

A History of the Baptists

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CHAPTER XV THE BAPTISTS IN THE REFORMATION PERIODS IN ENGLAND

THE Reformation period was of long duration in England. It began with Henry VIII and really did not end till the Long Parliament which beheaded Charles I. During this formative time the Creed, the Liturgy, and the Practice of the Church of England were determined.

Henry VIII (1509-1547) came to the English throne under the most favorable circumstances. He was young, cultivated, brilliant, and endowed with all those social and mental qualities which sent a thrill to the heart of the nation and inspired the most sanguine hopes for the future. He had a splendid coronation, for his father had left him ample means to gratify his love for display. He carried his deceased brother's wife, Catherine of Spain, after a solemn repudiation of the lawfulness of the former contract. This was the beginning of his troubles, and the occasion of endless disputes and ultimately the separation of the Church of England from Rome.

As much as Henry VIII hated the papal party, after he had broken with the Pope, he had still more hatred for the Baptists, at home and abroad. Neither threats nor cajolery prevented the spread of the Baptists. Like the Israelites in Egypt, "the more they were afflicted, the more they grew."

The history of the Baptists of England, in the times of Henry VIII, is written in blood. He had scarcely come to the throne before proceedings were begun against them, and they were persecuted to the death.

The chief agent of the king in these persecutions was William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury. There appeared before him, at the Mansion at Knoll, May 2, 1511, a number of persons. "Then I say," says Crosby, "it is evident that they were opposers of infant baptism at that time, and then the rise of the Baptists is not of such late date as some would have it" (Crosby, *The History of the Baptists*, I. 30). They were required to renounce the following articles:

1. That in the sacrament of the altar is not the body of Christ, but material bread.
2. That the sacrament of baptism and confirmation are not necessary, or profitable for men's souls.
3. That confession of sins ought not to be made to a priests. That there is no more power given by God to a priest than to a

layman. 5. That the solemnization of matrimony (by a priest) is not profitable or necessary for the well of a man's soul. 6. That the sacrament of extreme unction is not profitable or necessary to a man's soul. 7. That pilgrimages to holy and devout places be not profitable, neither meritorious for man's soul. 8. That images of saints are not to be worshipped. 9. That a man should pray to no saint, but only to God. 10. That holy water, and holy bread, be not the better after the benediction made by the priest, than before (Burnet, History of the Reformation of the Church of England, I. 27).

All were punished. Alice Grevill, who had been a Baptist for twenty-eight years, was condemned to death. Simon Fish and Tames Bainham, in the year 1525, belonged to a Baptist church, located in Bow Lane. Fish was a theologian and a pamphleteer. He was educated in Oxford, came to London and entered Gray's Inn, about 1525. He was denounced as a damnable heretic, and in 1531 he died of a plague. His wife, who was suspected of heresy, married Bainham, who was burnt for heresy in 1532. He was a lawyer of high character and Burnet says "that for true generosity, he was an example to the age in which he lived." This is truly a remarkable testimony coming as it does from a bishop of the Church of England. Under examination he said that "the truth of the holy Scriptures was never these eight hundred years past so plainly and expressly declared to the people as, it had been within these six years." He demanded that only believers should be baptized in this militant church (Fox, Book of Martyrs, II. 329, 330). There was then an organized Baptist church, in London, in the practice of believers' immersion in the year 1525. He died a triumphant death, at the stake, April 20, 1532, at Smithfield.

The law against heretics was strengthened, in 1534-5. The most alarming letters were sent into England, by English foreign officials; as to the insubordination of the Anabaptists, on the Continent. Henry VIII was already interested in the extermination of the Baptists, and his zeal extended to foreign lands. He extended his help in exterminating the Baptists in Germany (Gardiner, Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, VII. 167).

The interest of the king was not confined to Germany. In the same year a royal proclamation was issued, in which it is said that many strangers are coming into this realm, who, "though they were baptized in their infancy, yet have, in contempt of the holy sacrament of baptism, rebaptized themselves. They are ordered to depart out of the realm in twelve days, under pain of death" (Wilkins, Concilia, III. 779). They did not return to the Continent and continued under the royal inspection (Cottonian MSS., Titus B. I. vol.415).

This law was soon placed into operation. The old Chronicler Stowe, A. D. 1533, relates the following details:

The 25th day of May were—in St. Paul's Church, London—examined nineteen men and six women, born in Holland, whose opinions were, First, that Christ is not two natures, God and man; secondly, that Christ took neither flesh nor blood of the Virgin Mary; thirdly, that children born of infidels may be saved: fourthly, that baptism of children is of none effect, fifthly, that the sacrament of Christ's body is but bread only, sixthly, that he who after baptism sinneth wittingly, sinneth deadly, and cannot be saved. Fourteen of them were condemned; a man and a woman were burnt at Smithfield; the other twelve of them were sent to other towns, there to be burnt.

Froude, the English historian, gives a beautiful tribute to their fidelity. He says:

The details are all gone, their names are gone. Poor Hollanders they were and that is all. Scarcely the fact seems worth the mentioning, so shortly is it told in a passing paragraph. For them no Europe was agitated, no courts were ordered in mourning, no papal hearts trembled with indignation. At their death the world looked on complacent, indifferent, or exulting. Yet here, too, out of twenty-five poor men and women were found fourteen who by no terror of stake or torture could be tempted to say they believed what they did not believe. History has for them no word of praise; yet they, too, were not giving their blood in vain. Their lives might have been as useless as the lives of most of us. In their deaths they assisted to pay the purchase money for England's freedom (Froude, *History of England*, II. 885).

The burning of the Baptists caused a profound sensation. It became a matter of court correspondence throughout Europe. One who has not studied the subject in the light of recent revealed facts cannot appreciate the large place the Baptists occupied in the public mind in the sixteenth century. But the burnings continued to the end of the reign of this king.

The Baptists died with the greatest fortitude. Of them Latimer says:

The Anabaptists that were burnt here in divers towns in England as I have heard of credible men, I saw them not myself, went to their death, even intrepid, as ye will say, without any fear in the world, cheerfully. Well, let them go (Latimer, *Sermons*, 1.148).

The Landgrave of Hesse, in examining certain Baptists in Germany, found letters in their hands in regard to England. The letters showed that "the errors of that sect daily spread" in England. He wrote a violent letter to Henry and warned him against the Anabaptists. In October, 1538, the king appointed a Commission composed of Thomas Cranmer, the Arch-bishop of Canterbury, as President, with other distinguished men to prosecute the

Anabaptists.

The result was that the books of the Baptists were burnt wherever they were found. On November 16, following, the king issued a proclamation to the effect that none were "to sell or print 'any books of Scripture', without the supervision of the king, one of the councils, or a bishop. Sacramentarians, Anabaptists, and the like, who sell books of false doctrine, are to be detected to the king or Privy Council" (Titus MSS. B. I. 527). All strangers who "lately rebaptized themselves" were ordered from the kingdom, and some Baptists were burnt at the stake.

The thoughtful reader has doubtless frequently asked how many Baptists there were in England in the reign of Henry VIII. The question can only approximately be answered. There were probably more Baptists there at the period under survey than there were in America at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Ammonius, under date of November 8, 1531, writes to Erasmus of the great numbers of the Anabaptists in England. He says: "It is not astonishing that wood is so dear and scarce the heretics cause so many holocausts, and yet their numbers grow" (Brewer, Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, I. 285). Erasmus replied that Ammonius "has reason to be angry with the heretics for increasing the price of fuel for the coming Winter" (Thid, 297). This was horrible jesting.

