

# HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS



Thomas Armitage, D.D.

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# **A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS**

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**By**

**Thomas Armitage, D.D.**

**(1819-1896)**

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A History of the Baptists  
Thomas Armitage, D.D.

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The cover picture is the church Dr. Clarke founded and remains active as a Reformed Baptist Church and carries the name of United Baptist Church, John Clarke Memorial in honor of its founder.

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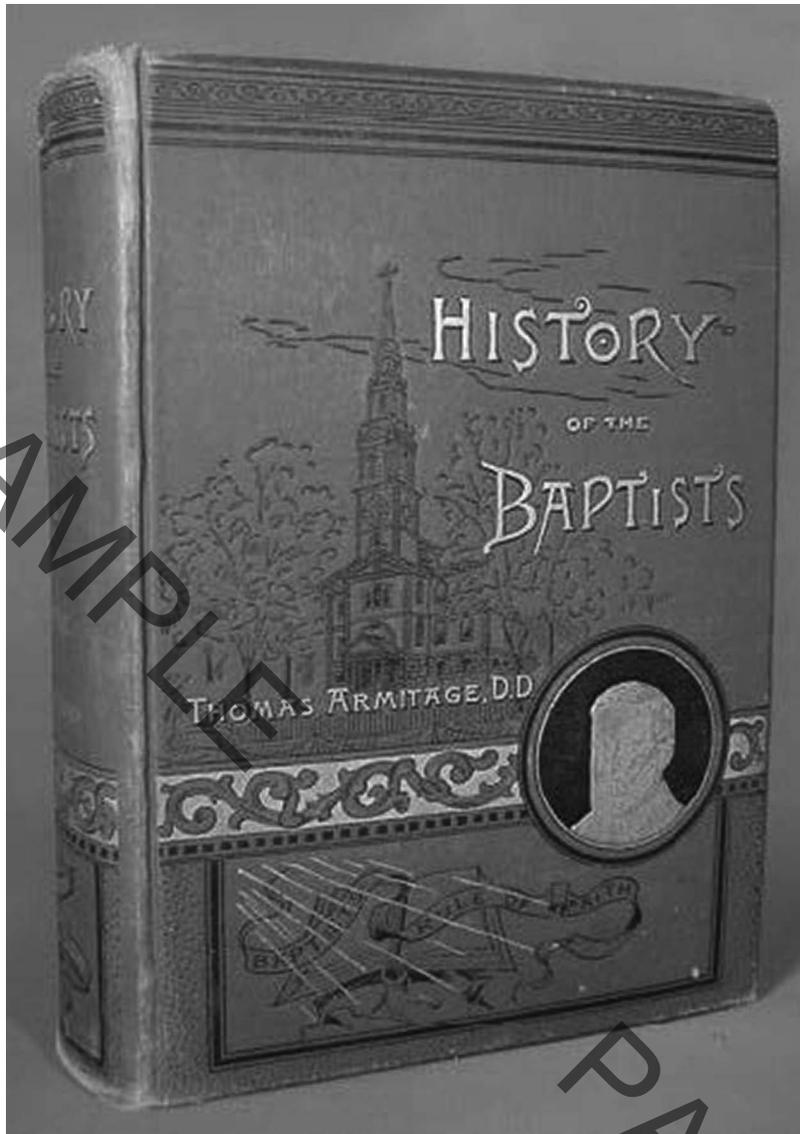
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**THE LIFE OF THOMAS ARMITAGE (1819-1896)**

AUTHOR OF -- *A History of the Baptists*. 2 Vol., New York, Bryan, Taylor & Co., 1890.  
1470 p.

The following is from the *Baptist Encyclopedia*, edited by William Cathcart, 1883, Louis H. Everts, Philadelphia:

Thomas Armitage was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1819. He is descended from the old and honored family of the Armitages of that section of Yorkshire, one of whom, Sir John Armitage of Barnsley, was created a baronet by Charles I in 1640. He lost his father at a tender age, and his mother when he was five years old. She was the grand-daughter of the Rev. Thomas Barrat, a Methodist minister. She had great faith in Jesus, and prayed often and confidently for the salvation of her oldest son, Thomas. At her death she gave him

her Bible, her chief treasure, which she received as a reward from her teacher in the Sunday School. Her last prayer for him was that he might be converted and become a good minister of the Saviour.

The religious influence of his godly mother never forsook him. While listening to a sermon on the text, "Is it well with thee?" his sins and danger filled him with grief and alarm, and before he left the sanctuary his heart was filled with the love of Christ.

In his sixteenth year he preached his first sermon. His text was, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The truth was blessed to the conversion of three persons. He declined pressing calls to enter the regular ministry of the English Methodist Church, but used his gifts as a local preacher for several years.

Like many Englishmen he imbibed republican doctrines, and these brought him in 1838 to New York. He received deacon's orders from Bishop Waugh, and those of an elder from Bishop Morris. He filled many important appointments in the M. E. Church in New York, and when he united with the Baptists he was pastor of the Washington Street church in Albany, one of its most important churches, where the Lord had given him a precious revival and eighty converts. At this period his influence in the M. E. Church was great, and its highest honors were before him. When he was first examined for Methodist ordination, he expressed doubts about the church government of the Methodist body, and about sinless perfection, falling from grace, and their views of the ordinances; but he was the great-grandson of a Methodist minister, his mother was of that communion and he himself had been a preacher in it for years, and his misgivings were regarded as of no moment. In 1839 he witnessed a baptism in Brooklyn by the Rev. S. Usley, which made him almost a Baptist, and what remained to be done to effect that end was accomplished by another baptism in Albany, administered by the Rev. Jabez Swan of Connecticut. An extensive examination of the baptismal question confirmed his faith, and placed him without misgiving upon the Baptist platform in everything. Dr. Welsh baptized him into the fellowship of the Pearl Street church, Albany. Soon after a council was called to give him scriptural ordination. Dr. Welsh was moderator: Friend Humphrey, mayor of Albany, and Judge Ira Harris were among its members. A letter of honorable dismissal from the M. E. Church, bearing flattering testimony to his talents and usefulness, was read before the council, and after the usual examination he was set apart to the Christian ministry in the winter of 1848. He was requested to preach in the Norfolk Street church, New York, in the following June. The people were charmed with the stranger, and so was the sickly pastor, the Rev. George Benedict. He was called to succeed their honored minister, who said to Mr. Armitage, "If you refuse this call it will be the most painful act of your life." Mr. Benedict never was in the earthly sanctuary again. Mr. Armitage accepted the invitation in his twenty-ninth year, July 1, 1848. In 1853-54, 140 persons were baptized, and in 1857, 152 while other years had great blessings.

The first year of his ministry in Norfolk Street the meetinghouse was burned, and another erected. Since that time the church reared a house for God in a more attractive part of the city, which they named the "Fifth Avenue Baptist Church." The property is worth at least \$150,000 and it is free from debt. The membership of the church is over 700. In 1853,

Mr. Armitage was made a Doctor of Divinity by Georgetown College, Ky. He was then in his thirty-fourth year.

At a meeting held in New York, May 27, 1850, by friends of the Bible, Dr. Armitage offered resolutions which were adopted, and upon which the Bible Union was organized two weeks later, with Dr. S. H. Cone as its president and W. H. Wyckoff, LL.D. as its secretary. In May, 1856, Dr. Armitage became the president of the society. In this extremely difficult position he earned the reputation of being one of the ablest presiding officers in our country. The Bible Union reached its greatest prosperity while he presided over its affairs.

Dr. Armitage is a scholarly man, full of information, with a powerful intellect; one of the greatest preachers in the United States; regarded by many as the foremost man in the American pulpit. We do not wonder that he is so frequently invited to deliver sermons at ordinations, dedications, installations, missionary anniversaries, and to college students. As a great teacher in Israel, the people love to hear him, and their teachers are delighted with the themes and with the herald.

Seventeen years ago a gentleman wrote of Dr. Armitage, "The expression of his face is one of mingled intelligence and kindness. As he converses it is with animation, and his eyes sparkle. His manners are easy, graceful, and cordial. He fascinates strangers and delights friends. He appears before you a polished gentleman, who wins his way to your esteem and affection by his exalted worth." The description has been confirmed by time.

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### A REMARKABLE INCIDENT

(The following is from an updated clipping of the *Watchman* paper, probably about 1885.)

A remarkable episode in a public religious service once occurred while a minister was preaching from the brief text, "Is it well with thee?" (2 Kings 4:26) which refers to Elisha and the Shunamite woman, at a little church in Yorkshire, England, in the year 1831. The minister was a good man with no little gospel power in his heart and manner, and he made it solemnly plain to the auditory that the Saviour was present, looking into their thoughts with kind inquiry, and testing the spirit of every one. "Is it well with thee? Is it well with thee?"

Suddenly an exclamation was heard from one of the pews, and a boy twelve years old, who had been intently listening, fell on his knees and began to weep and pray. A strange thrill ran through the congregation, and many rose to their feet. The minister paused in his sermon, and all attention was riveted on the kneeling boy. Everybody knew little Tommy, for he belonged to one of the Yorkshire families, and his ancestors of Barnsley had worn the arms of a baronet. He was a bright, gifted boy, now six years motherless, but carrying in his heart the indelible impression of his mother's early religious teachings.

The honest Yorkshire people felt too deeply themselves the effect of the sermon to misunderstand Tommy's emotion. They did not think he was crazy. The minister did not. "Let us pray," he said for he saw more need of prayer than preaching at a moment when before men and angels a young soul first spoke its want. The whole congregation at once assumed the attitude of devotion. Many strong and loving petitions went up to God for the little boy whom, like Samuel, he had called in his own tabernacle.

The scene was a strange one--that sudden prayer meeting in the middle of sermon time. The prayers were answered, too. Tommy rose from his knees with a radiant face. Thenceforth the seal of a divine anointing was on him. For the next eight years he continued to give increasing proofs of a Christian spirit and Christian zeal, and rare and happy fitness for winning souls. When very young, he was licensed to preach. At the age of twenty he left his native land and came to the United States. Since then he has not neglected the gift that is in him. The voice that so long ago said to him, on the other side of the sea, "Is it well with thee?" has ever been gladly recognized, and he has "followed Jesus all the way." It led him to Long Island; it led him to Albany; it led him down the Hudson again--and very many whom his words first taught the heavenly lesson now know "It is well" with them. Today few stand higher among the American ministry or more honored of the Great Master, than Tommy, the Yorkshire boy--now Dr. Thomas Armitage of New York.

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## PREFACE

Early in the summer of A.D. 1882 the publishers of this work called upon the author to confer on the desirableness of issuing a Baptist history. He laid before them the histories extant by our writers, commending their merits. They said that, after examination of these, whilst each filled a peculiar niche in Baptist history, they were satisfied that a larger and more comprehensive work was demanded by the present public want, and requested him to undertake the task of preparing one.

This request was declined on account of its inherent difficulty and the pressure of a large New York pastorate. He submitted two or three weighty names of those who, in his judgment, were in every way better qualified for the work, among them the late Dr. William R. Williams, and wrote letters of introduction to these several gentlemen. In a few weeks they returned, stating that they had consulted not only those referred to, but other well-known Baptist writers, each of whom suggested that, as the author had devoted years to the examination of the subject, he owed it to his denomination to write and publish thereon.

