

THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS

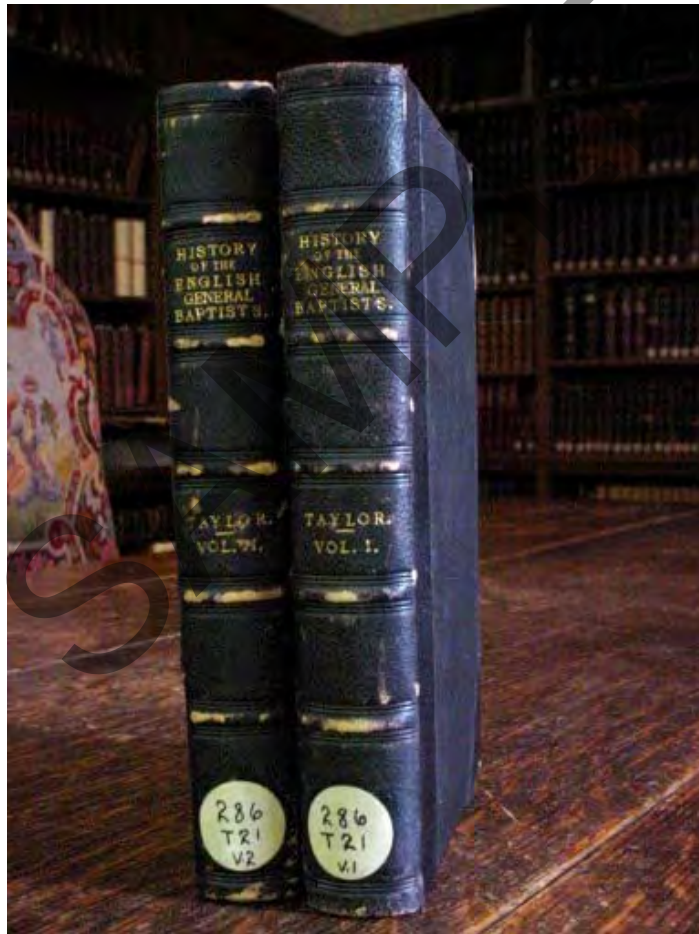
By Adam Taylor

London: Printed for the author, by T. Bore, Raven Row, Mile-End Turnpike:
and sold by Button and Son, Paternoster Row; Maxwell, Temple Bar; J. Mann,
Commercial Road, London: Wilkins, Derby; Noble, Boston; &c. &c.

1818

Way of Life Literature electronic edition, May 2003

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"Ask for the old paths." --*Jeremiah.*

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To the Ministers and Members of the Churches Composing The New Connection of General Baptists, This History, Undertaken at their Request, and conducted under their Patronage, is respectfully inscribed, as a Token of sincere Gratitude and cordial Esteem, by their Affectionate Brother, And Willing Servant, The Author. Shakespeare's Walk, March 3rd. 1818.

PREFACE

For many years, a wish had been frequently expressed, that the Rise and Progress of the New Connection of General Baptists should be committed to the press. The facts are instructive and interesting; and the worthy men, who had been the principal instruments in carrying forwards the good work, were daily resting from their labours. Their successors, therefore, were anxious that the particulars should be collected and secured, before the removal of all those who could best furnish information. Various attempts were made to accomplish this purpose; which failed of success. At length, the annual Association at Wisbeach, in 1812, requested the writer of the following sheets to undertake the work. This request being repeated at the next meeting of that assembly, and promises of information and support being made, he ventured to yield to their solicitations; and, through the goodness of divine Providence, and the patronage of his kind friends, has been enabled to bring the design to a conclusion.

The author has been considerably assisted, in tracing the early transactions of the General Baptists of the midland counties, by the accounts which appeared in the General Baptist Magazine, from the pen of Mr. J. Deacon; as well as by some valuable materials collected by that gentleman, and kindly handed to the writer. But his chief dependance has been on the information transmitted from the various churches. This information has been more full and particular in some cases than others: several churches sent their communications after a great part of the work was published; and a few neglected to furnish any documents. Hence, the reader will account for the more enlarged information respecting others. This too will, it is hoped, apologize for the want of a strict attention to method in certain instances, and for those mistakes, which a dependance on the general accounts in the Minutes of the Associations may have occasioned. These inaccuracies, as far as they have been discovered, are corrected, at the close of the volume: and the author will esteem it a favour to be informed of any which remain unnoticed; that a second edition, should it ever be called for, may be less imperfect.

The materials for this volume having been drawn from the sources already mentioned, it was not necessary to crowd the page with references to authorities. The Minutes of the Annual Associations, the General Baptist Magazine and Repository, and a few Ordination services, which must have been incessantly quoted, are publications with which, it is presumed, the readers of this history are familiar.

Great difficulty was experienced in forming a plan which would exhibit, at once, a history of the Churches individually, and of the Connection as a body. The division of the

narrative into periods of fifteen years appeared the most eligible. But the Index is so constructed, that the entire history of any society may be easily traced, as well as a connected account of the public transactions of eminent ministers.

The author has too frequently found his duty painfully delicate. To record the failings of his associates and friends has cost him many a struggle. On these disagreeable occasions, he has laboured to preserve the fidelity of the narrative, and at the same time to do as little violence as possible to personal feeling. One great advantage of the work would have been entirely lost, had these unhappy circumstances been consigned to oblivion. It is hoped, that the perusal of the deplorable apostacy of some who made high professions, and the contentions and imperfections of other sincere but weak christians, together with the awful mischief which the cause of the blessed Redeemer has sustained by these means, will cause him that thinketh he standeth to take heed lest he fall: and excite every reader, but especially every minister, to be more earnest and constant in praying for grace to preserve him from giving any occasion to the enemies of the truth to blaspheme, and doubly vigilant in shunning every appearance of evil.

The work is now sent abroad with a cheerful hope, that it may, through the blessing of Him, in whose hands are the hearts of the children of men, give the religious world more just ideas of the design, doctrines and character of the New Connection of General Baptists than have hitherto been entertained, and thus procure for it, that esteem and countenance among other denominations, which it may appear to deserve; and that it may call the attention of those who compose that Connection to the true nature and principles of their union, and animate them to pursue, with greater zeal, affection and ability, its important objects. Should these hopes be realized, the labour of the writer and the support of his friends will be abundantly rewarded, in the support of his friends will be abundantly rewarded, in the increasing prosperity, respectability and purity of that cause, to which they, have, from principle, devote all their energies.

CONTRACTIONS IN THE REFERENCES, EXPLAINED.

A. A. B. The Minutes of Aylesbury Association. A. C. B. Amersham Church Book, Vol. I. 96. [These references are to the places in the following Work in which some account of these Manuscript will be found.] B. C. B. Berkhamstead Church Book. B. G. C. B. Bessell's Green Church Book. Bid. C. B. Biddenden Church Book, Vol. I. 283. B. MSS. Burgess' Manuscripts. C. C. B. Coningsby Church Book, Vol. I. 137. Ch. C. B. Chesham Church Book, Vol. I. 230. C. L. C. B. Church Lane Church Book. F. S. R. Fenstanton Records, Vol. I. 140-147. G. & C. Grantham's dispute with Connould, Vol. I. 308. J. T. MSS. Josiah Thompson's Manuscripts, Vol. II. 29. L. A. B. Lincolnshire Association Book, Vol. I. 318. N. C. A. B. New Connection Association Book. P. I. Private Information, collected from various sources, by friends on the spot. S.T.C.B. Shad Thames Church Book, Vol. I. 263. W.A.C.B. White's Alley Church Book. W.C.B. Warboys' Church Book, Vol. I. 104.

PART I.

THE ENGLISH GENERAL BAPTISTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BOOK I.

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA TO THE REFORMATION.