It was regarded as a great feat to discover and break up "a bed of snakes," as their meetings were called. Erasmus, under date of February 28, 1528, wrote to Moore: "The heresy of the Anabaptists is much more widely diffused than any one suspects" (Brewer, Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, IV. pt ii. 1771). The Bishop of Faenza, June 8, 1535, wrote to M. Ambrogio that the Anabaptists already have "a firm footing in England" (Gardiner, Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, IX. 344) Hacket, an English official, places their number at 8,000 and daily increasing. He says:

Said that the king's justice and amiable and good entreating toward him subjects would preserve the realm against all adversity, and he marveled that those whose eyesight was so sharp as to see the fire that burns before their own doors, and the commotion of this new sect of rebaptizement, which now numbers 6,000, and is dally increasing (Brewer, Henry VIII, VII. 136).

One town had more than 500 Baptists in it Latimer, who was a contemporary, says of their numbers:

I should have told you of a certain sect (the margin says they were Anabaptists) of heretics that spake against their order and doctrine; they

have no magistrates or judges on the earth. Here I have to tell you what I have heard of late, by the relation of a credible person and worshipful man, of a town in this realm of England that hath above five hundred of heretics of this erroneous opinion in it (Latimer, Sermons, V. 151. Parker Society).

Petrus Taschius, under date of September 1, 1538, says:

"In England the truth silently but widely is propagated and powerfully increases" (Corp. of the Reformation, 111.580).

Immersion was the universal rule of baptism in the reign of Henry VIII. There are two elaborate' rituals of the Church of England at this period. The one is: "A Declaration of the Seremonies to the Sacrament of Baptysm," A. D. 1537; and the other is the "Saulsbury Liturgy," 1541. The last is regarded, by some, as the most sacred Liturgy belonging to the Church of England. Both of these liturgies enforce immersion. Erasmus, writing from England in 1532, gives the English practice. He says: "We dip children all over in cold water, in a stone font" Every English monarch of the sixteenth century was immersed. Henry VIII and his elder brother Arthur, Elizabeth in 1533 and Edward VI in 1537 were all immersed.

The form of baptism among the Baptists is equally clear. Simon Fish was compelled to flee beyond the seas and while there he translated the old Baptist book, *The Sum of the Holy Scripture*. This old Dutch book demanded the immersion of the believer and denied infant baptism. It was printed in England in 1529. Through the next fifty years many editions of the book appeared in England (Fish, *The Sum of Holy Scripture*. British Museum, C. 37 L Arber proper dialogues in Rede me and not Wroth. English Reprints, 1871), and it became the Baptist text book next to the New Testament. There were editions of the book printed in England in 1547, 1548 and 1550 (British Museum, C. 37 a). There are copies of two editions in the Library of the University of Cambridge. All of these editions exhibit the same bold language against the baptism of infants, and in favor of the immersion of believers as the only act of baptism. The book was secretly published in the face of the greatest hostility, condemned by the decrees of councils and persistently circulated by the Baptists (Ex. reg. Warham, 188).

The quaint and queer old Church historian Fuller, in giving a reason for the coming of so many Dutch Baptists to England, also mentions something of their doctrines, their practice of immersion and activities. He says:

A match being now made up, by the Lord Cromwell's contrivance, betwixt King Henry and Lady Anne of Cleves, Dutchmen flocked faster than formerly into England. Many of them had active souls; so that whilst their hands were

busied about their manufactures, their heads were also beating about points of divinity: Hereof they had many crude notions, too ignorant to manage themselves and too proud to crave the directions of others. Their minds had a by-stream of activity more than what sufficed to drive on their vocation: and this waste of their souls they employed in needless speculations, and soon after began to broach their strange opinions, being branded with the general name of Anabaptists. These Anabaptists for the main, are but "Donatists new dipt," and this year their name first appears in our English chronicles, etc, (Fuller, Church History of Britain, II. 27).

Fuller was wrong in stating that these were the first Anabaptists who appeared in England. He was right, however, in declaring that they were in the practice of dipping. The "Donatists new dipt" and the allusion to the "by-streams," show, of course, that the Baptists practiced dipping. The statement is incapable of any other construction. Fuller was born in 1609 and wrote his history in 1654. He was an eye witness of much of the times through which Baptists passed in their persecutions, and this account is peculiarly valuable.

There is another author who lived only a short distance from Fuller and published a book one year after the appearance of Fuller's history. He is the author of the book "The Anabaptists Routed." He also refers to the Donatists in connection with the Anabaptists. In fact the Donatists seem to have been a current name by which the Baptists were called. What Fuller mentions in a figure of speech this author states in plain words. He declares:

Anabaptists not only deny believers' children baptism, as the Pelagians and Donatists did of old, but affirm that dipping the whole body under water is so necessary that without it none are truly baptized (as has been said) (The Anabaptists Routed, 171,172).

Daniel Featley, D. D., the opponent of the Baptists, born in 1582, also declares that the Baptists of the reign of Henry VIII practiced dipping. He says:

Let the punishment bear upon it the print of the sin, for as these sectaries drew one another into their errors, so also into the gulfe; and as they drown men spiritually by rebaptizing, and so profaning the holy sacrament, as also they were drowned corporally. In the year of our Lord 1539, two Anabaptists were burnt beyond Southwark (Featley, The Dippers Dipt).

It will be noticed that Fuller says these Baptists were from Cloves, where the Baptists in 1534 were numerous (Keller, *Preussische Jahrbucher*, September, 1882). The Baptists of this Dukedom practiced dipping in water (Rembert,

Die Wiedertauffer in Hexogtum Julich, 253).

The practice of immersion was universal in the reign of Henry VIII. It was the form of baptism of all parties and there is no known testimony to the contrary. The Church of England practiced immersion. The Catholics practiced immersion. The Baptists practiced immersion.

In the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) the laws against the Baptists were enforced, and the two persons burned at the stake in this reign were Baptists. Others were safe, had the protection of the laws, even criminals were pardoned, but to be a Baptist was a grave crime. This sterling young king, merciful to an astonishing degree, for his heart was peculiarly kind and tender, visited upon the Baptists a cruelty that reminded one of a wild beast.

The Baptists steadily increased in numbers. They were found in the court, and among the common people, in the town and in the country. Bishop Burnet says: "There were many Anabaptists in many parts. of England" (Burnet, History of the Reformation, II. 110). Heylyn says: "And at the same time, the Anabaptists, who had kept themselves unto themselves in the king's time, began to look abroad, and disperse their dotages" (Heylyn, History of the Reformation, I. 152). Bishop Fowler Short says: "Complaints had been brought to the Council of the prevalence of the Anabaptists . . . To check the progress of these opinions a Commission was appointed" (Short. History of the Church of England, VI. 543). These references had to do with the Baptists throughout the country.

Their numbers in London were great. Bishop John Hooper wrote to Henry Bullinger, under date of June 25, 1549, as follows: "The Anabaptist flock to this place (London) and give me much trouble." (Ellis, Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation, I. 65). In 1550 Ridley was Bishop of London. In "the articles to be enquired of", early in June, the clergy were ordered to ascertain:

Whether any speak against infant baptism.. Whether any of the Anabaptists' sect, or other, use notoriously any unlawful or private conventicle (churches), whether they do use doctrine or administration of sacraments, separating themselves from the rest of the parish (British Museum C. 58 aa 11)

Here is a direct official statement that there were Baptist conventicles, or churches, in London. Some of these churches were "notorious," and some of them more "private." These churches "do use doctrine," had "the administration of the sacraments," that is, they baptized and observed the Lord's Supper, and they were separated from the parish churches. That is to

say, there were fully organized Baptist churches in London in the year 1550.

