

## PREFACE

Prof. W. J. McGlothlin, who occupies the chair of Church History in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, at Louisville , Ky. , and this author had a discussion involving the attitude of Baptists toward the question of alien immersion, especially their past history upon the question. The discussion was published in the columns of the Baptist and Reflector, of Nashville , Tenn. Knowing that no work had ever been published, devoted exclusively to the history of this question. I suggested that we put the discussion in permanent form. This, however, Bro. McGlothlin declined to do, stating, among other things, that it would be fragmentary and unsatisfactory as a history. He, however, at the same time stated that a consecutive, impartial history of the question was at this time desirable, and suggested that I undertake the work. Brother McGlothlin and myself are not agreed on all points. We are agreed that the facts, without bias, should be disclosed. It shall be the purpose of these pages to record, without partiality, facts as they exist.

These pages will be devoted exclusively to history, and theory and exegesis will be employed only as they will throw light upon the history of the question.

With the hope that we shall be able to contribute, at least, something in the study of this vexed question, these pages are sent forth on their mission. J. H. Grime, Ridgely, Tenn. , May 14, 1909.

## INTRODUCTION

We have just read in manuscript, "History of Alien Immersion and Valid Baptism," by Elder J. H. Grime, of Ridgely, Tenn.

As we finished the last page a hearty amen came fully endorsing the book. It is just what it purports to be, "A History of Alien Immersion." It is largely a compilation of historical facts on the subject, a clear demonstration of the fact that Alien Immersion is a modern fad of liberalists, who are more anxious to be popular than they are to be right. The book is well arranged, is clear, logical and most timely.

It should be read by all of our Baptist people, and the just acknowledgment made of the timely service rendered to the cause of truth.

Would it not be timely for every real Baptist Association to go on record by publishing their disapproval of this illogical, inconsistent, modern practice of the few lax, would-be leaders and thus put a stop to the inroads of error which lead unmistakably to disintegration and confusion? Let Baptists be Baptists, contending earnestly for the faith.

J. G. Bow, Associate Editor Western Recorder, Louisville ,  
Ky. , May 25, 1909

# History of Alien Immersion and Valid Baptism

## CHAPTER I.

### *Valid Baptism versus Alien Immersion.*

#### **DEFINITIONS.**

In order to a correct understanding of any question, we should have a definite understanding of the meaning of all terms employed, and positions assumed. By the term "Alien Immersion" is meant immersions performed outside of Baptist churches, by persons who are in no way connected with them. It is commonly understood to refer to immersions performed by Pedobaptists and Campbellites. The question of divergence is, whether Baptist churches should recognize such immersions as valid baptisms, and receive members thus immersed into their churches, without immersing them again. There will be found among Baptists certain persons who take either side of this question. It will be the purpose of these pages, if possible, to determine the attitude which the denomination has occupied on this point in the past. The whole question turns upon the authority of the administrator. Those who believe in the reception of alien immersion, hold that the character of the administrator has nothing to do with the validity of baptism. They hold that if we have a proper subject—a true believer in Jesus Christ—a right design—to obey God, and symbolize our death to sin and resurrection to a new life—and a proper action—the total

immersion of the body in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that we have a gospel or valid baptism, it matters not what may be the character of the administrator. On the other hand, those who oppose the reception of Alien immersion, hold that in addition to the three qualifications stated above, to have valid or gospel baptism, there must be a legal administrator—one authorized by a gospel (Baptist) church. Of the former there are two classes. The one insists on receiving alien immersion at all times and without restraint; while the other class believes it is valid, but “opposes the reception of it on the principles of good order.” Of the latter there are also two classes; the one believes we should have direct church action in each particular case; while the other class believes that it is sufficient when the church confers her authority upon the minister in his ordination. The whole thing turns, however, upon the question of church authority. The question may be stated thus: All Baptists are agreed as to the subject, design and action of baptism. But when they come to the administrator they reach the point of divergence.

The question, we think, is sufficiently clear now that we may proceed to look after its history. Perhaps this would be a good place to state, that the rejection of alien immersion is a Baptist peculiarity. Even the Roman Catholics, with all their proscriptive and persecuting arrogance, have ever received, the baptism of heretics (as they are pleased to call all who differ from them). If for any cause they rebaptize one, they give what they call “conditional baptism,” employing this ceremony: “If thou art not baptized, I

baptize thee,” etc. Protestant denominations, as a rule, have always received baptism from the hands of others. It is true that in their general meetings they have at times discussed the propriety of receiving baptisms performed by Catholics. But they have usually given indefinite decisions in the matter, with the understanding that if they invalidated Catholic baptism, they invalidated their own, since they received their baptism from the Catholics. It is true also that John Wesley rebaptized Dissenters in order to get Catholic, or Episcopal authority, for their baptism. These are isolated cases, however, and as a rule the statement holds good, that it is peculiarly a Baptist practice.

### ***THE BIBLE***

The history of this question has its beginning with God himself. When God would begin the ordinance of baptism, he began it by emphasizing the administrator-in sending a man direct from God. John 1:6. The administrator was further emphasized by Christ. When the time came for him to be baptized, he did not say the administrator is non-essential, and therefore seek baptism at the hands of some Rabbi, or Priest, in his own town ( Nazareth ), but walked sixty miles to get baptism at the hands of a Baptist preacher-the heaven-sent legal administrator. (See Mark 1:9; John 1:33.) Christ further emphasized the administrator when he raised the question as to whether “John’s baptism was from Heaven, or of men.” Matt. 21:25. And he still further emphasized the

administrator when he told the “Pharisees and lawyers that they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of John.” Luke 7:30.

