support for different ideas. Controversies over Mission agencies, schools, Bible translations (!), Secret societies, total abstinence from alcohol and even doctrinal differences divided Baptists through these years of growth in America. But the leaders of evangelism, soul-winning, missionary endeavor and even education have been Baptists, over the years.

1. Baptists and Evangelism:

- a. From Apostolic days onward, genuine believers have always made evangelism (personal and group) a primary concern.
- b. The predecessors of the people called Baptists and those bearing the name in later times, have made evangelism a priority.

1. It should be noted that true believers, especially Baptists, have held tenaciously to the freedom and conscience in spiritual matters, and though zealously evangelistic, avoided coercion at all costs.
2. True believers, specifically Baptists, have held the Great Commission to be the "marching orders of the church," thus have sought the conversion of the lost and made it their prime directive.

- c. The phenomenal growth of Baptists in America, under extremely adverse conditions, is a testimony to this emphasis on Evangelism.

ILLUS: In the 130 year period between 1768 and 1898 conservative figures (in THE NEW DIRECTORY FOR BAPTIST CHURCHES, By Edward. T. Hiscox) show an increase from 137 to 43,397 churches, from under 400 missionaries to 27,355 and from under 35,000 to 4,055,806 members. This is all the more remarkable when one considers the emphasis on a credible profession of faith (a regenerate church membership) and the prerequisite for believer's baptism. (Also, we must add that, generally speaking, "professions" were not as readily made nor accepted in these early days as today.) Besides, since Baptists are independent and individualistic and non-denominational in structure, the churches did not all cooperate in the reporting of statistics. Statistics on Baptists have always been notoriously hard to obtain.

2. Baptists and Education:

- a. American Baptists, from the first, felt the necessity of a better education for their children and as early as 1756 an academy was established in Hopewell, NJ by Rev. Isaac Eaton.
- b. In the Colonial Period, of course, before the more structured schools were built, Baptists educated their children at home and in the church, with the Bible as the only textbook.
- c. About 1750 some Baptists in the Philadelphia Assoc. were considering an institution of higher learning and in 1766 the Rhode Island (Baptist) College (later Brown University) was established in Providence (due to difficulty of obtaining a charter in Phila.). In 1769 the first commencement saw the B.A. Degree granted to 7 young men.
- d. Soon other schools were established by the Baptists in America, (to name a few):
 1. Newton Theological Institution
 2. Waterville College, Maine (now Colby College)
 3. Worcester Academy, Mass.
 4. Suffield Literary Institute, Conn.
 5. Columbian College, Washington, D.C.
 6. Rochester Theological Seminary, NY
 7. Crozer Theological Seminary, Upland, PA
 8. Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA

ILLUS: "Before this, Baptists had everywhere been few in numbers, composed chiefly of what are contemptuously called 'the common people,' often persecuted, always despised, frequently unlearned. Now they had (by the 1850's) become the largest Protestant body but one in the U.S....it was actually becoming respectable to be a Baptist." Vedder, p. 365 "This is the counting; now for the weighing. Has the increase in piety, intelligence, in wealth, in missionary zeal, kept pace with this growth of numbers? In many of these particulars, if not in all, it is possible to answer the question with an emphatic 'yes'. It is, in truth, speaking soberly, to say that the numerical increase of Baptists (during this period) is the least striking feature of their history." Vedder, p. 366. By 1900 one out of every 18 people in the U.S. were Baptists. If you include all their families and those who were Baptist in sentiment, it would be one out of every seven or eight.

IX. THE CHURCHES AND BAPTISTS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE:

A. Baptists of the Present:

ILLUS: Someone has noted that there are as many kinds of Baptists as there are brands of dog food! But this depends on what definition you place on the word “Baptist” and its theological and biblical connotation.