After fuller consideration he consented to make the attempt, with the distinct understanding that he should be entirely unfettered in regard to the principle on which the work should be written. He saw at a glance that as Baptists are in no way the authors or offspring of an ecclesiastical system, that, therefore, their history cannot be written on the current methods of ecclesiastical history. The attempt to show that any religious body has come down from the Apostles an unchanged people is of itself an assumption of infallibility, and contradicts the facts of history.

Truth only is changeless, and only as any people have held to the truth in its purity and primitive simplicity has the world had an unchanging religion. The truth has been held by individual men and scattered companies but never in an unbroken continuity by any sect as such. Sect after sect has appeared and held it for a time, then has destroyed itself by mixing error with the truth; again, the truth has evinced its divinity by rising afresh in the hands of a newly organized people, to perpetuate its diffusion in the earth.

It is enough to show that what Christ's churches were in the days of the Apostles, that the Baptist churches of today find themselves. The truths held by them have never died since Christ gave them, and in the exact proportion that any people have maintained these truths they have been the true Baptists of the world. The writer therefore, refused to be bound in his investigations by an iron obligation to show a succession of people who have held all the principles, great and small, of any sect now existing--no more and no less.

When Roger Williams left his followers they were in great trepidation lest they had not received baptism in regular succession from the Apostles, as if any body else had. They heard, however, that the Queen of Hungary had a list of regularly baptized descendants from the Apostles, and were half persuaded to send their brother, Thomas Olney, to

obtain it at her hands. Still, on the second sober thought, they could not swallow this dose of the essence of popery, and concluded not to make themselves ridiculous. Whereupon Backus solemnly says, that at length they ‘concluded such a course was not expedient, but believing that now they were got into the right way, determined to persevere therein.’ Thus, once more, wisdom was justified in her children, under the application of the radical anti-Romish principle that the New Testament is the only touch-stone of Christian history. The men who obey it in all things today, the men who have obeyed it since it was written, and the men who wrote it, are of one flock, under the one Shepherd, whose holy body John buried beneath the waters of the Jordan.

The author has aimed, so far as in him lay, to command accuracy of statement with a style adapted to the common reader in our churches, thus especially reaching and interesting the young and making the work a reliable reference for all.

A lamentable lack of intelligence exists amongst us in regard to our origin and principles as Baptists. This book is written for the purpose of putting within the reach of all such facts as shall inform them of their religions history and what it cost the fathers of our faith to defend the same.

While cumbrous notes have been dispensed with, yet, for the benefit of those who honestly desire to inform themselves, references upon important points to authorities, mostly Pedobaptists, are given at the close of the volume. For the same reason the work is a defense and an exposition of our distinctive principles, as well as a history. Biography is here combined with history proper, and numerous portraits are given, chiefly of those not now living.

The engravings of the volume, with the exception of the steel-plate of the author, have been executed by the experienced hand of John D. Felter, Esq., whose ability and artistic skill are widely recognized. The letter-press and mechanical finish of the book are all that can be desired, even in this age of elegant printing, and bespeak the public favor for the gentlemanly publishers, who, by their enlarged business generosity, have secured to the reading public this volume in the best style of the printing art.

Whilst the author has noticed at length the rise and progress of the Baptists in the several States of the Union, he has not been able to present, with but few exceptions, the history of local churches and associations. To have attempted this would have extended the work far beyond the prescribed limit, and, owing to the great number of Baptist churches, the result must necessarily, have been meager and unsatisfactory.

The author has done his work in all candor, with a sincere regard to the purpose of history and the maintenance of truth. He sends it forth with the prayer that it may fulfil its mission and afford profit to all who peruse its pages. Despite the utmost care to avoid mistakes, it is very likely that some have crept into the text, but on discovery they will be promptly corrected hereafter.

It was desirable to seek the aid of several young scholars, specialists in their

departments, who have rendered valuable service by the examination of scarce books and documents, and submitted their own suggestions for consideration. Of these it is specially pleasant to mention :

Rev. W.W. Everts, Jr` of Philadelphia, who has devoted a large portion of his life to the study of ecclesiastical history, and has had rare opportunities, as a student in Germany, to make himself acquainted with the records of the Continental Baptists. He has made his investigations with great care and enthusiasm:

Henry C Vedder, Esq., a junior editor of the ‘ Examiner,’ and an editor of the ‘ Baptist Quarterly.’ He is especially at home in all that relates to the Baptists in the time of the English Commonwealth, and has shown superior ability in examining that period:

Rev. George E. Horr, Jr., of Charlestown, Mass., who is thoroughly acquainted with the American period of our history, and in his researches has made free use of the libraries at Cambridge and Boston, turning them to most profitable account.

The first two of these gentlemen have also read the proofs of the respective departments to which they have thus contributed.

Rev. J. Spinther James, of Wales, was recommended by Rev. Hugh Jones, late president of the Llangollen College, as quite competent to make investigations in the history of the Welsh Baptists. These he has made and submitted, having had special facilities for information in the library of that institution.

Hon. Horatio Gates Jones, of Philadelphia, consented to prepare a full Baptist bibliography, but a press of legal business has prevented the accomplishment of his work, after devoting much time to the subject.

The portraits of these gentlemen are grouped, and preface the American department. It is but honorable to add, that none of these scholars are to be held responsible for any statement of fact or for any sentiment found in the book; that is entirely assumed by the author.

Hearty and sincere thanks are hereby rendered to Frederick Saunders, Esq., librarian of the Astor Library, for many attentions, especially for the use of Garruci, in photographing ten of the illustrations found in the chapter on Baptismal Pictures; to Dr. George H. Moore, of the Lenox Library, for the use of the great Bunyan collection there; and to Henry E. Lincoln, Esq., of Philadelphia, and Rev. Daniel C. Potter, D.D., of New York, for photographs used.

The author owes a debt of gratitude also to T.J. Conant, D.D`LL.D., for his kindness in reading the proof-sheets of the chapters on the Baptism of Jesus and the Apostolic Churches as Models ; to Heman Lincoln, D.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the Newton Theological Seminary, who examined the proofs on the Second and Third Centuries; to Albert H. Newman, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Church History in the Toronto

Theological Seminary, who read all the chapters on the Continental Baptists from that on the Waldensians to that on the Netherlands; to Rev. D. McLane Reeves, D.D., of Johnstown, N. Y., who read the chapter on the Waldensians; to Rev. Owen Griffith, editor of the 'Y Wawr,' Utica, N. Y., who read the proof of the chapter on the Welsh Baptists; to Henry S. Burrage, D.D., editor of *Zion's Advocate*, who examined the two chapters on the Swiss Baptists; to S. F. Smith, D.D., of Mass., who has aided largely in the chapter on Missions; to Reuben A. Guild, LL.D., Librarian of Brown University, who read most of the proofs of the chapters on the American Baptists; to J. E. Wells, M.A., of Toronto, who furnished much material for the chapter on the Baptists in British America; and to Rev. J. Wolfenden, of Chicago, Ill., for many facts concerning the Australian Baptists. Each of these scholars made invaluable suggestions, laying both the author and the reader under great obligations.

Acknowledgments of debt are also made to Rev. William Norton, A.M., of Chulmleigh, England, and to Rev. Joseph Angus, D.D., LL.D., Principal of Regents Park College, London, for the examination of works not easily found in this country. Also to William Cathcart, D.D., of Philadelphia; Henry G. Weston, D.D., of Crozer Theological Seminary; to Howard Osgood, D.D., of the Rochester Theological Seminary; to Ebenezer Dodge, D.D., LL.D., president of Madison University; to Rev. Frederic Denison, of Providence, R. I.; to Hon. William H. Potter, to Hon. L.M. Lawson, Roger H. Lyon, Esq., and Dr. S. Ayers, of New York; and to D. Henry Miller, D.D., of Connecticut. The General Index has been prepared by Mr. Henry F. Reddall, of New York. Many other friends have kindly assisted the author in various ways in the preparation of the work, who will please accept his devout thanks; and last, but not least, those members of the press who have voluntarily spoken so kindly of the work on the inspection of portions of the manuscript personally or by their correspondents.

Thomas Armitage,  
Parsonage, No. 2, West 46th St., New York  
January 1, 1887

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## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

### HAVE WE A VISIBLE SUCCESSION OF BAPTIST CHURCHES DOWN FROM THE APOSTLES?

On the western coast of India, near Goa, and also in the Mediterranean, springs of fresh water, which do not rise to the surface but are run off by the undercurrent, rush out of the strata at the bottom of the sea. But in the Gulf of Xagu, on the southern coast of Cuba, a wonderful fountain of fresh water gurgles up in the open sea; forcing aside its salt waters, it passes off in the surface-current and is lost in the ocean. From this spring navigators often draw their supplies of pure water in the midst of the briny waste. Here nature lends us a forceful type of the fact that there may be a flow of visible succession without purity, and that there maybe a continuous purity without a flow of visible succession.

Is an unbroken, visible, and historical succession of independent Gospel Churches down from the apostles, essential to the valid existence of Baptist Churches today, as apostolic in every sense of the word? This question suggests another, namely, Of what value could any lineal succession be as compared with present adherence to apostolic truth? From these two questions a third arises: Whether true, lineage from the Apostolic Churches does not rest in present conformity to the apostolic pattern, even though the local church of today be self-organized, from material that never came out of any church, provided that it stands on the apostolicity of the New Testament alone. The simple truth is, that the unity of Christ's kingdom on earth is not found in its visibility, any more than the unity of the solar system is found in that direction, for its largest domain never falls under the inspection of any being but God. So, likewise, the unity of Christianity is not found by any visible tracing through one set of people. It has been enwrapped in all who have followed purely apostolic principles through the ages; and thus **the purity of Baptist life is found in the essence of their doctrines and practices by whomsoever enforced.** Little perception is required to discover the fallacy of a visible apostolical succession in the ministry, but visible Church succession is precisely as fallacious, and for exactly the same reasons. The Catholic is right in his theory that these two must stand or fall together; hence he assumes, *ipso facto*, that all who are not in this double succession are excluded from the true apostolic line. And many who are not Catholics think that if they fail to unroll a continuous succession of regularly organized churches, they lose their genealogy by a break in the chain, and so fail to prove that they are legitimate Apostolic Churches. Such evidence cannot be traced by any Church on earth, and would be utterly worthless if it could, because the real legitimacy of Christianity must be found in the New Testament, and nowhere else.

The very attempt to trace an unbroken line of persons duly baptized upon their personal trust in Christ, or of ministers ordained by lineal descent from the apostles, or of churches organized upon these principles, and adhering to the New Testament in all things, is in itself an attempt to erect a bulwark of error. Only God can make a new creature; and the

effort to trace Christian history from regenerate man to regenerate man, implies that man can impart some power to keep up a succession of individual Christians. Apply the same thought to groups of churches running down through sixty generations, and we have precisely the same result. The idea is the very life of Catholicism. Our only reliable ground in opposition to this system is: That if no trace of conformity to the New Testament could be found in any Church since the end of the first century, a Church established today upon the New Testament life and order, would be as truly a historical Church from Christ, as the Church planted by Paul at Ephesus. Robert Robinson has well said:

‘Uninterrupted succession is a specious lure, a snare set by sophistry, into which all parties have fallen. And it has happened to spiritual genealogists as it has to others who have traced natural descents, both have woven together twigs of every kind to fill up remote chasms. The doctrine is necessary only to such Churches as regulate their faith and practice by tradition, and for their use it was first invented... Protestants, by the most substantial arguments, have blasted the doctrine of papal succession, and these very Protestants have undertaken to make proof of an unbroken series of persons, of their own sentiments, following one another in due order from the apostles to themselves.’