The administrator is still again emphasized in that those baptized by Christ’s disciples are said to be baptized by Christ himself. John 3:22 and 4:1-2. Just as the State hangs a criminal through the sheriff-their legal agent-so Christ baptized through the disciples, his legal administrators. Such could never be said of one hanged by a mob; it matters not how guilty the one lynched might be. Just so no one could be said to be baptized by Christ unless baptized by one commissioned by Him.

## CHAPTER II.

### *EARLY CHURCHES*

We come now to consider the history of the early churches upon this question.

Ignatius, one of the “Apostolic Fathers,” and probably a contemporary with John and Paul, and who suffered martyrdom early in the second century, in a letter to the church at Smyrna, has this to say: “It is not lawful without the bishop (pastor) either to baptize or to celebrate a love feast (Lord’s Supper), but whatsoever he shall approve of, that is also pleasing to God, so that everything that is done may be secure and valid.” –Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, p. 90.

We move up now to the year 200 A. D., when we find Tertullian strongly opposing the reception of the baptism (immersion) of heretics (other sects). He uses this language:

“There is to us one, and but one baptism. . . . One God, and one baptism, and one church in the heavens. But it must be admitted that the question, ‘What rules are to be observed with regard to heretics?’ is worthy of being treated. For it is to us that that assertion refers.

Heretics, however, have no fellowship in our discipline whom the mere fact of their excommunication testifies to be outsiders (other denominations). I am not bound to recognize in *them* a thing which is enjoined *on me*, . . . And, therefore, their

baptism is not one *with ours* either; because it is not *the same*; a *baptism* which, since they have it not duly doubtless they have *not at all*; nor is that capable of being *counted* which is not had.” – Ante Nicean Fathers, Vol. 3, p. 676.

It will be seen here that Tertullian reads their baptism clean out, as being nothing, and clearly makes it a test of fellowship.

In the next place the churches planted by Paul, and his fellow helpers in Asia Minor , Cappadocia , Cilicia , Syria , Arabia , Mesopotamia , Pontus Galatia . Bithynia , with adjoining countries, including Africa and Numidia , stood as a unit in the rejection of alien immersion up to 259 A. d. –Eusebius, Book 7, chapter 5, pp. 257-258.

Speaking of the above, Neander (Vol. 1, p. 318), perhaps the most learned historian of his day, tells us that the only discordant note, the only ones to raise their voice in favor of the reception of alien immersion (for nothing but immersion was practiced then) was the church at Rome, and such as they dominated by their influence. It must be remembered that this was after the split in the church at Rome , and the corrupt party had started on their way to the papacy under the leadership of Cornelius. It was this factional church, at Rome , which afterward became the headquarters of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, that set the pace for the reception of alien immersion. And they carried it so far as to institute the farce of passing the act of exclusion of all churches who refused to receive it. Hear Neander describe it:

“But here again, it was a Roman bishop, Stephanus, who, instigated by the spirit of ecclesiastical arrogance, domination and zeal, without knowledge, attached to this point of dispute a paramount importance. Hence toward the close of the year 253, he issued a sentence of excommunication against the bishops (pastors) of Asia Minor , Cappadocia , Galatia , and Cilicia , stigmatizing them as Ana-baptists (Aiatsitpaban) a name, however, which they could justly affirm they did not deserve by their principles; for it was not their wish to administer a *second* baptism, to those who had been already baptized, but they contended that the previous baptism, given by heretics (other sects) could not be recognized as a *true* one. . . . “These induced Cyprian, the bishop (pastor) to propose the point for discussion at two Synods (councils) held at Carthage in the year 255 A. D., the one composed of eighteen, and the other of seventy-one bishops (pastors); and both assemblies declared in favor of Cyprian’s views, that the baptism of heretics ought not to be regarded as valid.” –Neander, Vol. 1, pp. 318, 319. See also Ante Nicene Fathers, vol. 6, p. 102.

In the “Apostolic Constitution” we find this language: “Be ye likewise contented with one baptism alone, that which is into the death of the Lord; not that which is conferred by wicked heretics, but that which is conferred by unblamable priests.” –Ante Nicene Fathers. Vol. 7, p. 456. This statement dates in the early part of the fourth century.

## *ANA-BAPTISTS.*

From this time until the reformation the question must be studied in the light of the Ana-baptists. It has been repeatedly stated by alien immersionists that Ana-baptists only opposed infant baptism, and that they never re-baptized on account of the character of the administrator. This statement seems strange, in view of the fact that the title was born about the time infant baptism was first introduced, and many centuries before sprinkling was in use for baptism. The only question involved was the administrator. This fact can be verified by reference to the Ante Nicean Fathers, Eusebius, and in fact any reputable church history of any denomination. We quote from McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia:

“The term Ana-baptists, or Rebaptizers, is connected with the controversies of the third century. In Asia Minor and in Africa, where the spirit of controversy had raged long and bitterly, baptism was considered to be only valid when administered in the orthodox church....So high were the disputes on this question, that two synods (councils) were convened to investigate it, one at Iconium and the other at Synnada, in Phrygia, which confirmed the opinion of the invalidity of heretical Baptism. From Asia the question passed to Northern Africa ; Tertullian accorded with the decision of the Asiatic councils in opposition to the practice of the Roman church. Agrippinus convened a council at Carthage , which came to a similar decision with those of Asia . Thus the matter rested, till

Stephen, bishop of Rome, prompted by ambition, proceeded to excommunicate the bishops (pastors) of Asia Minor, Cappadocia, Galatia and Cilicia, and applied to them the epithets of Rebaptizers and Ana-baptists, A. D. 253.” –McClintock & Strong. Vol 1. p. 210.

