

Where Did The Baptists Come From - By S. H. Ford

Milestones by the Track of Time This is an age of inquiry and tireless research. To the questionings of an imperative curiosity the very rocks have rendered an account of themselves, and the leaves that fell before the flood, have been made to tell their story. Not a time-worn mark, or hieroglyphic, but has been cleared from the dust of centuries and deciphered. Not a crumbling monument, or a buried city, or perished people of the dead, past, but has been reproduced on the canvas of living history. Naught escapes the sleepless eye, the persevering industry of modern research. Now, there is a class of people in our midst, numbered by hundreds of thousands - found, indeed, wherever soul-freedom is, and the gospel is, a people marked and peculiar, whose principles and influences have told, and must still tell on the character and destiny of society. This people are called Baptists. Their distinguishing peculiarities are, an uncompromising avowal and advocacy of soul-liberty, enlightened, and guided, and governed only by the Eternal King. That earthly priests, and kings, and governments, ranged hierarchies and mitred fathers, are but as those "that peep and that mutter." "To the law and to the testimony," is their watchword; "if any man speak not according to these things, it is because there is no light in him," that no mortal has the right to decide the church relations of any human being. In a word, that Christianity demands voluntary obedience; and to forestall, control, or fetter this, is antichristian. This is the prominent peculiarity of the people of whom we speak. And the profession of this voluntary surrender to the Lord of life is avowed by a burial by baptism into his sacred name. Now, this people, so well known and so rapidly increasing among us, as a distinct class, originated somewhere. Some spot witnessed their beginning; some period in the march of time noted the birthday of these Baptists. Can the place of their nativity be found? Can the record of their origin be traced? Is the energy of human research, with all its triumphs, to pause breathless here, and acknowledge itself baffled and defeated? NO, no! The question can and must be answered, or history is a dead, a dumb thing. Let its voice but be heard as it tones distinctly through the mists of ages, and it will be forever decided - WHERE DID THE BAPTISTS COME FROM? But in vain shall we seek among the authoritative records of the past, for one kind word concerning them. Crushed beneath a powerful and persecuting hierarchy; few, feeble, and what the world calls unlearned, yet lifting up their voice in defiant tones above the storms of execration and violence; protesting, in the name of truth and freedom, against the universal domination of the State Church, and a proud, tyrannical clergy; sounding out through the grates of filthy prisons the joyous notes of redeeming mercy, and melting the hearts of those that mockery attracted to the spot; scattered defenceless, without State patronage, or the prestige of noble names, or great leaders; with no earthly head, or strong central government to give direction to their aims; with the Word of God their only guide; yet rising in the strength of God above the crested waves, battling with the storm, steadily, steadfastly, onward, upward, until now, in the words of the eloquent Chalmers: "Let it never be forgotten of the Baptists, that they form the denomination of Fuller, and Cary, and Ryland, and Hall, and Foster; that they originated one of all missionary enterprises; that they have enriched the Christian literature of our country with an authorship of the most exalted piety, as well as of the first talent, and the first eloquence; that they have waged a noble war with the hydra of Antinomianism; that, perhaps, there is not a more intellectual community of ministers, or who have to their number put forth a greater amount of mental power and mental activity in the defense and illustration of our common faith; and what is still better than all the triumphs of genius and understanding, who by their zeal and fidelity, and pastoral labour among the congregations which they have reared, have done more to swell the lists of genuine discipleship in all the walks of private society, and thus both to uphold and extend the living Christianity of our nation." (Dr. Chalmers's Lectures on Romans.) Such are the people whose origin we would trace, and whose origin surely can be found. CHAPTER 1 Century Eighteen Baptists in Virginia In 1775, the Baptists first appeared in this mighty West. It was at a period the most momentous in the world's history. The storms of Revolution were sweeping over the colonies, spreading calamity and gloom. Nowhere did the contest rage more fearfully than in Virginia, and nowhere did the opposing parties put forth mightier efforts. It was the battle of truth, of principle, of national life, fought not for America alone, but for the world. The dark hour was succeeded by the sunrise of freedom. In the midst of this conflict, and ere the storm had subsided, the West rose into being, like the fabled spirit of beauty, from the waves of the agitated sea. The principles which triumphed in the revolution were the elements of her existence, and the men who had suffered most from oppression, and had lifted up their voices for freedom from the jails of Virginia, were the first settlers in the valley of the Mississippi. Lewis Craig had been followed by his sympathizing church to the gates of Fredericksburg jail. He was followed by that same church through the Cumberland gap, to plant that gospel barrier amid the tangled wilderness of the "dark and woody ground." The principles which actuated him and them, and which have ever characterized the Baptists, had been working silently, but effectually, for a century previous in Virginia. Of the names of those prosecuted for those principles little need be said. Let one scene suffice. It was the trial of Lewis and Joseph Craig and Aaron Bledsoe. They had been indicted for preaching the gospel of the Son of God in the colony of Virginia. The clerk was reading the indictment in a slow and formal manner; when he pronounced the crime with emphasis - "For preaching the Gospel of the Son of God in the colony of Virginia," a plainly-dressed man who had just rode up to the court-house entered, and took his seat within the bar. He was known to the court and lawyers, but a stranger to the mass of spectators, who had gathered on the occasion. This was PATRICK HENRY, who, on hearing of this prosecution, had rode some fifty or sixty miles from his residence in Hanover county, to volunteer his services in their defense. He listened to the further reading of the indictment with marked attention, the first sentence of which that had caught his ear was, "For preaching the Gospel of the Son of God." When it was finished, and the prosecuting attorney had submitted a few remarks, Henry arose, reached out his hand and received the paper, and addressed the Court: "May it please your worships: I think I heard read by the prosecutor as I entered this house the paper I now hold in my hand. If I have rightly understood, the king's attorney of this colony has framed an indictment for the purpose of arraigning, and punishing by imprisonment, three inoffensive persons before the bar of this Court, for a crime of great magnitude-as disturbers of the peace. May it please the Court, what did I hear read? Did I hear it distinctly, or was it a mistake of my own? Did I hear an expression as if a crime, that these men, whom your worships are about to try for a

