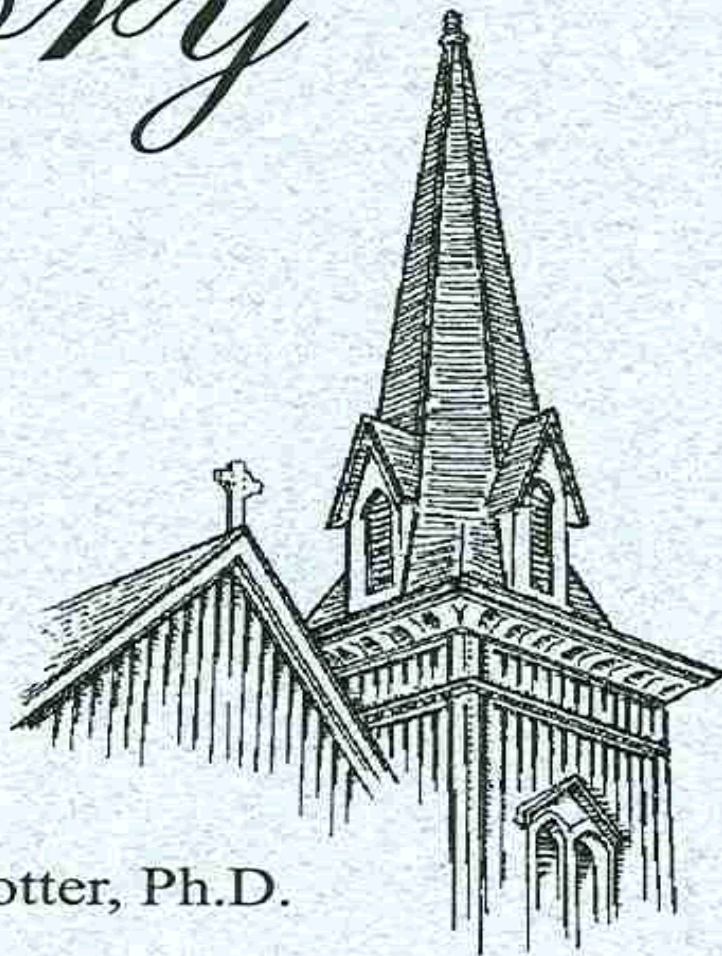


The
Baptist
Story



By David Potter, Ph.D.

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About the Author

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Foreword

This essay suffers two related disadvantages. First, I must summarize many centuries of history concerning wide geographical areas in only a few pages. Second, I do not have space to dwell on the lives of individuals. The ingredient that makes history exciting is the story of the individual. If you don't believe this, ask yourself why the historical sections of the Bible are such gripping examples of literary art. Surveys like this one tend to be dry. Please bear with me.

Introduction

Few groups of people have been so persecuted for their views as the Baptists. Baptists cannot trace their history to some dynamic founder during the Reformation like a Luther or a Calvin or a Knox. Their only claim to validity is their dependence on Scripture alone for their doctrine and practice. Their commitment to the Scriptures to dictate their practice, as well as their beliefs, distinguishes Baptists from the Protestants, who protested only what was unacceptable to them in the Roman Catholic Church, yet retained some unbiblical practices. While Protestants generally desired religious liberty for themselves, the Baptists sought freedom of worship for everyone. We as Baptists can take great encouragement from the history of those who have passed the torch of truth down to us.

Origins

The origin of the Baptists is a controversial subject. Baptist historians have advanced three major views of Baptist roots: the Successionist Theory, the Spiritual Kinship Theory, and the English Separatist Theory. The Successionist Theory contends that an unbroken succession of churches have taught and practiced Baptist principles from the time of the New Testament. The Spiritual Kinship Theory contends that, although a visible succession is not provable, Baptist

churches have always existed since the time of the apostles. The English Separatist Theory states that modern Baptists began as an offshoot of the English Separatist movement. Any connection with earlier groups is historically unproven.

All three views contain elements of truth. While there is no historical proof of a direct succession of the English Separatist Baptists from earlier groups holding Baptist principles, the idea of someone going out freelance and starting a church purely on his own is contrary to the scriptural pattern. Churches starting churches and churches sending missionaries to start churches have always been the norm for Baptists. Men like Roger Williams and John Smyth (see below) started fresh because they did not know of any alternative. On the other hand, modern Baptists were not the first group to hold to the principles that we now call the Baptist Distinctives. Adherence to the Baptist Distinctives defines what a Baptist is, not the Baptist name. The early English Baptists were aware of the Anabaptists both in England and on the Continent. These Baptists knew that they held similar beliefs to the Anabaptists, but they also knew that they differed in several ways.