Robinson, the English historian, has this to say, speaking of the Ana-baptists: “The third division comprehends all such as placed the essence of baptism in the virtue or competency of the administrator....It was on this account, that many of the ancient Bohemian Brethren rebaptized, and were denominated by the priests, whose services they disowned, Ana-baptists....Bishop Bossuet properly enough observes this rebaptizing was an open declaration, that in the opinion of the Brethren the Catholick church had lost baptism. This is precisely their meaning. They did not pretend to rebaptize; but supposing what was done in the church (of Rome ) to be no baptism, they baptized, as they thought, properly.” –History of Baptism, p. 414.

Mosheim speaking of the Ana-baptists, says: They “acquired the denomination of Ana-baptists by their administering anew the rite of baptism to those who came over to their communion.” “They rebaptized all those who leave other Christian churches to embrace their communion.” –Mosheim’s Church History, Vol. 2 pp. 127, 296.

Gieseler says: “In accordance with this view they declared all other churches to have forfeited the rights of a Christian church;

and baptized anew those who came over to them.” –Gieseler’s  
Church History. Vol. 1. p. 255. We might multiply these authors,  
but these are sufficient.

## CHAPTER III.

### *ENGLISH BAPTISTS*

In discussing this question in connection with English Baptists, it should be remembered that the titles Baptist and Ana-baptist, were much of the time used interchangeably, referring to the same people. As long as their enemies were able to control the matter, they persisted in dubbing them as Ana-baptists, notwithstanding the Baptists have always protested, claiming that they were not Ana-baptists, but simply Baptists.

Baptists have, through the ages, been great sufferers on account of persecution, but some of the bitterest persecution known to history, was inflicted on the Baptists of England during the century following the Reformation.

It would take a great stretch of credulity to believe that these persecuted Baptists would recognize their persecutors as proper channels for the administration of the ordinances of God's House.

Of the Ana-baptists, who operated in England following the Reformation, Owen says (Works, Vol. 13. p. 184): "The Donatists rebaptized those who came to their societies (churches) because they professed themselves to believe that all administration of the ordinances not in their assemblies was null, and that they were to be looked upon as no such thing. Our (English) Ana-baptists do the same thing." -Church Perpetuity, p. 343.

It will be seen here that the whole matter turned upon the authority of the administrator; no other point being referred to. The mode was not controverted, for it is a matter of open history that the Church of England immersed for the first hundred years after the Reformation.

It is admitted that the facts connected with John Smyth are not altogether as clear as we would like. (We may say, that this author seriously doubts the story of his baptizing himself.) But whatever the facts may be, it is an undisputed fact, that he and the Brownists had a heated discussion over the validity of administrations performed by the Church of England.

Armitage records the following: “When the Brownists left the English State Church, they objected to its hierarchy, liturgy, constitution and government, as anti-Christian. Smyth, therefore, broke with them on the issue, that if that church was apostate, as a daughter of Rome, then its clergy were not qualified to administer Christ’s ordinances. The Brownists, however, considered them valid, and called the English church their ‘mother’, while they denounced her as ‘harlot’, and ‘Babylon’; but Smyth, having been christened in her pale, concluded that he was yet unbaptized.

Bishop Hall caught this point keenly, and was severe on the Brownists when he opposed Smyth. He wrote: “ ‘You that cannot abide a false church, why do you content yourselves with a false sacrament? (baptism), especially since our church (Episcopal) not being yet gathered to Christ, is no church, and therefore her

baptism a nullity!...He (Smyth) tells you true; your station is unsafe; either you must forward to him, or back to us...You must go forward to Ana-baptism, or come back to us...All you rabbins cannot answer that charge of your rebaptized brother...If our baptism be good, then is our constitution good...What need you to surfeit of another man's teacher?...Show you me where the apostles baptized in a bason!'

“Smyth having rejected infant baptism also on its merits as a human institution, Ainsworth said, in 1609 A. D., that he had gone over to the abomination of the Ana-baptists.” -Armitage, p. 158.

Whatever may be said about immersion in England (and it is not the purpose of these pages to discuss this feature only as it affects this question), it is clearly apparent, that the Baptists of England made the validity of baptism rest largely in the administrator. Armitage says: “And there are many reasons for believing that this is a similar case, and that these fifty-three members of the same congregation declined to accept immersion from what they considered an unauthorized administrator.” – Armitage, pp. 165-166. Hence they sent Richard Blunt to Holland to secure regular baptism at the hands of the Dutch Ana-baptists. “He was immersed by the Collegiants at the hands of their teacher, Mr. John Batte. Upon his return he immersed Samuel Blacklock and the two immersed the rest (of the fifty-three) in 1641.” –A Review of the Question, p. 57.