misdemeanor, are charged with-what?"-and continuing in a low, solemn, heavy tone, "For preaching the Gospel of the Son of God!" Pausing, amid the most profound silence and breathless astonishment, he slowly waved the paper three times around his head, when, lifting his hands and eyes to heaven, with peculiar and impressive energy he exclaimed, "GREAT GOD!" The exclamation, the action, the burst of feeling from the audience, were all overpowering. Mr. Henry resumed: "May it please your worships: There are periods in the history of man, when corruption and depravity have so long debased the human character, that man sinks under the weight of the oppressor's hand, and becomes his servile, his abject slave; he licks the hand that smites him; he bows in passive obedience to the mandates of the despot, and in this state of servility he receives his fetters of perpetual bondage. But, may it please your worships, such a day has passed away! From that period, when our fathers left the land of their nativity for settlement in these American wilds, for LIBERTY, for civil and religious liberty, for liberty of conscience, to worship their Creator according to their conceptions of Heaven's revealed will; from the moment they placed foot on the American continent, and in the deeply imbedded forests sought an asylum from persecution and tyranny, from that moment despotism was crushed; her fetters of darkness were broken, and Heaven decreed that man should be free-free to worship God according to the Bible. Were it not for this, in vain have been the efforts and sacrifices of the colonists; in vain were all their sufferings and bloodshed to subjugate this new world, if we, their offspring, must still be oppressed and persecuted. But, may it please your worships, permit me to inquire once more, for what are these men about to tried? This paper says, 'For preaching the Gospel of the Son of God.' Great God! For preaching the Gospel of the Savior to Adam's fallen race." And in tones of thunder, he exclaimed: "WHAT LAW HAVE THEY VIOLATED?" while the third time, in a slow, dignified manner, he lifted his eyes to heaven, and waved the indictment around his head. The Court and audience were now wrought up to the most intense pitch of excitement. The face of the prosecuting attorney was pallid and ghastly, and he appeared unconscious that his whole frame was agitated with alarm; while the judge, in a tremulous voice, put an end to the scene, now becoming excessively painful, by the authoritative declaration, "Sheriff, discharge those men." They battled on for truth and soul freedom; and their fortitude, their courage, and final triumph have been recorded by their foes. They were republicans from principle. Says the Episcopalian, Hawkes: (Hawkes's Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia, p.121.) "No dissenters in Virginia experienced, for a time, harsher treatment than did the Baptists. They were beaten and imprisoned, and cruelty taxed its ingenuity to devise new modes of punishment and annoyance; but the men, who were not permitted to speak in public, found willing auditors in the sympathizing crowds who gathered around the prisons to hear them preach from the grated windows. "Persecution had taught the Baptists not to love the establishment, and they now saw before them a reasonable prospect of overturning it altogether. In their Association, they had calmly discussed the matter and resolved on their course; in this course they were constant to the end; and the war they waged against the church was a war of extermination. They seem to have known no relentings, and their hostility never ceased for seven-and twenty years. They revenged themselves for their sufferings by the almost total ruin of the church; and now commenced the assault, for, inspired by the ardor of patriotism, which accorded with their interests, they addressed the Convention, and informed that body that their religious tenets presented no obstacle to their taking up arms and fighting for the country; and they tendered the services of their pastors in promoting the enlistment of the youth of their persuasion. A complimentary answer was returned, and the ministers of all denominations, in accordance with the address, placed on equal footing. This, it is believed, was the first step toward religious liberty in Virginia." A century anterior to this, a statute was enacted in the colonial Legislature of Virginia, which runs thus: "Whereas, Sundry and divers persons, out of adverseness to the establishment orthodox religion, or out of new-fangled conceits of their own heretical inventions, refuse to have their children baptized. Be i enacted, that whosoever shall thus refuse when he might carry his child to a lawful minister within the country, shall be fined two hundred pounds of tobacco, half to the informer, and half to the parish." (Herring's Statutes). The persons against whom the legislative thunder was hurled in the name of God and King Charles II., were Baptists. Here, then, in the interior of Virginia, at the time when Rhode Island was organizing, and with no intercourse with that distant little colony, we find Christian immersionists, Baptists. Where did they come from? One year previous, in the colony of Massachusetts, a "poor man by the name of Painter," as we are informed by Mr. Hubbard, "was suddenly turned Anabaptist; and, having a child born, would not suffer his wife to carry it to be baptized." He was complained of for this to the Court, and enjoined by them to suffer his child to be baptized. But poor Painter had the misfortune to dissent, both from the church and the court. He told them that infant baptism was an antichristian ordinance, for which "he was tied up and whipped." Gov. Winthrop tells us that Painter was whipped "for reproaching the Lord's ordinance."(Backus, vol. i, p. 147). The persecutions at this time were so numerous in this pious Pedobaptist colony, that a letter was addressed to the "Governor, Assistants, and People of Massachusetts, exhorting them to lenient measures toward the Dissenting brethren." About this time, we are told by Gov. Winthrop, that "the Anabaptists increased and spread in Massachusetts; and this fearful increase which could not be checked by argument or insult, led to the following act for their suppression:" "Forasmuch as experience hath plentifully and often proved that the Anabaptists have been the infectors of persons in the main matters of religion, and the troublers of churches in all places where they have been; and that they who have held the baptizing of infants unlawful, have usually held other errors therewith; and whereas, divers of this kind have, since our coming into New England, appeared among ourselves, and if they should be connived at by us are likely to be increased among us, it is ordered and agreed, that if any person or persons, within this jurisdiction, shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the approbation or use thereof, or purposely depart from the congregation at the ministration of the ordinance - every such person of persons shall be subject to banishment." (Winthrop, p. 211). Of the malice of these "tender mercies" of Pedobaptist orthodox churches, a passing glance is sufficient. The connection of infant baptism and oppression is so intimate, that in no spot on earth has the former prevailed that the latter has not followed. But pursuing our inquiry; the statute shows one fact: that from the first settlement, (or, as the act reads,) "since our coming into New England have appeared among ourselves divers Anabaptists." Five years anterior to the enactment of the above law, in 1638, Hanserd