[Robinson, *Ecclesiastical Researches*, pp. 475,476]

Sanctity is the highest title to legitimacy in the kingdom of God, because holiness, meekness, and self-consecration to Christ are the soul of real Church life; and without this pedigree, antiquity cannot make Church existence even reverent. This sanctity is evinced by the rejection of error and the choice of truth, in all matters which the New Testament has enjoined, either by precept or example. In things of light import, demanding a robust common sense, the noble and courteous spirit of Jesus must be maintained, for personal holiness is the highest test of Christianity in all its historical relations. But this matter of visible Church succession is organically connected with the idea of Church infallibility, rather than of likeness to Christ. The twin doctrines were born of the same parentage, and the one implies the other, for a visible succession must be pure in all its parts, that is, infallible; if it is corrupt in some things, no logical showing can make it perfect. **Truth calls us back to the radical view, that any Church which bears the real apostolic stamp is in direct historical descent from the apostles, without relation to any other Church past or present.** In defense of this position the following considerations are submitted to all candid minds:

**1. THAT CHRIST NEVER ESTABLISHED A LAW OF CHRISTIAN PRIMOGENITURE BY WHICH HE ENDOWED LOCAL CHURCHES WITH THE EXCLUSIVE POWER OF MORAL REGENERATION, MAKING IT NECESSARY FOR ONE CHURCH TO BE THE MOTHER OF ANOTHER, IN REGULAR SUCCESSION, AND WITHOUT WHICH THEY COULD NOT BE LEGITIMATE CHURCHES.**

those who organized the churches in apostolic times went forth simply with the lines of doctrine and order in their hands, and formed new churches without the authority or even the knowledge of other churches. Some of these men were neither apostles nor pastors, but private Christians. Men are born of God in regeneration and not of the Church. They have no ancestry in regeneration, much less are they the offspring of an organic ancestry.

The men who composed the true Churches at Antioch and Rome were ‘born from above,’ making the Gospel and not the Church the agency by which men are ‘begotten of God.’ **This Church succession figments shifts the primary question of Christian life from the apostolic ground of truth, faith and obedience, to the Romanistic doctrine of persons. and renders an historic series of such persons necessary to administer the ordinances and impart valid Church life.** How does inspiration govern this matter? ‘Whoso abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any man cometh to you and bringeth not this teaching receive him not.’ **Pure doctrine, as, it is found uncorrupted in the word of God, is the only unbroken line of succession which can be traced in Christianity.** God never confided his truth to the personal succession of any body of men: man was not to be trusted with the Custody of this precious charge, but the King of the truth has kept the keys of the truth in. his Own hand. The true Church of Christ has ever been that which has stood upon his person and work.

Whitaker, treating of this blunder of the hierarchy, says, ‘*Faith*, therefore, is, as it were, the soul of the succession; which, being wanting, a naked succession of persons is a dead body.’ [i, 506] Tertullian says, ‘If any of the heretics dare to connect themselves with the Apostolic Age, that they may seem to be derived from the Apostles as existing under them, we may say: Let them, therefore, declare the origin of their Churches, let them exhibit the series of their bishops, as coming down by a continued succession from the beginning, as to show their first bishop to have been some apostle or apostolic man as his predecessor or ordainer, and who continued in the same faith with the Apostles. For this is the way in which the Apostolical Churches calculate the series of their bishops.’ [De Præscript, C. 32] Ambrose takes the same ground, thus: ‘They have not the inheritance, are not the successors of Peter who have not the *faith* of Peter.’ Gregory (Nazianzen), in defending the right of Athanasius, to the chair of Alexandria, against his opponent, uses these words: ‘This succession of piety ought to be esteemed the true succession, for he who maintains the same *doctrine of faith* is partner in the same chair; but he who defends the contrary doctrine, ought, though in the chair of St. Mark, to be esteemed an adversary to it. This man, indeed, may have a nominal succession, but the other has the very thing itself, the succession in deed and in truth.’

Calvin’s view is in harmony with this testimony; he says: ‘I deny the succession scheme as a thing entirely without foundation. This question of being successors of the Apostles must be decided by an examination of the doctrines maintained.’ Zanchius gives the same view: ‘When personal succession, alone, is boasted of, the purity of true Christian *doctrine* having departed, there is no legitimate ministry, seeing that both the Church and the ministry of the Church are bound not to persons, but to the *word of God*.’ Bradford, the martyr, truly said of the Church, that she is ‘Not tied to succession, but to the word of God.’ And Stillingfleet says, with spirit: ‘Let succession know its place, and learn to vaile bonnet to the Scriptures. The succession so much pleaded by the writers of the primitive Church was not a succession of persons in apostolic power, but a succession of *apostolic doctrine*.’

On this ground it follows, that those who hold to a tangible succession of Baptist

Churches down from the Apostolic Age, must prove from the Scriptures that something besides holiness and truth is an essential sign of the Church of God. The whole pseudo-apostolic scheme, from its foundation, was a creation of the hierarchy for the purposes of tyranny. **The question of veracity is of vastly more moment in Baptist history than that of antiquity.** Veracity accepts all truth without regard to time; gathering it up, and putting it on record exactly as it has been known through the centuries. Historic truth has many parts in harmony with each other, but the hard and fast lines of visible succession are those of a mere system and not those of true history. The Bible is the deep in which the ocean of Gospel truth lies, and all its streams must harmonize with their source, and not with a dreamy, sentimental origin. As it is not a Gospel truth that Christ has lodged the power of spiritual procreation in his Churches, so it is not true that all who come not of any givenline of Church stock are alien and illegitimate.

## **II. OUR LORD NEVER PROMISED AN ORGANIC VISIBILITY TO HIS CHURCH IN PERPETUITY, AMONGST ANY PEOPLE OR IN ANY AGE.**

He endowed his Church with immortal life when he said: 'The gates of hell (Hades) shall not prevail against it.' But this has nothing to do with the question of a traceable or hidden existence. He gives his pledge that his Church shall not perish, and he has secured to her this stability. The forces of death have proudly dashed themselves against her a thousand times, but despite their rage, she stands firmly built on a 'Rock.' She has been driven into the wilderness again and again, as a helpless woman, to find a home as best she could. Its fastnesses, wastes, dens and caves, have invited her to their secrecy and shelter; but though her members have been driven like chaff before the wind, she has never been destroyed. An army is not overthrown when withdrawn from the field, it is retired only to make it indestructible. A grain of wheat enswathed and hidden in a pyramid for thousands of years grows as fresh as ever when brought back to light and moisture. So Christ signally evinces his watch-care over his Church when he brings her into a secret retreat for safety, or as John expresses it, into 'her place prepared by God,' that she may be 'nourished for a time,' to come forth stronger than ever. Men have often thoughtthe Church dead, first amongst this people and then that, when she was more alive than ever for her occasional invisibility. At such times her organization has been broken, her ordinances suspended, her officers slain, her members ground to powder; but **she has come forth again, not in a new array of the same persons, but in the revival of old truths amongst a new people,** to reproduce new and illustrious examples of faithful men. Christianity has been one web through which the golden band of truth has been visible from edge to edge at times, then a mere thread has been seen, then it has been fully covered by the warp. But anon, it has re-appeared as bright as ever, from its long invisibility.

## **III. CHRIST NEVER PROMISED TO HIS CHURCHES THEIR ABSOLUTE PRESERVATION FROM ERROR.**

He promised his Spirit to lead his Apostles into all truth, and kept his word faithfully when they wrote and spoke as the Spirit moved them. But when he had finished the inspired rule for their guidance, he did not vouchsafe to keep them pure, *volens volens*.

They might mix error and false doctrine with his truth, and disgrace themselves by corrupting admixtures; but the loss and responsibility were theirs. To have pledged them unmixed purity for all time despite their own self-will was to endow them with infallibility, which is precisely the doctrine of Rome and a contradiction of all reliable history. Even in the first century there was great defection from the truth, as the Epistles show. Some of them were written, indeed, for the express purposes of correcting error, especially the latter writings of Paul and John. From the second to the fourth century, we find a rapid departure from inspired truth, with many sects, and no churches exactly after the Apostolic order. Some few men, original thinkers who followed no man's teachings, broke loose from the leadership of all. They went independently to the text of Scripture, but stood single-handed, and took with them some error from which they could not free themselves, so that they fell below their own ideal; and the original model was not restored for some length of time. Nay, more than this even is true. Those organic bodies of men who were drawn together into reformed churches, were moved by mixed motives, and in attempting a new order of things few of them came up to the New Testament standard in all respects. **And the failure to reach that standard in all churches has been so marked as to render it vain to look for a visible line of succession, which constitutes the only true Church descent from Apostolic times to ours. Some churches have been faithful to one divine truth and some to another, but none have embodied all the truth and few individual men now known to us have kept all the requisitions of the gospel.**

This principle of infallibility and Church succession is the central corruption of Rome, and has so polluted her faith that she scarcely holds any truth purely, both in the abstract and the concrete. She believes in the proper Deity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit,--in the Unity and Trinity of the Godhead,--in the authenticity and inspiration of the Scriptures,--in the doctrines of incarnation and atonement,--and in eternal glory and retribution. But which of these has she not modified and perverted, under the pretense that she is endowed with Catholicity and perpetual visibility, as the rightful church Apostolic, all her defilement to the contrary? and now she makes her errors her real life. What is true of the hierarchy is equally true of most of the bodies which have protested against and shaken off her heresies. They clung to some truths which she trod underfoot, but they hugged some of her errors as closely as she hugged them, defended them as stoutly, and often persecuted unto death those who differed with them, even in minor matters.

**IV. THE WORLD IS VASTLY MORE INDEBTED TO A LINE OF INDIVIDUAL MEN WHO HAVE CONTENDED FOR THE TRUTH, EACH BY HIMSELF, THAN TO ANY ORGANIC CHURCHES, WHICH CAN BE TRACED BY VISIBLE SUCCESSION FROM THE APOSTLES, UNDER ANY NAME WHATEVER.**

In religion, as in other departments of life, great movements have almost always centered in one or two isolated individuals, who have become immensely influential, by first turning their eyes upon the needs of their own souls, without human aid, and generally in opposition to all organizations. External influences had little to do in shaping their

powers. They were molded above and in advance of their age, and created a new life for all about them, often far outside of their native sphere. First of all they were obliged to escape from and master themselves, then they led their times into a higher and purer godliness. God wrought some grand consummation by them without the aid of any local church, under those uniform laws of truth by which Christ's kingdom has ever been governed. These powerful examples, scattered through the centuries, show that not organization but regenerated manhood makes true history, as we might expect from the fact, that the foundation of Gospel obedience is laid in the deep soul-convictions of individual men.