Gov. John Hutchinson and his wife, Lucy Hutchinson, were leading Baptists of England in the seventeenth century. To show how they stood on this question, we quoted the words of Crosby :

“The former of these (methods) was, to send over to the foreign Ana-baptists, who descended from the ancient Waldenses in France or Germany, that so one or more receiving baptism from them might become proper administrators of it to others. Some thought this the best way and acted accordingly, as appears from Mr. Hutchinson’s account in the epistle of his treatise of Covenant and Baptism.”

Hutchinson says: “The great objection was the want of a proper administrator; which, as I have heard, says he, was removed, by sending certain messengers to Holland whence they were supplied.” – English Baptist Reformation, p. 84.

Crosby, who wrote in England one hundred years after Hutchinson, in the eighteenth century, says of this same event: “So those who followed this scheme did not derive their baptism from the aforesaid Smyth, or his congregation at Amsterdam, it being (from) an ancient congregation of foreign Baptists in the Low Countries to whom they sent.” –Ibid., p. 85.

These statements are not only important to show the facts they record, but they also show how these leading Baptists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stood on this question. Whatever may be said about immersion earlier than this date

referred to, it is a fact, if these historians are to be relied on, that Richard Blunt went all the way to Holland, by church or congregation action, to be baptized, and the remainder of the congregation awaited his return, simply upon the ground that they would not receive immersion at the hands of an administrator about whom there was the least doubt as to his qualifications.

(This Blunt affair is of doubtful authenticity. Whether authentic or not, it proves that this was a live question in England, and that English Baptists stood for regular baptism by a legal administrator, or such question never could have been raised.)

We come now to the doctrinal statement of the English Baptists as found in their Confession of Faith. We take the first (1643) and last (1689) of the Calvinistic Confessions of the seventeenth century. The first of these has this to say upon this point: Art. 41 –“The person designed by Christ to dispense baptism, the scripture holds forth to be a disciple, it being nowhere tied to a particular church officer or person extraordinarily sent, the commission enjoining the administration, being given to them as considered disciples, being men able to preach the gospel.”

The latter of these (1689) says:

Art. 28 – “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world. These holy appointments are to be administered by those

only who are qualified and thereunto called, according to the commission of Christ.”

The former of these was adopted by seven Baptist churches in London; and the latter by more than one hundred “Baptized” (Baptist) churches in England and Wales.

If language has any meaning it seems apparent that in both of these articles the administration of baptism is confined to the pales of the church, and must be performed by the authority of the same. In the first, it must be a disciple and also it must be a man capable of preaching the gospel. In the latter it confines it not only to the church, but to those called and set apart for that specific purpose. The seeming difference may be explained in this way: When the first Confession was adopted the clergy, of the State Church, had made themselves very obnoxious, and had assumed such authority as to create a prejudice with the Baptists against anything that savored of clerical domination. This article, no doubt, was intended to assert church authority on the one hand and rebuke an arrogant clergy on the other. When the latter Confession was put forth matters had changed up, and assumed a somewhat normal attitude. It would be hard to get stronger and plainer language than is found in the Confession of 1689. But, the question comes back: “Did the framers of these Confessions intend to confine the administration of baptism to the authority and agency of Baptist churches? Were they Baptists of the strict type?” This must be answered in the affirmative. There was a living link which binds

the two Confessions together. The name of William Kiffin is appended to both these Confessions. He was the first to sign the Confession of 1643, and the second to sign the one of 1689. He was a leader of Baptist thought in his day. When you would learn the doctrinal standing of William Kiffin and Hansard Knollys, you would know the doctrinal caste of the Baptists of England in the seventeenth century. Concerning Kiffin we find the following in Cramp's Church History: "The young man (Wm. Kiffin) became an independent inquirer, prepared to follow the leadings of truth regardless of consequences. Observing that some excellent ministers had gone into voluntary banishment rather than conform to the Church of England, he was induced to examine the points in dispute between that church and her opponents. He had been five years a member of the Independent church, then under the care of Mr. Lathrop, when, with many others, he withdrew and joined the Baptist church, the first in England of the Particular Baptist order, of which Mr. Spilsbury was pastor. Two years after that, in 1640, a difference of opinion respecting the propriety of allowing ministers who had not been immersed to preach to them—in which Mr. Kiffin took the negative side—occasioned a separation. Mr. Kiffin and those who agreed with him seceded, and formed another church, which met in Devonshire Square. He was chosen pastor, and held that office until his death, in 1701 (sixty-one years), one of the longest pastorates on record."—Baptist History (Cramp), p. 447, and Both sides, p. 22.

Such was the type of the Baptists who framed the London Confession of Faith. He and his church did not only reject the administration of the ordinances at the hands of unbaptized ministers, but made the preaching to them of such a minister a test of fellowship, sufficient to create a division in the church. Can any one conclude for one moment that such Baptists would tolerate alien immersion? or frame a Confession of Faith in any way favorable to it? or that they would even wink at it?

We would not undertake to say that there were not some individuals in England who held connection with Baptist churches that would tolerate alien immersion. And that they have grown more loose during the last century is admitted. What we mean to say is that the Baptists of England and Wales during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as a denomination, stood unflinchingly against all such innovations as alien immersion and mixed communion.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *AMERICAN BAPTISTS*

In transferring this discussion from England to America it changes location and environments, but virtually has to do with the same people. The Baptists of America, at first, came from England and Wales, with possibly a few from other countries. It has been repeatedly stated, however, that the Baptists of this country owe their origin to Roger Williams, who, with a small company, started a church of their own by baptizing each other without any previous authority.