I will not be able to resolve the problem of Baptist origins in a short paper, but we can make one confident assertion. Imagine that all traditional theological views were erased from the earth and only the Bible remained. Tomorrow "there would be Baptists."¹ Doctrine and practice based squarely on the New Testament is true apostolic succession.

The Anabaptists

The Anabaptist movement still suffers today from misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Enemies of the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century applied that label indiscriminately to at least five distinct kinds of religious groups, from social and political revolutionaries, to anti-trinitarians, and even to groups that did not believe in baptism at all. The biblical Anabaptists, on the other hand, were true heroes, many of whom suffered martyrdom for their faith. The Anabaptists pled with both Catholics and Protestants to allow liberty of conscience. No one argued the case for religious liberty better than Balthasar Hübmaier (1480-1528). His pamphlet *On Heretics and Those Who Burn Them* concludes that "those who burn heretics are the greatest heretics of all." A few years after publication of his pamphlet, Hübmaier was burned at the stake in Vienna.

In many ways Anabaptists were similar to modern Baptists in that they held to an orthodox theology and that they viewed the local church as a community of believers that one enters by requesting water baptism. They rejected the linking of church and state and insisted on soul liberty for all. On the other hand, they refused to take oaths or serve in public office. They were pacifists. Some of them did not insist on baptism by immersion. Nevertheless, we should not be ashamed to own the biblical Anabaptists as forerunners of modern Baptists.²

Baptists in England

Origins in the Seventeenth Century. The two groups of English Baptists, General Baptists and Particular Baptists, arose from two separate origins. The names come from the views of each group regarding the atonement. The General Baptists held to a general atonement and the Particular Baptists held to the particular atonement of the elect. They also differed over some matters of church organization.

General Baptists. A group of Puritans called Separatists, because they believed in separation of church and state, met at Gainsborough, England, in the early 1600s. When the congregation became too large to meet in one place, the group divided. A part of them began to meet at Scrooby Manor under the leadership of John Robinson (1575-1625), while the rest remained in Gainsborough under the preaching of John Smyth (1570-1612). Both congregations fled to Holland to escape persecution, Smyth's group settling in Amsterdam and Robinson's in Leiden. Part of Robinson's church went back to England and then on to America in 1620 on the Mayflower. We know them today as the Mayflower Pilgrims.

In 1612, through contact with Dutch Anabaptists, Smyth became convinced that baptism is for believers only. He persuaded his congregation of this view and "baptized" them by pouring. The group then split, part returning to England under the leadership of Thomas Helwys (died in Newgate Prison in 1616), and the rest remaining in Holland. After Smyth's death, his faction joined the Mennonites (the Dutch Anabaptists). Back in England, the small congregation of General Baptists faced terrible persecution. Some of them died in prison from the harsh conditions. These General Baptists eventually realized that scriptural baptism is by immersion.

Particular Baptists. The Particular Baptists emerged from a group of Independent Puritans (Independents stressed the independence of the local church) in the 1630s under the leadership of John Spilsbury (died 1699?), William Kiffin (1616-1701), and Henry Jessey (1601-1663). Kiffin, a wealthy merchant, was a great asset to the early Baptists both because of his political connections and his sound judgment. Benjamin Keach (1640-1704), pastor of the Horsleydown Church in Southwark, London, was an innovator who introduced singing of hymns to church services (previously they had just sung Psalms) and encouraged the Christian education of children.

Early Baptist Writings

Baptists in seventeenth century England might not have suffered so much persecution if they had kept a lower profile. Instead, they published materials clarifying and defending their beliefs. John Murton (died 1626), a General Baptist, wrote *Persecution for Religion Judg'd and Condemn'd* from prison in 1615. The London Confession of 1644, a Particular Baptist statement of faith, is a forerunner of Baptist confessions still in use today, including the Philadelphia Confession and the New Hampshire Confession.

John Bunyan (1628-1688), a Baptist preacher who had little formal education and made his living by repairing pots and pans, was also one of the greatest literary geniuses in the history of the English language. He wrote his masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, an allegory about the Christian life, while in prison because he refused to stop preaching without the sanction of the state.

Struggle for Liberty

The political situation in England complicated the Baptists' struggle for liberty. At various times, the English government tried to impose strict Anglicanism or Puritanism on everyone, depending on who happened to be in power. The Baptists generally supported Parliament in their conflict with King Charles I. Some radicals, including a few Baptists, resisted the restoration of Charles II after Oliver Cromwell's death. Most people considered these "Fifth Monarchy Men" to be dangerous revolutionaries. Even though the Baptists tried to distance themselves from the radicals, the government and the general public suspected the Baptists of complicity in this movement.