The most marked discoveries and advancements of history have been made, not on the plans of concerted bodies, but by individual minds. Galileo seized the idea of the telescope from a casual glance at a boy holding a tube to his eye; and Newton found the law that binds the universe in a falling apple. So, the few who have been impregnated with holy purposes, saturated through and through with fidelity to Christ, have arisen in imperial strength to vindicate his truth; these are the Alpine peaks that mark the centuries. Their love to Christ held their action responsible to him, and made its final results safe. Religious systems arose out of their personal exertions, but when did a religious system create a new life, after the first century? Baptists are greater debtors to such a train of men than to any train of churches that can be named. This great law of individuality has not escaped the notice of skeptics. Matthew Arnold says, in his *Introduction to Literature and Dogma*: 'Jesus Christ, as he appears in the Gospels, and for the very reason that he is manifestly above the heads of his reporters there, is, in the jargon of modern philosophy, an absolute; we cannot explain him, cannot get behind him, and above him, cannot command him. He is, therefore, the perfection of our ideal, and it is as an ideal that the divine has its best worth and reality. The unerring and consummate felicity of Jesus, his prepossessingness, his grace and truth, are moreover at the same time the law for right performance on all great men's lines of endeavor, although the Bible deals with the line of conduct only.' Goethe speaks of the person of Christ in the same strain: 'The life of that divine man, whom you allude to, stands in no connection with the general history of the world in his time. It was a private life; his teaching was for individuals. What has publicly befallen vast masses of people, and the minor parts which compose them, belongs to the general history of the world, the religion we have named the first. What inwardly befalls individuals, belongs to the second religion, the philosophical: such a religion was it that Christ taught and practiced so long as he went about on earth.'

This tribute to Christ from such sources may be applied largely to those who have pre-eminently imbibed his spirit, were made what they were by closely following him, and who lived singly to his glory. The distinctive religious life which they introduced into their times was in advance of their day, as his life was in advance of his day. Their progress was slow, like his, because they set up a high mark and suffered for it; their patience and growth drew men to their side. and when they retired, perhaps as martyrs, their aim was reached by the world, so that that which others first scouted became necessary at last to their bliss. Some few such men drew the historic boundary lines, as a few headlands mark the entire 'sweep of a dim sea-coast. The truths which they insisted upon were changeless, though they were neglected under the reign of ignorance, or the

sway of violence. But the king-men were not to blame for the dwarfishness of others. They gave unity to the centuries by keeping the struggle alive for the purity of eternal principles, the idea for which they suffered has interpreted its priceless value by their sufferings. Because the masses of the people were ignorant they were ferocious, for in the Middle Ages men did not seek high principle in troops; as great souls only can prefer a pure religion to one that is corrupt, one that is simple to one that is complicated, one from heaven and unstamped by earthly and grotesque intermixtures. The natural creed of the masses lodges in ceremony, mummery and external sanctity, and simple purity is too great to enlist admiration, when men prefer sophistication. Of course, where such religion is preferred there can be few men of gigantic stature.

Then, it often happens that men of high excellence rise in character far above their creed, for in historic religion creed and character do not always harmonize. When a few men rise above the character of a whole people they rise above the level of their age, and in that case they must pay a large price in suffering for the purpose of blessing their race; a price that but few are able to pay. A great mind of our day avows, 'That in the whole period from the sixth to the tenth century, there were not in all Europe more than three or four men who dared to think for themselves;' and even they were not classed with the creators of their age. They were neither rulers nor statesmen, but quiet and unobserved suggesters, who discovered abuses and pointed out remedies which future times were proud to apply. Chiefly through this order of mind we are to trace the record of Baptist sentiments, but **the name 'Baptist' must not mislead us to enlist into our ranks men who would be unworthy of that name today, simply because they held some things in common with ourselves.** Rather, we must embrace only those who cherished in full, the conception which both the New Testament Baptists and those of the nineteenth century set forth as underlying the entire kingdom of Christ. It is in the embodiment of these principles, whether in individuals or churches, that we are to look for true Baptist history. Because they are imbedded in the Bible we bow to their holy teachings, the antiquity of principles being quite another thing from the antiquity of organizations. As doctrines and practices originated in after times are late and new, we must reverence that antiquity alone which God uttered in the beginning. **A system running through ages is an empty boast unless it reproduces the vital, spiritual copy of the first age.**

For seventy years the Jews lost the line of the Passover, when Jerusalem lay in heaps and Israel was enslaved in Babylon, but when Hezekiah brought them back and restored the feast, the seventy missing links of festivity came with them. Two generations of their people had died and certain of their tribes were never heard of again, yet their true history as Jews was not broken nor the significancy of the Passover impaired, 'although they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it is written.' The moment that the Temple was rebuilt, its doors opened, and its lamps relit, the old authority of the institution revived. No Jewish household now living can trace its descent to any given tribe which existed at the fall of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. All have been so scattered and intermixed amongst themselves and the Gentiles, that tribal lines are entirely obliterated; yet none will deny that they are the direct descendants of Abraham. The principles above set forth are not those which have been generally adopted in Baptist history. But the writer is

persuaded that they are the only true channel through which it can be traced, and by which Baptists can be made a unit with Apostolic Churches, while visible descent and the unbroken succession of churches are not and cannot be a proper test in the matter. We enjoy the right of self-government in the United States by a regular descent of democracy from the Roman Republic, but it is impossible to trace its course by a line of democracies to which our own is the successor. But the two, separated so widely in point of time, are essentially the same in their liberties. Individuals have asserted the rights of man in every country, and bands have struggled to embody them in every government, but who will say that these have not been the true patriots of the world, because a perpetual and visible line of organized republics has not come down to us, side by side with a similar line of despotic governments?

Historical truth applies the same processes to the several streams of natural science. Certain families and tribes are found in vegetable and animal life; that is to say, a given type multiplies itself into groups, sequence being our guide; yet no scientist discards faith in the existence of a type, because he cannot trace its visible sequence, while again and again he finds its outward course strangely resumed. **So we speak of a people known as 'Baptists,' who have been substantially of one order of religious faith and practice, and have been made so by one order of religious principle. If crushed at one time, or entirely driven out of sight, others bearing the same Apostolic stamp and force have come forth to fill their places, under other names.** A sunbeam is a sunbeam, no matter upon what putrescence it may fall, or with what pollution it may mingle; and by a ray of this character we thread our way from Christ down in ecclesiastical life. **But the pretense that any one communion now on earth can trace it all the way down from the Apostles, in one line of fidelity and purity to New Testament teachings, is to contradict all reliable history.** Dr. Abel Stevens says: 'Obscure communities, as the Cathari of the Novatians, the Paulicians, the Albigenses, and the Waldenses, maintained the ancient faith in comparative purity from the beginning of the fourth century down to the Reformation.' **These and other sects held one or more distinctive Baptist principles, but none of them were thorough Baptists, through and through. A Baptist church is a congregation, and not a denomination of congregations, and find if in what nook we may if it can trace its doctrines to the Apostles it is an Apostolic Church.**

'A church,' says Dr. Ripley, 'that came into existence yesterday, in strict conformity to the New Testament principles of membership, far away from any long-existing church or company of churches and therefore unable to trace an outward lineal descent, is a true Church of Christ. While a church so-called, not standing on the Apostolic principles of faith and practice, and yet able to look back through a long line up to time immemorial, may have never belonged to that body of which Christ is the Head.'

The reader of religious history must be as honest as its writer, for the one is as much exposed to bias as the other. Yet, the exact facts which are found by the truthful historian are often condemned unweighed, because they are unpalatable; and true chronicles are often buried under the abuse which they heap upon the subject. For some reason much of this unfairness crops out, with many, whenever the truths of the New Testament are under

consideration. Hence a man only honors himself and the vital teachings of the Holy Spirit when he separates himself from all that is superficial in his own methods of examination. **Above all people, Baptists should be content to separate their history from all questionable material, and to write and read it in the form in which facts have cast it, its complete touchstone being conformity to the Gospel.** Those only have been Baptists who have conformed to this rule, from age to age, without addition or subtraction. **Error must eternally remain error, and no antiquity can sanctify it into truth.** For all the ends of truth merely venerable custom is weak; yet, if a supreme love of truth does not force it back, it will dominate the mind through the senses, which are captivated by the hoary. As the dykes of Holland repel the approaches of the sea, so Baptists can only reserve the fairest provinces of truth by resisting ancient custom, simply because it is ancient. Ecclesiastical custom is as mutable as its maker, and yet, when an old practice conflicts with the New Testament, many make that practice the true interpretation of God's word without questioning its authority. Although not one jot has been added to the truth since the death of the Apostle John, the bare antiquity of a tradition enshrines it in the faith of many, especially if it came down from one of the so-called 'Fathers.' A late able scholar of Dr. Wayland's illustrated the feeling of many on this subject. He asked whether, if the doctor had lived near the time of Paul, his word would not have been weightier than that of other men. The great tutor replied, 'Yes, provided Paul had said in his writings, "I leave Francis Wayland my interpreter."' And if not, how could he have interpreted an apostle better than any one else, without special inspiration from God? **The noblest minds are often crippled by this straining after uninspired antiquity, under the notion that it must touch the divine, without reaching after Christ's infallible ideal, when it stands openly before their eyes.**

Baptist historians have always written against great odds. Commonly those who rejected our principles in past ages were filled with bitterness, and destroyed the best sources of exact data in the shape of treatise narrative and record. The hated party was weak, and the dominant bought its destruction. Often these helpless victims of tyranny were obliged to destroy their own documents, lest discovery should overwhelm them in calamity. We shall see also that while many of the old sects were more or less imbued with Baptist principles, each had its own class of deductions, convictions and practices. In consequence, what was a cherished faith with one was held in contempt by another, and these states of mind became a part of the men themselves. Their different stages of faith were different stages of consciousness; and it came to pass, that to oppose each other fiercely was to attain high fidelity. In the dreary weakness of human nature each man held his own sect virtuous and the other vicious, all the time forgetting that as relative bodies they modified each other, and were largely responsible for each other's conduct. **Then, as the Baptists had control of no national government, they could not preserve their records as did others. They managed no legislation or system of civil jurisprudence, and could keep no archives, having no legal officers whose special business it was to store up and keep facts. Necessarily, therefore, what few records they have left are fragmentary, without due continuity of register, and almost barren of vital events. The hand which carried the sword to smite this people, carried also the torch to burn up their books, and their authors were reduced to ashes by the flames of their own literature. The material for building up**

**their chronicles is both crude and scanty.** The governing life of a people, and not circumstances alone, gives value to their claim, and so we are thrown back on principle and hard generalization.

If Baptist history be peculiar, it is only because they have been a peculiar people. Their enemies have always accounted them as ‘heretics,’ whose prime value was to keep a cold world warm by their use as fuel for the stake. Men have never been willing to understand them, because they never would accept them on their own showing, but have insisted on measuring them by other standards than their own. With a great price they obtained their freedom, and their radical individualism made them appear to other men as disturbing and even violent. In turn, almost every man’s hand has been against them, and as a people of but one book, they have taken a fixed and sturdy character, which has made them look as if their hand was against every man. What Burke said of Americans, in another line, is true of them in their devotion to the Bible, namely: ‘In no country, perhaps, in the world, is the law so general a study.’

We see, then, that Robinson, Crosby, Irving, Orchard, Jones, Backus, Benedict, Cramp, and other Baptist historians, have written under every possible disadvantage. Still, their work shows an instinctive love of the truth for the truth’s sake, worthy of such veterans. Their spirituality is elevated, their piety without guile, their devotion to the Gospel ardent, and their historical acumen quite equal to that of other Church historians. In the main, their leading facts and findings have not been proven untrustworthy, and no one has attempted to show that their general conclusions are untenable. Possibly, their chief mistake has lodged in the attempt to find the stray and casual links of a certain order of churches which may, by accommodation be called Baptist. The design of this work will be, to follow certain truths through the ages, on that radical Protestant principle which professes to discard the Romish claim of catholicity and succession, and so to follow certain truths down to their chief conservators of this time, the Baptists. By this method we can best understand their battles with error and power, their defeats and victories. In general history no writer will be content to seek a succession of kings and courts, of warriors and bloody fields, but he will find truth in the social and civil life of a people, in the march of constitutional freedom, and the phenomena of human elevation.