INTRODUCTION

A general baptist, who understands the true principles of his profession, does not esteem it necessary to trace his tenets through the several ages of the Church. He is persuaded, however early, and however generally, the contrary opinions may have prevailed, that those doctrines which distinguish him from other professors of christianity are expressly taught and enjoined in the grand commission which the adorable Head of the church gave to his Apostles, immediately before his taking his seat at the right hand of God.--"Go ye," said the ascending Saviour, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes, and in baptized, shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be condemned.

"Go ye forth, therefore, and proselyte all nations, baptizing them ill the Name of the Father, and of the and of the Holy Ghost." [Mark 16:15,16; Matt. 28:19] The New Testament, he is convinced, is full of evidence, that the Apostles and primitive Christians understood this divine Commission, and obeyed its sacred injunctions, in the same manner that he does. This has been proved at large by many of their writers: and it would evidently be improper for an historian to enter into the debate. But he may be permitted to state a few facts, which will prove, that, in all ages of the church, there have been Baptists, who have heartily joined with the first baptist, John, in pointing sinners to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

It is generally allowed by all, who have candidly examined the subject, that for the two first centuries after Christ, all who professed to be his followers were baptists, both as to the mode and subjects of that ordinance. They baptized none but such as made a credible profession of faith; and these they always immersed in water.--Towards the end of the second century, it became a question, whether infants ought to be 'baptized. The reason appears to have been that, about that time, they began to ascribe some mysterious efficacy to the ordinance; and to imagine that none who died unbaptized could be saved. This naturally engaged the humane parents and guardians to the eternal welfare of their children who died in infancy and led them to desire that they might be partakers of a rite so essential, and so powerful. By degrees the custom of baptizing infants was introduced; and, in the course of the third century, appears to have made some progress in the christian world. [Stennett's *Answer to Addington*, Second Part, Letter 16.] But, for many centuries after this, the mode of administering the ordinance remained unchanged. They baptized by immersion for ages. [Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*, Part. II. pages 290-

303.] During many succeeding centuries, the darkness of Popery grew gradually deeper and deeper, till it eclipsed almost totally, the light of the gospel; and involved the christian world in the darkness of error and superstition. Then the ordinances of the gospel were beclouded with false additions: and the simple institutions of the divine Legislator were lost in the time-serving accommodations and proud ceremonies of temporal policy. One part of the Lord's Supper was denied to the laity; and the other part exalted into an idol. Instead of the two simple and expressive institutions, appointed by Jesus Christ, seven sacraments, as they were called, were invented; loaded with childish ceremonies, and useless but imposing pageantry. During this long night, baptism was altered, both in design and administration, from what it appears in the New Testament. Instead of the striking act of plunging the person who professed to believe In Christ in water, and lifting him up again to express his death unto sin and life unto holiness--his belief in a dying and risen Saviour,--new-born infants became the unconscious subjects; and the mode was changed, at first to pouring water over the head and shoulders; and then gradually to sprinkling a few drops of water on the face. Various ceremonies and fooleries were invented. The whole transaction assumed an air of mystery and resembled some of the heathenish initiations more than a simple ordinances of christianity.

[In administering baptism according to the ritual of the Church of Rome, the Priest blew three puffs in the child's face, to expel the Devil--crossed various parts of its body, and the elements, fifteen times--exorcised the Devil three or four times--consecrated salt with many incantations, and put a little of it into the infant's mouth--changed his own dress--bedaubed the ears and nostrils of the child with his own spittle--pored water three times over its head--anointed its breast, head, and shoulders with holy oil--put a white cloth on its head, and a lighted taper into its hand, &c. &c. See the whole detail extracted from the Romish Ritual, in Grantham's Hear the Church, pp 24-27. The three pourings have degenerated into one sprinkling and some other circumstance of less importance may have been varied; but such was the practice, and such, in general, it continues: and, it is hoped, that this epitome of it will justify the expressions used in the text.]

It is however probable, that, during the darkness of popery there were always persons who professed many of the genuine doctrines of the gospel. Several historians have traced the baptism up to the apostolic time: and their adversaries allow, that some of the most ancient and most zealous opposers of the man of sin, have also asserted the doctrine of believers' baptism. We shall endeavour to take a hasty review of the principal of these worthies first in foreign countries, and then in our own, in the successive ages of the church.

CHAPTER. I.

TRACES OF BAPTISTS, IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES, PREVIOUS TO THE REFORMATION.

SECT. 1.--From Tertullian to the Conquest of Spain by the Moors: or, from A.D. 200 to A.D. 714.

TERTULLIAN, who flourished about A. D. 200, was the first who opposed infant baptism. The reason evidently is, that it then first began to be pleaded for, under the impression that those who died unbaptized must be eternally miserable. Not one instance of baptizing a single infant, nor one clear allusion to such a transaction can be traced previous to this writer. He assures us, that, in his time, the candidates for baptism made a profession of their faith twice; once in the church, before the congregation, and again when they came to the water. [Robinson's History of Baptism p. 58.] And he expresses the sense of the whole primitive church in this sentence, "We are made, but not born christians." When, therefore, some mistaken persons began to move for the baptizing of infants, Tertullian protested against it:--"Let children," said he, "come, when they grow up: let them come, when they learn, when they are instructed whither to come: let them become christians when they are able to know Christ." "Let them know how to ask for salvation; that you may appear to have given to him that asketh." [Wall's *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part I. pp.26, 27.]

Notwithstanding this rational opposition, the practice of infant baptism gained ground. At an African council, held by Cyprian, in 257, it was recommended and was patronized about the same time by some leading men. It does not, however, appear that it made a rapid progress. Galetes, the dying son of the Emperor Valens is the first instance of infant baptism on record; and this happened, A. D. 370, above a century after the council of Carthage. "It was performed says Mr. Robinson, "by order of a monarch who swore he would not be contradicted. The age of the prince is uncertain: and the assigning his illness as the reason for his baptism, indicates clearly enough that infant baptism was not then generally practised." [Robinson's *Eccles. Researches*, p. 56.]

It is, indeed, evident that the practice of infant baptism was not then become general, or esteemed necessary for filling the highest offices of the Church. In the year 360, Basil thus addresses his hearers:--"Do you demur, and loiter, and put off? When you have been from a child catechized in the word, are you not yet acquainted with the truth?—Having been always learning it, are you not yet come to the knowledge of it?—A seeker all your life long?—a Considerer till you are old?—When will you be made a christian? When shall we see you become one of us?—Last year, you were for staying till this year: and now you have a mind to stay till next. Take heed that, by promising yourself a longer life, you do not quite miss of your hope. You do not know what change to-morrow may bring;" &c. [Robinson's *Hist. of Bap.* pp. 65-67.] Nothing can more explicitly establish the fact, that, in that age, instruction preceded baptism; that it was every one's voluntary act; and that even those who had been from children catechized in the word, were not

baptized till they arrived at years of maturity, and sought it for themselves. And all the instances on record of the administration of baptism, in this century, are in perfect consistency with the sentiments of this discourse. Gregory Nazianzen, the celebrated patriarch of Constantinople, was born A.D. 328. His father was, at his birth, not only a christian, but a minister; and, soon after, if not at the time, became bishop of Nazianzum. Yet this minister neither baptized his son Gregory, nor another son who was younger than Gregory, nor a daughter whose age is not precisely ascertained. They were all three baptized when grown to years of maturity, on a personal profession of faith: Gregory and his brother, when they were young men; and their sister, when she was a grandmother. [Wall's *Hist. of Inf. Bap.* Part II. pp. 52-62.] Constantine the great, Constantius his son; the emperors, Gratian, Valentinian II. and Theodosius I.; the bishops, Basil, Nectarius, Chrysostom, Ambrose, and several private christians, were all baptized at years of maturity, on a personal profession of faith. Augustine, the great champion of paedobaptism, though his mother, if not his father, was a christian at the time of his birth, was not baptized till the thirty-third year of his age. [Ibid. Part II. Chap. III. passim.] It is, indeed, acknowledged, that some learned defenders of infant baptism have made it probable, that the parents of some of these persons were not baptized christians at the time of the birth of these children: [Wall, ut supra.] but this is never assigned, by contemporary writers, as the reason of their baptism being deferred to years of discretion: and, respecting some of these instances, it is indisputable that their parents were, at their births, not only christians, but filled elevated stations in the church. The argument drawn from these that believers' baptism was the prevailing custom in that age, therefore stands unimpeached.

