

OUR BAPTIST HERITAGE

Pastor Bruce D. Cummons

Dr. Bruce D. Cummons is the pastor of Massillon Baptist Temple, Massillon, Ohio. He has the responsibility of Massillon Baptist College and Christian School associated with the church. This message was preached at *Baptist Fundamentalism '84*, Washington, DC April 12, 1984.

“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” John 1:7.

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 3:1-2.

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” Matthew 11:11.

OUR DISTINGUISHED HISTORY

John was a Baptist. His divinely given name according to Matthew 11:11 was “John the Baptist.”

John was an Independent Baptist, spelled with a capital “I”! The religious leaders and councils of his day could not condone him, they could not control him, and they could not conform him to their doctrines, methods, nor religious orders!

John preached when and where God directed him, and baptized repentant believers in the Jordan.

John was a “Fundamentalist!” To read the life and ministry of the forerunner of Christ, no one would dare question his faith in God, his faith in the Word of God, his faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God (whom he introduced to the crowds at the Jordan), nor his faith in his call and commission to preach and to declare “the whole counsel of God!” He was a complete separatist, and very definitely a “Fundamentalist!”

John was a Missionary. “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John” John 1:7.

A Missionary is a “sent one.” John was a Missionary “sent from God.”

Thus, the first New Testament preacher to ever grace this earth with his presence was a Baptist. John the Baptist was an INDEPENDENT, FUNDAMENTAL, MISSIONARY BAPTIST PREACHER!

According to John 1:35-51, some of the disciples, or followers, of John began to follow

Christ. Christ took these believers who had been baptized by John the Baptist, and formed the first church to ever exist. Since this first church, formed by Christ, with Christ as its head, was formed out of men who were baptized by a Baptist, it had to be a Baptist Church! The only kind of church you can form out of Baptist material is a Baptist church!

To state it quite simply, brethren, there have been Baptists on the face of the earth ever since!

We do not claim John the Baptist as our founder, nor the head of the church. Christ founded the church, He is the head of the church, and we recognize Christ and no other as our founder, our head, and beginning of His church. But our Lord did build His church out of those who were baptized by John The Baptist, so the church was formed and built out of Baptist material, thus I repeat that the first church ever founded was a Baptist church!

Historians of various denominations admit that Baptists have existed through the ages since Christ. Let us notice the statement of just a few of them.

Dr. John T. Christian (Baptist): “I have no question in my mind that there has been a historical succession of the Baptists from the days of Christ to the present time.” (History of Baptists, page 5).

Alexander Campbell (Founder of the Disciples, or Christian Church, or Church of Christ): “The Baptists can trace their origin to Apostolic times and can produce unequivocal testimony of their existence in every century down to the present time.” (Debate with Walker).

John C. Ridpath (Methodist): “I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A.D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then as all Christians were then Baptists.” (Jarrel's Church Perpetuity, page 59).

COMMENT: If all Christians were then Baptists, what kind of churches did they form? Baptist churches, of course!

Ypeig and Dermout (Dutch Reformed Church): In 1819 the king of the Netherlands appointed these

men to write a history of the Dutch Reformed Church, and to investigate the Claims of the Dutch Baptist that they could trace their history back to Christ. These men wrote in the books, “We have now seen that the Baptists who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and who have long in history received the honor of the origin. On this account the Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community that has stood since the days of the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the gospel through all the ages.” (History of the Dutch Reformed Church, Volume 1, page 148).

Mosheim (Lutheran): “The first century was a history of the Baptists.”

Cardinal Hosius (Catholic-Spoken at the Council of Trent in the year 1554): “If the truth of Religion were to be judged by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows suffering, then the opinions and persuasions of no sect can be truer or surer than those of the Anabaptists; since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more grievously punished.” (Orchard's History of the Baptists, page 364).

A great many more similar quotations could be given, but these are sufficient to prove that historians, even of other denominations, admit that Baptists have existed since the apostolic days.