The best service that can be rendered to the Baptists is, to trace the noiseless energy and native immortality of the doctrines which they hold, after all their conflicts, to the glory of Christ, for it is exactly here that we see their excellency as a people. If it can be shown that their churches are the most like the Apostolic that now exist, and that the elements which make them so have passed successfully through the long struggle, succession from the times of their blessed Lord gives them the noblest history that any people can crave. **To procure a servile imitation of merely primitive things has never been the mission of Baptists. Their work has been to promote the living reproduction of New Testament Christians, and so to make the Christlike old, the ever delightfully, new.** Their perpetually fresh appeal to the Scriptures as the only warrant for their existence at all must not be out off, in a foolish attempt to turn the weapons of the hierarchy against itself. The sword of the Spirit must still be their only arm of service, offensive and defensive. An appeal to false credentials now would not only cut them off from their old

roll of honor, but it would sever them from the use of all that now remains undiscovered and unapplied in the word of God. The distinctive attribute in the kingdom of Christ is life; not an historic life, but a life supernatural, flowing eternally from Christ alone by his living truth.

Such existence does not claim the right of long possession in this soil or that, or through this or that course of time; nor is this the best title by which Baptists can prove their heirship to their fair inheritance. So far from their right to live inhering in organic ancestry by ancient descent, their right to be, in the nineteenth century, comes by their oneness with the truth given by Christ in the first century. **Their present possession of that truth, is the testimony to their unity with an endless life, is their only authority for existence at any time, with or without human records, and shuts out all other considerations.** The life of all Gospel churches must center in the truth which has come down unscathed from Jesus Christ; we must find it here or nowhere, and there can be no course, extreme or *via media*, which applies the true test of Church life but this. A human figment may serve the ends of Catholicism, but as Baptists are not Romanists, only Christ and Apostolicity as they are found in the Divine Writings can suffice for them. The spirit and outcome of these in their normal form afford the staple for genuine Baptist History.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD

### JOHN THE BAPTIST

When Malachi finished the promissory books, BC 397, his vision shot the great gulf between the Old and New Revelations. He had just stated that on the other side 'The Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings,' and looking 400 years in advance he saw Christ's messenger, his own successor, in a young Judean prophet, and heard him uplift the cry 'Behold your God.' Nearly 4,000 years before Malachi, a four-headed river had flowed from Eden 'to water all the ends of the earth,' and His faith now descried on the banks of the antitypical Jordan, the Master with the messenger, two Godlike forms, each first-born, and cousins' sons. Whom Malachi saw in vision, Matthew met in real flesh and blood, the Baptist 'herald' and the Lord from heaven. The voice, 'Make straight his paths,' is the first sentence in Baptist history. No moral night had been so dark as that athwart which this prophet cast his eye to see the coming 'Day-star.' Only remnants of the old Jewish faith were left, and the national life was fast going forever, with that public patriotism, free thought and outspoken manliness, which had already perished.

At first God gave the Jews the most popular government of all the nations; it treated the personal man with honor and dignity. Though they had no human king or hereditary ruler from time to time, he gave them such a political head as war or peace required, with prerogatives which met present necessity. In time the theocracy gave witness to the unity of God, and its liberties were linked to this vital truth. This theistic doctrine made Jehovah their common Father, they were uncrippled by doubtful negations, untainted with atheism, and the ideal in each man's soul clothed his fellow with the rights of a brother. The radical teaching from which all abiding liberty flows is this: 'Love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.'

During the period between the last prophet and the first evangelist the Assyrian, Persian, and Macedonian empires, with their endless divisions and subdivisions, had culminated in the Roman Empire. This power absorbed into itself the sentiment, humanity, political economics, and religious philosophies of thousands of years, covering the histories of all the great races, Semitic and Indo-European, having welded the whole into a homogeneous mass. It had sprung from an obscure city more than seven centuries B.C. and now embraced the civilized world. The great republic had waged its renowned conflict between plebeians and patricians for constitutional government. The democratic spirit had passed away with its staunchest defender, the regal and republican forms of government having been swallowed up in the imperial under Augustus.

Palestine was but a hundred and eighty miles long, by about half that width. Yet, when John and Jesus came the officers of Rome were everywhere, with no jurisprudence left; only appeal to a heathen emperor, under privilege. Three native kings, indeed, divided the old Hebrew patrimony: Antipas, in Galilee; Philip, in Ituria; and Lysanius, in Abilene.

Still, over these was Pilate, the sixth procurator in twenty-three years, with the Governor of Syria over him, with Tiberius above all, and each ready to enforce his mandate by the arms of the empire. These tyrants quarreled alternately with each other, in turn issued conflicting commands, fleeced each other in particular, and the Jews universally. One Jewish party flattered and copied the native rulers, another the foreigners, and all were proud to serve as minor officers, if they might wring a crust out of official rapacity. A third party hated and defied the intruders, plotting revolt and sedition, which kept the nation in a seething excitement and its blood ever flowing. Yet, a few men of God never yielded heart or hope. However dark the hour of adversity their lamp was always burning. They waited for the Deliverer to break every yoke. Their fellows, worn-out, grounded arms and died, their eyes glazed with despair. But the love of Jehovah and liberty never forsook these. No matter if the red-handed family of the age held Jacob by the throat, the holy few felt the shadow of the King at the gate. If the iron had entered their soul it was not rusted by heart-tears. The time had come for a new manhood; a new revelation of truth and holiness was needed, fresh in righteousness and true holiness. An age of moral suasion was dawning to work a new character in the personal man. Then, from renewed individuals should come 'the kingdom of heaven,' in a regenerate society. Zacharias and Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna, felt their old hearts revive, because another Elijah was at the portal to open the golden age. Groans and strife, tears and blood, had tracked the horrid length of 400 years. At length there came a 'little child' to lead them, with a 'voice' to prepare his way; and when their withered arms pressed the reforming Baptist and his redeeming Lord to their bosoms, the 'first chapter in Baptist History was' begun.

Edward Irving truly says, 'John was the beginning of a new race.' But the words of Jesus better fix his proper place in history: 'Amen, I say unto you, among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist.' These words alone make him the most remarkable character on the sacred page, save only he who spoke them. Zacharias his father, was a priest in Israel, Elisabeth, his mother, was a daughter of Aaron. Not only had their priestly ancestry stretched down fifteen centuries, but they were 'filled with the Holy Spirit.' This is said of no other father and mother of our race. They feared that their honorable lineage would soon be blotted out, for they were old and childless. The words, 'Thy prayer is heard,' imply that their empty home had been the subject of petition at God's throne. He had promised them a son, and when he would fulfill his word, it fell to the lot of John's father to pass through the golden gate into the holy place to burn incense: a high and holy privilege which never was repeated by the same priest, as it brought him so near to Jehovah. Already the live coals had been carried in a fire-pan from the burnt offering, the sweet spices sprinkled thereon, and the floating perfume was on its way to the clouds, when lo! a mysterious form glided into the hallowed place. Gabriel stood by the altar, bright in native benignity. In a moment the temple heard the new revelation, that a son should be born in the home of the man of God.

Gabriel and Michael are the only angels called by name in the Bible. Michael is the judicial messenger, the destroyer, valiant for the Lord of Hosts in terrible warfare. The mission of Gabriel is peace, especially Messianic peace. At the 'evening oblation,' the

same hour of incense, he told Daniel that the Prince, Messiah, should come. He brought the same news to Mary, and to the father of John; the three cases ascribe to him the office of Messianic angel. *No* person but the priest could stand by the altar and live, and fear fell upon Zacharias when he saw that the celestial visitant did not fall dead. Then Gabriel broke the silence of four centuries, and opened the Baptist Age, saying: 'Fear not, thy wife shall bear a son, and his name shall be called John.' The venerable priest staggered through unbelief, and asked for a sign. Gabriel gave it in the very dumbness of the tongue that asked it until the child should be born. He then went forth to the people mute, beckoning, perhaps in an excited manner, but he could not pronounce the usual blessing, and they perceived that some strange thing had happened. He retired to his home at Hebron, or Juttah, near to Hebron, and remained, speechless for three fourths of a year.'

The 'city Juda,' the Levitical city of Juttah, as shown by Beland and Robinson, is about six miles south of Hebron, in the hill country, seventeen miles south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem stood 2,400 feet above the sea, and Hebron was 200 feet above that. Hebron was the ancient home of Abraham, where his pool still exists, the oldest now known in the world. This city had been given to the children of Aaron, 'with the suburbs thereof round about it,' and was a fitting birthplace of the Baptist, the greatest descendant of Aaron's house. Here David received his crown, and here were the sepulchers of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Leah. Rabbinical tradition says of this spot, that the morning sacrifice was never offered at the temple till the watchman on its tower saw these uplands ablaze with the newly-breaking morning sun. Zacharias saw this glory despite His speechless state, meanwhile Gabriel's words rang through his son concerning the coming child. The pledge: 'He shall be great before the Lord,' did not refer to his native wisdom, fidelity or influence, but royally set forth his great office; the great era which he should usher in, the great truths which he should proclaim--and, above all, the new stamp of manhood to be brought in his own person, as a specimen of those whom the new era was to produce. Without rank, or wealth, or power, he was to loom up above the old classes of good men, mighty before God. Consecrated to a greater work than any other man, and opening a greater future than any had foreseen, he was to take a higher type of moral character than any had yet borne. Of a priestly house, he was to offer no sacrifice, but was to preach the first Sacrifice from a princely house. Priesthood needed not the fullness of the Spirit, and seldom possessed it, but in order to establish the new office of preacher, to lead men to salvation, he needed the indwelling Spirit. Nor was the first prophet in four centuries to work a miracle, but simply to proclaim the Christ.

When the cry of the new-born babe had brought music to the quiet home, a dispute arose among the neighbors about his name, some calling him Zacharias. This could not be. No one was named after his own father in the Old Testament. 'Nay,' said his mother; 'he shall be called John,' meaning: 'Bestowed of the Lord.' The neighbors remonstrated, none of his family were known by that name, and they made signs to his father to decide the question, who wrote upon a tablet: 'His name is John!' The child was to begin the world's new sermon, and as it was meet that the Gospel theme which had been pent in his father's soul so long should break forth, the tongue of the dumb was unloosed. With his first gust of voice he cried: 'O, child! thou shalt be called prophet of the Highest, for

thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, in order to give knowledge of salvation to his people, in the remission of their sins.' It were worth the dead silence of a lifetime to speak these words. Their meaning was so broad, and their music so sweet, that the old priest repeated the word 'salvation' three times before he could stop. 'A horn of salvation,'--'salvation for our enemies,'--'salvation in the remission of sins,' was the astonishing threefold theme on which he practiced his new-found tongue, in the new-found language of truth. Gabriel put a key into his hand to open this mystery, saying: 'Fear not, Zacharias, many of the sons of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God;' in the converts whom John should make. Nay, he said, that 'the mouth of the holy prophets of old' had spoken of this 'redemption' as if the mystic fingers of dead Malachi were sweeping his old heart that day, till its chords vibrated as those of a harp. That child had brought the missing link between the two dispensations, had become the veritable bridge-builder, the true Christian pontiff, who spanned the arch from the last outskirts of Judaism to the frontier line of the Gospel. What manner of child was this first Baptist?