Knollys, a name enshrined in the temple of soul-liberty, gathered together a Baptist church; and John Smith, John Spur and four others, were arrested in 1639 for attempting to organize a church at Weymouth, fourteen miles south of Boston. Before Roger Williams was baptized, or his Church organized, there were Baptist Churches and Baptist ministers throughout New England. The principles of this down-trodden people Roger Williams adopted, and in advocating them, defending them, and suffering for them, he has stamped immortal honour on his name. The glory of that name we would not, even could we, tarnish. Not a green leaf would we pluck from the imperishable laurels that wreath his brow. Every lover of freedom, every one imbued with the spirit of Jesus Christ, as he follows the turbid stream of history and searches for that vital principle which first enlarged the soul of humanity on this continent, will have his footsteps arrested, and will pause with delight as he watches the developments of principle on the colony of Massachusetts. In February, 1631, an humble pilgrim, noble in his appearance, yet retiring in his manners, a little more than thirty years of age, a fugitive from English persecution, Roger Williams, like a "light on eternity's ocean," rose amid the darkness of spiritual depotism, then brooding over Europe and the world. "It became his glory," says Bancroft, "to found a State on the principle of full liberty of conscience, and to stamp himself upon its rising institutions in characters so deep that the impress has remained to the present day, and can never be erased." There he stood, like freedom itself, towering above the storms of persecution and suffering, triumphant, sublime. But historic facts prove beyond doubt that Roger Williams was not the founder of the Providence Church, and further, that the church he established, and which crumbled to pieces four months after it was gathered, was not the first church in America. It is recorded in the minutes of the Philadelphia Association, when the first Church in Newport was one hundred years old in 1738, Mr. John Callender, their minister, delivered and published a sermon on the occasion. Williams, indeed, touched the Baptist standard, but ere he raised it, his hand trembled, and it fell. It was seized by a steadier hand; at Newport it was raised, and far and near they came to it; it was carried into the heart of Massachusetts, and a work was commenced which till the last setting of the sun, shall never cease; and this, before we have any evidence that a church in Providence had begun to be. Among the evils that have resulted from the wrong date of the Providence Church, has been the prominence given to Roger Williams. It is greatly to be regretted, that it ever entered into the mind of any one to make him, in America, the founder of our denomination. In no sense was he so. Well would it be for Baptists, and for Williams himself, could his short and fitful attempt to become a Baptist be obliterated from the minds of men. A man only four months a Baptist, and then renouncing his baptism forever, to be lauded and magnified as the founder of the Baptist denomination in the New World! As a leader in civil and religious liberty, I do him homage; as a Baptist, I owe him nothing. There is another name, long, too long concealed, by Williams being placed before him, who will in after times be regarded with unmingled affection and respect, as the true founder of the Baptist cause in this country. That orb of purest luster will yet shine forth, and Baptists, whether they regarded his spotless character, his talents, his learning, the services he rendered, the urbanity and the modesty that distinguished him, will mention John Clarke as the real founder of our denomination in America. And when Baptist history is better understood than it is at present, every one, pointing to that venerable church which, on one of earth's loveliest spots he established, will say, "This is the mother of us all!" But in Virginia were Baptists ere Rhode Island had its charter. In Massachusetts were Baptist congregations before Williams was baptized. In the language of the legislative act already cited, "since our coming to New England," before Roger Williams saw it, "divers of this kind", Baptists, pleading for soul-liberty and Christian immersion, trod these shores of the New World, stained or hallowed by their blood. "SOME OF THE FIRST PLANTERS IN NEW ENGLAND WERE BAPTISTS." This is the language of Dr. Mather, their bitter foe, who lived in that persecuting age; and his language, corroborated as it is by colonial laws and documents still extant, is conclusive. Here, then, closes our first milestone up the blood-stained path which Baptists have been forced to travel. Here we look on the bleak, wild forests of New England and Virginia, as this mighty nation was lifting its mountain summits into the morning mists of historic light. And here, before Williams lived, or Clarke or Holmes suffered and bled, we have found these Baptists. We subjoin the epitaph of this noble man of God, whose memory should be held in vivid and grateful recollection by every lover of truth and freedom. To the Memory of DOCTOR JOHN CLARKE, One of the original purchasers and proprietors of this island, and one of the founders of the First Baptist Church in Newport, its first pastor and munificent benefactor: He was a native of Bedfordshire, England, and a practitioner of physic in London. He, with his associates, came to this island from Mass., in March, 1638, O.S., and on the 24th of the same month obtained a deed thereof from the Indians. He shortly after gathered the Church aforesaid, and became its pastor. In 1651, he, with Roger Williams, was sent to England, by the people of Rhode Island Colony, to negotiate the business of the Colony with the British ministry; Mr. Clarke was instrumental in obtaining the Charter of 1663 from Charles II., which secured to the people of the State free and full enjoyment of judgment and conscience in matters of religion. He remained in England to watch over the interests of the Colony until 1664, and then returned to Newport and resumed the pastoral care of his Church. Mr. Clarke and Mr. Williams, two fathers of the Colony, strenuously and fearlessly maintained that none but Jesus Christ had authority over the affairs of conscience. He died April 20, 1676, in the 66th year of his age, and is here interred. To our inquiry - Where did they come from? CHAPTER II Century Seventeen Baptists in England Cromwell and the Stuarts "We are cheered by the rays from former generations, and live in the sunny reflection of all their light." Monuments rise all along the stream of time, whose summits, like the fabled statue, kindled beneath the light, give out cheering music, and over the deep sorrows of humanity throw a halo of hope and joy. We can thus look up the dark current in its ever onward, desolating sweep, bearing on its flood the wreck of nations and systems; can behold the rocky towers where our fathers have stood, and the deep indented footprints crimsoned with their blood; and can hear above the deep silence the sublime echo of their voices. We are their children. They link us to the past. Their histories, like the tombstones of our parents, speak lovingly to us from their graves. Such a monument, a link in our common brotherhood, was Hanserd Knollys, a Baptist preacher, who was imprisoned in New England by virtue of a warrant from the Court of Commission, a Protestant inquisition, which followed him with its persecutions till the day of his death. Around him were numerous Baptists. Such men as Clarke and Holmes battled and suffered by his side. They had fled in search of