The information is equally positive that there were Baptist churches in Kent. Bishop John Hooper, June 26, 1550, writes regarding this district as follows: "That district is troubled with the frenzy of the Anabaptists more than any other part of the kingdom" (Ellis, Original Letters, I. 87). Strype says: "There were such assemblies [churches] in Kent" (Strype, Memorials, II. 266). Such congregations were in Feversham, Maidstone and Eythorne.

The Baptists of Kent had a number of eminent ministers. Such was Cole of Feversham. Henry Hart began preaching in the reign of Henry VIII. He was strict and holy in life but hot in his opinions. He, with several others, was thrown into prison. Humphrey Middleton was another. When he was cast into prison he said to the Archbishop: "Well, reverend sir, pass what sentence you think fit upon us; but that you may not say that you were forewarned, I testify that your turn will be next." It accordingly came to pass that upon the release of Middleton the Archbishop was thrown into prison. Another preacher in Kent was John Kemp who "was a great traveler abroad in Kent, instructing and confirming the gospellers" (Strype, Annals of the Reformation, II. ii. 284).

There is much important information in regard to the Baptist churches in Essex (Strype, Memorials Ecclesiastical, II. i. 369). There was an organized Baptist church at Bocking (Strype, Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer, I. 334. Also Lansdowne MSS., 930. 95). "The Bocking-Braintree church book, which is still in existence, carries the authentic records of the church for more than two hundred years; but there is no question that the origin of the church dates back to the days of Edward VI" (Goadby, Bye Paths in Baptist History, 26-28). John Veron, in 1551, writing to Sir John Gates, says:

For this our country of Essex, in which many of these libertines and Anabaptists are running in, "hoker moker," among the simple and ignorant people to incite and move them to tumult and insurrection to magistrates and rulers of this realm. Whence I trust if ye once know them, ye will soon weed out of this country to the great good and Quiet of the king's subjects of the same county and shire (Tracts on the liberty of Conscience, cx).

Only two Baptists were burnt during the reign of Edward VI, Burnet says there were two kinds of Anabaptists in the country. Says he:

For the other sort of Anabaptists who only denied infant baptism, I find no severity used against them, but several books were written against them, to which they wrote some answers (Burnet, History of the Reformation, 11.112).

The influence of John Calvin had begun to be felt in English affairs. His books had appeared in translations in England. He was responsible in a large measure for the demon of hate and fierce hostility which the Baptists of England had to encounter. He advised that "Anabaptists and reactionists should be alike put to death" (Froude, History of England, V.99). He wrote a letter to Lord Protector Somerset, the translation was probably made by Archbishop Cranmer (Calvin to the Protector, MSS. Domestic Edward VI, V. 1548)) to the effect: "These altogether deserve to be well punished by the sword, seeing that they do conspire against God, who had set him in his royal seat"

The first to be burnt in this reign was Joan of Kent, who was probably a member of the church at Eythorne (Evans, The History of the English Baptists, I. 72 note). She was a pious and worthy woman, and a great reader of the Scriptures. She was arrested in the year 1548 on the charge of heresy and she was burnt April 30, the following year.

The other Baptist who suffered martyrdom in this reign was George van Pare. He was by profession a surgeon. He could not speak English and had to plead his cause through an interpreter. Burnet says of his death:

He suffered with great constancy of mind, and kissed the stake and faggots that were to burn him. Of this Pare I find a popish writer saying, that he was a man of most wonderful strict life, that he used to eat not more than once in two days, and before he would eat he would lie sometimes in his devotions prostrate on the ground (Burnet, History of the Reformation, II. i. 112).

All parties in the reign of Henry VIII practiced immersion and there was but slight change in the reign of Edward VI. Twice was the Prayer Book revised during this period, and the form of baptism prescribed in both books was immersion, a slight concession was made in the last Prayer Book of Edward, possibly to the growing influence of Calvin, but more probably from a dread that children dying unbaptized would be lost, to the effect that if the child be weak it would suffice to pour water upon it. This was the first time that fine "clothes," or a desire for worldly show, was permitted to enter into the ceremony of baptism.

In such instances pouring was permitted but it was performed with the greatest hesitation and doubt. Tyndale says

If aught be left out, or if the child be not altogether dipped in water, or if, because the child is sick, the priest dare not plunge it into the water, but pour water upon its head,—How tremble they. How quake they. "How say

ye, Sir John," say they, "is the child christened enough? Hath it full Christendom". They believe verily, that the child is not christened" (Tyndale, Works, III. 28).

Instructions were further given to the archdeacons, in 1553, as follows:

Whether there be any who will not suffer the priest to dip the child three times in the font, being yet strong and able to abide and suffer it in the judgment and opinion of discreet and expert persons, but will needs have the child in the clothes, and only be sprinkled with a few drops of water (Hart, Ecclesiastical Records, 87).

Immersion was insisted upon in all cases where it could be performed. In the Catechismus, that is to say, a Short Instruction into the Christian Religion there is a Sermon on Baptism. There is a picture representing a number of adults being baptized by immersion. The Sermon further says:

For what greater shame can there be, than a man to profess himself to be a Christian man, because he is baptized, and yet he knoweth not what baptism is, nor what strength the same hath, nor what the dipping in the water doth betoken . . . For baptism and the dipping into water doth betoken, that the old Adam, with all his sin and evil lusts, ought to be drowned and killed by daily contrition and repentance (Sermon on Baptism, ccxxiii).

Provision was made for the baptism of adults and only immersion was allowed. The Catechism of Edward VI provided:

Him that believeth in Christ, professeth the articles of the Christian faith, and mindeth (I speak now of them that are grown of ripe years) the minister dippeth in or washeth in pure clean water, in the name of, etc.

In the very year that Edward came to the throne, A. D. 1547, J. Bales wrote a book against the Baptists (A breyfe and, plaine declaration. . . Anabaptists). He had been accused of holding Baptist principles and this book was a reply to the charge. He declares that they "that be of age" as well as infants "ought to be baptized" "in the fountain of. regeneration." He thought that grown people ought to be immersed upon a profession of faith. He says when he thus speaks of baptism he is called an Anabaptist. According to Bales an Anabaptist is one who immersed those that be of age in a fountain, Bales continues:

If he speaks anything concerning the abuse of the ceremonies and sacraments: what exclamations do they make and how do they report him

to be a sacramentary. If ye speak anything of baptisme declaring that neither the holiness of the water, neither the oil, can give the grace therein promised, and that the washing in the fount avayleth not them that observe not the profession they make there how detestable Anabaptists shall be counted.

The opinion of the Anabaptists was that they did not believe that the water saves, but that an adult ought to be dipped in water on his profession of faith and live a holy life after that profession.

The opinion of the Baptists on immersion is set forth in the trial of the Dutchman Giles van Bellan, in York. He said:

Item, That no man can make any water holier than God made it; therefore the water in the font, or the holy water in the church, is no holier than the water in the river, for the water in the river is as holy as the water in the font, if a man be baptized in it, and the words of baptism be spoken over hi.m

Item, That any man may baptize in water as well as a priest (Evans Early English Baptists, I. 243).