The Gospels are silent on John's youth and early manhood, saying: 'That the hand of the Lord was with him,' that he 'grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of His manifestation to Israel.' God marked him by special tokens for his great task. While his body grew his soul became mentally and morally mighty till he was ready for his public work. The inspired limner gives simply this bold outline which makes 'the hand of the Lord,' the power of God, the emblem of his force. Gabriel throws light upon his discipline when he imposes the Nazarite's vow, to 'drink neither wine nor strong drink.' Nothing inflaming was to pass his lips or affect his brain. The vow also exempted him from attendance at the feasts, and kept him separate until his 'showing unto Israel.' Samson, Samuel, and John were all Nazarites from birth, severe consecration and denial of luxury being specially needful in the forerunner of him who was separate from sinners. His father's priestly house furnished him with Hebrew Biblical knowledge, and held there under the holy influence of Elisabeth, like Moses in Midian and Elijah in the desert, no rabbi could pervert him, till he was ready to stir the life of Judea to its center, by the Gospel. Samson and Samuel were 'sanctified,' set apart to the Lord from their birth, but neither of them was filled with the Holy Spirit, as was the Baptist, one of the train of wonders in his character and mission.

It seems most likely that he left his home and plunged into the wilderness of Judea when he had passed his twentieth year, the time at which young priests were inspected by the Sanhedrin for their office. The 'deserts' which he entered are supposed to be that weary region that stretches over Western Judea, bordering on the Dead Sea, including its desolate basin. It includes Engedi, extending from the Kedron twelve miles south of Jerusalem to the south-western end of the Sea of Death, and in width, from thence to the mountains of Judea. It is not called a 'wilderness' for barrenness of vegetation, like the African sand-wastes. On the contrary, it is a perfect tangle of growth. Lonely and wild, the broom-brush, the stunted cedar, the osher, the rush and the Apple of Sodom, all flourish there, and nomads pasture their cattle with great profit. It is watered by the Kedron and other streams, their course lying dark and deep, in ravines and chasms, where all is grim and ribbed with rock, sometimes to the depth of 1,000 feet below the brow of the cliff.

This region abounds in gorges, crevices and caverns. It is torn by sharp precipices from the heaving of earthquakes, leaving the flint, chalk and limestone rents in every weird aspect. Rills of water gush forth, twisting their way here and there, or falling in cascades over crags and shelves, in haste to sweeten the acrid plain and sullen Sea of Salt. There, the jackal, the wolf, the fox, the panther, the boar, find their lairs and dens. From ridge to ridge, the hoarse scream of the vulture, the raven and eagle, echoes mingled with the pensive song of the thrush, and the drone of the bee, wandering from wild flower to wild flower, yellow and blue, crimson and white. In all its grandeur, this howling wilderness was the chosen home of the first Baptist. Its solemn desolation and wild elements preached to him of God, inured his body to hardship, and turned his soul inward upon itself. The parchment which warmed in his hand stirred him to communion with the Inspiring Spirit, who had invested its sentences with immortality, and proved its truths divine by their appeal to his heart. Life had coursed through the skin on which, the text glowed before the knife of slaughter flayed it; and now, the holy *afflatus*, which the sacred penman had infused into its texture, warmed his soul with the beatings of an immortal life. There, he listened to the still, small voice, as did Elijah in sacred Horeb, away from noise and contention, till his spirit waxed strong in God and in the power of His might.

In his austerity, this holy recluse wore the coarsest of raiment. The rough camel's hair-cloth, bound to his loins by a band of undressed leather, covered his limbs. Young and full of fire, he stood, the living image of courage, in the garb of the elder prophets. His Nazarite vow had kept his hair unclipped from birth, his diet was locusts, dried, ground, and eaten with wild honey which dripped from the rock, and he cooled his thirst at the spring wherever he roamed in the freedom of the desert. His removal from the uplands of Hebron into this somber desolation was not a mere incident. He must be equipped for his iron mission, as far as hardship could fit him to cope with moral evil. For years, he had been wrestling with the slow openings of his fore-felt work. Self-recognition had come glimpse by glimpse, till new insight had brought him into new sympathy with the Holy One who had sent him. Struggle after struggle had wrought in him an ardent spirituality, which rebukes sin with the quietest authority. Pleading with God day and night, the depravity of his brethren, and the hollowness of their ritual were echoed to his soul from the hollow rocks by his own foot-falls.

Did he pass his time amongst these grotts and caverns without studying the word of God? Without the Sacred Parchments brought from his father's house, the gold had become dim and the fine gold changed, he had not been a true Baptist if ignorant of these, to win his countrymen back to Jehovah. We can scarcely doubt, that in the desert these treasures showed him how the rod of Aaron, his great ancestor, should bloom again and his empty pot of manna be refilled. How the Nazarene, then sweating at the carpenter's bench should suddenly come to his Temple, to rekindle the Shekinah in new glory over the mercy-seat. The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms in his retreat, made his heart burn with prophetic fire, for he heard the voices of old Prophets quivering in the air. As night gives brilliancy to the gem, so did his desert gloom bring out lustrous truth from the inspired lore of ages, every line that he unrolled telling a divine story; for everywhere he found

his Redeeming kinsman of the tribe of Judah, of whose 'Salvation' his father had sung. God would not entrust the education of his greatest prophet to the skill of mortals. In visions of the night when deep sleep fell upon his father's house, fear came upon him and trembling, which made all his bones shake. An image stood before his eyes, spirits passed before his face and he heard a voice. When the breathing Parchment crackled in His hand, the pulsations of a deathless life stirred him, and the Holy Oracle was alive with living images. The flaming sword of Eden waved before him, and the ascending fire of Abel. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, told him that Jesus opened the gate of heaven, when he rose to his home without tasting death. Noah told the Baptist that the ark, wherein eight souls 'were saved through water,' was a type of his coming Captain. That when it rocked over an immersed world in the darkness of its grave, Jesus was the lamp which hung in its window above the gloomy deep. Nay, it was he who gave hues to the first rainbow that spanned the new world, when the eight elect antediluvians pitched their tents again on dry ground, and offered sacrifice under its radiant arch.

John also saw Abraham's day in the desert and was glad, when the great forefather assured him that he had seen the coming King, as he looked out from the steeps of Hebron. Isaac avouched to him that he had seen his Star, when he went into the fields at eventide to meditate; and Jacob declared, that at Bethel he saw Jesus standing at the top of the mystic ladder, and on his pillow of stone dreamed in the night watches about the glory of the latter day. David, the son of Jesse, showed the Baptist that his great Son guided his fingers over the Messianic harp, when his throne trembled in raptures, and living anthems flew like angels from the strings. Moses told him of the Rock that followed Israel, which 'Rock was Christ'; and Isaiah, that Jesus was the 'Stem' that blossomed by the house of Jesse, on the hill-side of Bethlehem. In a word, from the days of Eve, the mother of all living, to those of Mary, the mother of Jesus, the history of the Promised Seed was traced in the desert by the son of Elizabeth. And, yet, a few miles from his dingy retreat, the incarnate God had already been wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger.

All this fitted him for the office to which he was born, armed him with a fidelity which nothing could daunt to grapple with his adulterous generation. Without this strength defeat only awaited him. Being fully clad in celestial panoply, the word of the Lord said to him: 'Go,' and he arose to begin his true Baptist work. He emerged from the desert of the North, and came first upon the well-watered plain of the Jordan. His sandals then pressed the soil of Lot, on which the eye of Moses rested, when he died on Nebo. There the name of John became eternally united with the name of Jesus, the Christ. Whenever an Oriental monarch passed through his realms, a herald went before him, proclaimed his coming, and required his subjects to make the neglected roads passable for their sovereign, by removing all hinderances to his progress. When Semiramis, the Queen of Babylon, marched into Persia, she crossed the Zarcean mountain, but not till its precipices were digged down and its hollows filled to make her way smooth. We have similar records of Xerxes, Caligula, and Titus, and when Jesus entered upon his kingly course, John, his herald, demanded that all obstructions be removed before him in his march. He cried, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, that all flesh may see his glory; His progress was not to be that of pomp and pageantry, but that of a nation's

repentance. Rugged and wretched as were the moral wastes, he was to make the desolation ring with the demand for 'repentance,' summoning all to surrender to the coming Prince. The valleys must be filled. All debasing affections must be elevated, the downtrodden and the despairing must be lifted up. Mountains must be brought low. The proud and haughty were to be leveled, abased in the dust. The crooked should be made straight. All tortuous policies, winding deceits, and lying frauds of the self-righteous, should be exchanged for simplicity and transparency. The rugged ways must be made smooth. Coarse severity, rough tempers, bitter asperity, hot fanaticism, and stoical hardness must be cast aside, for gentleness and child-like affections. Then all flesh should see the salvation of God. No lofty shadow was to fling its length before the face of God's Anointed, The 'Voice' cried: 'Prepare the way of the Lord.'

When John left the howling of beasts in the desert, it was to electrify the land by the startling cry 'Repent,' and thenceforth, he frowned on all brutal passion. The whole nation started to its feet and flocked to him, as its center of hope. City, village, and hamlet poured forth their hardened multitudes to see and hear the new Baptist preacher. The Prophecy of Malachi had said: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and, as the universal expectation of the Messiah was cherished by the Jews at this time, they looked for the literal accomplishment of this prediction in the return of the Tishbite, as his precursor. The news, therefore, flew through the land that this faithful servant of God who ascended to heaven in the reign of Jehoram, had been borne back to the earth, to break the Roman Scepter, and hurl himself like a thunderbolt against all tyrants, that he might restore the glory to Israel by enthroning her new king. Every eye longed to see this somber old giant of Carmel and Horeb, and every ear listened for his strange voice; hence, all flocked to the banks of the Jordan whence he ascended, for, said they, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof, had landed him on the very spot where he laid down his mantle and burden 900 years before.

But instead of launching forth denunciation against Roman strangers, John opened an accusative ministry upon his own people. He made not his voice soft and smooth in his 'cry.' He presented a new and striking figure to them, enthusiastic, yet self-poised. Filled with deep conviction of the truth, inspired of God and consecrated to the truth, he had evidently come on no dubious errand, and his aim was worthy of his great work. Under the pressure of a divine-influence, he set his face like flint, in downright fearlessness. The scorn of every form of cunning filled his voice, holy indignation at sin flew in every syllable from his lips. His body was free from sanctimonious vestments, and his soul inflamed with zeal; he lifted up the truth, a lambent torch, for his word made dread exposures, and searched men to the core of their being. Without the tears of Jeremiah, the sublimity of Isaiah, or the mystery of Ezekiel, he bravely struck home by rebuke and exhortation and heart-piercing censure. He dealt in no arts of insinuation, no apologies, no indulgence; but upbraided the hollow and pretentious, and shivered their pious self-conceit to atoms, while they gnashed their teeth at him. He was a living man, just sent from the living God, dealing with cardinal verities, in an original and emphatic vigor that stung the cold-hearted, and held the malignant conscience by a remorseless grip. Wicked men saw the majestic flow of holiness in his eye, they felt its nervous

vibrations in his abrupt anatomy of character, and were borne down before his impassioned demands for self-loathing. The slothful were startled in their dreams; beheld up the self-blinded for their own inspection, in their true colors; he rudely tore off the mask of the false. The hard-hearted saw their guilt staring them in the face, and the reckless were haunted by the ghosts of their murdered mercies from the God of Abraham. Yet, he wielded no weapons of earthly chastisement; he mingled not the blood of sinners with the waters of the Jordan, but he pointed to the uplifted ax, as it gleamed in the terrors of the Lord, about to strike a blow-and fell the withered tree.