freedom to this New World, but their tracks were followed, and their first church-meeting, near Boston, broken up, and they were hauled to prison by the agents of the law. Eighteen years after the landing of the Mayflower, when every man in the colony was English born, and before Roger Williams was baptized, a Church of Baptists was formed in America. Where did they come from? Let us trace the connecting link across the Atlantic, from New England to Old England. Hanserd Knollys was born in Lincoln, England, 1598. He graduated with honour at Cambridge University. Having joined the Baptists, he became the object of Episcopal hate. He passed over to New England, where persecutions still followed him. When the news reached him of the revolution which brought Charles I. to the block, in 1648, he returned to England. Says Crosby: "A few years after his return from America, we find Mr. Knollys discharging his public ministry to a congregation of his own gathering, in Great St. Helen's, London, where the people flocked in crowds to hear him, and he had generally a thousand auditors. This roused the jealousy of the Presbyterians, and the landlord was prevailed on to refuse them the use of the place any longer. "The life of this good man was one continued scene of vexation and trouble. Soon after the Restoration, in 1660, Mr. Knollys, with many other innocent persons, was dragged from his own dwelling-house, and committed to Newgate, where he was kept in close custody for eighteen weeks, until delivered by an Act of grace upon the king's coronation. At that time, four hundred persons were confined in the same prison for refusing to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. A royal proclamation, occasioned by the rebellion of a person of the name of Venner, was issued at this time, prohibiting Anabaptists and other sectaries from worshipping God in public, except at their parish church. This cruel edict was the signal for persecution, and the forerunner of those sanguinary laws which disgraced the reigns of the Stuarts; and to these things we must attribute the frequent removals of Mr. Knollys, mentioned in a former part of this memoir. During his absence in Holland and Germany, his property was confiscated to the Crown; and, when the law did not favour the monarch's pretensions, a party of soldiers were dispatched to take forcible possession of Mr. Knollys's premises, which had cost him upward of £700." The old man died in poverty at the age of ninety-three after spending at different times nine years of imprisonment, besides fines and banishments. In a brief review of his life, as immortality was about to break in upon him, he wrote: "I confess that many of the Lord's ministers have excelled me, with whom he has not taken so much pains as he hath with me. I am an unprofitable servant; but, 'by the grace of God, I am what I am.'" The brief visit of Hanserd Knollys to America, and his return to England, together with sacrifices and suffering - amid which he stood like a tower, unawed and unbowed beneath the thunder-storm, give to his character peculiar interest. But, beyond this, the age in which he lived will ever be memorable to Baptists. It was the age of Tombs, of Collier, of Kiffin, and of Bunyan, a day of trial and triumph. Let us listen to the historian, Macaulay, speaking of these men: "Bunyan had been bred a tinker, and had served as a private soldier in the parliamentary army. Early in his life he had been fearfully tortured by remorse for his youthful sins, the worst of which seem, however, to have been such as the world thinks venial. From the depths of despair, the penitent passed to a state of serene felicity. An irresistible impulse now urged him to impart to others the blessings of which he was himself possessed. He joined the Baptists, and became a preacher and writer. His education had been that of mechanic. He knew no language but the English, as it was spoken by the common people. Yet his rude oratory roused and melted hearers, who listened without interest to the laboured discourses of great logicians and Hebraists. His works were widely circulated among the humbler classes. One of them, the Pilgrim's Progress, in his own lifetime, was translated into several languages. "It may be doubted whether any English Dissenter had suffered more severely under the penal laws than John Bunyan. Of the twenty-seven years which had elapsed since the Restoration, he had passed twelve in confinement. He still persisted in preaching; but, that he might preach, he was under the necessity of disguising himself like a carter. He was often introduced into meetings through back doors, with a smock frock on his back, and a whip in his hand. If he had thought only of his own ease and safety, he would have hailed the indulgence with delight. He was now, at length, free to pray and exhort in open day. His congregation rapidly increased; thousands hung upon his words; and at Bedford, where he ordinarily resided, money was plentifully contributed to build a meeting-house for him. His influence among the common people was such that the government would willingly have bestowed on him some municipal office; but his vigorous understanding and his stout English heart were proof against all delusion and all temptation. He felt assured that the proffered toleration was merely a bait intended to lure the Puritan party to destruction; nor would he, by accepting a place for which he was not legally qualified, recognize the validity of the dispensing power. One of the last acts of his virtuous life was to decline an interview to which he was invited by an agent of the government." (The Continuation of Bunyan's Life, appended to his "Grace Abounding.") "Great as was the authority of Bunyan with the Baptists, that of William Kiffin was still greater. Kiffin was the first man among them in wealth and station. He was in the habit of exercising his spiritual gifts at their meetings; but he did not live by preaching. He traded largely; his credit on the Exchange of London stood high; and he had accumulated an ample fortune. Perhaps no man could, at that juncture, have rendered more valuable services to the court. But between him and the court was interposed the remembrance of one terrible event. He was the grandfather of the two Hewlings, those gallant youths who, of all the victims of the bloody Assizes, had been the most generally lamented. For the sad fate of one of them, James was in a peculiar manner responsible. Jeffrey's had respited the younger brother. The poor lad's sister had been ushered by Churchill into the royal presence, and had begged for mercy; but the king's heart had been obdurate. The misery of the whole family had been great; but Kiffin was most to be pitied. He was seventy years old when he was left desolate, the survivor of those who should have survived him. The heartless and venal sycophants of Whitehall, judging by themselves, thought that the old man would be easily propitiated by an alderman's gown, and by some compensation in money for the property which his grandson had forfeited." (Macaulay's History, vol. 2 p. 175). Of Thomas Collier, a passing word is all that can be given. He preached at Guernsey, where he had many converts; but his cruel persecutors would not allow him to enjoy peace. They banished him and many of his followers from the place, and cast him into prison at Portsmouth; but how long he remained in confinement we are not informed. On account of his incessant labours and extensive usefulness, he is represented by his adversaries as having done much hurt in Lymington, Hampton, Waltham, and all along the west country. "This