He held to the baptism of immersion in water. These are the words almost literally condemned by Archbishop Warham as taken from the Sum of the Holy Scripture.

Robert Cooke was a celebrated Baptist who lived during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, He was connected with the court for more that forty years. He was ardent in his opinions, full of debate, eloquent and well educated. He was probably the Baptist against whom John Knox wrote his celebrated book on the Anabaptists (Works of John Knox, V.16). Dr. William Turner also wrote a book against him (A Preservative, or triacle, against the poyson of Pelagius, lately renewed and styrred up in the furious sect of Anabaptists).

Turner was described as a "noted and forward theologist and physician of his tine." On coming to the court he and Cooke would have debates in private. At length he preached a sermon against the Anabaptists which sermon was reported to Cooke and he answered it. Turner had already written something against the Anabaptists. A book had appeared in 1548 called the Sum Of Divinity by Robert Hutton. The introduction was written by Turner. In the chapter on baptism are found these words:

Repentance and remission of sins, or, as Saint Paul sayeth a regeneration or new birth for the dipping into water signifieth that the man to be mortified with sin, the coming up again or deliverance out of the water signifieth the new man to be washed and cleansed and reconciled to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The persons mentioned as dipped into the water were adults. A striking contrast is drawn by Dr. Turner. Cooke and his church dipped believers only; Turner and his church dipped infants. Both practiced the same form of baptism, dipping, but they differed in regard to the subjects. The position is stated by Dr. Turner in these words:

And because baptism is a passive sacrament, and no man can baptize himself, but is baptized of another: and children may as well be dipped into the water in the name of Christ (which is the outward baptism as much as one man can give to another) even as old folks; and when as they have the promise of salvation, as well as the old folks and can receive the sign of the sacrament as well; there is no cause why the baptism of children shall be deferred (Turner, Preservative, 40).

Turner says these Baptists practiced "over baptism, which is the dipping into water in the name of Christ," and he thinks infants should be dipped as well (Ibid, 43). He further says "that these water snakes" are everywhere.

Mary Tudor, known in history as the "Bloody Mary," came to the throne July 6, 1553, and died in the early morning of November 17, 1558. Mary was an intense Roman Catholic at the time when Roman Catholicism was passing from England forever. "Catholicism had ceased to be the expression of the true conviction of sensible men on the relation between themselves and heaven. Credible to the student in the cloister, credible to those whose thoughts were but echoes of tradition, it was not credible any more to men of active and original vigor of understanding. Credible to the uneducated, the eccentric, the imaginative, the superstitious; credible to those who reasoned by sentiment, and made syllogisms of their passions, it was incredible then and ever more to the sane and healthy intelligence which in the long run commands the mind of the world" (Froude, History of England, VII. 10).

When Mary came to the throne her first thought was to reestablish the Roman Catholic religion. She was literally consumed by her zeal. Henry VIII and Edward VI had both burnt the Baptists. Mary sought to burn all who were opposed to Romanism, Baptists and Reformers alike. There was intense opposition to the policy of the Queen, an opposition which finally worked her doom, but Mary was none the less determined on that account.

"I have never seen," said Renard the Imperial Ambassador of Charles V, "the people as disturbed and discontented as now." Mary was determined that burning should be administered to heretics.

She was ably seconded by several lieutenants. Philip II of Spain, the husband of Mary, was the leader in the punishment of heretics through the horrible Inquisition. Her chief agent and adviser was, Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester. Bishop Ponet gave the following description of him:

The doctor had a smart color, hanging nose, frowning brows, eyes an inch within his head, a nose hooked like a buzzard's; nostrils like a horse, ever snuffing in the wind; a sparrow mouth, great paws like the devil, talons on his feet like the grife, two inches longer than the natural toes, and so tied with sinews that he cannot abide to be touched (Froude, History of England, VI. 105, 197, 295, 298).

Loyd said of him:

His reserveness was such that he never did what he aimed at, never aimed at what he intended, never intended what he said, and never said what he thought; whereby he carried it so, that others should do his business when they opposed it, and should undermine theirs when he seemed to promote it. A man that was to be traced like a fox, and read like Hebrew, backward. If you would know what he did, you must observe what he did not; that whilst intending one thing, he professed to aim at the opposite; that he never intended what he said, and never did what he intended (Lodge, Illustrations of English History, I. 126).

Another enemy of the Baptists was Edward Bonner the Bishop of London. The brutality of Bonner was notorious and unquestionable. A published letter was addressed to him by a lady in which he is called "the common cut throat and general slaughter slave of all the bishops of England" (Godly Letter Addressed to Bonner. Fox, Acts and Monuments, VII 611).

These were the murderers of the Baptists. J. M. Stone is the latest writer on Mary. He is a Roman Catholic and an apologist. He is compelled to admit, after he had done all he could to explain her acts, that she persecuted. He says:

But apart from all misrepresentations, exaggerations, distorted evidence and positive fiction, there remains the fact that a considerable number of persons did perish at the stake in Mary's reign (Stone, History of Mary I., 371, 372).

"That the Baptists were very numerous" says Crosby, "at this time, is without controversy; and no doubt many of the martyrs in Queen Mary's days were, such, though historians seem to be silent with respect to the opinion of the martyrs about baptism; neither can it be imagined, that the papists would in the least favor any of that denomination which they so detested and abhorred" (Crosby, History of the English Baptists, I. 63). Investigations have confirmed the surmises of Crosby, and we know that many of the martyrs were Baptists. The historian Ivimey also declares that "the Baptists came in for their full share of suffering, and that many of the martyrs were of that denomination, which was then numerous" (Ivimey, History of the Baptists, I. 97).

The exact number of the martyrs among the Baptists, at this period, probably will never be known, but the large majority of those who suffered were of this communion. William Clark recently investigated this subject and gave the following testimony: "A considerable proportion of those who suffered under Mary were Anabaptists" (Clark, The Anglican Reformation, 328). This conservative statement is borne out amply by the original documents.

Nothing but immersion was permitted in England at this time, Bishop Bonner, of London, in his article to be enquired of demanded:

Item: Whether there be any that will not suffer the priest to dip the child three times in the font, being yet strong, and able to abide and suffer it in the judgment and opinion of discreet and expert persons; but will needs have the child in the clothes and only be sprinkled with a few drops of water (Cardwell, Documentary Annals, I. 157).

Trine immersion had long been the practice of the Church of England. There was a tendency in Mary's time to practice one dipping (Wall, The History of Infant Baptism, I. 580). The testimony of Dr. Watson, the Bishop of Lincoln, is at hand. He says:

Though the old and ancient tradition of the Church hath been from the beginning to dip the child three times, etc, yet that is not such necessity; but if he be once dipped in the water, it is sufficient, Yea, and in times of great peril and necessity, if the water be poured on his head, It will suffice. (Watson, Holsome and Catholyke Doctryne Concernynge the Seven Sacraments, 22, 23. London, 1558).

There is no recorded exception to dipping among the Baptists.

Elizabeth the second queen regnant of England, the last sovereign of the

Tudor line, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, was born at the Palace of Greenwich, September 7, 1533, and died March 24, 1603. In her treatment of religion she was vacillating and could not be depended upon to pursue the same policy. Although the Roman Catholics were constantly plotting against her throne and even her life, she treated them with great leniency. With the Baptists it was not so. From the beginning she was their enemy, and her hostility continued with increasing violence to the end of her life.