After years of refinement in the fires of persecution, Baptists finally gained religious "toleration" in 1689 with the ascension of William and Mary to the English throne. As Baptists had their first taste of freedom to worship and to propagate their views, the stage was set for great advance. Sadly, they missed their chance

Eighteenth Century, Regress and Revival

The General Baptists and the Particular Baptists each faced problems that prevented them from having the spiritual impact on England that they should have had. When doctrinal heresy arose, the General Baptists sacrificed purity for the sake of unity. In the end, they had neither unity nor purity. The Particular Baptists refused to sacrifice doctrinal purity for unity. In the end, they had both unity and purity, but they lacked soul-winning zeal, for they had embraced a deadening form of Calvinism.

One Calvinist preacher who was a successor of Keach at the historic Horsleydown Church³ boasted that he had preached for more than fifty years and never addressed the unconverted. John Gill (1696-1771) was a gifted Hebrew scholar and theologian. His *Body of Divinity*, first published in 1769, is still in print today. Hyper-Calvinism like Gill's reduced evangelistic zeal among the Particular Baptists. God wanted to send revival to England in the eighteenth century, but the Baptists weren't listening.

New Connection General Baptists

Revival did come to England, but it came through the preaching of John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. Dan Taylor (1738-1816), a convert of the Wesleyan revival, came to Baptist views after answering the call of God to preach. When he tried to join the General Baptists, who shared his Arminian beliefs, he soon realized that he could not work with them because of their doctrinal errors. He then started his own group: the New Connection General Baptists. The old General Baptists gradually faded into oblivion, while the New Connection enjoyed growth through evangelistic outreach.

Revival and Missions

Particular Baptists needed to modify their views in order to experience revival. The change came about through the preaching and writing of men like Robert Hall (1764-1831) and Andrew

Fuller (1754-1815). Though still a Calvinist, Fuller realized that evangelism was the necessary means ordained by God to save men. The classic statement of Fuller's view is found in his book, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, published in 1785.

Closely associated with Fuller was William Carey (1761-1834), a self-educated preacher who cobbled shoes in order to keep food on the table for his family. God gave Carey a vision for world missions. At an associational meeting in May of 1792, Carey preached a message from Isaiah 54:2 ("Expect Great Things from God, Attempt Great Things for God"). This "deathless sermon" was a turning point in history. The pastors at that meeting resolved to form a missionary society, and Carey became their first missionary. Carey's success in India gave added credibility to Fuller's modified Calvinism, spurring further missionary and evangelistic efforts. While Fuller labored tirelessly in England for the new mission society, Carey's work in India was almost legendary. Despite government opposition, physical hardship, and lack of finances, Carey supervised the translation of all or part of the Bible into thirty Indian languages and dialects.

Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century, God greatly used several Baptist preachers in various areas of Great Britain. The powerful preaching of Christmas Evans (1766-1838) stoked revival fires in Wales. James (1768-1851) and Robert (1764-1842) Haldane, wealthy brothers, were known as the Wesley and Whitefield of Scotland. God blessed their preaching with many conversions and many new churches formed. One figure, however, towers above the rest in nineteenth century Great Britain.

The old Horsleydown Church, now known as the New Park Street Chapel, had fallen on hard times. The area in which it was located had become industrialized, and the people who lived in the area at that time were of a low social class. Only about a hundred people now attended the church. The discouraged little band called a self-educated nineteen-year-old named Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) as their pastor. Large crowds soon gathered out of curiosity to hear the boy preacher, but they came back again and again because of the substance of the preaching. In 1861 the church constructed a new auditorium seating 5,500 people. Admission was by ticket, which was free of charge, and members were instructed to come to only one of the two Sunday preaching services so as to leave more room for visitors.

Spurgeon's ministry included a pastor's college to give men the formal training for the ministry that he himself never received. The church also operated an orphanage and a publishing house. Mrs. Spurgeon established a fund to buy books for young preachers who could not afford them. Spurgeon published a monthly magazine called *The Sword and the Trowel*, which enjoyed a wide circulation. Graduates of Spurgeon's college planted and pastored over 200 new Baptist churches in England.

The Down Grade

Toward the end of his life, Spurgeon complained of a drift that he perceived among the Particular Baptists. He cited three problems: (1) abandonment of prayer meetings and general lack of spiritual vitality in church services, (2) worldliness among pastors who spent more time going to the theater than studying the Word, and (3) tolerance of doctrinal error. Spurgeon's church

separated from the Particular Baptists in 1887. To his bitter disappointment, only a handful of churches withdrew with him. Most of the graduates of his pastor's school remained in the denomination. In the same year as Spurgeon's death, the Particular Baptists merged with the New Connection General Baptists to form the British Baptist Union. By this time the New Connection suffered from serious doctrinal defection. Later, with Spurgeon's son as pastor, his church returned to the Baptist Union (the church has since withdrawn again).