Collier," says Edwards, one of his Pedobaptist contemporaries, "is a great sectary in the west of England, a mechanical fellow, and a great emissary, and a dipper, who goes about Surrey, Hampshire, and those countries, preaching and dipping." (Sketches of Early Baptists). But time would fail to speak of Bamfield, of Denne, and of Tombs, the antagonist of Baxter, of Jessey, also, and of Goswold, whose congregation in London, even at that day, was three thousand, and whose pulpit powers no man in England surpassed. This was in 1660. There were then, even in the midst of all this persecution, two hundred and seventeen (217) Baptist churches in England; and a fearless avowal of their convictions, long afterward known as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, was published and circulated, among whose signers were Kiffin, and Tombs, and Knollys. It was a dark, and yet a glorious day, for the Baptist denomination; for the blackest clouds send forth the brightest lightnings. Charles I. was dethroned in 1648, and royalty, nobility, episcopacy, and the whole tribe of dead formalities were swept like rotting leaves from the realm. But the Stuarts had returned, and with sin a treason in their train, marched with garments rolled in blood and crime over the rights of a prostrate people. Episcopacy, ever the deadly foe of Christianity and soul-freedom, was again enthroned and clad in scarlet. It plied at once its engines of oppression and cruelty. But there were those whom the power of the Bishops could neither bend nor crush. Above their thunder rose, with fearless front, the forms of Bunyan, of Kiffin, of thousands more, whose names are found only in heaven's martyr-roll; Baptists, whose fidelity to their principles was, like those principles themselves - DEATHLESS. From 1649 to 1659 was a kind of twilight hour of hope; and most valiantly did the Baptists press upon the attention of the world their principles of soul-freedom. These principles, previously sheltered in obscurity, became the property of the people. The parliamentary army, whose splendid victories won freedom for England, and struck terror to the tyrants of Europe, was composed, to a great extent, of Baptists. An army, not of hireling fighters, but of true men, battling for freedom. Says Carlyle: "In dark, inextricable difficulties, Cromwell's officers used to assemble and pray alternatively for hours, for days, till some definite resolution arose among them. Consider that - in tears, in fervent prayers, and cries to the great God to have pity on them, to make His light shine before them. A little band of Christian brothers, who had drawn the sword against a black, devouring world, they cried to God in their straits, in their extreme need, not to forsake the cause that was His. The light that now rose upon them, how could a human soul by any means get better light? To them it was as the shining of heaven's own splendour into the vast howling darkness." Never before had the world seen such an army, whose "officers preached," and whose privates were constantly "busy in searching the Scriptures." Major General Harrison, one of the most distinguished leaders, was a Baptist. To the cause of freedom his life had been given; and his death on the scaffold, on the return of Charles II., was that of a pious Christian hero. Ludlow, Tilburn, and Overton, the friend of Milton, and Col. Mason, the governor of the Isle of Jersey, were Baptists. And such was their increase and influence, that Baxter, the Presbyterian, complained that many of the soldiers became Baptists as a means of promotion. He laments, that "those who at first were but a few in the city and army, had, within three years, grown into a multitude." To them he traces the invasion of Scotland, the downfall of monarchy, and the establishment of a Republic. (Baxter's Works, xx. p. 255). In Cromwell's own family their influence was felt; and the genius of Milton shunned not to avow these sentiments. No wonder that Bunyan, who once served in the army against the king; not wonder that Baptists, generally, were the victims of hate and cruelty, from kings, bishops, and presbyters. They were, as their antagonist, Hawks, has said, "Republicans from principle." In the destruction of the throne of Charles, they were the principal actors. During that brief hour of freedom, they multiplied by thousands. But we must pass a little farther up the stream. To our inquiry - Where did the Baptist come from? The confession or declaration of principles, to which reference has been made, was published during the reign of Charles I., in 1643. Thirty-two years previous, when the burning rage of Episcopal persecution was at its height, a similar avowal of their faith, a bold confession of their immortal principles, was published to the world. (Rippon's Register, No. 8). A reference to these Confessions of Faith often curls the lip of ignorance into a heartless sneer. But let the eye glance a moment on the situation of those who signed a sent forth these confessions; let their sorrows, their foes, the dangers menacing them, be seen, - and the man who does not honour the real heroism displayed in the fearless, outspoken avowal of their principles, is one destitute of the noble instincts of humanity. A sublime scene was that, when, in the old hall in Philadelphia, with the roar of the British lion in their ears, feeble, and unorganized, and an ignominious death the certain consequence of defeat, man after man moved calmly forward and placed his name to that immortal document, the Declaration of Independence. Is there any comparison? Let us see. THE BAPTISTS OF ENGLAND WERE POOR. Into their situation we can have an insight by an extract from a tract, put forth by one of them in 1613. A tract which, if we will reflect a moment, we will acknowledge to be a deep tone of sorrow, wrung from crushed, yet trusting, fearless hearts. The extract is from a little work published by Leonard Busher, citizen of London, entitled "A Plea for Liberty of Conscience, presented to King James." Busher, toward the close of his treatise, says: "Another reason why so many good people are now deceived, is, because w that have most truth are persecuted, and therefore most poor; whereby we are unable to write and print, as we would, against the adversaries of truth. It is hard to get our daily bread with our weak bodies and feeble hands. How, then, should we have means to defray other charges, and to write and print? I have, through the help of God, out of his Word, made a scourage of small cords, whereby antichrist and his ministers might be driven out of the temple of God. Also a declaration of certain false translations in the New Testament. But I want wherewith to print and publish them. Therefore must they rest till the Lord seeth good to supply it." Ah, poor Busher! And yet dare he and the Baptist of his day, three years after King James' version was sent forth, attempt to show up the false translations of our present version. Then, alas, they were too poor to print the corrections which truth required. But they did not and do not despair. When Busher thus lifted his voice, the ashes of Edward Wightman were still being borne about by the winds; for, he was burned at the stake at Litchfield for being Baptist just three years before. He was charged with affirming "that the baptizing of infants is an abominable custom; that the Lord's Supper and baptism are not to be celebrated as they now are in the Church of England; and that Christianity is not wholly professed and preached in the Church of England, but only in part." For these, Episcopacy doomed him to death. It was the year 1612, April 11, that Wightman was sent to the stake; one year after James' version was given to the world.