All Baptists delight to honor Roger Williams, and vie with each other to perpetuate his name as one of our greatest Americans, and one who did much to establish Baptist principles, especially "Religious Liberty."

What we deny is, that Baptists of America are indebted to his irregular church for the administration of baptism, or owe their origin as a denomination to him. We might state just here, by way of parenthesis, that a number of churches, in church capacity, emigrated to this country and settled here with the same constitution formed in the old world. We might state also that Roger Williams himself was too good a Baptist (as will be seen later) to try to impose such an administration upon the denomination.

Baptists on coming to America were still dubbed as Anabaptists by their persecutors. Nich Ayres, a Baptist preacher, of

New York, was given legal license on January 23, 1721, in which he was denominated an “Ana-baptist”. Semple’s History Va. Bap., p. 444.

The first Baptist church (Kioka) ever planted on the soil of Georgia, was incorporated as an “Ana-baptist Church”. Hist. Bap. of Southern States, p. 32. They were everywhere dubbed as Ana-baptists by their persecutors.

### ***NEW ENGLAND BAPTISTS.***

We will begin with Roger Williams. Prof. W. J. McGlothlin tells us: “Roger Williams reached conviction that only immersion of a believer was baptism, was baptized by E. Holliman, and he baptized Holliman and others.” Guide to Church Hist., p. 212. This was irregular proceeding, and is often held up before us by the advocates of alien immersion.

“Richard Scott, who was a Baptist with Williams at providence, but who afterward became a Quaker, writing against Williams thirty-eight years afterward, says: “I walked with him in the Baptists’ way about three or four months...in which time he broke from his society, and declared at large the ground and reason for it; that their baptism could not be right because it was not administered by an apostle.” Armitage, p. 279.

Later, in a letter to Winthrop, he repudiated his baptism on the ground of “authority”. It is clear to be seen that Williams first

took this rash step, but after mature thought he repudiated this irregular baptism as being invalid, and never did again adhere to it.

Henry S. Burrage quotes S. L. Caldwell thus: “But Williams remained only a few months in connection with the church. He had doubts in reference to the validity of his own baptism and the baptism of his associates on account of the absence of ‘authorized administrators.’ For him there was no church, and no ministry left. The apostolic succession was interrupted and apostolic authority had ceased. It was the baptizer, and not the baptism, about which he doubted. He was a high church Ana-baptist.” Hist. New England Baptists, p. 23.

“The General Association of Connecticut, in 1745, put on record the declaration that ‘if Mr. Whitfield should make his progress through this government, it would by no means be advisable for any of our ministers to admit him into their pulpits, or for any of our people to attend upon his preaching and administrations.” Hist. New England Baptists, p. 63. Here is the General Association of this New England State taking this high landmark ground. They advise against pulpit affiliation with the great Whitfield, and go so far as to advise the people to not even hear him preach, or look upon his “administrations,” much less receive them. This was exactly one hundred years before the coming of J. R. Graves to Tennessee.

This clearly shows how the denomination stood in New England. That some individuals broke faith with the denomination at large was true then, is true now, will always be true.

G. D. B. Pepper in an address (“Baptists and the National Centenary”): “There have been individuals, in some instances prominent ministers, who have believed, thought, and practiced, in some respects, contrary to the common faith. Some churches have been led to place themselves, at least for awhile, in opposition to the general belief. But the denomination has been wise in its action in such cases. When possible it has allowed dissent and dissenters to remain within it... A break or schism has taken place only when dissent has so made issue with the denomination that without the break the doctrine of the dissent must be endorsed... Such has been its practice hitherto. It has thus far stood together in doctrine a compact body.” Hist. New England Bap., pp. 286-287

## CHAPTER V.

### *EASTERN STATES.*

We come now to look into the history of the Eastern States on this question, taking the Philadelphia Association as to the center. This is the oldest Association in America, constituted in 1707 A.D. and the London Confession of Faith which they adopted, in 1742, with slight alteration, thus making it their own, has been considered the most satisfactory statement of Baptist belief to be found anywhere, outside of the Bible. The churches composing this Association were organized of Baptists emigrating from England and Wales, except the Old Welch Tract Church, which emigrated from Wales in church capacity.

What has been the practice of this mother Association, and the Eastern States, in regard to alien immersion? What did they esteem as necessary to valid baptism? These are the questions to be settled in the light of the records.

This Association for a considerable period of time embraced practically all the churches in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, with some of the Virginia and New England churches. To determine the practice of this Association on this question is to settle the question concerning a large scope of country. They were organized as an Association thirty-five years before they put forth any Confession of Faith. They were Baptists and knew why they were Baptists. They knew what they believed and why they believed it. They were what their enemies were

pleased to call Ana-baptists. But in 1742 A. D., they reached the conclusion that it was best to put forth a statement of their belief that others might know where they stood. So they adopted the London Confession of Faith, with slight changes, as the expression of their own belief, thus making it theirs, and which since that time has been known as the “Philadelphia Confession of Faith”. This confession either in full, or in an abridged form, was adopted by practically all the old Associations, and churches, up until the middle of last century, when the New Hampshire Confession was put forth. The Philadelphia, with many other old and new Associations and churches, still retain it. The Twenty-eighth Article reads thus: “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only Lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world. These holy appointments are to be administered by those only who are qualified and thereunto called, according to the commission of Christ.”