The first canon in favour of infant baptism, was promulged in the year 416, by the council of Mela in Numidia; which anathematized all its opposers. [Robinson's *Hist. of Bap.* p. 21.] This council was first held at Carthage and afterwards adjourned to Mela. Augustine exerted his utmost ability and influence to crush all whom he and his party chose to brand with the name of heretics. The Donatists were a very numerous, and, according to the testimony of their adversaries, a very respectable sect. In the beginning of the fifth century there were upwards of four hundred congregations in Africa, who were, at the instigation of Augustine and the Pope, delivered over to banishment and death. The magistrates hesitated; but the bishops were importunate, and the emperor their tool: so that persecution in all its horrors, depopulated these churches. [Mosheim *Eccles. Hist.* Vol. II. pp. 58-60.] There is good proof that many, if not all of these christians, were baptists. [For evidence of this fact, see Danvers' *Treatise of Baptism*, page 222, Second Edition, and Robinson's *History*, pp. 215 and 496. It would be tedious to transcribe the authorities produced by these writers; but we cannot omit here the testimony of Mr. Long Prebendary of St. Peter's, Exeter, as reported by Crosby, Vol. I. Pref. p. xliv.--"The Donatists did not only re-baptize the adults that came over to them; but refused to baptize children, contrary to the practice of the Church, as appears from several discourses of St. Austin."--*Hist Donatists*, p. 103.]

Pope Innocent I. confirmed the decrees of the council of Carthage. It is worthy of remark that the same pope, very consistently, confirmed the practice of infant communion, which had been introduced in the time of Cyprian and directed the Lord's supper to be given to

babes, as soon as they were baptized. [Wall, Part II. p. 357.] This pope persuaded the emperor to issue an edict, decreeing that the person rebaptized, as well as the administrator should be punished with death: and history records the names of some baptist ministers, who were executed, under the authority of this law, for presuming to baptize those who had been baptized in their infancy. [Danvers, 230, from Baronius.] The successes of the Goths and Vandals, for some time, put a stop to these bloody proceedings, as many of the conquerors governed with moderation; and granted liberty of conscience to all their subjects. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.*] During the sixth century there were many dissenters from the established church or, in the language of the times, many heretics, who opposed the catholics: and there is abundant evidence that many of these were baptists.

In the year 634, Justinian, the emperor, declared the pope head of all the churches. This was the prelude to the most intolerant persecution.--Where the power of the emperor was acknowledged, the iron hand of the pope was severely felt; but in those places which were subject to the enemies of Rome, a far greater degree of religious liberty was enjoyed. The baptists in Justinian's time are represented by two ancient historians, as "honest and godly christians; that from the example of Christ did reprove the evil custom of children's baptism, which, like an inundation, had then broken in." [Danvers, p. 230, from Rulicius.]

Adrian, bishop of Corinth, at the commencement of the seventh century, publicly opposed infant baptism, and would neither baptize infants himself, nor suffer them to be baptized by others. This roused the indignation of the pope Gregory, who instigated the prelates against him: and they persecuted him as a great transgressor and blasphemer. The Donatists under all their hardships, still flourished so much, that the same Gregory wrote to two African bishops to suppress them. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* p. 112.] Believers baptism was practised in Egypt, about A.D. 670; and in such esteem, that some in other countries imitated their example. [Kingsford's *Centenary Traces*, p. 131, from Vicecomes &c.]

SECT. 2. From the Conquest of Spain by the Moors to Peter de Bruys: or, from A.D. 714 to A.D. 1100.

The Moors conquered Spain A. D. 714. On this occasion many of the Spanish christians fled to the Pyrenean mountains, which separate their country from France, and either mixed with the old inhabitants, or settled near them.

Probably they formed little independent republics, under the protection of the Moors. In a short time, the mountains were overstocked with inhabitants and they spread themselves into the adjacent vallies, on the Spanish territories. Continuing still to increase near the middle of this century, many thousands of these people, with their wives, children, and servants, emigrated over the Pyrenees, and settled in the French provinces at the northern foot of the mountains. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 242, 280, &c.] They remained, almost unmolested, for nearly five hundred years; and, during the grossest darkness of popery, preserved much of the primitive doctrines, practices, and spirit of christianity. They were

the ancestors of those pious sufferers, who were so dreadfully persecuted, under the names of Waldenses, Albigenses, &c. There is strong evidence that many of these ancient Waldenses were baptists; as we shall find their followers were, when they became the objects of persecution. Besides those fugitives, numbers, who in the language of the catholics were denominated heretics continued in Spain: and enjoyed, under the government of the Mahometans, greater religious liberty than they had done under the catholics. They were distinguished by various names; but they all agreed in one article.-- They rebaptized all such as joined their communities; and they baptized none without a personal profession of faith. They called themselves christians: and asserted that a New Testament church consisted only of virtuous persons, born of water and the Spirit. [Ibid. 246.]

Indeed, so far was the practice of infant baptism from being universally approved, that council of Laodicea held about this time, decreed that, those that will come to baptism ought first to be instructed in the faith, and to make a confession thereof." [Cent. Traces, 144.] A doctrine that appears to have been countenanced by several eminent men, of this century, however they were led by custom to adopt a contrary practice. The council Paris, A.D. 829, has this remarkable canon: "In the beginning of the holy church of God, no one was admitted to baptism, unless he had before been instructed in the holy sacrament of faith and baptism: which is proved by the words of Paul, Rom. 6. 3,4." [Booth's Paedob. Exam. II. 83.]

From the reign of Constantine, when the first established national church had been founded, there were always numbers of dissenters in the eastern empire; who were persecuted, favoured, neglected, or caressed, according to the circumstances of the times. About the year 970, the patriarch of Antioch complained to John Zimisces, the emperor, that his patriarchate was full of heretics; and begged to be freed from them. The emperor complied with his request; but, instead of extirpating these heretics, he removed them to Philippolis; and gave them liberty of conscience. The whole adjacent country was soon filled with inhabitants free and happy; [Robinson's Eccl. Res. pp. 73-75.] and from hence they spread themselves, all over Europe, under the denomination of Philippolitans, which was corrupted, in different countries, into Popolicans, Publicani, or Publicans. Ecclesiastical historians assure us, that they asserted that infants ought not to be baptized till they arrived at years of understanding. This was naturally to be expected, as they were the descendants of the Greek nonconformists; most of whom practised believers' baptism. [Booth's Paed. Bap. ii. 125.]

In the eleventh century, the advocates of believers' baptism became more conspicuous. The Waldenses, in the south of France, were numerous and respectable. They had many powerful protectors amongst the nobility: and their tenets attracted considerable attention. Their opposition to infant baptism was one of the most striking of their peculiar tenets, and drew upon them great persecution. Many of them were condemned and executed at Thoulouse and in Aquitain, in 1017; and, in 1022, fourteen were burnt alive at Orleans. One of the crimes for which they suffered, was, the denial of baptism; which, in the lips of a catholic, meant refusing it to infants: or, as stated by others, denying that it confers

grace, or is necessary to salvation. The chief plea on which infant baptism was first introduced. [Usher, on the Succession in Ann.]