And that almost canonized head of the Episcopal church thus, in the name of Christ, authorized poor Wightman's death. "Whereas, the reverend father in Christ, Richard by Divine providence, of Coventry and Litchfield, bishop, hath signified unto us, that he, judicially proceeding, according to the exigence of the ecclesiastical canons, and of the laws and customs of this our kingdom of England, against one Edward Wightman, of the parish of Burton-upon-Trent, in the diocese of Coventry and Litchfield, and upon the wicked heresies of Ebion, Cerinthus, Valentinian, Arius, Macedonius, Simon Magus, Manus, Manichees, Photinus, and of the ANABAPTISTS. "We command thee, that thou cause the said Edward Wightman, being in thy custody, to be committed to the fire in some public and open place, below the city aforesaid, for the cause aforesaid, before the people; and the same Edward Wightman, in the same fire, cause really to be burned, in the detestation of the said crime; and for manifest example of other Christians, that they may not fall into the same crime. And this no ways omit, under the peril that shall follow thereon. ("Witnesses, etc., James, Rex.") And the Episcopal historian, Dr. Fuller, a contemporary with these events, says: "God may seem well pleased with these seasonable severities." It was in the midst of such circumstances as these: poor, calumniated, fined, banished, burned at the stake, that Baptists had the courage to make public confession of the truths they held, and for which they were ready to die. Fearlessly, without equivocation or compromise in the face of danger and death, they penned, they signed, they published, and circulated what they professed and confessed. Let heartless, faithless scoffers scoff at it and such as them. Their privilege to scoff was won by the blood of these men. But we must take a few more hurried steps along the upward pathway. "In 1589, Dr. Some, an Episcopal writer of that day, "there were several Anabaptist conventicles in London and other places." This was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, as the fires of Smithfield, which lit up the bloody reign of her sister Mary were dying out; and yet their slumbering flames were fed with the bodies of inoffensive Baptists, whose dooms were sealed by "the most Protestant virgin Queen." A congregation of Baptists was discovered on Easter day without Aldergate, London, in 1570, seven and twenty of whom were taken and imprisoned, where they wasted and died in filthy dungeons. And during the same year John Wielmaker and Henry Torwoort were burned at Smithfield. (Hume, Crosby, Cobbett). Passing by the years of Mary's reign, which were marked by the indiscriminate murders of Protestants, we may pause over the illustrious years of the young and pious Edward VI., in which the foundation of Episcopacy was laid; when kingcraft and priestcraft united to force upon Protestants a creed and a ritual still venerated and followed in America by the offshoots of that Antichristian hierarchy, Protestant Episcopacy and Methodist Episcopacy. Cranmer, the father of English Episcopacy, ruled young Edward and England. "There were, at this time," says Fox, in his Book of Martyrs, "numerous Anabaptists in England, who, with other errors, objected to infant baptism and to the manner of it, by sprinkling, instead of dipping. Among them was one George Van Parre. He had led a very exemplary life, and suffered with great composure of mind." He was burned to death. A Protestant inquisition was established in 1549, with Cranmer at its head, and hundreds of Baptists were the victims of its cruelty. Among these, an illustrious and heroic example will ever awaken the sympathies of mankind. Joan Boucher, of Kent, was a female of illustrious character and family distinction. Her education was far beyond that of the most eminent of her country-women of her age. The commission was granted to the bishops to search out and apprehend the heretical Baptists. Joan was selected as an illustrious victim. She was tried before these Protestant bishops and condemned. The venerable archbishop who framed many of the prayers still read in the Episcopal and Methodist Churches brought the warrant to the youthful Edward to sign. He doubted, even declined. The bishop plied him with arguments and arts. The king still thought it was an instance of the same spirit of cruelty for which the Reformers condemned the Papists. But Papist and Protestant Episcopacies, through their ramifications, are one in origin, form, and tyranny. Edward was silenced, not convinced. With tears in his eyes, he signed the death warrant. A year, within three days, transpired between her condemnation and death. Every effort was made to pervert her from the truth. At length, on the 2nd of May, 1550, she was bound to a stake in Smithfield, and died in fearless triumph. Her persecutors tried to sully her memory by attributing opinions to her which she never held. She was a Baptist; a member of the Baptist Church then existing at Canterbury, and which exists to this hour. Her memory is deathless, and the crime of her murder stains with blackness, and stamps FALSEHOOD on the front of Episcopacy. We here approach those stirring times when society burst forth into new life; when the magic charm which wrapped Europe in the sleep of ages was broken, and the light of truth dawned like a new morning of creation on the world. Amid the struggle and the conflict of heart and mind, of truth with fiction, of the oppressed with tyrants, Baptists were everywhere mingling in the battle, foremost, fearless, numerous, in England, Spain, Germany, France, lifting up their voices, yielding up their lives; pleading for soul-freedom, and embalming it with their blood. The Reformation, a memorable milestone in the path of time, records ten thousand Baptist martyrdoms. Did they originate in the great Protestant Reformation? CHAPTER III Century Sixteen The Reformation A pure Christianity is the glorious embodiment of soul freedom. Adapted to the spiritual wants and immoral aspirations of the individual man; meeting him in his darkness with the clearness of its discoveries; meeting him in weakness with its transforming power; meeting him in wretchedness with consolation and refuge; coming in direct contact with the heart, and flashing in upon it a full sense of its sinfulness and responsibility, and breathing into the deep recesses of his being the breath of life and hope, it raises him to communion with the Eternal, as responsible and as free to worship God, so far as human agencies or interferences are concerned, as though no other being but himself dwelt upon the earth. Christianity, uncorrupted, presses upon man his personal, his individual relations to eternity, telling him to "work out his own salvation," and thus makes it a matter entirely between himself and his God. Hence its announcement was not to kings or magistrates; to a convocation of rules or a hierarchy of priests. It chose no organized power as its oracle. It sanctioned no assumptions of human authority in spiritual concerns. Replete with blessings boundless and eternal, with all that could elevate and adorn a fallen humanity; shedding the light of truth on man's ruin and redemption; unfolding the future and perfection of his being, and flinging an everbrightening radiance over the grandeur of his destiny, Christianity was and is her own revealer; her own oracle; attending herself the heaven-lit fires that burn upon her altar. Passing by, without a word or a look of recognition, the exalted ranks of principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, she unveiled her beauty and whispered her message of