It has been argued that this article does not involve the question of alien immersion, and that no such thought occupied the mind of the messengers of Philadelphia Association when they adopted it. But to this author’s mind the language is plain and the diction forces such a conclusion.

In the first place baptism is “to be continued in his church to the end of the world”. With these words we are driven to one or the other of the following conclusions: First – That this language

was intended to exclude baptisms in other denominations; or, Second – That the Philadelphia Association regarded these denominations as the church of Jesus Christ. Which horn of the dilemma will the reader take? At that very time these same Baptists were being fined, imprisoned, whipped and persecuted in every conceivable way, by these denominations. There were forced, by taxation to pay the salaries of Pedo-baptist pastors. They taxed the poor Baptist preacher to support Pedo-baptist preachers.

“Three hundred and ninety-eight acres of land belonging, in part, to Dr. Ebenezer Smith, Baptist minister, and the Ashfield Baptists, had been seized and sold to build a Congregational meeting house. On this land was a dwelling house and orchard, and also a burying-ground, so that the Baptists found their dead taken from them as well as their property.” Armitage, p. 329.

“Taylor says that the Baptists ministers were ‘fined, pelted, beaten, imprisoned, poisoned and hunted with dogs; their congregations were assaulted and dispersed; the solemn ordinance of baptism was rudely interrupted, both administrators and candidates being plunged and held beneath the water till nearly dead; they suffered mock trials, and even in the courts of justice were subjected to indignation’.” Armitage, p. 349.

When they were confiscating the property of the Baptists, one of their ministers got up to preach to the poor wicked (?) Baptists, and among other things he said:

“The Baptists, for refusing to pay an orthodox minister, shall be cut in pound pieces, and boiled for their fat to grease the devil’s carriage.” Old Landmarkism, p. 197.

This was the state of affairs at the time the Philadelphia Association adopted their Confession of Faith. Who can believe for one moment that they had in mind and meant to refer to these persecuting bodies, when they spoke of baptism continuing in the church of Jesus Christ? This you must believe, or accept the only alternative, that they meant to confine baptism within the pales of Baptist churches.

In the second place they say: That those “only” can baptize “who are qualified and thereunto called according to the commission of Christ”.

What do they mean by being qualified? They state positively that he must be called for that specific purpose. Can any one believe that these Baptists regarded the minister of these denominations called of God to baptize when they would come to where the Baptists had met to baptize and baptize dogs in mockery, and then drag the Baptist preachers off and put them in jail, and whip their bare backs till the blood would run down upon the ground? Does any one suppose these Baptists, regarded them “Called according to the commission of Christ” to baptize? when they were doing all within their power to destroy baptism from off the face of the earth? It seems such a conclusion would be

impossible. But if any one is still skeptical on this point, we turn to their minutes where they forever put the matter at rest.

In their minutes, 1787, the First church of New York presented the following query: “Whether a person applying to one of our churches for admission as a member, and satisfies the church that he has been previously baptized by immersion, on a profession of his faith in Christ, but at the same time confesses the person who administered the ordinance was, at the time, neither ordained to the work of the ministry, now baptized himself by immersion, but only chosen and called by a religious society to officiate as their teacher or minister, should be received?”

This matter was laid over until the next sitting of the Association, that they might have a whole year to deliberate on it: that their action might be the result of mature thought. At the next meeting of the body (1788) they gave the following reply: “We deem such baptism null and void.”

“First – Because a person that has not been baptized must be disqualified to administer baptism to others, and especially if he be also unordained.

“Second – Because to admit such baptism as valid, would make void the ordinances of Christ, throw contempt on his authority, and tend to confusion, for if baptism be not necessary for an administrator of it, neither can it be for church communion, which is an inferior act; and if such baptism be valid, then

ordination is unnecessary, contrary to Acts 14:23, 1 Tim. 4:14, Titus 1:5, and our Confession of Faith, Chapter 27.

“Third – Of this opinion we find were our Associations in times past; who put a negative on such baptisms in 1729, 1732, 1744, 1749 and 1768.

“Fourth – Because such administrator has no commission to baptize, for the words of the Commission were addressed to the apostles, and their successors in the ministry, to the end of the world, and these are such, whom the church of Christ appoints to the whole work of the ministry.”

It would seem from the above that they studied their words employing the very strongest terms possible, and basing the whole upon their “Confession of Faith.” But we are not done with this matter yet. In 1791 there came a request from Abraham Booth of London England, that the Association would rescind this action. Again, they laid the matter over for one year. So in 1792 they took the matter up and passed the following:

“A query respecting the validity of baptism by an unordained and unbaptized administrator, referred in the sixth of October 5, in our minutes of last year, was taken up and determined in the negative”.

Thus after a lapse of five years time, and two years deliberation, this, the oldest and largest Association in America, with between fifty and one hundred churches, covering several

States, filed their opposition to Baptist churches receiving alien immersion, in the very strongest terms it was possible for them to employ. In this Association at that time were such ministers of renown as Samuel Jones, Samuel Morgan, John Boggs, Oliver Hart, Morgan Edwards, William Rogers, Thomas Ustick and many others, too numerous to mention.

Over against this two instances have been cited as “clear cases” of this Association receiving alien immersion. As it is the purpose of this author to give as nearly as possible an impartial history I make note of them. From the minutes of 1765 I take the following:

“Query, from Smith’s Creek: Whether it be proper to receive a person into communion who had been baptized by immersion by a minister of the church of England, if no other objection could be made? Answer: yea, if he had been baptized on a profession of faith and repentance.”