At best the distinction between the names Baptists and Anabaptists is technical; for the word Anabaptists is still used in England to designate the Baptists of today; and was long used in this country, even after the Revolution, in the same manner. It is now the legal name of the Baptists of New England. The word Baptists was used by a high official of the English government in the earlier days of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. That official was Sir William Cecil, afterwards Lord Burleigh, then the Secretary of State and especial adviser of the Queen. The date is March 10, 1569. It is found in a remarkable sketch drawn up possibly for his own use, as his habit was, to look everything square in the face; but more probably that he might place before Elizabeth the dangers that beset her government. At any rate, it is an official memorandum of the highest officer of state, and easily the most influential man under Elizabeth.

It is a long document, covering many pages, but in this instance we are interested in only one of the alleged dangers enumerated. Secretary Cecil says:

The next imperfections are here at home, which be these: The state of religion many ways weakened by boldness to the true service of God; by increase of the number and courage of the Baptists, and the deriders of religion; and lastly by the increase of numbers of irreligious and Epicures. (A Collection of State Papers relating to the Reign of Elizabeth. Transcribed from original Letters and other authentic Memorials, left by William Cecil, Lord Burleigh, and now remaining at Hartfield House, in the Library of the Right Honorable the Present Earl of Saalsbury, by Samuel Haynes, M. A., London, 1740.1.585, 586).

It is therefore scientifically correct to call these people Baptists.

The Baptists had not been exterminated in the reign of bloody Mary. Under her many Baptists had suffered martyrdom, some fled to other lands, the most remained at home. It is certain that at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth England was full of Baptists. The opinion of Marsden, one of the calmest of the Puritans, may be of interest on this point. He says:

But the Baptists were the most numerous, and for some time by far the most formidable opponents of the Church. They are said to have existed since the days of the Lollards, but their chief strength was more abroad (Marsden, 144).

Evans, an unusually careful historian, says:

Not only the existence, but the wide spread of Baptist principles during the reign of the royal Tudor lioness, is acknowledged on all hands (Evans, Early English Baptists, I. 147).

There were at this time a number of Baptist churches in England and the Baptists had a great following. Three reasons may be offered for the multitude of the Baptists of England in the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth. First, protection had been given to Dutch and French refugees. Churches were allowed to them in which divine worship, according to their own views, could be conducted. While none of these permitted churches were Baptist, yet many Baptists unawares to the authorities came in. Second, the state of the Netherlands supplied another cause. England under a Protestant Queen, appealed to them as a land of freedom, and many Baptists hoped there to find at least partial liberty of conscience. Third, there were also in England numbers of native Baptists. At the prospects of liberty they came from their hiding places where they had been sequestered.

The native Baptists were reinforced by shoals of Baptists from abroad. The Bishop of London described these, exiles as "a marvelous colluvies of evil persons, for the most part *facinorosi ebriosi et sectarii*." Roger Hutchinson, a contemporary, thus speaks of them:

Divers sectaries were crept in, under the cover and title of true religion, who through the persuasion of the devil hath sowed the devilish seed, as the . . . Anabaptists (Roger Hutchinson, Works, 214).

Bishop Jewel, who had just been consecrated Bishop of Saalsbury, wrote to Peter Martyr, November 6, 1560, as follows:

We found at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, a large and inauspicious crop of Arians, Anabaptists, and other pests, which, I know not how, but as mushrooms spring up in the night and in darkness, so these sprung up in that darkness and unhappy night of the Marian times. These I am informed, and hope that it is the fact, have retreated before the light of pure doctrines, like owls at the light of the sun and are nowhere to be found (Zurich Letters, 91).

Strype went over the subject and carefully recorded the facts as follows:

There were so many of these strangers in London, even upon the first coming of the Queen to the crown, that in her second year she was fain to issue a proclamation for the discovery of them, and a command to transport them out of her dominions; or else expected to proceed against them according to the laws ecclesiastical or others (Strype, 'The Life of Archbishop Grindal, 180).

The Queen being informed of the coming of these Baptists, issued letters, dated in May, to Archbishop Parker, to cause a visitation to be made. The Queen wrote:

Forasmuch as we do understand that there do daily repair into this realm great numbers of strangers from the parts beyond the seas, otherwise than hath been accustomed and the most part thereof pretending the cause of their coming to be for to live in this realm with satisfaction of their Conscience in Christian religion, according to the order allowed in this realm, that are infected with dangerous opinions, contrary to the faith of Christ's Church, as Anabaptists, and such other sectaries, etc. (Cardwell, Documentary Annals, I 307, 308).

Bishop Aylmer says:

The Anabaptists with infinite other swarms of Satanites, do you think that every pulpit nay well be able to answer them? I pray God that there may be many who can. And in these later days the old festered sores newly broke out, as the Anabaptists, the freewillers, with infinite other swarms of God's enemies. These ugly monsters, brooks of the devil's brotherhood (Aylmer, Harborough of Faithful subjects, in Preface).

Whitgift in 1572 Wrote a book against the Baptists, He came to the following conclusions:

Only I desire you to be circumspect, and to understand, that Anabaptism, (which usually followeth the preaching of the Gospel) is greatly to be feared in the Church of England.

It is indeed true that the Baptists usually "follow the preaching of the Gospel." There were many replies to Whitgift. In a large volume (The Defence) in reply to his oppouents he repeatedly denounced the Baptists One of their worst faults was, he says:

They had their private and secret conventicles, and did divide and separate themselves from the Church, neither could they communicate with such as were not of their sect, either in prayers, sacraments, or hearing of the word (Whitgift, *An Answer to a Certain libel*).

The Baptists had churches, observed the sacraments, and were of the stricter sort. Bishop Cox was also disturbed by the Baptists. In writing to Gaultner, June 12, 1573, he says:

You must not grieve, my Gaultner, that sectaries are showing themselves to be mischievous and wicked interpreters of your most just opinion. It cannot be otherwise but that tares must grow in the Lord's field. and that in no small quantity. Of this kind are the Anabaptists and all other good for nothing tribes of sectaries (Zurich Letters, 285).

Persecution was resorted to but the Baptists continued to multiply; foreigners continued to stream into the country, as many as 4,000 resided near Norwich, many of them were Baptists. Moreover churches were formed. Of those still existing it is alleged that Faringdon was founded in 1576; Crowle and Epworth both in 1597; Dartmouth, Oxford, Wedmore, Bridgewater, all in 1600. That is to say there were conventicles in at least nine counties outside of London, where churches still exist as their direct successors (Langley, *English Baptists before 1602*. London, April 11, 1902. In *The Baptist*). Some of these Baptists were foreigners but some of them were "even in England amongst ourselves and amidst our bowels" (Acta Regia, IV. 86). Dr. Some (A Godly Treatise, wherein are examined and Confuted many execrable fancies) not only tells of "the Anabaptistical conventicles in London, and other places," but he likewise affirms that many of the Anabaptists were educated in the universities.

"The Anabaptists," says Burnet, "were generally men of virtue, and of universal charity" (Burnet, *History of the Reformation of his own Time*, 702). But no principle of toleration was to prevail toward them. The people of that generation, save the Baptists, never understood religious liberty. Least of all did Elizabeth understand it. On December 27, 1558, she commanded all preaching to cease; and February 4, 1559, the High Commission Court was established by Parliament. This was the beginning of unnumbered woes to the Baptists. The Baptists were to suffer most of all.