Every evil that Spurgeon foresaw came to pass. Toleration of error eventually put error in control. Today the British Baptist Union has virtually no positive spiritual impact.

Baptists in America

Baptists in America had an origin separate from their British brethren. Roger Williams (ca 1603-1684) arrived in Boston in 1631. Williams ministered to congregations in Plymouth and Salem before being banished in January of 1636 for promoting views such as that the colonists should purchase their land from the Indians before settling on it and that the civil magistrates had no power in spiritual matters. For one to be banished during a New England winter was like receiving a death sentence. Friendly Indians saved Williams' life. Williams purchased land from the Indians in what is now Providence, Rhode Island, and petitioned the king to charter a new colony there.

By 1639 Williams had come to Baptist views and accepted immersion.⁴ About the same time, another group of Baptists led by John Clarke (1609-1676), a medical doctor and preacher, began practicing believer's baptism by immersion in what is now Newport, Rhode Island.⁵ The two towns together formed Rhode Island Colony, based on complete religious liberty. Despite the fact that Williams remained a Baptist for only a year,⁶ he made major contributions to the Baptist cause and to America. He strongly advocated missions to the Native Americans, even writing a book to help missionaries learn Indian languages and culture. In 1644 he published *The Bloody [Bloody] Tenent of Persecution*, a pamphlet that had a great impact in favor of religious liberty on both sides of the Atlantic. He advocated separation of church and state. He advanced the idea of democratic government because his colony was governed by the majority vote of its citizens.

In 1652 Clarke also published a book on religious liberty called *Ill Newes from New England*, an account of the harsh persecution of Obadiah Holmes (1607-1682). Holmes received thirty lashes with a three-corded whip for holding an "illegal religious service." All he had done was to read Scripture, sing hymns, and pray in the home of a sick friend. The description of the trial, the beating, and its aftermath had a greater impact on most people than theoretical arguments would. Only with great difficulty can we imagine how radical the idea of religious liberty seemed to people at that stage of history.

Struggle for Religious Liberty and Phenomenal Growth

The Baptists in America in the eighteenth century experienced much religious persecution, accompanied by tremendous growth. In 1700 the Baptists in the Thirteen Colonies, with about two dozen churches, numbered less than 1,000 in total membership. By 1800, they were the largest religious group in the United States. Like most denominations, the Baptists benefited enormously from the Great Awakening. Also, like most denominations, the Baptists split for a time into New

Lights and Old Lights (the Baptists called them Separates and Regulars, respectively) depending on whether or not they embraced the revival. Here are a few Baptist preachers who were representative of the era.

Isaac Backus (1724-1806) pastored a small church in Middleboro, Massachusetts. He suffered jail and the confiscation of his property. He fought courageously for religious liberty, a battle not fully won in Massachusetts for more than 25 years after his death.⁷ He traveled indefatigably in the cause of revival and liberty of conscience. Though his own congregation was never large, scores of young men were called to preach from his church during his sixty years in the ministry.

John Leland (1754-1841) of Massachusetts and Virginia was "one of the best-informed Baptist ministers of the time."⁸ A gifted evangelist, he baptized more than 1,200 converts. He was a personal friend and political ally of Thomas Jefferson. Leland, like many Baptist and Presbyterian preachers in Virginia, suffered beatings and imprisonment at the instigation of the established Episcopal Church. Leland's efforts were a significant factor in gaining Baptist support for the federal Constitution as their best hope of attaining religious liberty.

Shubal Stearns (1706-1771) and Daniel Marshall (1706-1784), two New Englanders, had a huge impact on the American South. David L. Cummins rightly says that the South should not be called the Bible Belt, but rather the Baptist Belt. Stearns and Marshall are two major reasons this is so. The pair found Christ during the Great Awakening. In 1751 Stearns was baptized and ordained as a Baptist minister. Marshall also was ordained as a Baptist preacher by 1754. Marshall had married Martha Stearns, Shubal's sister, and both Stearns and the Marshalls moved south in 1754. After a brief stop in Virginia, they settled on Sandy Creek in North Carolina in 1755. Within a few years, their congregation numbered more than 600. This church became the mother of scores of churches throughout the Southeast.

John Gano (1727-1804) became the first pastor of First Baptist Church of New York City in 1762. Like almost every Baptist preacher in the Colonies, he supported the cause of American independence. All the able-bodied men in his church enlisted as soldiers in the revolutionary army, Gano himself serving with distinction as a chaplain. After the war, he returned to New York to regather his scattered flock. In 1784, leaving the church in the care of his son Stephen, Gano moved to Kentucky to plant churches on the frontier, where he died in 1804.