A numerous sect had arisen in Italy, under the very eye of the pope. Their chief residence was at Milan; and in that neighbourhood they flourished for two centuries. At one time, they had upwards of fifteen hundred members; and their churches appear to have been organized in distinct associations. [Robinsons *Eccl. Res.* p. 409.] The catholics distinguished them by the name of Paterines. The whole system of catholic discipline was resolutely opposed by them, and infant baptism in particular. In the year 1025, some of them were examined by a catholic bishop; when they pleaded, in this rational manner, against ministering the ordinance to children. "Because," said they, "to an infant, that neither wills nor runs, that knows nothing of faith, is ignorant of its own salvation and welfare, in whom there can be no desire of regeneration, or confession of faith, the will, faith, and confession of another seem not, in the least, to appertain." [Stennett against Russen, p. 84.]

About the year 1,035, Bruno, the bishop of Angers in France, and Berengarius, archdeacon of the same church, opposed the errors of Rome. They are charged, by one of their contemporaries, with overthrowing, in far as in them lay, the baptism of infants. [Wall, Part II. p. 159.] Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1021, wrote against these reformers and asserts that by denying infant baptism they opposed the general doctrine and universal consent of the church." [Danvers, p. 243, from Matt. Paris, Anno 1087.] The followers of these men were numerous and spread into divers countries to such a degree that an ancient historian says, Berengarius drew all France, Italy and England to his opinions. [Baronius's *Annals*, A.D. 1095.]

The baptists appear about this time to have spread in various countries. Besides those already mentioned who suffered in France, many were put to death at Parenza in Italy. [As Anselm, Burchardus Normantis, Ado. Treverensis, Bonizo bishop of Placentis, &c.-- See Cen. Tr. pp. 176-179.]

Peter Abalardus, a learned man, and a great opposer of infant baptism, was imprisoned and martyred at Rome; and at Goslar in Germany, several were executed for the same crime. Yet in this century there were many eminent writers who taught that faith ought to precede baptism.

SECT. 3. From Peter de Bruys to the persecution of the Albigenses: or, from A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1200.

In the commencement of the twelfth century Peter de Bruys made the most laudable attempt to reform the abuses, and to remove the superstitions which had disfigured the beautiful simplicity of the gospel. After having engaged in his cause a great number of followers, during a laborious ministry of twenty years, he was burnt to death, at St. Giles near Thoulouse, A.D. 1130, by an enraged populace, set on by the clergy. His disciple, Henry, succeeded to his labour, and sufferings. He had been a monk, and an hermit but being convinced of the errors of popery, he left Lausanne, a city in Switzerland, and

travelled to Mons. Being banished from Mons, he removed successively to Poitiers, Bourdeaux, and the countries adjacent. At length in 1147, he arrived at Thoulouse. In all these places he exercised his ministerial functions with the utmost applause; and declaimed, with the greatest vehemence, against the vices of the clergy, and the superstitions, which they had introduced into the christian church. He was warmly opposed, at Thoulouse, by St. Bernard: and, notwithstanding his popularity, was obliged to save himself by flight. A bishop seized him, in his retreat, and carried him before pope Eugenius III. who presided in person, at a council then assembled at Rheims. By him he was committed, in 1148 to a close prison, where in a little time, he ended his days. [Mosheim's *Eccl. History*, Vol. III. pp. 116, 117.]

Though we have no accurate account of the doctrines taught by these reformers, yet all paedo-baptists allow that they rejected the baptism of infants Their followers increased much; and were long known by the appellations of Petrobrussians and Henricians. [Wall, Part II. pp. 172-188.] Dr. Wall calls these two reformers the first anti-paedobaptist preachers that ever set up a church that rebaptized those who had been baptized in their infancy. *ib.* p. 184.]

The emperor Alexias took great pains to reunite, to the catholic church, those independent sectaries, whom his predecessor, Zimisces, had settled at Philippolis; and burnt Basil, the physician, one of their principal men. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res*, pp. 79-84.] This caused several of the Greeks to leave those parts, and remove into Italy; where, during the twelfth, century they gained many followers and spread their tenets. They were frequently called cathari or puritans; and denied baptism to children, because they want understanding. Arnold, of Brescia, was a man of note among these Italian dissenters. He was condemned at Rome by the Pope, in 1155: and was first hanged, then his body burnt, and his ashes were thrown into the Tiber. [Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.* Vol, III. p. 119.]

In this century the Waldenses continued to increase. The labours of Peter Waldo appear to have contributed much to their success. This pious man was, originally, a merchant at Lyons; having been induced, by the sudden death of a friend, in 1160, to study the scriptures, became acquainted with the way of salvation, and was convinced of the corruptions and errors of the church of Rome. He therefore relinquished commerce, distributed his goods amongst the poor, and devoted himself to the work of the ministry. He procured a translation of several parts of the Old Testament into the French language; and was indefatigable in publishing the sacred contents of the oracles of truth. His success was great. Numerous disciples flocked round him and congregations were formed. The archbishop of Lyons forbade him to preach; but Waldo, for some time, disregarded his prohibition. He formed many distinct societies, and was instrumental in raising up many faithful ministers. At length, he found it necessary to remove into Dauphiny, accompanied by many of his followers. After spreading the gospel in this province they went into Picardy; and there appears to have laboured with peculiar success. So numerous were his disciples in Picardy, that they attracted the notice of government. Troops were sent against them, and they were treated like public enemies. Their houses were overthrown, their villages consumed, and towns destroyed Six

hundred of these innocent people were burnt in one day, by order of Philip Augustin, who began his reign, in 1180. [Martin's *Memoirs of French Protestants*, p. 15.] Many, to avoid these cruelties, retired into Flanders.--Thither fire and sword followed them: and many suffered death there, in 1182, for opposing infant baptism. Waldo fled into Germany; and at last settled in Bohemia, where he died in peace, A.D. 1179. [Fox's *Acts and Monuments* Vol. 1. p. 260. It is not intended to assert that Waldo was the founder of this-sect.--Dissenters from the catholics had existed as, we have seen, in every age; but this zealous minister appears to have been an instrument of reviving their cause and increasing their numbers.]

In Germany, this sect was dreadfully persecuted. Eighty were burnt at Strasburgh: and, at Cologn, Arnold, an eminent Waldensian, and ten of his associates, who opposed the commission of Christ against infant baptism, suffered the same punishment, Aug. 2, 1163: besides numbers in other parts. [Abp. Usher, *Suc.* p. 292.]

In the middle of this century, a very numerous and powerful branch of Waldenses attracted public attention. They were called Albigenses, from the town of Alby, in the province of Languedoc, where they first appeared. Peter Auterius, an eminent minister among them, was condemned, by the inquisition, for saying, among other things, that "water baptism, performed by the church, is of no use to children; because they do not consent: nay, they weep." [Limborch's *History of the Inquisition*, Book O. Ch. VIII.]

SECT. 4.—The sufferings of the Albigenses, &c. from A.D. 1200 to A.D. 1400.

In the thirteenth century, the Waldenses and Albigenses had vastly increased in numbers; and spread their doctrines through the southern part of Europe. In 1260, the Waldenses alone were computed at eight hundred thousand. [Perrin's *Hist. of Old Waldenses*, Book II. Chap. II.] Their principal residence continued to be at the foot of the Pyrenees, in the provinces of Languedoc, Dauphiny, Bearn, &c. Their numbers and prosperity alarmed the pope: and he determined to take the most effectual methods to put a stop to their progress. He wrote epistles to them, exhorting them to return to the [Roman] church, and lay aside their errors. To these succeeded numbers of friars and monks, whom he sent to preach in the country, and to dispute with the people.—The preachers were reinforced by legates, who had special commissions to compel them to reform. The legates called to their aid inquisitors, who then first began to exercise more than savage cruelties, in the name of the merciful Jesus. All these efforts, however, proved ineffectual. The heretics met tortures and deaths, in the most frightful forms, with a constancy that did honor to their cause; and, not unfrequently, gained them proselytes from among their persecutors. Every harsh and unchristian method, used to induce them to conform, furnished them with an additional reason for persisting in their nonconformity. The pope, thus baffled, resolved to pursue more decisive measures. He declared these heretics not worthy of a place in society, and inculcated on all good catholics the duty and merit of exterminating such insolent enemies of God and the church. To animate them to engage in this pious work, agents were sent to all parts of Europe, with authority from the pope, to promise a pardon of all sins, and the certain possession of paradise, to all who would undertake a pilgrimage of forty days, to fight against the heretics.