Three things were undertaken against the heretics. The first was certain injunctions given by the Queen's Majesty (British Museum, 698 h 20 (1)). One of the injunctions was:

That no man shall willfully or obstinately defend or maintain heresies, errors, or false doctrine, contrary to the faith of Christ and his holy Scripture.

Another was against "the printing of heretical and seditious books."

The second, To follow these prohibitions with a search warrant, or a visitation, as it was called. When a royal visitation was to be made the kingdom was divided into circuits, to which was assigned a certain number of visitors, partly clergymen, partly laymen. The moment they arrived in any diocese the exercise of spiritual authority by every other person ceased. They summoned before them the bishop, the clergy, and eight, six or four of the principal householders from each parish, administered the oath of allegiance and supremacy, required answers upon oath to every question which they thought proper to put, and exacted a promised obedience to the royal injunctions. In this manner the search for heretics was pursued from parish to parish throughout the kingdom.

The third step began February 28, in an Act for the Uniformity of Religion and came fully into operation December 17 of the same year. An Act of Parliament was obtained for one religion, for a uniform mode of worship, one form of discipline, one form of church government for the entire nation; with which establishment all must outwardly comply. This Act metamorphosed the Church of England into its present form, being the fourth alteration in thirty-four years.

Elizabeth was anxious to do what she could to gratify Philip II, and she took an opportunity of showing him that the English for whom she demanded toleration from him, were not the heretics with whom they had been confounded. She had caught in her net some Dutch Anabaptists. These became the scapegoat for her diplomacy. "The propositions for which they suffered," says Froude, "with the counter propositions of the orthodox, have passed away and become meaningless. The theology of the government mischievous; but they were not punished in the service of even imagined truth. The friends of Spain about the Queen wished only to show Philip that England was not the paradise of heresy which the world believed" (Froude, History of England, 11.43, 44). Two noble men were carried to Newgate and burnt at Smithfield, July 22, 1575. One was a man of years with a wife and nine children; the other was a young man who had been married only a few weeks.

The last years of Elizabeth were marked by special cruelty. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada she had time to press her ideas of conformity. After the death of Grindal she had chosen John Whitgift as Archbishop of Canterbury. Honest and well intentioned, but narrow minded to an almost

incredible degree the one thought which filled his mind was the hope of bringing all men into conformity with the Church of England. Fletcher, the historian of the Independents, described him as follows:

This man was thorough in all he did, especially if souls were to be snared, or persons of real piety to be punished. He seems to take a malicious delight in bending the laws over to the side of persecution; and when no law existed which could thus be used, he either made or sought to procure one. He was probably more feared and detested than any man of his day (Fletcher, History of Independency, II. 145).

Whitgift choked the prisons with Baptists. He regarded the Baptists as heretics beyond any of his times. The doctrines of these men were fatal to the idea of a National Church. There could be no National Church if infants were not to be baptized, if priests did not by the magic of baptism make all children Christians. He made the 'pulpits ring against the Baptists. He preached in St. Paul, November 17, 1583, against the Anabaptists as "our wayward and conceited persons." The consequence was that some Baptists went to foreign lands, but the most hid themselves or under the cloak of conformity waited for better times.

It has been sometimes stated that the Baptists originated with the Independents. The exact reverse is true. The Independents derived their ideas of religious liberty and independent form of government from the Baptists.

Robert Browne was the father of the Independents or Congregationalists. It was in the year 1580 that he went to Norwich. This was the headquarters of the Dutch Baptists in England. There were "almost as many Dutch strangers as English natives inhabiting therein" (Fuller, Church History of Britain, III. 62). Collier says:

At this time the Dutch had a numerous congregation at Norwich; many of these people inclining to Anabaptism, were the more disposed to entertain any new resembling opinions (Collier, Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain, VII. 2).

From these Dutch Baptists he learned some of his opinions, and so, in that city, in the year 1584, he organized the first Independent Church. Many of the foremost writers admit, as the circumstances indicate, that he copied from the Baptists. No one except the Baptists ever held these peculiar views of liberty of conscience and independence of church government; and the Congregationalists did not well learn these lessons.

Weingarten makes this strong statement:

The perfect agreement between the views of Browne and those of the Baptists as far as the nature of a church is concerned, is certainly proof enough that he borrowed this idea from them, though in his "True Declarations" of 1584 he did not deem it advisable to acknowledge the fact, lest he should receive in addition to all the opprobrious names heaped upon him, that of Anabaptists. In 1571 there were no less than 8,925 Dutch-men in Norwich (Weingarten, *Revolutions Kirchen Englands*, 20).

Sheffer says:

Browne's new ideas concerning the nature of the Church opened to him in the circle of the Dutch Baptists in Norwich.

One of the most recent of the historians of the Congregationalists is Williston Walker, Professor in Hartford Theological Seminary. About the connection between Browne and the Anabaptists he makes the following statements:

In many respects—in their abandonment of the State Church, in their direct appeal to the Word of God for every detail of administration, in their organization and officers—their likeness to those of the radical Reformers of the Continent is so striking that some affiliation seems almost certain. Nor is the geographical argument for probable connection with continental movements less weighty. These radical English efforts for a complete reformation had their chief support in the eastern counties, especially in the vicinity of Norwich and London. These regions had long been the recipient of Dutch immigration; and the influence from the Netherlands had vastly increased during the early reign of Elizabeth, owing to the tyranny of Philip II. In 1562 the Dutch and Walloons settled in England numbering 30,000. By 1568 some 5225 of the people of London were of this immigration; and by 1587 they constituted more than half of the population of Norwich, while they were largely present in other coast towns. Now these immigrants were chiefly artisans, and among the workmen of Holland Anabaptist views were widely disseminated; and while it would be unjustifiable to claim that these exiles on English soil were chiefly, or largely, Anabaptists, there were Anabaptists among them, and an Anabaptist way of thinking may not improbably have been widely induced among those who may have been entirely unconscious of the source from which their impulse came. Certainly the resemblance between the Anabaptist movement of the Continent and English Congregationalism in theories of church polity, and the geographical possibilities of contact between the two, are sufficiently manifest to make a

denial of relationship exceedingly difficult (Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches of the United States, 26).

After tracing certain dissimilarities of the two bodies he says that Browne never acknowledged his indebtedness to the Anabaptists. He then further remarks:

Though no trace of a recognition of indebtedness to Anabaptist thought can be found in Browne's writings, and though we discover no Dutch names among the small number of his followers whom we know by name at all, the similarity of the system which he now worked out from that of the Anabaptists is so great in many respects that the conclusion is hard to avoid that the resemblance is more than accidental (p.86).

In 1582 he emigrated, on account of persecutions, to Middleburg, Zealand. Here his church was broken up by dissensions. The Baptists were numerous here, and some of his people fell in with them (Brandt, History of the Reformation in the low Countries, I. 343, 443). Johnson, the Pastor of the Separatist Church, in Amsterdam, writing in 1606, says of these people who fled from England on account of persecution:

A while after they were come hither, divers of them fell into the errors of the Anabaptists, which are too common in these countries, and so persisting, were excommunicated by the rest (Johnson, An Inquirie and Answer of Thomas White, 68).