Missions, Controversy, and Division

The nineteenth century began on a very bright note for the Baptists. The denomination continued to expand into the frontier. However, with the opportunities came new difficulties.

Judson and Rice

Oddly enough, Baptist missions began with a group of Congregationalists. The Congregational denomination sent Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) and Luther Rice (1783-1836) to India as missionaries in 1812. Knowing they would meet William Carey when they arrived, Judson began to study his Greek New Testament so he would be prepared to debate the subject of baptism. He concluded that the New Testament taught believer's baptism by immersion and asked Carey for baptism when they arrived. The British government forbade the group to remain in India, so they

found another field of service in Burma. They knew that taking money from Congregationalists in order to plant Baptist churches was unethical, so Rice returned to America with their letters of resignation, hoping to raise support from Baptist churches and then to return to the field.

Judson's work in Burma was extremely important. The success that God granted him gave credibility to the infant missionary movement in America. The Baptists had never sent out foreign missionaries before, and there were many doubters among the hyper-Calvinists. Rice's work proved to be even more important than Judson's. He never returned to the field. Instead, he traveled all over the United States organizing, raising money, and generally promoting missions until his death. The result of Rice's work was the formation of "The General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions" in 1814. Since this name was too long, and since the society held meetings every three years, most people called it the Triennial Convention.

Trouble

The Baptists had their share of problems to hinder their growth and fragment them. The Anti-mission Movement was an extreme expression of Calvinism that included double predestination. One factor in the controversy was cultural. The main advocates of this movement were less educated frontiersmen, while those promoting missions were better educated easterners. Also, the frontiersmen faced the constant reality of Indian attacks. Their Anti-mission position allowed them to neglect evangelization of the Indians without feeling guilty. The success of Judson and Carey, as much as anything else, discredited the Anti-mission Movement.

Another cause of division was the so-called Restoration Movement. Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), a Scottish Presbyterian, came to believe that all denominations had become corrupt. He purposed to restore primitive Christianity and reunite all Christians. His followers called themselves Christians or Disciples of Christ. They taught that baptism by immersion is a requirement for salvation. A number of Baptist churches, mostly in the South, split from their fellow Baptists as a result of this "Campbellite" Movement.

Prophecy also became a divisive issue. William Miller (1782-1849), a man of limited education but a diligent student of Scripture, was licensed to preach in 1833 by a Seventh-Day Baptist⁹ church in Low Hampton, New York. He concluded from his study of Daniel 9:24 that Christ would return to set up his kingdom in 1843. When that date passed, he recalculated and determined that the correct date was 1844. When Christ did not return on that date, Miller recognized his error and repented of it. Nevertheless, the "Millerism" had two bad effects. Many of his disappointed followers became skeptical about religion in general and stopped attending church altogether. Others later followed Ellen G. White (1827-1915), who founded Seventh Day Adventism.

An even more widespread disagreement arose over slavery. A Southern slave-holder applied to become a missionary with the Triennial Convention. Controversy over this appointment caused the group to split between North and South in 1845. During that era, other denominations also split along geographical lines for similar reasons.

Denominational development in the North and the South proceeded differently. Southerners emphasized consolidation and joint effort. The result was greater growth in the South than in the North, but with a loss of local church autonomy. At first, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC),

formed right after the split over slavery in 1845, was just that, a meeting that convened. Over time the Convention developed a full denominational apparatus. The North remained unorganized with no central denominational office until 1908. Regrettably, the liberal theology promulgated in the European theological schools infiltrated the Northern Baptist colleges and seminaries. This liberal influence led to the great fundamentalist-modernist battles.

The Twentieth Century

Definitions are important in understanding the battles of the twentieth century. During the nineteenth century, most non-Catholic groups in America were "evangelical." At that time, the term referred simply to the fact that they preached the biblical gospel. If you asked a pastor from one of these churches how to be saved, you would most likely get the correct answer. Modernism, the theological child of the Enlightenment, assumed that God never breaks into history to perform miracles. One must therefore reject anything in the Bible that suggests the supernatural. Liberalism, of which Modernism was a form, is the substitution of the human mind for the Bible as the final authority in determining truth. Fundamentalism is the response of biblical Christianity to Liberalism. Fundamentalists simply restated and defended the historical Christian faith.

Baptists in the North

In 1908 Baptists in the North united to form the Northern Baptist Convention (NBC, later renamed the American Baptist Convention, ABC). From the first, the denomination was a mix of Modernists and Fundamentalists. Purifying the Convention and related organizations of Liberalism became the goal of Fundamentalists within the Convention. Unfortunately, a number of men in the Convention were conservative in doctrine but content to get along with everyone. The rise and development of Fundamentalism is a topic so important that every pastor should read more material on this subject. All I can give here is a very selective sketch.