Impious and ridiculous as these proposals appear to us, in the darkness in which the world was, at that time, involved, they had the desired effect. Multitudes flocked to the standard of the pope, and proceeded, under the banner of the cross, to merit heaven by exterminating their fellow-men, their fellow-subjects, and, in many instances, their near relatives. It is computed that at the command of the pope, there marched against the peaceable Waldenses more than five hundred thousand fanatics: of whom more than three hundred thousand lost their lives in the conflict. The results were dreadful beyond description. Murder, devastation, and cruelty, for more than two centuries, disfigured the fairest parts of Europe. The numbers that perished by famine, tortures, and ill usage, were immense. In France alone, above five hundred thousand are supposed to have been slain; and the victims of papal cruelty and policy, in other places, are thought to have at least doubled the bloody amount. This is a moderate computation. Some writers make the number destroyed in France to exceed one million. Their sufferings were great. They were attacked, in their peaceful villages, and driven, in the most inclement weather, to the inhospitable mountains. The inhabitants of the valley of Pragela were thus assaulted, on a Christmas-day, when the ground was covered with snow; and were driven, at the point of the sword, from their habitations, which were instantly set on fire by their pursuers. They took their infants in their cradles, and the fathers carried such as could not walk. Many were killed before they reached the mountains over which they must pass to reach an asylum. The night overtook them: and they were obliged to spend it without shelter. In the morning eighty young infants were found frozen to death in their cradles: and the greatest part of their mothers expiring at their sides. On another occasion, being pursued by the king's lieutenant in Picardy, they took shelter in the rocks and caverns. The rocks and caverns were scoured by the troops; and all they could seize were put to the sword. Heaps of wood were piled in the entrances of such caverns as were impenetrable to their pursuers, and set on fire. Many of the Waldenses, driven to desperation, rushed out;--threw themselves headlong down the rocks, and were dashed to pieces. When the caverns were examined, more than four hundred infants were found smothered to death in their cradles, or clasped in the arms of their dead mothers. [Perrin's *Hist. of the Waldenses*, Book II. Chap. 3.]

While these public measures were pursuing to ruin these innocent people, the bishops and inquisition omitted no opportunity to harass them privately. They were excommunicated and anathematized; their goods were confiscated; their bodies were imprisoned, tortured, insulted and spit upon; their ears cut off; their flesh plucked off with pincers, they were torn asunder by horses; dragged up and down; broiled, roasted, burnt, drowned, and beheaded. But it would be too affecting to enter into the horrid detail of the various secret and overt acts of cruelty and oppression, exercised against these devoted people. The result was, to adopt the words of Thuanus, "They were slain, put to flight, spoiled every where of their goods and dignities, and dispersed here and there, rather, than that convinced of their error they repented.--They fled into Provence and the neighbouring Alps, and found a shelter for their lives and doctrine in those places. Part withdrew into Calabria and continued there a long time, even to the middle of the sixteenth century: part passed into Germany, and fixed their abode among the Bohemians, and in Poland and Lithuania; and others obtained a refuge in Britain." It is very probable that thousands of

their descendants retained their principles till the reformation; when, by degrees, they mixed with the protestants and were no longer known as a distinct people.

The Waldenses and Albigenses were very numerous and scattered in distant countries. They appear to have existed, under a great variety of names throughout the dark ages: though they became more conspicuous in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It cannot be supposed, that, among so numerous a succession of men, who claimed the right of private judgment and laid down their lives in defence of their claims, there was an uniformity of sentiment and practice. In different ages and countries, and frequently at the same time and place, there existed a diversity of opinions, which did not interrupt their harmony. They placed religion in piety and virtue: and left speculation unconfined and free. That many of them rejected infant baptism has been abundantly proved, by several baptist writers: we can only glance at the principle evidence.

Many eminent men among them were baptists. Bruno and Berengarius, Peter de Bruys, and his colleague Henry, Arnold, and several others, have been mentioned, in the course of this sketch: and respecting most of them, sufficient evidence produced, that they opposed infant baptism, or defended believers' baptism in such a manner as to overthrow the contrary practice. If then the leading men were baptists it is very natural to conclude that their followers held the same sentiments.

From several ancient confessions of their faith it appears that they admitted only two sacraments: and in one, of a very ancient date, they say, "By baptism we are received into the holy congregation of the people of God; there protesting and declaring openly our faith and amendment of life." [Perrins *Hist Wald.* Book I. Chap. XIII.] This certainly is inconsistent with infant baptism; but applies exactly to the baptism of believers, on a profession of faith and obedience. In an ancient treatise, written about 1120 perhaps by Peter de Bruys, they say that "Antichrist attributes the regeneration of the Holy Spirit unto the dead outward work; baptizing children into that faith and teaching that thereby baptism and regeneration must be had: grounding therein all his christianity which is against the Holy Spirit. And, in all their confessions, they totally disallow all, human inventions or traditions: and appeal to the scriptures as the only standards of faith and doctrine. [Ibid. Books I. and V.]

The popes and councils, who issued out their decrees, &c. against the different sects of the Waldenses, enforced the baptism of infants;--a strong proof that it was opposed by those sectaries. Thus, pope Leo IX, in his decretal epistle, in 1050, addressed to the bishop of Aquitain, a province in which the Waldenses abounded, commands that "young children should be baptized, on account of original sin." [Danvers, 248, from Usher.] Pope Innocent III. in 1025, decrees, "That baptism is profitable to adult persons, and also to infants:" and the same pope, in his decretals, in answer to a letter from the bishop of Arles, in Provence, a country noted as the nursery of these sects, A.D. 1199, says that "It had been represented to him that some heretics, in those parts had taught, that it was to no purpose to baptize children since they could have no forgiveness of sins thereby; as having no faith, charity, &c." [Wall, Part. II. p. 178.] He therefore concluded that, "Since baptism is come in the form of circumcision, therefore, not alone the elder, but also the

younger children, which of themselves neither believe nor understand, shall be baptized; and in their baptism original sin shall be forgiven them." In the year 1176, pope Alexander III sent a cardinal and three bishops to extirpate the Albigenses. In order to discover them, they drew up a number of articles to which they required the suspected to swear. Some of these were, "We believe that none are saved except they are baptised: and that children are saved by baptism." In the same year, the Gallican council, speaking of these heretics, as they called them, in their third canon, say,--"They convince and judge them of heresy, for denying baptism to children; or that they are to be saved thereby." [Danvers, 254, from Usher.]

Their adversaries charge them with this error.--Bernard, who had many disputes with them, says, "The Cathari, a sect of the Waldenses, laughed at the catholics, for baptizing of infants." [Wall, Part. II. p. 176.] Eckbertus, a famous doctor, who wrote about 1160, accuses them of saying baptism ought to be deferred till they come to years of discretion: and that then only, when they can, with their own mouths make a profession of faith, and desire it." [Ibid. 168.] A dominican persecutor of these heretics complained, that, "although the prayers of the priest and the sign of the cross absolved the child, when it came out of the water, from every sin; yet these heretics admitted another baptism." [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* p. 463.] The same accusation is made by Estrardus, Ermengendus, Peter of Clugny, and many other contemporaries. [Danvers, ut supra.]