Immersion was the almost universal rule in Elisabeth's reign. Gough, a learned antiquarian, of two centuries ago, states the condition of things in England under this queen. He quotes the original authorities to make good his words. He says:

This (Immersion) In England was custom, not law, for, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, the governors of the Episcopal Church in effect expressly prohibited sprinkling, forbidding the use of basins in public baptism. Last of all (the Church Wardens) shall see that in every Church there be an holy font, not a basin, wherein baptism may be administered, and it be kept comely and clean. Item, that the font be not removed, nor that the curate do baptize in parish churches in any basins nor in any other form than is already prescribed. Sprinkling, therefore, was not allowed, except in the Church of Rome, in cases of necessity at home (Archaeology , X. 207, 208).

The authorities were particular that the law should be complied with. The first commentary upon the Book of Common Prayer was by Thomas Sparrow. He says on baptism as it was understood in his time:

This baptism is to be at the font. What the font is everybody knows, but why is it so called. The rites of baptism in the first times were performed in fountains and rivers, both because their converts were many, and because of those ages were unprovided of other baptisteries; we have no other reminder of the rite but the name. For hence it is we call our baptisteries fonts; which when religion found peace, were built and consecrated for the more reverence and respect of the sacrament (Sparrow, A Rationale upon the Book of Common Prayer, 299).

Bishop Horn writing to Henry Bullinger, of Zurich, in 1575, says of baptism in England:

The minister examines them concerning their faith, and afterwards dips the infant (Zurich Letters, Second Series, 356).

John Brooke, A. D. 1577, gives a glimpse of the form of baptism by immersion. He says:

I believe that baptism ought to be administered (not with oil, salt, spittle, or such things) but only in pure and clean water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (Brooke, A brief and clean Confession of the Christian Fayth).

Many of the Baptists were connected with the church of John a Lasco which was organized in London in 1550. This was a good hiding place for foreign Baptists. The practice of this church was dipping. Their Catechism prescribes:

Q.—What are the sacraments of the church of Christ? A.—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Q.— What is baptism? A.—It is a holy institution of Christ, in which the church is dipped in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Denkleynen catechismus, oft kinder leere der Duytscher Ghmeynte van London. An. 1566).

In this connection Robinson states that the Anabaptists practised dipping. He says:

They found no fault with the ordinary mode of baptizing, for that was dipping, but their objections lie against the subject, a child (Robinson, The History of Baptism, 555).

The year 1571 marks the appearance of a very important book (Reformation Legum Ecclesiasticarum), which was to have been sent forth by the authority of John Fox. It was prepared by Archbishop Cranmer and other

Commissioners, and was probably written by Dr. Haddon. It was printed under the supervision of Bishop Parker in the 13th Parliament of Elizabeth. It makes clear that the Church of England required the candidates to be "plunged into the waters (*in aquas demergitur*) and rise again out of them." It is equally clear on the practice of dipping among the Baptists. After alluding to their denial of infant baptism it says:

Likewise more errors are heaped up by others in baptism, which some so amazed look as if they believed that from that eternal element itself the Holy Spirit emerges, and that his power, his name, and his efficiency, out of which we are renewed and his grace and the remaining gifts proceeded out of it, swim in the very fonts of baptism. In a word, they wish our total regeneration to be due to that sacred pit which inveighs against our senses.

The year 1578 affords an additional proof of immersion among the Baptists of England. The Rev. John Man, Merton College, Oxford, published in English, a translation and adaptation of the Common Places of the Christian Religion by Wolfgang Musculus. He says the word baptism comes from a Greek word which means in English, "dipping or drowning." He declares the form of baptism among the Baptists to be immersion. He continues:

But some man will object. If the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ be all one, then the Apostles had no reason to baptize the twelve disciples in the manner of our Lord Jesus, who were baptized before of John. For what purpose was it to dip them twice in one baptism? Did not some of the fathers, and the Anabaptists of our days, take the foundation of their baptizing of this (Man, Common Places of the Christian Religion, 678).

Wall particularity marks the correspondence between the decline of dipping in the Church of England and the growth of the Baptists. According to his position, Baptists thrive wherever Pedobaptists practice pouring or sprinkling. Dipping and the Baptists go together. The Dutch Baptists made no particular progress in England because the English practiced dipping. When pouring began to be the custom in the days of Elizabeth the Baptists made progress, and their great popularity in England was secured by the growth of sprinkling in the reigns of James I and Charles I. The statements of Wall are very interesting. He says:

Germany and Holland afterwards had their share of trouble with this sect; but not till they also had, almost generally, left off the dipping of infants. England all this while kept to the old way. And though several times some Dutch Anabaptists came over hither during these times, endeavoring to make proselytes here; yet Foxe the historian in Queen Elizabeth's time declares that he never heard of any Englishman that was perverted by them.

So that antipaedobaptism did not begin here while dipping in the ordinary baptisms lasted. 'Then for two reigns pouring water on the face of the infant was most in fashion, and some few of the people turned antipaedobaptists, but did not make a separation for it. 'They never had any considerable numbers here, till the Presbyterian reign began. 'These men (out of opposition to the church of England I think) brought the eternal part of the sacrament to a less significant symbol than Calvin himself had done, (for he directs pouring of water on the face,) and in most places changed *pouring to sprinkling*. This scandalized many people. and indeed it was, and is really scandalous. So partly that, and partly the gap that was then set open for all sects that would, to propagate themselves, gave the rise to this: which I therefore think, as I said, would upon our return to the church of England way, case (Wall, The History of Infant Baptism, II. 464, 465).

The reign of James I. (1603-1625) was in a wild time, an age of ceaseless conflict all around. The human mind, awakening from the sleep of Feudalism and the Dark Ages, fastened on all of the problems inherent in human society problems which even at the present day are not half solved. In England during the seventeenth century, men were digging down to the roots of things. They were asking, What is the ultimate authority in human affairs? Upon what does government rest? and, For what purpose does it exist? (Arber, The Story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 6). But the Baptists and others were to win victories on constitutional and religious liberty hitherto unknown in England.

The Baptist churches in the early part of the reign of James I were in the extremity of weakness, in the depths of obscurity, and in the midst of violent persecutions. The powers of the state and of the hierarchy were combined, and persistently directed to stamp them out of existence. Imprisoned, banished, or put to death, it was supposed for a time that they had almost become extinct; but they grew in secret, multiplied exceedingly, and were found in every part of England. It is said by Omerod, in 1605, that "so hold our Sectaries also conventicles in private houses, and in secret corners, which truth seldom seeketh," He continues: "And thus their plotting and plodding together they (being few in number at the first) are grown to such a multitude, as that one of their own preachers said openly in a pulpit, he was persuaded that there were 10,000 of them in England, and that the number of them increased daily in every place of all stations and degrees" (Omerod, The Picture of a Puritan. London, 1605). These doubtless were not all Baptists, but the Baptists were well represented among the Dissenters.

Notwithstanding that Edward Wightman was burnt to death, the Baptists petitioned, in 1610, the House of Lords for wider liberty of conscience and greater privileges. The petition is preserved in the Library of the House of

Lords, and is endorsed on the back "read and rejected." The petition is as follows:

To the right Honorable assembly of the Commons House of Parliament. A most humble supplication of divers poor prisoners, and many others the King's native loyal subjects ready to testify it by the oath of allegiance in all sincerity, whose grievances are lamentable, only for cause of conscience.