Baptist Fundamentalism

Three figures dominated Baptist Fundamentalism in the first half of the twentieth century: Thomas Todhunter Shields (1873-1955), pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Canada; William Bell Riley (1861-1947), pastor of First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota; and John Franklyn Norris (1877-1952), pastor of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas. Unlike most Baptist Fundamentalists of the last century, Shields was not a dispensational premillennialist. He first gained fame by his opposition to liberal infiltration of McMaster University, a Baptist school in Hamilton, Ontario. Riley was the founder of Northwestern Schools in Minneapolis, which trained hundreds of pastors for pulpits from the North-central United States all the way to the Pacific Northwest. Norris was a very controversial character. At one time, he was pastor of both First Baptist of Fort Worth and Temple Baptist of Detroit, Michigan, commuting between the two cities weekly by air. Norris's churches in Fort Worth and Detroit were among the largest in the United States.

This trio of friends founded the Baptist Bible Union in 1923, an abortive attempt to unite Fundamental Baptists in the United States and Canada. Bad judgment on the part of Shields and others led to the demise of the organization. The remnants of the group formed the General

Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) in 1932, led by Robert T. Ketcham (1889-1978).

Riley led the fight to purify the Northern Convention. He and several of his allies formed the Fundamentalist Fellowship in 1920 to protest liberalism within the Convention. Fundamentalist leaders preached against apostasy at pre-convention meetings. Sadly, the Fundamentalist Fellowship failed to transform the Convention for at least three reasons. First of all, paid members of the convention staff had full voting rights at the annual meetings, and the Convention paid their expenses to attend. This base of paid votes on the liberal side was very hard to overcome. Second, many "good" men either failed to realize what was at stake or did not have the courage to act on what they knew. Compromise became the order of the day, and civility prevailed over doctrinal fidelity. Third, the Convention held many pastors hostage financially through the Convention-administered pension plan. Under the terms of the plan, preachers who left the Convention did not receive any pension benefits.

By the 1940s, even diehards like Riley came to recognize that the Convention was beyond salvaging. Their first priority was to start a missionary institution committed to the Fundamentalist position. The result was the formation of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1943, followed by the Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society in 1950. A national association of churches, the Conservative Baptist Association of America (CBA of A), began in 1947. The CBA of A called Blaine Myron Cedarholm (1915-1997), the young pastor of Lehigh Avenue Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as their first general director. Under Cedarholm's vigorous leadership, the CBA of A became the fastest-growing religious group in America.

Two factions vied for control of the movement. The "hard core" group believed that the time had come for churches to make up their minds where they stood and leave the Convention entirely. For a time, by a transitional arrangement, the CBA had allowed churches to be members of both the CBA and the NBC at the same time. The "soft core" group resisted taking a decisive stand. Two other matters complicated the situation. Many soon realized that if they followed the philosophy of the hard core, they would no longer be able to support Billy Graham's ecumenical evangelistic crusades, which began around 1956.¹⁰ The second complication was that the mission agencies did not have Premillennialism as a part of their doctrinal standard. During the 1960s, the two factions could no longer coexist in the same organization.

Fundamental Baptist Fellowship

Meanwhile, the Fundamentalist Fellowship, now known as the Conservative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), had begun to change its character. Since the split of the CBA from the NBC, the original purpose of the movement had become irrelevant. The CBF therefore began a new function as an informational agency. Chester Tulga (1886-1976), the group's research secretary, wrote an influential series of pamphlets called the "Case" booklets, dealing with issues important to the Fundamentalists. Under the leadership of Guy Archer Weniger (1915-1982), the organization changed its name to the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship (FBF, now the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International, or the FBFI), reflecting its new role as the rallying point for Fundamental Baptists who had left the CBA and others of like mind. In addition to publishing a magazine, the Fellowship holds regional and national meetings for preaching and discussion.

The "hard core" group also felt the need for a new mission society that would be free from the problems they saw in the CBA mission societies. Baptist World Mission began with a meeting of Fundamentalist leaders at the Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Chicago in 1961. The doctrinal statement of the new agency was solidly Premillennialist and rejected ecumenical evangelism. The new board emphasized church planting rather than institutional missions (like schools and hospitals).

Baptists in the South

After the collapse of the Baptist Bible Union, J. Frank Norris founded the Premillennial Baptist Missionary Fellowship (the name was later changed to Baptist World Fellowship, or BWF). Norris was a larger-than-life character, both in his virtues and his faults. Tired of his methods and personality, a sizeable group left the BWF in 1950 to form the Baptist Bible Fellowship (BBF), led by G. Beauchamp Vick (1901-1975). Vick served both as pastor of Temple Baptist in Detroit and president of Baptist Bible College of Springfield, Missouri, the main school of the movement. Noel Smith (1900-1974), founder and editor of the *Baptist Bible Tribune*, was the movement's most acute thinker.