mercy to the obscure, the despised, the pious poor. She visited the haunts of the people, and not the conclaves of priests or the palaces of kings. From the hill-tops, by the shepherds, her songs were first heard. Amid poverty in the manger she took up her abode. She uttered her voice in the streets, and in the fields, in the fisherman's hut on the sea-shore, and in the chief places of concourse in the city. Leveling or ignoring all artificial distinctions, Christianity places each man on an equal platform before his Maker, equally dependent, equally responsible, and therefore equally free. This is the great conservative principle of human society, the freedom of the soul, a principle whose elements Christianity concentrates and proclaims. Where, then, shall we expect to behold Christianity, robed in her pure forms, lifting her laureled brow and gathering up her trophies? "Go walk where she hath been, and see The shining footprints of her deity, And feel those godlike breathing in the air Which mutely tell HER SPIRIT hath been there." Truth flourishes where freedom is. On a fair field, single-handed against the serried hosts of error, her victory is sure. Well, where did the truth flourish most? Let a foe to Baptists answer: "In the times of general liberty this opinion (of Baptists) grew mightily." (Wall, ii, p. 317.) Yes, in the times of general liberty it grew mightily; and even beneath the withering blast and fiery thunderbolts of despotism, though often riven, it could never be uprooted. Such a time of general liberty was that glorious epoch known as the Protestant Reformation. Night had long wrapped in darkness and tyranny a sleeping world. Suddenly, as at the trump of God, men everywhere awoke and struggled to roll off the weight that was crushing them. Simultaneously in Germany, France, Switzerland, England, Spain, throughout Europe, mighty men rose up pleading for truth and freedom. But the history of the Reformation is known. Its results are all around us. Protestant Episcopacy, and that branch of it called Methodism, Presbyterianism through all its subdivisions, and Lutheranism, all Reformed or Protestant Churches, are the results of that mighty awakening and revolution. The Church of Rome they reformed. In it these Reformers were baptized, and its materials were used in the new formation. And truly great men were these Reformers, these founders of the present Protestant Churches. From the monk of Wittenberg, from the valleys of the Alps, from the plains of France, the notes of soul-freedom rung forth. These notes were heard amid the mountain glens, in the forest depths, by thousands sheltered in remote obscurity, who came forth at the cheering call and owned themselves - BAPTISTS. Is this so? Let their opponents decide. Mosheim says this: "The true origin of that sect which acquired the denomination of Anabaptists, by their administering anew the rite of baptism to those who came over to their communion, and derived that of Mennonites, from that famous man to whom they owe much of their present felicity, is hidden in the depths of antiquity, and is of consequence difficult to be ascertained. This uncertainty will not appear surprising when it is considered that this sect started up suddenly in several countries at the same point of time, under leaders of different talents and different intentions, and at the very period when the first contests of the Reformers with the Roman pontiffs drew the attention of the world, and employed all the pens of the learned in such a manner as to render all other objects and incidents almost matters of indifference." (The Anabaptists) "not only considered themselves descendants of the Waldenses, who were so grievously oppressed and persecuted by the despotic heads of the Romish Church, but pretend, moreover, to be the purest offspring of the respectable sufferers, being equally opposed to all principles of rebellion on the one hand, and all suggestions of fanaticism on the other." "It may be observed," continues Mosheim, "that they are not entirely in an error when they boast of their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrussians, and other ancient sects, who are usually considered as witnesses of the truth in times of general darkness and superstition. Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Monrovia, Switzerland, and Germany, many persons who adhered tenaciously to the doctrine, etc., which is the true source of all the peculiarities that are to be found in the religious doctrine and discipline of the Anabaptists." (Mosheim's History of the Anabaptists, p. 490-1). These words of the learned Pedobaptist historian we have given in full, for all ought to know them. The Baptists "started up suddenly in several countries at the same point of time, at the very period the Reformers drew attention of the world." They came not from these Reformers, for they started up at the same point of time, and according to Mosheim, "they were not satisfied with the reformation proposed by Luther. They looked upon it as much beneath the sublimity of their views, and, consequently, undertook a more perfect reformation; or, to express more properly their visionary enterprise, they proposed to found a true church, entirely spiritual, and truly divine." (Mosheim's History of the Anabaptists, p. 492). They did not commence with Menno Simon, for when first he attended the Anabaptist assemblies, says Mosheim, he was a Popish priest; "and not till 1536 did he throw off the mask and publicly embrace their communion." They came not from Rome. They had not received baptism from her priests, and attempted no reformation of her dead, corrupting form. Where did these Baptists come from? The unchallenged words of Mosheim, already quoted, answer the question, "concealed in almost all the countries of Europe before the rise of Luther and Calvin." Let us illustrate his statement by a rapid glance at the places of their concealment. England In the year 1539, the thirteenth of the reign of Henry VIII, the following enactment was promulgated: "That those who are in any error, as Sacramentarians, Anabaptists, or any others that sell books having such opinions in them, once known, both the books and such persons shall be detected and disclosed immediately to the king's majesty, or one of his privy council, to the intent to have it punished without favor, even with the extremity of the law." (Fox's Martyrs, vol., ii, p. 440). This was soon after the bands which attached Henry to Rome were severed. It was the first dawn of the Protestant Reformation in England. Henry had divorced Catharine, and married Anne Boleyn. The effects of his quarrel with Rome emboldened the Baptists to leave their hiding-places, "and," says, Fox, speaking of the influence of Anne Boleyn over Henry, "we read of no persecution nor any abjuration to have been in the Church of England, save only that the Registers of London make mention of certain Anabaptists, of whom ten were put to death in sundry places of the realm, A.D. 1535; other ten repented and were saved." (Martyrology, p. 956, Ed. 2). Here, then, were Baptists coming out from their concealment at the very first dim dawn of the Reformation, when Henry first broke with the Pope, because he would not grant him a divorce from Queen Catharine. The following year a convocation sat, and, after some matters relating to the king's divorce had been debated, the lower house presented to the upper house a list of religious heresies which prevailed in the realm, specifying those of the Anabaptists. Among its items are: Infants must needs be christened, because they are born in