Strangely enough, instead of repelling the multitude, his fidelity fascinated them. The Spirit of God gave power to his proclamation. This, of itself, made his holy serenity soft and saving. Consciences were aroused, hearts were broken, and the sorrows of the people for sin, re-awakened the ancient sobbings, when their fathers wept, on the death of Moses. Arude and arrogant mind, having so difficult a work to do, would have been harsh in its rebukes, only exciting anger and resentment. But John's words cut to the quick because his affectionate holiness, gravity, sincerity; and good-will made them sharp. He had been so much in retirement with God that he was imbued with his love and compassion. He carried not the mien of an ill-mannered, bold, and self-appointed censor of sin.

True, the great Baptist had brought a fire-brand out of the wilderness which set all the dry stubble in the land ablaze. But with this came confession of sin in lowly simplicity, and sincere reformation of life, which sought expression in the new faith and baptism. Instead of meeting Elijah, descending in the regal state of flame to smite the waters of their great national river and divide them, the young representative of Elijah's God stood there demanding that their buried bodies, and not his rod, should divide the waters in token of death to sin. The alarming cry 'Repent ye' rang up and down the valley of the Jordan. This demand laid bare God's extreme holiness, and their personal guilt against him. The word itself (*metanoia*) means a change 'of mind or purpose'; so that he not only required deep sorrow, or contrition for their wickedness, but such an inward moral disposition as should thereafter obey the will of God. Then they were to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, so that the outward expression of that disposition should prove the inward change to be radical. He made their immersion in water the exterior method of 'confessing' the reality of an honest, heart-felt reform. Here, then, he required a spiritual revolution, a baptism for the 'remission' or forgiveness of sins, and the implanting of a new principle of life in keeping with the kingdom of heaven at hand.

These requirements, urged with the courteous fidelity of holy conviction and the sacred simplicity of an overawing holiness, led a multitude of wounded and stricken hearts to fly from all legal rites and ceremonial performances, for purification of heart and life, after the evangelical order of Isaiah: 'Wash you, make you clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.'

At a stroke of the pen Matthew draws another vivid picture. Priests, Levites, and doctors in the holy city had donned their robes and bound on their phylacteries and other ecclesiastical trappings for a visit to the great river, that they might pass upon John's

commission. Sweeping with pomp and dignity through the gates, they mix with the throng on the slopes of the Jordan, first with a conceited curiosity, and then with a bigoted scowl. But John's keen eye read their character, and he began to ply them with solemn invective. In the desert he had seen the slimy viper gliding through the moss; crafty, malicious, with a powerful spring and a hollow tooth through which it ejected deadly poison. He had seen the brawny forester swing the ax to cut the tap-root of a tree and fell it for burning. And converting these into blunt figures of speech, he allied his visitors with false teachers from the 'old serpent' who could not be trusted for a moment. Like the flat-headed, ash-colored reptile, they had stung the sons of God; and with bitter irony he compares them to the twisting young, ejected from their dam, to hiss, and fight her venomous battles. Scathing them with cold sarcasm, he demands, 'Brood of vipers! have ye come to my baptism? What sent you? The ribbon on your robes is beautifully blue, the phylacteries on your brow are ostentatiously pious, but they cloak corruption. Delude not yourselves with the thought that ye are Abraham's sons. His blood may warm your veins, but ye deny his God, for your souls are dead to his faith. Behold the stones at your feet, and know that from them God is able to raise up sons to Abraham. One word from his mouth will bring from the adamant, truer Jewish hearts and softer than those that beat in you.' He then demanded that if they were sincere they should prove this by bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance. Nor did he change his tone with his simile; for when he dropped the lash of scorpions, he took the edge of the woodman's ax. He could not away with their sanctimonious hair-splittings and religious tamperings, but would hew them down to be cast into the fire.

But other and better classes of the people hailed his ministry with awe, as from God. So powerfully did divine truth move them, that they actually reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether he himself were not the Christ. How beautifully our Lord Jesus speaks of these, when he would know of the rulers whether John's baptism were from heaven or of men. 'Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and ye did not believe him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.' These Rabbis were in the habit of saying 'That if the nation would repent but one day, the Messiah would come,' yet, when he came, they themselves were obdurate. And, when publicans, soldiers and others, who were openly sunk in sin, came to the Baptist, convicted of their iniquity, it was with the saving inquiry upon their lips, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' They seemed to look upon their own case as hopeless, but he fortified every man with encouragement at his weak point. He told the publicans, to 'Exact no more than that which is appointed you.' The tax-gatherers, to whom the Romans farmed out the taxation, were extortionate and cruel, for they paid so much to the government and then levied their own rates. He did not blame them for filling the political office, but he charged them to stop all rapacity, so that a new miracle would be found, when men should see an honest publican. His reply was of great breadth, forbidding them to confiscate property by unjust exaction. To the soldiers he replied: 'Do violence to no one, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.' Josephus shows, that at this very time, Herod Antipas was sending an army against his father-in-law, Aretas, King of Arabia Petraea, who had declared war in consequence of Herod's bad treatment of his daughter. This being true, their route would lie directly through the

region where John was preaching and immersing. This historian's full description of John is in perfect accord with the spirit of the above statement. These hearers of the Baptist were men of the bow, the arrow, the sword and the shield; their trade was war. He stood before them the living image of discipline and self-denial, and demanded of them, that they keep the insolent licentiousness and brutality of war in check, and disregard the lying doctrine that might makes right. In prosecuting their hard craft, godless pillage must cease. What lessons of love were these, enforced upon rough, heathen legions by which an unarmed young Baptist preacher tamed the fierceness of military tigers, and remanded desperate warriors back to the camp and field, made by their new faith as harmless as doves. Last of all, he threw the bridle over their license of riot and plunder, to curb them with a double bit. They must commit no robbery upon the conquered, indulge no selfishness, raise no mutiny against their officers to get more pay, but take their three *obolo* a day; and be content.

Such a scene had never been witnessed on earth, and the most remarkable thing about it was, that so sweeping a ministry provoked no physical resistance. Jewish priests had shed streams of sacrificial blood at the altar for hundreds of years, whenever the nation groaned beneath the heel of its foes. They sighed for the tender mercy of God to rescue them from the hand of their enemy, and guide their feet anew into the way of peace. But now, while they felt the rankling humiliation of a hated race, and their hearts sank as they looked at the broken scepter of their nation, a stern preacher of their own race stings them with rebuke, and demands not sacrifice but repentance. The Ark of the Covenant was no longer there with its Tables of Stone. Urim and Thummim were gone. The glory of Bright Presence had departed forever from the most Holy place. The Golden Candlestick gave no light. Their ensigns were torn, their minstrelsy hushed, their royalty beggared, and their covenant with God broken. Was not this enough? Their hearts sank within them when they remembered the past, in which they were never again to take lot or part, and the hatred of their hearts toward their foes filled them to the brim. Yet, without one word of sympathy for all this, they were warned to flee from coming wrath, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, to bury all their old sins with their bodies under the waves of Jordan, and to rise into the New Kingdom; and without a murmur it was done.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD

### THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

The Evangelist says that Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be immersed by him, 'But John sought to hinder him, saying: I have need to be immersed of thee, and dost thou come to me? And Jesus answering said to him: Suffer it now; for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him.' In approaching this august event, the forcible words of Godet attract our attention. He says: 'John and Jesus resemble two stars following each other at a short distance, and both passing through a series of similar circumstances. The announcement of the appearing of the one follows close upon that of the appearing of the other. It is the same with their twin births. This relation repeats itself in the commencement of their respective ministries, and lastly in the catastrophes which terminate their lives. And yet, in the whole course of the career of these two men, there was but one personal meeting--at the baptism of Jesus. After this moment, when one of these stars rapidly crossed the orbit of the other, they separated, each to follow the path that was marked out for him. It is this moment of their actual contact that the Evangelist is about to describe.'

The meeting was worthy of both, but pre-eminently worthy of the Father who directed their steps. The star of the morning was herald to the rising Sun, and then faded away in the fullness of his beams. For thirty years Jesus was secluded in Nazareth, calmly awaiting the ripe day for his public work. Eagerly he watched the shade on the dial, to indicate that his hour had come for release from that holy restraint which held back his consuming zeal. Often he knelt in prayer on the mountain-tops which overlook the plain of Esdraelon, till the sentinel stars took their stations in the sky; and then returned home, silent and pensive, to wait for the dawn of his ministry. When slumber fell upon the carpenter's household, Mary often rehearsed to him the ponderings of her own heart, the mysterious secrets of his birth, and the dealings of God with her cousin in Hebron. The story fell upon the soul of mother and Son as a radiance from heaven, full of sad beauty and divine love; for the dim foreshadings of separation moved their pure hearts to the parental embrace and the goodnight kiss, as in other sweet human homes. At last, the moment came when a sacred attraction drew him from the little upland town and dwelling forever; save on one brief visit to the plain old sanctuary, where his young heart had been warmed by the words of the Law. His journey from Galilee to the Jordan, after the touch of parting with his loved ones, stirred heaven with a deeper interest than the footsteps of man had ever excited, for then he recorded the hallowed resolution: 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' Many a hard-fought battle had soaked the plain which he crossed, with blood; but that day he went forth single-handed to the hardest war that had ever been waged upon this globe. After he had swept the foot of Tabor, at every step he trod on holy ground. And when he reached the western slope of the Jordan, like Jacob, his great ancestor, he crossed the ford that he might lead many pilgrim bands over a darker stream 'to glory.' 'All the people had been baptized,' and he presented himself as the last arrival of that day, because he was not one of the common repenting throng. He

had done no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; hence, remorse never broke his heart. Yet, he numbered himself with the transgressors. At the close of his ministry he was to sleep in a sepulcher wherein never man had laid; and it was meet that in opening his ministry he should be buried in the liquid grave alone, and separate from sinners. Baptism was the door by which he entered upon his work of saving mediation. The Baptist says, that up to this time he 'knew him not,' as if he had not met him before, and yet, he also says, 'I have need to be baptized of thee,' as if he knew him well. This apparent discrepancy has led to large discussion, with this general result; that while John knew him in person as Jesus, he did not know him in Messiahship until Jehovah who sent him to baptize in water said to him; before the baptism of Jesus: 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding on him, the same is he who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' But do John's words necessarily imply that he was ignorant, either of the person or Messiahship of Jesus, before his baptism? One great prerogative of the Christ was, that he should baptize men in the Holy Spirit. This fact had not come to John's knowledge till Jehovah gave him the special revelation that One should come to him for baptism, on whom he should see the Spirit 'descending and abiding,' and that he should be the pre-eminent Baptizer, who should baptize in the Holy Spirit. This thought seems to have struck John with deep awe, for he carefully draws a contrast between his own baptism which was 'in water' only, and that of Christ which should be 'in the Holy Spirit' himself. If John did not know him, in the sense of the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit till Jehovah had announced to him the impending token and its signification, then we can well understand why he said: 'I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?' The revelation that Jesus should be the Baptizer in the Spirit was special to John: 'He who sent me to baptize in water said this to me.' And, it was said before the Baptism of Jesus, for the visible sign of the descending Spirit crowned the act of his baptism. If this be the sense of John's words, the Fourth Gospel, written A.D. 97 or 98, throws a strong light upon the First, written about A.D. 60.