Most humbly showing that whereas in the Parliament holden in the seventh year of the King's majesty's reign that now is, it was enacted that all persons whatsoever above the age of eighteen years of age, not coming to Church, etc. should take the oath of allegiance, and for the refusal thereof, should be committed to prison without bail, etc. By such statute the Popish Recusants upon taking the oath, are daily delivered from imprisonments: and divers of us are also set at Liberty when we fall under the hands of the Reverend Judges and Justices. But when we fall into the hands of the bishops we can have no benefit by the said oath, for they say it belongeth only to Popish Recusants and not to others; but kept have we been by them in lingering imprisonments, divided from wives, children, servants and callings, not for any other cause but only for conscience toward God, to the utter undoing of us, our wives and children.

Our most humble supplication therefore to this high and Honorable Assembly is, that in commiseration of the distressed estate of us, our poor wives and children, it may be enacted in express words that other the King's majesty's faithful subjects, as well as the Romish Recusants may be freed from imprisonment upon taking the said oath.

And we shall still (as we do day and night) pray that the God of heaven may be in your Honorable Assembly, for by him do princes decree justice.

By his majesty's faithful subjects

Most falsely called

Anabaptists.

Rejected by the Committee.

The Baptists, in 1615, put forth an "humble supplication to the King's majesty." It bore the title, "Persecution for Religion judged and condemned" (British Museum, 4108 de 30 (5)). It was reprinted by the Baptists in 1620 and 1622. In the Epistle to the king they pathetically say:

Yet our most humble desire of our Lord the King, is, That he would not give his power to force his faithful subjects to dissemble to believe as he believes, in the least measure of persecution; though it is no small persecution to live many years in filthy prisons, in hunger, cold, idleness, divided from wife, family, calling, left in continual miseries and temptations, so as death would be to many less persecution; seeing that his majesty confesseth, that to change the mind must be the work of God. And of the lord bishops we desire, that they would a little leave off persecuting those that cannot believe as they, till they have proved that God is well pleased therewith, and the souls of such as submit are in safety from condemnation; let them prove this, and we protest that we will forever submit to them, and so will thousands; and therefore if there be any spark of grace in them, let them set themselves to give satisfaction by word of writing, or both. But if they will not, but continue their cruel courses as they have done, let them remember that they must come to judgment, and have the abominations set in order before them.

This appeal is signed by "Christ's unworthy witnesses, his majesty's faithful subjects, commonly (but most falsely) called Anabaptists." So there were thousands of Baptists in England at this time and many of them had never been out of the country for they describe their condition as in prison and in persecution. They declare they were falsely called Anabaptists, and this appeal was long afterwards published by the Baptists in the hours of persecution as a suitable historical document setting forth their position. The supplication exposed by several excellent arguments the great sin of persecution; they rejected the baptism of infants, as being a practice which had no foundation in Scripture; and all baptisms received either in the Church of Rome, or the Church of England, they looked upon as invalid, because received in a false church and from antichristian ministers. They denied succession to Rome and declared succession not necessary to baptism. They affirmed: "That any disciple of Christ, in what part of the world soever, coming to the Lord's way, he by the word and Spirit of God preaching that way unto others, and converting, he may and ought also to baptize them." They asserted that every man had a right to judge for himself in matters of religion and that to persecute on account of religion is illegal and antichristian.

They acknowledged magistracy to be God's ordinance, and that kings and such as are in authority ought to be obeyed in all civil matters, not only for fear, but also for conscience sake.

They allowed the taking of an oath to be lawful; and declared that all of their profession were willing in faithfulness and truth to subscribe the oath of allegiance.

They own that some called Anabaptists held several strange opinions contrary to them; and endeavored to clear themselves from deserving censure on that account, by showing, that it was so in some of the primitive churches; as some in the church of Corinth denied the resurrection of the dead; some in the church of Pergamos held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans and yet Christ and his Apostles did not condemn all for the errors of some. But that which they chiefly inveigh against is the pride, luxury and oppression of the lordly bishops, and the pretended spiritual power by which, they say, many of them were exposed to the confiscation of goods, long and lingering imprisonment, hanging, burning, and banishment "All of which," they say, "In our Confession of Faith in print, published four years ago."

This is a memorable document. "The enlarged and accurate views which this pamphlet," says Price, "broached, evince an astonishing progress in the knowledge of religious freedom, and fully entitle its authors to be regarded as the first expounders and most enlightened advocates of this best inheritance of man. Other writers, of more distinguished name, succeeded, and robbed them of their honor; but their title is so good, and the amount of service they performed on behalf of the common interests of humanity is so incalculable, that an impartial posterity must assign to them due meed of praise. It belonged to the members of a calumniated and despised sect, few in numbers and poor in circumstances, to bring forth to the public view, in their simplicity and omnipotence, those immortal principles which are now universally recognized as of divine authority and universal obligation" (Price, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in England*, 1. 520, 523. London, 1836-1838).

There was an event which happened in the year 1614 which was of more importance than all of the decrees of the bishops. It was a book written by an humble Baptist, a citizen of London. An old letter throws much light upon his history (in the Mennonite Library, Amsterdam). Mark Leonard Busher, the author, was in the prime of a ripe manhood, being at that date fifty-seven years of age. He wrote the first book which appeared in England advocating liberty of conscience. It cannot be read without a throb. The style is simple and rather helpless, but one comes upon some touching passages (Masson, *The Life of Milton*, III. 102). He was still living in 1641, in Leyden, poor, old, and forsaken. Whether he returned with Helwys and his church, or at another date, is not known, but he was in London in 1614. The probability is that on the publication of his book he was compelled to flee the country for at a later date he was again in Holland. The book was to receive no favor from the cruel and persecuting Church of England. The rigid Presbyterians and the Church of England would not tolerate the principles it contained. Nevertheless, the good seed was planted. In after years Locke and Milton

heard the voice of Busher with rapture.

The main contention of the book is "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"; that regeneration is the result of faith in Christ; and that no king or bishop is able to command faith. Persecution, therefore, is irrational, and must fail of its object; men cannot be made Christians by force. To this he adds another appeal: Even Turks, infidels, and the heathen tolerate those of other beliefs than their own. Therefore he says:

How much more ought Christians, when as the Turks do tolerate them? Shall we be less merciful than the Turks? or shall we learn the Turks to persecute the Christians? It is not only unmerciful, but unnatural and abominable; yea, monstrous for one Christian to vex and destroy another for difference and questions of religion.

He pleads for this liberty to be granted to the Romanists—the first Englishman who had the courage to do so—and argues that this could be done with entire safety to the state. This was an unheard of stretch of generosity. He also advocated the freedom of the press. He says:

That for the more peace and quietness, and for the satisfying of the weak and simple, among so many persons differing in religion, it be lawful for every person or persons, yea, Jews and papists, to write, dispute, confer, and reason, print and publish any matter touching religion, either for or against whomsoever, always provided they allege no Fathers for proof of any point of religion, but only the holy Scriptures (Busher, *Religious Peace: or, a Plea for Liberty of Conscience*, 51).

Slowly but surely the debt to the Baptists for religious liberty is being acknowledged. Says Stoughton:

The Baptists were foremost in the advocacy of religious freedom, and perhaps to one of them, Leonard Busher, citizen of London, belongs the honor of presenting, in this country, the first distinct and broad plea for liberty of conscience (Stoughton, *Ecclesiastical History of England*, II. 232).

The Baptists from the beginning stood for liberty of conscience for all.