A related group of Baptists in the South outside the Southern Convention is the Southwide Baptist Fellowship (SBF). Organized in 1956 by Lee Roberson (born in 1909), who was pastor of Highland Park Baptist in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and president of Tennessee Temple Schools, the Southwide Fellowship meets annually for preaching sessions. Also related to the BBF and SBF was the ministry of John R. Rice (1895-1980), evangelist and founder and editor of the *Sword of the Lord*, at one time the most popular Fundamentalist paper in America.

The Southern Baptists produced many fine educators and preachers, such as John A. Broadus (1827-1895), Archibald T. Robertson (1863-1934), E. Y. Mullins (1860-1928), B. H. Carroll (1843-1914), and George W. Truett (1867-1944). The SBC did not experience the deadly effects of liberalism as quickly as their Northern counterparts, but the effects did come eventually. The main part of the denomination remains conservative, but the Convention as a whole and its missionary and educational institutions continue to be a mixture of liberals and conservatives.

Other Baptist Groups

Given the Baptist stress on liberty, one should not be surprised that Baptists come in a variety of theological stripes, as well as various ethnicities.

Freewill Baptists. Freewill Baptists arose in New England in 1780 under the leadership of Benjamin Randall (1749-1808). This farmer turned preacher started 15 churches during preaching tours of New England between 1781 and 1792. Many of the Freewill Baptists in the North merged with the NBC in 1911. Freewill Baptists in the South trace their roots to Paul Palmer, who started the first Baptist church in North Carolina in 1727. Today the National Association of Free Will Baptists (NAFWB), headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, is the largest of the Arminian Baptist groups in the United States.

Black Baptists. The first Baptist preacher to go from America to a foreign land as a missionary was a freed slave named George Lisle (1742-1820). His owner, a Baptist deacon named Henry Sharp, recognizing Lisle's gift to preach, released him so that he could found a black Baptist

church in Savannah, Georgia, in 1777. After Sharp's death, his heirs tried to re-enslave Lisle. In 1783 Lisle fled with his family to Jamaica, where he established a Baptist church in Kingston. Lott Cary (1780-1828), another freed slave, carried the Gospel to Liberia, West Africa, in 1821.

For slaves, spiritual life made the hardships of their servitude bearable. The most numerous of all black religious groups are Baptist. Today the largest of these bodies are the National Baptist Convention of America and the National Baptist Convention, USA.

Immigrant Churches. Baptist immigrants from non-English-speaking countries often formed their own congregations and continued to worship in their native languages for a time. Most significant of these were the German and Swedish Baptists. The Germans formed the North American Baptist Conference in 1845. The Swedish Baptists, now known as the Baptist General Conference, date back to the 1850s.

Baptists in Other Countries

German Baptist. The German Baptists began with the conversion of Johann Gerhard Oncken (1800-1884) of Hamburg to Baptist views. In 1834 he received baptism from Barnabas Sears, a professor at Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution in Hamilton, New York, who was traveling in Germany at the time. Oncken's motto, "Every Baptist a missionary," was a good description of his life. In addition to travels all over Germany, he preached in Switzerland, France, Prussia, the Balkans, Hungary, and Russia. Everywhere he went he organized Baptist churches. McBeth called him a one-man missionary society.¹¹

Swedish Baptists. Swedish Baptists started with Gustavus W. Schroeder (1820/1-1914)¹² and Frederick Olaus Nilsson (1809-1881), two Swedish sea captains. Schroeder accepted Baptist views in 1844. He then influenced his friend Nilsson to become a Baptist. Since no one in Sweden was available to administer baptism, Nilsson traveled to Hamburg, where Oncken baptized him in 1847. The following year Nilsson started the first Baptist church in Sweden. Having been exiled in 1850, he traveled to Denmark and then to America. In 1857 he returned to Sweden, where he helped to organize the Baptist Union of Sweden.

Russian Baptists. Baptists are more numerous in Russia than in nearly any other country outside of the United States. Because of this and the nature of their history, they deserve an extended treatment even in a short work like this one.

Baptists in Russia arose from at least three sources. The first source was a group of German Mennonites who had settled in southeastern Russia during the reign of Catherine the Great in the late eighteenth century. The second was the Pietist movement. The Pietists conducted home Bible studies, which appealed to people who were disgusted with the spiritual deadness of the Russian Orthodox Church. The third source was the Molokan sect, which had separated from the Russian Orthodox Church and held evangelical views. Baptists in Russia began to appear in many places in the late 1860s. Many of the Molokans accepted baptism under Baptist influence. An Englishman named G. A. W. Waldgrave, also known as Lord Radstock (1833-1913), preached with great success among the Russian elite in Saint Petersburg, from which came significant Baptist leadership.