These reasons have induced many learned paedobaptists, both papists and protestants, to admit that there were some of the Waldenses opposed infant baptism, on the same principles as the modern baptists do. We mention a few. Chassanion, a French writer of the History of the Albigenses, who collected his material from original records, acknowledges, "I cannot deny, that the Albigenses, for the most part, opposed infant baptism." [Stenntt against Addington, Second Part, p. 155.] Mt. Wall, after an elaborate examination, concludes, though with evident reluctance, "These proofs do, I think, evince that there were some, about this time, that denied infant baptism, among those parties of men that have been lately called Waldenses." [*Hist. of Infant Baptism*, Part. II. page 179.] The cardinals, Baronius and Hosius, and those respectable writers, Limborch [*Hist. Inquisit.* Book II. Chap. VIII], Venema [*Hist. Eccl.* Book VII. p. 443], and Mosheim [*Eccl. Hist.* Vol. IV. p. 443], who had paid peculiar attention to this subject, all agree in the same opinion.

SECT. 5.--From the destruction of the Albigenses to Jerome of Prague: or, from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1600.

Wihelmina, a zealous Bohemian lady, who settled at Milan, taught and baptized in that city with great success. She died, in peace, in 1281 and the ignorant Catholics, having known the holiness of her life, said their prayers at her grave.--Nineteen years afterwards, her bones were dug up and burnt and her followers proceeded against as heretics. [Robinson *Eccl. Researches*, p. 413.]

The Lollards or Wickliffites, in the thirteenth century, had many baptists among them, and were greatly persecuted Many were burnt at Crema in Austria, in for opposing infant

baptism; and, in 1373, a pious woman, named Peronne, underwent a similar punishment for a similar crime, at Aubiton, in Flanders. [Danvers, p 234.] In 1808, Dulcinus, and Margaretha, his wife, were burnt at Novaria in Italy, for attachment to believers baptism: and, in 1417, Catherine Suabe died at Montpellier, in the same manner, in defence of the same cause. [Dr. Stennett against Addington, Part II. p. 255.]

In the ear 1411, a class of religious persons arose in Bohemia, known by the denomination of Pygherds, Picards, or Beghards; and not unfrequently referred to under the general term Waldenses. They were, for some time, favoured by the archbishop of Prague: but after they had renounced infant baptism, and begun to baptize their converts before they admitted them into church fellowship, he found it prudent, at first to keep them at a distance; and afterwards, being urged on by the pope's threatenings, to persecute them. These professors appear to have been of very different sentiments; but they agreed in baptizing all that joined them. When they were persecuted in Prague, they retired into Moravia, and made that country their chief settlement; though many went into other countries. The only attempt to disturb them, made during the reign of Maximilian, was providentially defeated. That emperor, though a friend to the liberty of conscience, was induced, by the efforts of the catholics of Prague, to grant an edict against them. The chancellor of Bohemia who had been at court to prosecute the measure, set out for Prague with the edict; but, in passing the Danube, the bridge gave way, and he and his companions were drowned. His corpse was taken up by a fisherman; but the edict was never recovered. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 499-521.]

In the year 1415, John Huss was burnt at the council of Constance; and, the year following, Jerome of Prague shared the same fate. These zealous Bohemian ministers had preached the gospel with great success, and very plainly exposed the wickedness of popery. Amongst other important principles, they insisted, in their public labours, on the following.--"The law of Jesus Christ is sufficient, of itself, for the government of the church."--"All human traditions savour of folly."--"No other law besides the rule of the scriptures ought to be prescribed."--"The devil is the author of multiplying traditions in the church," &c. Now, though we do not assert that these two martyrs were baptists, yet these principles, if followed to their legitimate consequences, would certainly have led them to renounce infant baptism. There is some reason no believe that Jerome pursued them go far: and there is abundant proof, that multitudes of their followers practised believers baptism. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 481-514.]

A number of the descendants of the ancient Waldenses had, for centuries, inhabited the woods and forests, situated in Bohemia and Hungary, in the marquisate of Moravia. These inoffensive people baptized their converts by immersion on a confession-of faith: which ordinance they considered as a public profession of Christianity. They lived in forty- five divisions, called colleges or fraternities; and each of these communities consisted of many families who had all things in common. Some of these houses carried on manufactories; others were factors or merchants; and others, employed in agriculture and the wine trade. All were busy, peaceable, and happy under regulations of their own making, Their numbers cannot be easily determined; but the lowest computation makes it amount to upwards of twenty thousand. The patronage of the secular princes, and of the

proprietors of the lands on which they had settled, who found their own interest in protecting such industrious tenants, for a long time, defended them against the rage of the ecclesiastics and the thunder of the popes, which had, on several occasions, been levelled against them, At length, Ferdinand II. having conquered Bohemia, determined to extirpate heresy out of his dominions; and as the principles of the Moravian baptists would not allow them to make any resistance, he thought it most prudent to begin with them. He, accordingly, at the commencement of- the sixteenth century, wrote to the general of the army in Moravia, and to the governor of the province, to inform them of his design, and require their concurrence, on pain of his displeasure. He then published an edict against the baptists, banishing them all, both natives and foreigners, from his hereditary and imperial dominions. Three weeks and three days only were allowed for their departure; and it was death to be found even on the borders of the country, one hour after the expiration of the time. It was autumn; their fields were white for the harvest; and their vines weighed down with the ripening clusters. But in silent submission to that Power who governs the universe, they packed up their effects, and departed. They conveyed their sick, their innocent infants sucking at the breasts of their mothers, and their decrepit parents, in several hundred carriages. At the borders they separated: some going to Transylvania; some, to Wallachia, and others to Poland. But though this decree scattered these people, it did not destroy them: baptists of this class continue to the present day; and maintain, in a good degree, the same christian simplicity. [Robinson's Eccl. Res. pp. 522-527.]

SECT. 6.--The Munster Anabaptists: from A. D. 1524 to A. D. 1535.

Having thus brought our account of these foreign baptists to the Reformation, when all parties acknowledge that they were numerous, we might here close this chapter. But it would, perhaps, be thought partial to omit, even in this hasty sketch, those baptists who have, for nearly three centuries, been the darling theme of many paedobaptists and whose excesses have furnished such favourite arguments against believers' baptism. The Munster anabaptists, as they are termed, will not be suffered to fall into oblivion and therefore it may be necessary for us to notice them.

Prior to the Reformation, the inferior orders of the people in Germany had long been in the most abject state of degradation. They were divided into three classes: the slaves, the villains, and the freemen. The slaves, with their wives and children and the produce of their industry, were the absolute property of their owner. He treated them with the greatest rigour; compelled them to labour to the utmost of their strength; inflicted corporeal punishment on them, at his pleasure and, if he killed them, was liable only to a small fine.--The villains paid a fixed rent for their farms; but were confined to the soil, and transferred with the estate.--The freemen were, indeed, permitted to hold a little property; but their condition was rendered so, wretched, by the oppression of their superiors, that they frequently renounced their privileges and went, by choice, into the class of slaves. The whole nation, both clergy and laity, had sunk into the grossest ignorance; and tyranny, the most intolerable and provoking, had been exercised, under the mask of religion. Luther had recently broken the charm and taught men to think for themselves. He had successfully set ecclesiastical usurpation at defiance. All Europe

observed the interesting event; and all were agitated. Men of the lowest rank began to feel their own importance, and to aspire after that liberty, which he had taught them, that they, in common their fellow-men, were entitled. Encouraged by the success of Luther's bold measures, the oppressed people of Germany were induced to make a struggle for the recovery of some of their civil rights. They rose on their tyrants, expelled the monks and magistrates out of several cities, and formed a new police. The insurrection had spread over several provinces, forty-thousand men were in arms, and most of the nobility had fled, before Thomas Muncer, a baptist minister, espoused their cause.

