

BAPTISM

Chapter Eight

The Bloody Waters of Baptismal Persecution

“¹⁸ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. ²³ He that hateth me hateth my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause” (John 15:18-25).

Most Baptists today have little knowledge of the price paid by true Christians in their opposition to the false doctrines of baptismal regeneration and infant baptism. Thousands upon thousands were slaughtered by Roman Catholicism during the Inquisition and thousands more were murdered later by the Reformers of Catholicism (perhaps they were not real Reformers after all). The following account of slaughter of a group that was known as the Albigenses in 1209 A.D is recorded by Thomas Armitage in his two volumes *The History of the Baptists*.

“They (the Roman Catholic army of ‘half a million . . . barons, knights, counts, and soldiery’) first attached Beziers, which was strongly fortified and garrisoned; but it was taken by storm and thirty thousand were slain. Seven thousand had taken refuge in the Church of St. Magdalene, and the monk Peter tells us with the most ferocious coldness they ‘killed women and children, old men, young men, priests, all without distinction.’ There were many Catholics in the town, and the ‘Holy Legate’ (leader of this Inquisition) was asked how these should be spared, when he commanded: ‘Kill them all, God will know his own!’ Lest a heretic should escaped they piled all in an

indiscriminate heap, and the Chronicle of St. Denis gives the whole number as sixty thousand.”¹ *Words in () added*

The Albigenses were not Baptists, as we understand Baptists according to certain *doctrinal distinctives*, but they were an early group of Reformers that certainly rejected Rome’s doctrine of baptismal regeneration. For this and other beliefs, the Inquisitors hunted them down and slaughtered them wherever they found them. A common way of executing the Anabaptists was to throw them in the river thereby drowning them in the same rivers in which they had been baptized. We find such an account in *Foxes’ Book of Martyrs* regarding the terrorism of the Inquisition in Ireland.

“At the town of Issenskeath they hanged above a hundred Scottish Protestants, showing them no more mercy than they did to the English. M’Guire, going to the castle of that town, desired to speak with the governor, when being admitted, he immediately burnt the records of the county, which were kept there. He then demanded 1000 pounds of the governor, which, having received, he immediately compelled him to hear Mass. and to swear that he would continue to do so. And to complete his horrid barbarities, he ordered the wife and children of the governor to be hanged before his face; besides massacring at least one hundred of the inhabitants. Upwards of one thousand men, women, and children, were driven, in different companies, to Portadown bridge, which was broken in the middle, and there compelled to throw themselves into the water, and such as attempted to reach the shore were knocked on the head.

In the same part of the country, at least four thousand persons were drowned in different places. The inhuman papists, after first stripping them, drove them like beasts to the spot fixed on for their destruction; and if any, through fatigue, or natural infirmities, were slack in their pace, they pricked them with their swords and pikes; and to strike terror on the multitude, they murdered some by the way. Many of these poor wretches, when thrown into the water, endeavored to save themselves by swimming to the shore but their merciless persecutors prevented their endeavors taking effect, by shooting them in the water. . . . One hundred and fifteen men, women, and children, were conducted, by order of Sir Phelim O’Neal, to Portadown bridge, where they were all forced into the river, and drowned. One woman, named Campbell, finding no probability of escaping, suddenly clasped one of the chief of the papists in her arms, and held him so fast that they were both drowned together.

¹ Armitage, Thomas, *The History of the Baptists Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices from the Time of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Year 1886 -Volume I* (Maranatha Baptist Press 1980 Reprint; copy from the library of Dr. Richard C. Weeks) page 279

In Killyman they massacred forty-eight families, among whom twenty-two were burnt together in one house. The rest were either hanged, shot, or drowned. . . In Kilmore, the inhabitants, which consisted of about two hundred families, all fell victims to their rage. Some of them sat in the stocks until they confessed where their money was; after which they put them to death. The whole county was one common scene of butchery, and many thousands perished, in a short time, by sword, famine, fire, water, and others the most cruel deaths, that rage and malice could invent.”² *Underling added*

These people were slaughtered because they refused to recant their beliefs, one of which was the rejection of infant baptism and the heresy of baptismal regeneration. Would you be willing to give your life rather than deny the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Christ viewed the denial of the Gospel of salvation as a gift of grace received through simple faith, and NOTHING ELSE, as denying Jesus Christ Himself.