It would harmonize exactly with the known methods of Divine Providence to suppose that the hand of God had kept them apart till that moment. Jesus had lived in the north and John in the south of the land, and we know of no high purpose which demanded a meeting previously, whilst their separation must silence all suspicion of combination or collusion between the servant and his Lord. Gabriel had put John under the Nazarite's vow from his birth, which exempted him from attendance at the triple annual feasts, so that they had not met in the metropolis. Nor had John gone abroad in search of him. This was not his work. He must wait till God brought them lovingly together. That time of 'manifestation to Israel would come' of itself. John went to the Jordan when he was sent, saying: 'That he might be made manifest to Israel, for this I came baptizing in water.' Like a man 'sent of God,' he was waiting for his Master to show himself fully and promptly, and Jehovah honored his faith by the foretoken agreed upon in the visible descent of the Spirit. Hence, when the solitary stranger joined the throng on the approach of evening, the eagle-eyed Baptist kenned him, and the vision made his whole being quiver with expectation. When David came to the throne in the garb of a young shepherd, the Lord said to Samuel: 'Arise, anoint him, this is he!' And, why should not the Holy Spirit, who had 'prepared' the body of Jesus, and filled the soul of John, say this of David's Son?

With godlike serenity and dignity the Prince of Peace presented himself for baptism. The words of his mouth, the repose of his body, the purity of his face, the soul of his eye, overpowered John with a sense of reverend princeliness. When the stern herald stood face to face with the Son of the Highest his soul was submerged under a rare humility, which extorted the cry: 'I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? Captivated by the dignity of the Candidate, and abashed by his own inferiority, he was helpless as a child before this incarnate God--this shrine of the Holy Spirit. He who had walked roughshod over all pride, and had leveled all distinctions of human glory, was seized with the conviction of a worthless menial, and as a holy man, was thoroughly daunted when the Lord sought a favor of his own servant. The reasons are apparent. He found the Promised of all promises, the Antitype of all types, the Expected of all ages, standing before him in flesh and blood, and he was startled at the thought of inducting him into the new faith by the new ordinance; for his baptism was administered to the penitent, but the Nazarene was guiltless. 'Suffer it now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.' He defers to John's scruple, and asks for the new baptism, not of right, but on sufferance. What did Jesus mean by these words?

Viewed in any light it seems strange that Christ should have sought baptism as a high privilege which he could not forego, for what could it confer upon him?

He clearly intended to render obedience to *some* law of his Father. What law? He had honored every requisition of the Old Covenant by circumcision, obedience to parents, hallowing the Sabbath, temple worship, observance of the feasts, all except in bringing the sin-offerings. For a full generation he had submitted to every claim of Jehovah's law upon him, in every institution and ordinance. But now his Father had established the last test of obedience in the baptism of John, and Jesus, born under God's law, must honor the new divine precept. Jesus himself gave this reason when he accused the Pharisees and lawyers with rejecting 'The counsel of God toward themselves' in not having been baptized by John. The will of God was his only reason for obeying any law; he held it an act of obedience to keep all the Divine appointments. Although not a sinner himself, he pleaded to be treated as a sinner; therefore he humbled himself to receive a sinner's baptism, as well as to submit to a sinner's death. This deep mark of mediatorial sympathy and mystery must have entered largely into his plea, 'Suffer it now.' With great clearness Geikie puts this point: 'Baptism was an ordinance of God required by his prophet as the introduction of the new dispensation. It was a part of "righteousness," that is, it was a part of God's commandments which Jesus came into the world to show us the example of fulfilling, both in the letter and in the spirit.' His baptism was the channel through which the Divine attestation could best be given to his Messianic dignity; and when we consider that he had reached the full maturity of all his human powers of mind and body, this manner of entering upon his public work gave a mutual and public sanction to the mission both of John and Jesus.

Yet, with our Lord's interpretation of his own words before their eyes, men will insist upon it that he was initiated into his sacrificial work by baptism, in imitation of the mere ceremonial ablutions of the Aaronical priesthood. Jesus was not even of Aaron's line as

was John, much less of his office, but sprang of the tribe of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. Did Jesus receive the vestments, the consecrating oil, or any other priestly insignia? Even when he made his sin-offering, and assumed the Christian High-priesthood, three years after his baptism, he neither assumed the vesture nor breastplate, the censer nor miter of Aaron. Because he was not made a High-priest after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedec, who knew nothing of sacred oils, ablutions, or vestments. How much better is it than a solemn caricature to set forth the baptism of Jesus as an idle, empty, ritualistic pageant? He came to abolish and cast aside forever the Aaronical priesthood with the economy that it served, and how could he do this by submission to any ceremonial act which they observed? John felt the binding force of Christ's words, when he appealed to the obligations of spotless holiness, and he threw aside his objections in a moment.

With gratitude and grace he yielded and obeyed. He found that His Master was under the same law of obedience as himself, and with holy promptitude he honored the sacred trust which God had put into his own hands, but which no other man had ever yet held. 'Then he suffered him.' O! sublime grandeur--awful honor! And when the great Baptist bowed the immaculate soul and body of Jesus beneath the parting wave, all the useless ceremonies of past ages sank together like lead, to find a grave in the opening waters of the Jordan, and no place has since been found for them.

This traditional spot is fixed in human memory as are points on the Tiber, the Thames, and the Delaware, where great armies have crossed. It is a little east of Jericho, near by the conquest of Joshua, also where David crossed in his flight. Christian pilgrims and scholars have visited it for centuries, Origen in the third, Eusebius in the fourth, Jerome in the fifth, and millions of others down to our day. Its thick willow groves are used as robing rooms, whence Copts and Syrians, Armenians and Greeks, go down into the Jordan and immerse themselves three times in the name of the Trinity. The place so fascinates and subdues the spirit that the visitors of every land and creed, reverently descend into the stream once a year. 'Having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately out of the water; and lo; the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending, as a dove, and coming upon him. And lo, a voice out of heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' To this account taken from Matthew, Luke adds: That the heavens were opened while Jesus was praying that the Spirit took the *bodily* shape of a dove, and the Baptist says, that he saw the Spirit '*abiding* on him.'

The time of our Lord's baptism may here be examined with profit. Luke says: 'That in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness; at which time he entered on his public ministry. And, again, that Jesus began his ministry when he was about thirty years of age. This last statement has the value of a date in a letter. The fifteenth year of Tiberius dates from the time that he commenced His joint reign with Augustus. 'Reckoning thus, the year 765, from January to January, as the first of Tiberius, the fifteenth is the year 779, from the founding of Rome. Some time, then, in 779, is the beginning of John's ministry to be placed. Allowing that his labor had continued six months before the Lord was baptized, we reach in this way, also, the month of January, 780. There is good reason to believe

that in December or January, Jesus was baptized, yet the day of the month is very uncertain.' As John and Jesus were born within six months of each other, in the year 749, Christ's baptism must have occurred somewhere near the above date, as he was then 'about thirty years of age.'

What act performed by John is called baptism? John was his proper name, and the term 'Baptist' added by the inspired writers, is a title of office, as Bloomfield thinks, 'To distinguish him from John the Evangelist.' By this name he was known pre-eminently as the administrator of the religious rite called baptism. That is, according to Liddell and Scott, 'one that dips;' or Donegan, 'one who immerses or submerges.' Dean Stanley says: 'On philological grounds, it is quite correct to translate John the Baptist, by John the Immerser.' (*Nineteenth Century*.) Baptism is a fundamental practice in Christianity, which has run through all its ages. Of baptism, in association with John, Edward Irving says: 'This is the first baptismal service upon record. The new rite of baptism, unknown under the Mosaic dispensation.' **Much has been said on the subject of Proselyte Baptism, whereby heathen converts were inducted into the Jewish faith, and so, many have depreciated John's baptism as a mere imitation of an existing rite. But modern scholarship has shown conclusively that the reverse of this is true, and that Proselyte Baptism in fact, an imitation of the Christian rite, incorporated into Judaism after the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70. It is true, that the Jews from early times used various symbolical illustrations as well as the Gentiles, but these were always purely ceremonial, and were never used as a rite by which others were inducted into their faith.** Josephus says, that many of these washings amongst the Jews were purely of their own will, without direction from the Lord, and VonKohden denies that they were 'performed by immersion.' He also points out these fundamental differences:

'The washings enjoined by the Law had for their object purification from ceremonial defilement; but the baptism of John did not: the one rite was performed by the candidates themselves upon their own persons: the other was administered to its recipient by the Baptist himself, or by one of his disciples properly authorized: the former was repeated upon every occasion of renewed defilement; the latter was performed upon the candidate only once for all. The two ceremonies, therefore, were essentially different in their nature and object. The first witness in favor of Proselyte Baptism is found in the Commentary of the Talmud, which was composed in the fifth century after Christ, and it represents the rite as existing in the first century.'

But this Commentary is not valid history, it is mere tradition at the most, and does not carry the ceremony back so far as John; nor could it have been known at that time, for had it been, the Jews would have scouted John's baptism instead of submitting to it, because it would have placed them on a level with the heathen as converts to the new faith. Proselytes to Judaism were divided into *proselytes of the gate*, and *proselytes of righteousness*. The first class had renounced idolatry, and bound themselves to keep the seven Noachic precepts, against idolatry, profanity, incest, murder, theft, eating blood and things strangled, and permitting a murderer to live. The second class not only renounced heathenism, but became Israelites in every respect excepting birth. Males were admitted into Judaism by circumcision, females by a free-will offering: after Christ, the Jews added baptism for both sexes admitted into their faith.

**T**his is a huge work, 840 pages, 8.5 x 11 inches, that is republished because it is such an important work.

**E**arly in the summer of A.D. 1882 the publishers of this work [Bryan, Taylor & Co., 1890] called upon the author to confer on the desirableness of issuing a Baptist history. He laid before them the histories extant by our writers, commending their merits. They said that, after examination of these, whilst each filled a peculiar niche in Baptist history, they were satisfied that a larger and more comprehensive work was demanded by the present public want, and requested him to undertake the task of preparing one. This request was declined on account of its inherent difficulty and the pressure of a large New York pastorate. He submitted two or three weighty names of those who, in his judgment, were in every way better qualified for the work, among them the late Dr. William R. Williams, and wrote letters of introduction to these several gentlemen. In a few weeks they returned, stating that they had consulted not only those referred to, but other well-known Baptist writers, each of whom suggested that, as the author had devoted years to the examination of the subject, he owed it to his denomination to write and publish thereon.

**A**fter fuller consideration he consented to make the attempt, with the distinct understanding that he should be entirely unfettered in regard to the principle on which the work should be written. He saw at a glance that as Baptists are in no way the authors or offspring of an ecclesiastical system, that, therefore, their history cannot be written on the current methods of ecclesiastical history. The attempt to show that any religious body has come down from the Apostles an unchanged people is of itself an assumption of infallibility, and contradicts the facts of history.

**T**ruth only is changeless, and only as any people have held to the truth in its purity and primitive simplicity has the world had an unchanging religion. The truth has been held by individual men and scattered companies but never in an unbroken continuity by any sect as such. Sect after sect has appeared and held it for a time, then has destroyed itself by mixing error with the truth; again, the truth has evinced its divinity by rising afresh in the hands of a newly organized people, to perpetuate its diffusion in the earth.

**I**t is enough to show that what Christ's churches were in the days of the Apostles, that the Baptist churches of today find themselves. The truths held by them have never died since Christ gave them, and in the exact proportion that any people have maintained these truths they have been the true Baptists of the world. The writer therefore, refused to be bound in his investigations by an iron obligation to show a succession of people who have held all the principles, great and small, of any sect now existing--no more and no less.