Thomas Muncer had been a priest before he became a disciple of Luther. He was, for some time, highly esteemed by the leaders of the Reformation; but, when he adopted the practice of believers baptism, he lost much of his credit among them. He laboured assiduously as an itinerant preacher, through the greatest part of Saxony. His deportment was grave and humble and his discourses plain and easy. After having been driven from several places by persecution, he settled at Mulhausen in Upper Saxony. Here he had preached for some time with great success before the peasants took up arms; when, being convinced of the justice of their cause, he joined them, in the year 1514; and was esteemed their leader. He drew up for them a Memorial, which was presented to their lords, and dispersed throughout Germany. In this their grievances and demands are distinctly stated. It consisted of twelve articles, of which only the two first could be supposed to have any connection with religion. In the first they pray that they be permitted to choose their own ministers; and on proper occasions to dismiss them. The second requires that they might be eased of all tythes except that on corn; which, they request, may be applied in equal portions to the support of teachers the relief of the poor, and the payment of those civil taxes which were levied on the poor. The other ten articles stipulate for personal freedom the right of fishing, hunting, &c.--the privilege of cutting wood in the forests--an amelioration of the services of villainage--a restitution of the tenures of farms to their original grants--a reduction of the annual rents--a reformation of the mode of administering justice --a restoration of the commons to the peasantry--and the abolition of the claiming of heriots. The concluding article states, that this memorial contains their present grievances; but that they are willing to make any alterations to truth and scripture, and tending to promote the glory of God, and the good of mankind.

It is evident, that these claims had no connection with the belief or practice of believers baptism: nor, indeed, with the distinguishing principles of any sect. They were the demands of men, as members of civil society; and some of the best of statesmen have admitted both the moderation and justice of these claims. Persons of every denomination of christians might, and actually did, join in supporting them; and the paedobaptists appear to have been as hearty in the cause as the baptists. Nor need any party be ashamed to acknowledge these patriots as brethren. Had it pleased the Governor of the universe to have crowned their efforts with success, Muncer and his associates would have been ranked with the assertors of the rights of man and immortalized as the saviours of their country.--But they were unsuccessful. The Landgrave of Hesse marched against them; with a numerous army.--Seven thousand of them fell in the conflicts: and Muncer, being taken some time afterwards, was beheaded, at Mulhausen, in 1525. [Robinson's *Eccl. Res.* pp. 535-554.]

This defeat did not terminate the struggle. It continued for many years; and in various parts of Germany, it was attended with circumstances much more criminal. The people, exasperated by their sufferings, appear to have been made the tools of enthusiastic and ill-designing men; who, taking advantage of the ferment of the public mind, joined the peasants, and led them into almost every kind of excess. In the spring of the year 1534, the populace, in the city of Munster, drove the citizens and clergy out of the town, and made themselves masters of it. The first mover of this tumult was one Bernard Rotman, at that time a Lutheran minister, though he afterwards opposed infant baptism. This man having in his sermons inveighed loudly against the errors of the church of Rome, the papists bought him off with a sum of money and prevailed on him to leave the city. After months, he returned, and threatened the principal inhabitants, that, if they would not open the churches to him, he would procure it to be done by force. The mob rose in his favor and he executed his threat. He was soon after joined by several turbulent enthusiasts from the neighbouring cities, some of whom professed believer's baptism. If we credit the reports of their enemies they advanced many extravagant and impious opinions and committed numerous acts of excess, cruelty, and violence. John Bockhold, known by the appellation of John of Leyden, set himself up for ruler; and assumed the title of King of Sion. He appointed twelve judges to govern the new republic of Israel; and sent twenty apostles into the neighbouring countries, to preach his doctrines. They proceeded, in this manner, and bade defiance to all the forces that could be brought against them for more than a year. The bishop of Munster, at length, by the assistance of an anabaptist that joined his army, took the town, May 28th 1535: and the pretended king of Sion, being apprehended, was first dreadfully tortured and then pierced through the heart with a dagger, in the beginning of the following year. [Brandt's *History of Reformation*. Vol. I. Book II.]

SECT. 7.--Remarks on these Insurrections, and their effects.

There is reason to believe that, extravagant and wicked as these madmen certainly were, yet they have been painted in too horrid colours. All the accounts of their opinions and practices which have reached us, have been preserved in the writings of their enemies; who, probably found it necessary to render the characters of the anabaptists as odious as possible, that they might justify the horrid persecutions to which they were afterwards exposed. The insurgents, at Munster, have generally been identified with the adherents of Muncer; but the doctrines attributed to the former are directly opposed to the memorial published by the latter. One instance will sufficiently shew this. The insurgents, at Munster, are charged with holding, that dominion is founded in grace, that the saints have a right to overturn governments, depose magistrates, and rule all things themselves. Nothing, certainly, can be more destructive of the peace and even existence of society, than these principles: yet they are frequently ascribed, with great confidence, to the anabaptists in general almost all the writers of those ages. But, in the third article of their memorial, Muncer and his followers declare, that they wished not to be free from the controul of magistrates, "whose office they honoured, as being of divine appointment, and whose just laws they would obey." It is plain, therefore, either that these men have been slandered; or that, some of the zealots at Munster advanced opinions which the sober part even of the insurgents themselves abhorred. This is the more probable, as

many, who were afterwards executed, as parties in these tumults, constantly persisted, under the most exquisite tortures, in denying even with their latest breath, the extravagancies imputed to them.

Again, this insurrection at Munster was by no means the only instance, in those unsettled times, of popular tumults, under the pretence of religion. Almost every principal town in Germany and the Netherlands witnessed similar scenes. Nor were they confined, to any party. Catholics rose against protestants and protestants against catholics; the reformed, as they called themselves, against the Lutherans, and the Lutherans against the reformed. [Brandt, ut supra.] The anabaptists, indeed, appears in this confusion, to have been the common object of persecution with every party. Every mans hand was against them and it is no wonder hand was against every man Oppression maketh even wise men mad.

But, allowing that every thing reported of these men is true, what have the modern baptists to do with them? Were their vices and excesses the necessary effects of their opinions respecting the subject or mode of baptism?--If not, is it not equally ungenerous and irrational to introduce them into the controversy?--Besides, it is very impolitic in the paedobaptists to adopt this mode of argument; for if it be allowed to them, it must be to their, opponents. And if the excesses and cruelties committed by the various classes of paedobaptists, protestant and papist, not only in these times of confusion, but in every age of the church, should be urged as evidence against infant baptism, the baptists would easily make a dreadful reply to any argument drawn from the transactions at Munster!* -- But they disdain such ungenerous and foreign topics: their cause needs such support.

[* When we said, in the beginning of the last section, that the Munster anabaptists would not be suffered to fall into oblivion; we did not expect soon to see them made the subject of a separate publication. But, it seems, we had formed too favorable an estimate of the disposition and understandings of some of our contemporaries.--An account of the tumults at Munster, extracted from Dr. Robertson's History of Charles V. has since been published in a two-penny tract, under the deceptive title of "The History of the Baptists," by W, Robertson, D.D. &c. &c. This piece, which is adapted, and doubtless meant, to circulate widely among the uninformed and credulous, is obviously designed to lead them to conclude that the tenets and practices that distinguish the baptists first originated in those times of confusion, and were till then unknown; and to induce them to identify the present adherents to those doctrines with the German insurgents. Such an insidious attempt to mislead the ignorant and traduce the innocent, certainly reflects a lustre on the boasted candour and liberality of this enlightened age; and will be duly appreciated by every intelligent observer.]

Lastly--It is very certain that though some enthusiasts who denied infant baptism disgraced themselves and their profession by their extravagant opinions and practices, yet there were thousands of baptists at that time, and in those countries, who deserved and obtained a very different character. Not to mention the many instances of rational piety and holy conduct in individuals of that persuasion who were persecuted to death itself, which extorted the admiration even of their enemies, we shall transcribe the testimonies of several impartial and competent witnesses to their general character who exerted his

whole force in opposing observes, that they owed their great success to three things; the first was "that their teachers deafened their hearers with numberless passages of scripture: the second, that they affected a great appearance of sanctity: the third, that their followers discovered great constancy in their sufferings and deaths." Beza, who will not be suspected of favouring them, and who had good opportunities of knowing them, says-- "Many of the anabaptists are good men, servants of G0d, and our dear brethren." Cassander, who, as well as Beza, lived in those times and had many disputes with the anabaptists, declares, "They discovered an honest and pious mind; and erred from the faith through a mistaken zeal; rather than an evil disposition:--they condemned the outrageous conduct of their brethren at Munster, and taught that the kingdom of Christ was to be established only by the cross." [Crosby, Vol. I. Pref. p. xxviii. &c.]