If we assume that the church of England refers to the Episcopal church, then the case is made out. There are some reasons, however, why we have reached the conclusion that such was not the case. In the first place; the term “church” in the minutes begins with a small letter instead of a capital, which would not have been the case, if it had been a denominational title. In the second place; in the action of the Association in 1788, when they refer to the former actions of the Association, on this question, they make no mention of this case. In the third place, just three years

after this (1768) we find the following: “In answer to a query from New York, it was agreed that baptism, administered by a person not ordained, was invalid and disorderly.” In taking this action they make no reference to the action of 1765, three years previous.

The question come back, if they did not refer to the State Church of England, what did they refer to? This was the year that the Philadelphia Association was having so much trouble with the General Baptists of England, and their custom of baptizing unconverted people. I think it more probable that they referred to these as the “church of England”. This was the year in which Kehukee Association was constituted through the ministry of missionaries from Philadelphia Association, and every student of history known full well that the question of baptizing by these people without any profession faith on the part of the one baptized, was a question more than any other being discussed at that time. The answer, in which they emphasized this one point of faith before baptism, is, we think, a strong pointer that the question referred to the General Baptist church of England.

The other instance referred to is found in the minutes for 1806, and is as follows:

“Query: Whether can an orthodox Baptist church receive a person who has been baptized by a Tunker Universalist, without baptizing him again? The person has renounced Universalist principles. Answer: Yes”.

Now, it is well known that “Tunkers” is but another name for German Baptists. The fact that in this query, “Baptist church” is qualified by the term “orthodox,” would seem to indicate that they regarded the applicant from some sort of a “Baptist” church. We are not informed as to all the circumstances connected with this case. But the fact that from time to time they put their unequivocal veto on the reception of alien immersion is sufficient proof that they did not regard this as a case of alien immersion. In fact a whole church of Tunkers , or German Baptists, united with the Philadelphia Association in 1848, and so far as this author knows is still a member of that body.

It seems that it would take quite an amount of credulity, to believe that these two doubtful cases, were plain cases of alien immersion, when the same body composed of the same men, put forth so many unequivocal statements to the contrary both before and after.

We append some other instances in the Philadelphia Association not heretofore mentioned.

In 1732 we have the following: “Whether a person not being baptized himself, and presuming in private, to baptize another; whether pretended baptism be valid or no, or whether it might not be adjudged a nullity.

“Resolved, We judge such baptism is invalid, and no better than if it had never been done.”

In 1740, “a query from Cohansie: Whether a pious person, of the number of Pedo-baptists, who forbears to have his own children sprinkled, may be admitted into our communion without being baptized?...

“Given to vote, and palled all in the negative, Nemine Contradicente.” (Without Opposition.)

In 1744 there came a “query from the church of Bethlehem: Suppose a person baptized by a man, who takes upon him to preach the gospel and proceeds to administer the ordinances without a regular call or ordination from any church; whether the person so baptized my be admitted into any orderly church. Yes or nay?

“Resolved, We cannot encourage such irregular proceedings; because it hath ill consequence every way attending it; it is also opposite to our discipline. We therefore give our sentiments that such administrations are irregular, invalid, and of no effect.”

In 1746. “Query: Whether it is regular for an Association to receive in, and admit as members of the Association, such as at the same time they would not admit to their church communion, if opportunity offered?”

“We answer, no.”

They everywhere prohibit Pedo-baptists from their communion. In 1749 they reaffirm these positions.

In 1768. “In answer to a query from New York, it was agreed that baptism, administered by a person not ordained, was invalid and disorderly.

This old association advised their ministers and churches against pulpit affiliation with other denominations. (See Minutes for 1734, 1747, and 1771.)

In order that the reader may understand what these people mean by an ordained minister, we append a circumstance reported by J. M. Pendleton, when he resided in Upland, Penn. His report was published in *The Baptist*:

“Rev. Henry Losch, a Presbyterian preacher, having learned the way of the Lord more perfectly, united with the Memorial church (Philadelphia) and was baptized by the pastor, Dr. Henson. In due time a council was called to consider the matter of Mr. Losch’s ordination. It was, fortunately, a large council, confined, so far as I know, to our city churches, and therefore it was not my privilege to be present. The council having been organized, Dr. J. Wheaton indorsing the validity of the Presbyterian ordination already received by the brother. This led to an earnest discussion, and the vote on the resolution was quite significant – two for it, fifty against it. Dr. Smith was, of course, chagrined, and referred in no very courteous way to the decision as an ‘outrage on a Christian church,’ but the council was firm. The brother has been ordained – I do not say re-ordained, but simply ordained.”

This shows very clearly that when they speak of an “ordained minister” they mean a minister ordained by a Baptist church.

We will close this chapter with a letter from Spencer H. Cone, who was at the time he wrote this (1845) pastor of the First Baptist church in New York City. This church for a half century represented in the Philadelphia Association. Spencer H. Cone, in his prime, was considered the greatest preacher in America. Hear his testimony:

“DEAR BRETHREN: – The question you ask was presented to me in July by Brother J. Tripp, Jr., of your church. I replied that, in my opinion, valid baptism could only be administered by a duly authorized minister; and stated my impression also that the ‘regular Baptist churches of England and the United States ’ had long held the same sentiment. I wrote in the midst of numerous calls, and without dreaming that the hasty line was to appear in print, but make no complaint. My Baptist sentiments are public property, for in things pertaining to faith and practice I have no secrets.