1. There are basically only 3 kinds of Baptists, theologically:
 - a. Fundamental Baptists: Those adhering to “Baptist Distinctives” and unreserved biblical authority.
 - b. Neo-Evangelical Baptists: Those who are basically Baptist with strong historic ties in Baptist history and tradition, but who have begun dangerous trends with regard to the Bible and its authority as well as loose associations and lack of Ecclesiastical Separation.
 - c. Liberal Baptists: Those who have deviated historically, traditionally, Biblically and Theologically from historic Baptists and other believers.
2. There are hundreds of groups of Baptists, denominationally:
 - a. Convention Baptists: Southern Baptists (SBC), American Baptists (ABC), General Baptists (GBC), etc.

ILLUS: Actually, the word “convention” and “denomination” should not properly be associated with the word “Baptist.” True Baptists, historically and biblically, are completely independent of conventionism and denominationalism which speak of control hierarchy, “headquarters,” etc.

- b. Association Baptists: General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC), Conservative Baptist Association (CBA), etc.
- c. Fellowship Baptists: Baptist Bible Fellowship (BBF), Bible Baptists, etc.

ILLUS: Associations and Fellowships of Baptist churches are both biblical and historical among believers. They are simply groups of autonomous Baptist churches (or Pastors) which voluntarily declare themselves to be in doctrinal and scriptural agreement which generally hold regional or national meetings for mutual encouragement and fellowship.

- d. Alliance Baptists: The World Baptist Alliance (WBA)

NOTE: This group of Baptists are generally liberal in theology and are in fellowship with the National and World Councils of Churches (NCCC and WCCC). This organization and any other theologically liberal Baptist church or group cannot biblically, nor historically, claim to be genuinely Baptist because the very foundation-stone of Baptist Distinctives is the Supremacy of the Scriptures. Such liberal groups have denied both in principle and practice this basic tenet.

- e. Other Baptists: Reformed Baptists, 7th Day Baptists, Freewill Baptists, Strict Baptists, Calvinist Baptists, Primitive Baptists, Six-Principle Baptists, Two-Seed-in-Spirit Baptists, etc., etc.

NOTE: These groups of Baptists and Baptist churches vary in theological persuasion and are difficult to classify except as individual churches.

3. There are many Baptists in Communist Countries:

- a. In Russia there are 2 basic Baptist groups:
 - 1. The State-controlled All Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (A.U.C.E.C.B.)—Communist denominated.
 - 2. The Reform Baptists of unregistered (including the Evangelical Christians and Baptists of (E.C.B.) an amalgam of Brethren, Pentecostals, Mennonites, Baptists and others.)

4. Present approximate statistics on Baptists:

- a. Baptists exist in 141 “countries” throughout the world (this is believed to be the widest dispersion of any Christian group besides the Roman Catholic Church.
- b. In 1975 it was estimated that there were nearly 140,000 local Baptist Churches world wide with nearly 40,000,000 members.
- c. The top 3 nations for Baptist Churches are 1) the U.S. (100,000), 2) India (6,000), and 3) U.S.S.R. (5,000).

B. Baptists and the Future:

- 1. Baptists have a bright future:
 - a. Fundamental Baptists are evangelistic and aggressive and are presently on the increase.
 - b. Fundamental Baptists are Missionary-minded and compassionate and are conscious of the world’s needs of the Gospel.

ILLUS: Jack Hyles, Pastor of the World’s Largest Baptist Sunday School, often said of Fundamentalists versus Social-Gospelers that a good soul-winning church will do more to help people with their social needs and personal problems by “accident” on the way to win the lost than the Liberal church with their social-emphasis and community projects do on purpose.

2. Baptists have a blessed future:

- a. Fundamental Baptists believe in the Rapture of the church and thus stay active in working for the Savior so as not to be “ashamed at His coming.”

- b. Fundamental Baptists believe in the soon return of their Savior and thus see their future as glorious and continue to work and watch for his appearing and to receive His “well done” and rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

CONCL: As long as the church remains on the earth, there will be people who believe the Bible and hold to what we presently refer to as “Baptist Distinctives”, which are, in reality, nothing more than Bible Doctrines. These people will not necessarily call themselves Baptists, but in spirit they shall be, and if they study the History of the Church, they, like we, should be proud to take the name “Baptist” to themselves!

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