The paedobaptists, however, contrived to throw whole odium of this disgraceful business on baptists, and a most violent persecution followed. Papists and protestants united in hunting down this slandered people and put to death many who had used all their influence to prevent the enormities that had been committed. In March, 1549, five men and three women were burnt at Amsterdam, because they offered themselves to be re-baptized. About the same time, two men and one woman were executed for the same crime at Leuwarden. In 1558, above forty baptists fell, by the hand of the executioner; and an equal number in the following year. [Brandt's Hist. Ref. under the respective years.] But to enumerate particulars would far exceed the limits of this sketch. We therefore sum up the whole in the words of an intelligent writer, who appears to have well examined the subject.--"I have," says he, "carefully told over five hundred and seventy odd persons, all anabaptists, who were put to death, merely on account of religion, exclusive of, and in contradiction to, any who suffered as charged with treason, rebellion, sedition, &c. Nor have I reckoned into the number a whole assembly of those people who were betrayed at Rotterdam, in 1554, for I cold not make an estimate of their number; but all that were caught of these were executed. Upon a fair computation, then, this scantling of anabaptists, who suffered in and about the Low Countries, for their religious principles, amounts considerably to above the highest number of those, of whatsoever denomination, who were put to death in England on account of the Reformation. What I further observe, is, that in the judgment of charity there appeared in these, not only equal firmness of mind, and the traces of a good spirit; but they had such divine transports and solid assurances before their exits, as eminently attended our glorious British martyrs." [Rees' *Inf. Bap. no Inst. of Christ*, p. 220.] In confirmation of this last remark, it may be proper to insert the testimony of Cardinal Hosius, their great persecutor.--"If the truth of a religion were to be judged of by the readiness and cheerfulness which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer than that of the anabaptists; since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more grievously punished, or that have been more fully and stedfastly undergone, and even offered themselves, unto the most cruel punishments than those people." [Stennett against Addington, Part II. p. 268.]

SECT. 8.--Baptists persecuted by Protestants.

When we consider that the baptists, in all ages, have attacked the main pillars of popery, by maintaining--that the holy scripture is the sole rule of faith and practice in religious concerns--that Christ is the supreme and only Head of the church--and that whoever usurps authority in it rebels against him and antichrist; we cannot be surprized that the papists should be highly exasperated against them. We sincerely wish that we could stop there, and leave the catholics loaded with the whole disgrace of persecuting the baptists: but justice requires us to state, that the protestants must share in the odious burthen.

Wickliff, Huss, Jerome, and others, had prepared the way for the reformation by exposing the errors of the church of Rome: and Luther, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, favoured by a conjuncture of circumstances, carried it forward with unexpected rapidity. He appealed to the Bible, as the only standard of religion and boldly maintained the right of every man to read and understand it for himself. His doctrines spread, and soon embraced by many kingdoms and states; who protestant against the errors and usurpations of Rome, and thence obtained the name of protestants.

Many of the most famous leaders of the dissenters, had expressed themselves with sufficient clearness on the distinguishing tenets of the baptists. They had acknowledged, that baptism signifies immersion, and that believers are the proper subjects. It might, therefore, have been expected, either that they would have declared themselves baptists; or, at least, that they would have cherished those who acted on their own principles. But, whether they found it more prudent to leave a subject so closely interwoven with the prejudices and passions of men untouched; or whether they changed their views respecting this ordinance; certain it is, that many of the leading men among the reformers declared, at last, in favour of infant baptism.--Too certain it is, also, that no sooner had they gained the protection of the civil power, and an influence over civil governors, than they all, whatever mode of discipline they embraced, whether episcopal, presbyterian or independent, endeavoured to impose their opinions on those who differed from them either in principle or practice. It may excite surprise, that an inconsistency to their fundamental tenets, so glaring, should have been so universally prevalent. But religious liberty was then very imperfectly understood. The degrading fetters of papal tyranny had so benumbed the human mind, that they could not, except by slow degrees, expand it to its proper dimensions, or act with its native energy. To this, and not to any thing hostile to truth or liberty in the systems or the hearts of these good men, do we ascribe the inconsistency to which we have alluded. Abundant evidence might be brought of the existence of this disgraceful inconsistency on the continent; but as we shall meet with too many painful examples of persecuting protestants in tracing the history of the English General Baptists, we shall only notice one remarkable instance of tyranny, in a country noted for the love of liberty.

In the protestant canton of Zurich, in Switzerland, an edict was published, in 1525, commanding all persons to baptize their children and to forbear rebaptizing, on pain of fines and imprisonment: and, in 1526, Zuinglius, one of the reformers at that city, passed this sentence on Felix Mans--"He that rebaptizes, let him be drowned:" upon which that worthy minister was drowned. [Brandt's *Hist. of Ref.* Vol. Book II.] In 1530, a second edict was published at Zurich, by which adult baptism was made a capital offence; and,

by authority of these edicts, ten baptists were put to death in that town, in less than four years. They then declined public executions; but cruelly starved seven of the same persuasion to death in prison; and confined five others, till death released them. [Danvers, pp. 264, 265.]

CHAPTER II.

The Progress of the Gospel, and Traces of Baptists in England, previous to the Reformation.

SECT. 1--From the Introduction of the Gospel, and Traces of the Baptists in England, Previous to the Reformation.

When the gospel of Christ was first preached, in this favoured isle, is not easy to determine.--Many respectable writers place this important event in the apostolic age; and suppose, that some of the apostles either came in person, or sent their companions, into Britain. Be that as it may, there appears sufficient evidence, that about A.D. 180, Lucius, who then reigned in Britain, sent to Eleutherius, the bishop of Rome, to request that he would assist him in propagating the christian religion among his subjects. In compliance with this request, Eleutherius sent two holy men to instruct the Britons. The missionaries from Rome were zealous, active, and successful. They soon baptized the king; and the principal part of the nation followed his example: so that the country appears to have been in a great measure rescued from the worship of idols. [Fox's *Acts and Mon.* I. p. 118.] There is good authority for saying that, in 182, there was a school of learning, to provide the British churches with proper teachers. [Usher *de Antiquitate Eccl. Brit.* pp. 69, 70.]

This happy island afforded an asylum for banished christians, during the first nine general persecutions: as none of them reached it. But the tenth, raised by Dioclesian, about the year 301, was felt severely by the British churches. In this dreadful persecution, Albanus, the first English martyr, Aaron, Amphibalus and Julius, all eminent British christians, sealed the truth with their blood, at Verolamium, since called St. Alban's, from Albanus. At this time, christianity was almost driven out of the whole island; the churches were subverted; the books of the scripture were burned; and many faithful christians, both men and women, slain. [Fox I. p. 98.]

After this persecution, the christians in Britain appeared to have flourished in peace, during the government of the Romans. But the great numbers of troops drawn from expeditions of their conquerors, weakened both the church and state; and left England, when forsaken by the Romans, a prey to the idolatrous Picts and Scots. These barbarous nations dreadfully harassed, and cruelly persecuted, the Britons. When these neighboring enemies were driven out by the Saxons, whom the Britons had invited to their assistance, they only changed their oppressors. The Saxons were, at this time, bigotted heathens, and seized every opportunity of proving their hatred to christianity and its professors. The devastation made among the British churches was terrible. "From the east to the west," says Gildas, an eminent writer who lived near those times, "nothing was to be seen but churches burnt or destroyed to their very foundations. The inhabitants were extirpated by