This statement is not true concerning other denominations. All other churches, religions, sects, and denominations trace their beginning back to an earthly head, and a more recent date than the days of Christ and the early Apostles. By way of example:

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Founder</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Time</u>
Catholic	Gregory	Rome	590
Lutheran	Luther	Germany	1520
Episcopal	Henry VIII	England	1534
Presbyterian	Calvin	Europe	1536
Congregational	Brown	England	1580
Methodist	John Wesley	England	1740
Disciples (Church of of Christ)	Alexander Campbell	USA	1827
Mormons	Joe Smith	USA	1830
Nazarene	P.F. Bresee	USA	1835
Seventh Day Adventist	William Miller	USA	1843
Christian Science	Mary B. Eddy	USA	1884

The record of the founding of every other

denomination and religion (except Baptists) can be similarly given, and fail to meet the doctrines, conditions and qualifications of the Baptist churches founded by Christ in Palestine about A.D. 30.

While these people called Baptists were not always known by that name in all ages of history, they were known by their doctrine, their church polity, and their loyalty to the Word of God, and the God of the Word.

Throughout history, through times of persecution, through the bloody “dark ages,” they were known by many names, such as Paulicians, Montanists, Novations, Albigenses, Waldenses, and many other names. They were later called Anabaptists, and then the prefix was dropped, and they were simply called “Baptists.”

Today, Baptists, because of their independency, are divided into scores of denominations, associations, and fellowships, as someone aptly said, “Like Heinz soups...57 varieties!”

However, the Independent, Fundamental Baptist still holds to the same faith, doctrine, and practice of the New Testament Church, and many strong denominational Baptists, according to their doctrinal statements and church covenants, agree with the founding doctrines and principles of the New Testament Church set forth in the days of Christ and the Apostles.

OUR DISTINCTIVE MARKS

There are several distinctive marks that set Baptists apart from any other church or religion.

We recognize Christ as the only Head of our churches, and the Holy Spirit as our only Administrator.

We believe in the Verbal, Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures, our doctrine is not tradition, but is bedrock Bible-based doctrine, and the Bible is our only rule for faith and practice.

As Independent Baptists, we believe in the absolute autonomy of the local church and refuse to wear anyone's brand, bridle, or bellyband!

As Baptists, we endeavor to maintain purity of doctrine in the church, and we are dogmatic in our stand. Our insistence on Scriptural Baptism has been a “thorn in the flesh” to other denominations, and a distinguishing and distinctive mark of Baptists from the beginning of our history.

Our refusal to accept sprinkling as baptism, and our refusal to sprinkle our infants, brought unparalleled persecution, ridicule, and the killing of fifty million of us during the “dark ages.”

Thus, we gained our name of “anabaptist” or “re-baptizers,” because we believe there is a Scriptural administrator, a Scriptural mode, and a Scriptural subject (believers only) to constitute true baptism.

Baptists have two other outstanding marks that separate us historically from other churches. We believe in ABSOLUTE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE, and FREEDOM OF RELIGION, OR RELIGIOUS WORSHIP!

While other churches and religions have endeavored to make their church or religion the State Church or Religion, Baptists have always fought for freedom of religion, and have never tried to force the State to accept Baptists as a State Church.

Dr. Neighbors, a professor at Midwestern University, (and a Methodist, by the way!) while teaching a class in American History stated, “When you pass a Baptist Church you should tip your hat!”

“Why?”, someone questioned.

“Because we owe our freedom of religion in America to the Baptists!”

More than one hundred years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Baptists were banished from Massachusetts, beaten publicly in Boston, and vilified in Virginia because of their stand for freedom of religious worship, and separation of Church and State.

Our forefathers came to America to flee persecution in England, Ireland, and Europe. A decayed state church-religion sorely persecuted any who dared worship differently, or dared speak out against the state-church. People were beaten, whipped, had their ears cut off, or their tongues cut out, or were otherwise maimed, in the name of “Christianity!”