“First, then, what has been the sentiment of ‘Regular Baptist churches’ in England and the United States upon this subject? The ministers and messengers of more than one hundred baptized congregations of England and Wales (denying Arminianism) met in London, July 3-11, A. D., 1689, and published what they call ‘The Confession of our Faith,’ and

recommended it perusal not only to the members of our churches, but to all other Christians who differ from us. Among these ministers you have the names of Knollys, Kiffin, Keach, Collins, Harris, Gifford, Vaux, Price, Finch, and a host of others, whose praise was in all the regular Baptist churches, viz.: such as was opposed to ‘general redemption and open communion.’ Under the head of baptism, among other things, they stated that it is to be administered by those only who are qualified and thereunto called.’

“The Philadelphia Association was formed in 1707 and adopted, with alternation, the London Confession of 1689; so that in this county it has gone by the name of the Philadelphia confession of faith; and since that period most of the Associations in the Middle States have been formed upon the same platform. The New York Association, organized in 1791, has always held the views I advocate. In 1821, the particular point before us was discussed and settled, in answer to a ‘query’ from one of the churches similar to that contained in your letter. Mr. Parkinson was appointed to write a circular letter on baptism, in which he maintained the ‘immersion of professing believers, by a baptized minister, as essential to gospel baptism.’

“After the adoption of this circular a resolution was passed, stating that although they considered the query sufficiently answered in the circular, nevertheless they record the opinion of the Association, that Baptist churches had better never receive person, either as members, or even as transient communicants

upon such baptism, viz.: by unimmersed administrators, many reasons are embodied in the resolution to sustain the opinion given, as the disunion, inconvenience, uneasiness, etc., which have always arisen in churches receiving such members.’ But the basis of their opinion is thus set down in plain words – ‘Pedo-baptist administrator, as far as we can see, are unknown in the Holy Scriptures.’ And that is just as far as I can see, and no further.

“The First church in this city, of which I am pastor, was founded in 1745, and as the Bible has not changed, she still adheres to her original Confession of Faith. The article on baptism closes thus: ‘That nothing is a Scriptural administration of baptism, but a total immersion of the subject in water, in the name of the Holy Trinity, by a man duly authorized to administer gospel ordinances.’ (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:40-42.) The action of this church for one hundred years has been to reject as invalid, baptism administered by an unimmersed administrator. During my residence in Maryland and Virginia, the Baltimore, Columbia and Ketoc-ton Associations (which I attended for eight or ten years, and was personally acquainted with every minister belonging to them) held the same sentiment. The subject was called up in the Associations while I was pastor of the Alexandria Baptist church, D. C., thus: A Mr. Plummer, from down East, a Free-Will Baptist, or ‘Christian,’ as he called himself, immersed a number of persons in Virginia, and founded a Baptist church. He baptized in the name of the Father, son and Spirit, and yet denied the divinity of the Son. In a year or two he departed from our borders—his disciples were

scattered. Some of them were really converted, and wished to unite with some Baptist church in the vicinity. The church and pastor in Alexandria being satisfied with the Christian experience and deportment of two of them, I baptized them into the name of our God, Father, Son and Spirit—co-equal and co-eternal—and we no more considered their baptism by Plummer, as Christian, than we should if they had been dipped by a Mohammedan into the name of his prophet. These Associations then held that valid baptism must be administered, not only by an immersed minister, but also one in good standing in our denomination.

“In the early part of my ministry, I was intimately acquainted with Gano, Baldwin, Holcomb, Staughton, Williams, Richards, Fristoe, Mercer and many others, now gone to glory; and I never heard one of them drop a hint that baptism by a Pedo-baptist minister opened the door into a regular Baptist church. Indispensable engagements compel me to close. That there are now many pastors and churches opposed to my views I know—painfully know—but all this does not convince me that our fathers were wrong in this matter. I must be made over again before I count that to be ‘valid baptism’ when neither the administrator nor those who ordained him, believed immersion of believers any part of their commission, and never submitted to it themselves in obedience to the command of the King of Zion. Affectionately, your brother in gospel bonds. S. H. Cone. “New York, September 30, 1845.”

This letter was published in a number of papers and one book that I know. This is taken from the columns of the Baptist Messenger, which in turn took it from the Examiner and Chronicle. In the Examiner and Chronicle we find the following note appended:

“Mr. Editor:—While the valid administration of baptism is under consideration, I hope you will publish the following letter from Rev. Spencer H. Cone, D. D. , written to certain brethren in South Carolina. I copy the letter from my ‘scrapbook,’ and I advise all our young ministers especially to keep scrapbooks, that they may preserve important newspaper articles. In behalf of truth. J. M. P.”

The “J. M. P.” evidently stands for J. M. Pendleton.

Spencer H. Cone was born and spent all of his eventful ministerial life within the bounds of what was once Philadelphia Association. No one could speak with more authority upon these questions. His letter settles two points. First—That up until less than one hundred years ago, the Baptists of America, as a denomination, stood solidly against the reception of alien immersion. Second—Within the first half of the nineteenth century the contrary sentiment began to assert itself; until today numbers within the denomination will apologize for it, while some openly espouse the cause of alien immersion.