By the early 1900s there were at least 100,000 Russian Baptists and probably many more. The All-Russian Baptist Union, begun in 1881, centered in Kiev in the Ukraine. The Russian Union

of Evangelical Christians, a group less strictly Baptist than the All-Russian Baptist Union, began in 1907 under the leadership of Ivan Stapanovich Prokhanov (1869-1924). The strictness of the All-Russian Baptists resulted at least in part from the influence of Johann Oncken.

Baptists Under Communism. The Baptists suffered varying degrees of restriction and persecution under the Tsars. Ironically, after the Marxist Revolution in 1917, the Baptists gained an unprecedented degree of freedom for a time. Lenin was more concerned with consolidating his tenuous hold on power than with suppressing religion. He may even have seen the Baptists as a possible ally in breaking the power of the Russian Orthodox Church. The period of freedom ended in 1929 when Joseph Stalin came to power and enacted the Law of Religious Cults. Persecution by the Soviets then became brutal.

In 1944 the Soviet government forced both major Baptist groups to unite in the All Union Council of Evangelical Baptists (also known as the All Union Council). Under government pressure, the Mennonites and Pentecostals also joined. The purpose of the government in forcing this merger was so that it could monitor and control the churches. The Mennonites and Pentecostals eventually withdrew.

In 1960 the government issued new statutes concerning the operation of the churches. Children under the age of 18 could not attend services and must not receive religious instruction. The churches could not baptize anyone under the age of 30. Churches had to stop evangelizing and be content with maintaining their current membership. The portion of the Union that had been the Evangelical Christians tried to accommodate themselves to the new edicts. The portion that had been the Baptists refused, bringing down the wrath of the government upon them. The churches that cooperated with the government were the registered churches, and those that refused were unregistered.

Georgi Petrovich Vins (1928-1998), a leader of the unregistered churches, is an example of what life under Communism was like for committed Baptists. Vins' father, Peter, was a Russian American who returned to his ancestral homeland as a missionary. He remained there with his Russian wife after Stalin began his crackdown on religion. The Soviets executed the elder Vins in a prison camp in Siberia when Georgi was still in his teens. The younger Vins, who was pastor of an unregistered church in Kiev, served terms of three and five years in prison and suffered the confiscation of his property. He spent the majority of the time between his two prison terms living underground. In 1979, under an arrangement with President Jimmy Carter, the Soviets exiled Vins to the United States as part of an exchange of Soviet spies for Russian dissidents. Imprisonment broke Vins' health, yet he continued his preaching ministry in the United States and was able to visit Russia after the fall of communism to encourage the brethren there.

Conclusion

God has richly blessed us as Baptists with a wonderful heritage. The Baptists dared to embrace what the Reformers accepted in theory only: the Bible as final authority for faith *and practice*. They were so committed to the Bible as their infallible guide that they were willing to endure hardships and intense persecution. An apt description of our Baptist forefathers would be the one used by the writer of Hebrews concerning the heroes of the faith listed in Chapter 11, "Of whom the world was not worthy." May God make us worthy to follow in their footsteps.

Endnotes

1. J. H. Shakespeare, *Baptist and Congregational Pioneers*, p. 4, cited by H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, p. 63.
2. The Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites are modern descendants of the biblical Anabaptists.
3. Lifelong pastorates were common in that era. John Gill served as pastor at Horsleydown for 51 years. Gill's successor, John Rippon, a famous hymn compiler, served for 63 years.
4. Since Williams was not aware of anyone in America who had been scripturally baptized, he requested baptism from a member of his congregation. Williams then administered baptism to the church members.
5. We do not know whether or not Clarke held Baptist views before coming to America.
6. Williams was never able to escape the notion taught to him by the Church of England that a valid church must have a visible succession from the apostles. He retained his Baptist views all his life but despaired of ever finding a valid church.
7. Massachusetts retained its established church until 1833.
8. McBeth, 273.
9. The Seventh Day Baptists worship on Saturday instead of Sunday.
10. Billy Graham's crusades began earlier than 1956, but in that year their character changed. Graham (born in 1918) is the most noted figure of what is known as New Evangelicalism. New Evangelicals rejected the biblical principle of ecclesiastical separation, preferring infiltration rather than confrontation.
11. McBeth, p. 470.
12. Schroeder spent time in San Francisco during the 1880s. In 1881 he organized the Zion Baptist Church in his own home. Today that church is known as the Hamilton Square Baptist Church.