In Ireland, in 1641, the Roman Catholic Church launched a surprise attack designed to obliterate every other religion. That year the Protestants earned their title!

Under England and Ireland's persecution, Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians and Puritans suffered alike.

Baptists, not being Protestants, refused to have their babies sprinkled, and suffered at the hands of Catholic and Protestant alike!

Puritans wanted freedom from Episcopalians and Catholics. Later, the Episcopalians and Catholics wanted freedom from the Puritan dictator, Cromwell. The Presbyterians wanted freedom from all three. The Quakers wanted freedom from all four. The Baptists just wanted freedom. Not freedom from anyone, but FREEDOM FOR EVERYONE!

When the Baptists landed in America, they found that it was Puritan country in this New World! They found no more freedom than in the Old Country!

In the founding of the original thirteen Colonies, the Baptists soon found that ten of the thirteen Colonies had some type of State established and State enforced church! Thus, again these people called Baptists found that their churches were closed, they were forbidden to worship, and were often beaten publicly! This is America—“The Land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave!”

Dr. John Clark and Roger Williams founded a Colony in 1638, Rhode Island, where against much opposition, and with great difficulty, they established a Colony where absolute religious freedom was permitted!

Led by the Baptists, it took many, many years of persecution, suffering, preaching, praying, and legislation until the young government formed its constitution, guaranteeing absolute religious freedom for one and all!

Baptists can stand tall and be proud of their heritage, and the proven history that we have always led in the fight, and sometimes fought alone, for our freedoms!

Beloved, THE BATTLE IS STILL ON TODAY! There are forces in our land that would close our churches, close our Christian schools, stop freedom of speech and freedom of religion if they could! These forces are very real and “Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.”

Again, we find that BAPTISTS ARE LEADING IN THE FIGHT AND STANDING TRUE TO OUR HERITAGE, in battling all the inroads of State and Government, and Secular Humanism, and Communism, and Socialism, and any other force that would take away from us, and

from our beloved country, our freedom of religious worship!

Stand tall, Baptist! We have a glorious heritage!

OUR DOGMATIC STAND

The accusation is often brought against Baptists, “You Baptists are always fighting! If you are not fighting for some cause, you are fighting for truth and right. You fight against apostasy, and you fight for pure doctrine. You fight against false religion, and on the other hand, you fight for freedom of religion. You enlist in the armed forces and fight for your country during times of war, and then you fight against your country when your liberties are threatened by law and legislation. When you are out of other things to fight for—or against—then you level your guns at one another and fight one another! Why are you always fighting?!”

The answer is simple, **WE FIGHT BECAUSE WE BELIEVE SOMETHING!** Our convictions are strong—they run deep. We know what we believe. Our faith is based on the Bible. We believe strongly what we believe, therefore we are willing to fight and to die for what we believe!

Yes, we are dogmatic in what we believe, and we take a dogmatic stand for the “faith once

delivered.”

Our Baptist Heritage is great. Our Baptists Heritage is glorious. Our Baptists distinctives will continue to shine as brightly in the future as any day in our history. We have a glorious, and victorious past, and we are assured of a bright, glorious, and victorious future.

I am convinced that when revival comes to America, it will come through the preaching of Baptist preachers, and the soul winning, revival ministry of Baptist churches.

If apostasy continues to sweep our land and the world, you will find Baptists still standing declaring, “Thus saith the Lord!”

Jesus asked the question, “...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Jesus is coming again. When He returns He will find “Faith on the earth.” Somewhere, a Baptist congregation will be meeting, and a Baptist preacher will be holding high the Word of God, and shouting, “Repent! Believe! Get saved! Ye must be born again! We will have a Baptismal service tonight, so get right with God!”

Therefore, the next time you pass a Baptist Church, “**TIP YOUR HAT!**”