original sin, which sin must needs be remitted, and which only can be done in the sacrament of baptism. That children or men once baptized, can or ought never to be baptized again. That they ought to repute and take all the Anabaptists, and every man's opinion agreeing with said Anabaptists, for detestable heresies and utterly to be condemned." (Dr. Wall, vol. ii, p. 309). The truth, like an over-burning altar fire, thus lived unquenchable in concealment, "or," as says the persecuting Dr. Featly, who wrote against the Anabaptists in 1645, "if it broke out at any time, by the care of the ecclesiastical and civil magistrates, it was soon put out. But of late this sect has rebaptized hundreds of men and women together, in the twilight, in rivulets and some arms of the river Thames." (Ibid, Infant Bap., vol. ii, p. 316). "They were found," says Bishop Burnett, "in almost every town and village in England." "They were emboldened," says Durham, as quoted by Dr. Wall, "and their great increase is accounted for by the partial toleration in religion." The fact stated by Mosheim is thus verified: Baptists lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe before the rise of Luther and Calvin. They lay concealed in thousands in England, and came forth at the first note of partial freedom. Where, then, did the Baptists come from? CHAPTER IV Century Fifteen Wales The vale of Carleon is situated between England and the mountainous parts of Wales, just at the foot of the mountains. It was for centuries the Piedmont of the Welsh. The Welsh Alps, Mount Merthyn and Tydfyl, the recesses and caverns, were the hiding-places of Christ's lambs. In this vale, as in other portions of Wales, the ordinances of Christ had been administered since the time of the Apostles. So soon as the Reformation occurred in England, and spread into Wales, communication was at once opened between the obscure followers of Christ in the mountain fortresses, and the awakened clergy of the establishment. Of the latter, three distinguished men adopted the sentiments held by those Welsh heretics, who claimed descent from the Apostles. Their names were Perry, Wroth and Ebury. These henceforth were called the Baptist Reformers, because they were of the Reformation, and had joined with the Baptists. We will now let the History of the Welsh Baptists present the facts in the case: "It is no wonder that Perry, Wroth, and Ebury, commonly called the first Baptist Reformers in Wales, should have so many followers at once, when we consider that the field of their labors was the vale of Carleon and its vicinity. As they were learned men belonging to that religion established by law, and particularly as they left that establishment and joined the poor Baptists, their names are handed down to posterity, not only by their friends, but also by their foes, because more notice was taken of them than of those scattered Baptists on the mountains of the principality (Wales). If this denomination had existed in the country since the year 63, and so severely persecuted, it must be, by this time, an old thing. But the men who left the Popish establishment were the chief objects of their rage, particularly as they headed the sect everywhere spoken against, and recognized Baptist Churches. The vale Olchon, also, is situated between mountains almost inaccessible. How many hundred years it had been inhabited by Baptists before William Ebury, it is impossible to tell. It is a fact that can not be controverted, that there were Baptists here at the commencement of the Reformation; and no man upon earth can tell when the church was formed, and who began to baptize in this little Piedmont. Whence came these Baptists? It is universally thought to be the oldest church, but how old none can tell. We know that, at the separation, they had a minister named HOWELL VAUGHAN, quite a different sort of Baptist from Ebury, Wroth, Vavasor, Powell, and others, who had come out from the Established Church. And this is not to be wondered at; for they had dissented from the Church of England, and had, probably, brought some of her corruptions with them. But the mountain Baptists were not (Protestants or) dissenters from the establishment. We know the Reformers were for mixed communion, but the Olcan received no such practice." (Thomas's History Welsh Baptists. Also Hist. W. B., by J. Dais, p. 17). These are most conclusive evidences that William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into the English language, and the four books of Moses into the Welsh language, in 1536, was a Welsh Baptist of that plain, strict, apostolic order. He lived most of his time in Gloucester, England; but Llewellyn Tyndale and Hezekiah Tyndale were members of the Baptist Church in Abergavenny, South Wales. (Dais's History Welsh Baptists, p.21). The text of Mosheim is thus fully illustrated by facts. Baptists lay concealed in almost all the countries of Europe before the rise of Calvin and Luther. Bohemia A deep forest, extending three hundred miles in length, and two hundred in breadth, was, in the days of Roman triumph, settled by a tribe of Celts called Boii, who fled to its shelter to avoid the Roman yoke. Hence the word "Bohemia," under which are now included the countries of Silesia and Moravia. A short time before the birth of Christ, Caesar described this Hercynian Forest thus: "It is nine day's journey over. It begins on the confines of the Helvetii, Nemetes, and Rauraci, (that is, Switzerland, Basil, and Spire,) and extends along the Danube to the borders of the Daci and Anartes, (that is, Transylvania,) there turning from the river to the left, it runs through an infinite number of countries. No one could ever yet come to the end of it or know its utmost extent, though some have gone sixty days' journey into it." This was the Hercynian Forest, of which the Black Forest was then a part. Amid its depths, Paul tells us he preached the gospel of Christ, and it tribes were visited by Titus. (Rom. XV:19, 28; 2 Tim. iv:16). In this wilderness, before the rise of Luther, Mosheim tells us, were Baptists. Thousands of them claim to have been sheltered there in the wilderness from the wrath of the dragon. Is it true? In 1519, six years before Luther appeared before the Diet of Worms, a letter was addressed to Erasmus from Bohemia, thus describing this people: "These men have no other opinion of the Pope, cardinals, bishops, and other clergy than of manifest Antichrists. They call the Pope sometimes the beast, and sometimes the whore, mentioned in the Revelation. Their own bishops and priests, they themselves do choose for themselves, ignorant and unlearned laymen, that have wife and children. They mutually salute one another by the name of brother and sister. They own no other authority than the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. They slight all the doctors, both ancient and modern, and give no regard to their doctrine. Their priests, when they celebrate the offices of mass, (or communion,) do it without any priestly garments; nor do they use any prayer, or collects on this occasion, but only the

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