By the early tenth century, Roman Catholicism dominated world politics and literally controlled nations and kings. True Christians were forced into hiding and obscurity, living in constant fear of being discovered and killed. Laws were passed in most European nations requiring the baptism/sprinkling of infants. The penalties for failure to comply were forfeiture of all property and often even a death sentence upon the parents. Even within this terroristic theater of existence there arose numerous sects that publicly taught against Rome’s heresies. Such a man was Peter of Bruis. His followers came to be known as the *Petrobrusians*. These may have been true Baptists, not merely Anabaptists. Armitage gives us the distinction between the terms:

“The term Cathari has also been applied to another thoroughly Baptist sect, which arose in the very dawn of the century [*the twelfth century*]: the PETROBRUSAINS. Their leader was the great reformer, Peter of Bruis. In order to prevent confusion, it may be well here to define what is meant by the term ‘Baptist,’ when used to characterize one of these historical bodies. A Pedobaptist is one who baptizes babes. An Anti-pedobaptist is one who rejects the baptism of babes. But this does not of necessity make him a Baptist; for the Paulicians, Cathari, Albigenses, and in fact the modern Quakers, all cast infant baptism aside, but administered no baptism at all. Hence all these have rejected the baptism of babes as a matter of course, but we cannot, for that reason, number them with Baptists. An ‘Anabaptist’ is one who baptizes again for any reason. The Novatians and Donatists were

² *Fox’s Book of Martyrs 19. Chapter XVII* (SwordSearcher Software 6.1)

‘Anabaptists’ and reimmersed those who came to them from the Catholics. At the same time the Catholics were ‘Anabaptists’ when they reimmersed those who came to them from what they called the heretical bodies. They were therefore Pedobaptists and ‘Anabaptists’ at the same time. But a Baptist proper, in modern parlance, is one who rejects the baptism of babes under all circumstances, and who immerses none but those who personally confess Christ under any circumstances; and those who are thus properly immersed upon their faith in Christ, we have a right to claim in history as Baptists to the that extent, but no further.”³ *Words in [] added*

Armitage goes on to clarify why the *Petrobrusians* were considered true Baptists.

“In the Petrobrusians we find a sect of Baptists for which no apology is needed. Peter of Bruis seized the entire Biblical presentation of baptism, and forced [*used to imply dogmatism not coercion*] its teaching home upon the conscience and the life, by rejecting the immersion of babes and insisting on the immersion of all believers in Christ, without any admixture of Catharistic nonsense. . . He laughed at the stupidity which holds that a child is regenerated when baptized, that he can be a member of Christ’s flock when he knows nothing of Christ as a Shepherd, and demanded that all who came to his churches should be immersed in water on their own act of faith. . . ”⁴
Words in [] added

I personally would question Peter of Bruis being a genuine Baptist because of the next quote Armitage gives regarding the beliefs of Peter of Bruis. It would appear that he did not disagree with Rome’s view of baptismal regeneration. He simply disagreed with infants being baptized because their baptism could not be accompanied with their own faith. He had no objection to the Catholic’s baptism of adults and did not require those adults to be baptized after they left Catholicism. Peter of Bruis said (as quoted by “the venerable monk, Maxima Biblioth”):

“The first article of the heretics denies that children below the age of reason can be saved by the baptism of Christ; and affirms that another’s faith can do those no good who cannot yet exercise faith of their own, since, according to

³ Armitage, Thomas, *The History of the Baptists Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices from the Time of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Year 1886 -Volume I* (Maranatha Baptist Press 1980 Reprint; copy from the library of Dr. Richard C. Weeks) page 283

⁴ Armitage, Thomas, *The History of the Baptists Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices from the Time of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Year 1886 -Volume I* (Maranatha Baptist Press 1980 Reprint; copy from the library of Dr. Richard C. Weeks) page 285

them, it is not another's but one's own faith which, together with baptism, saves, because the Lord said, 'Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' He makes them say in another place, 'It is an idle and vain thing to plunge candidates in water at any age, when ye can, indeed, after a human manor, wash the flesh from impurities, but can by no means purify the soul from sins. But we await an age capable of faith, and after a man is prepared to acknowledge God as his and believe in him, we do not, as you slander us, rebaptize, but baptize him; for no one is to be called baptized who is not washed with the baptism wherewith sins are washed away.'"⁵

At the least, there appears to be some ambiguity regarding the actual beliefs of Peter of Bruis regarding his understanding of the efficaciousness of water baptism. It appears he believed baptism efficacious when *accompanied by faith*.

Another group of Anabaptists suffered overwhelming persecutions at the hands of the Church of Rome. These were the Waldensians (believed to be named after an early leader named Peter Waldo, although there are those that claim this group traced their heritage back to the Apostles). They were one of the first sects to translate the Bible from Latin into the *common language*. In response to the growing interest in reading these translations, the Church of Rome forbade anyone from reading the Bible or books explaining the Bible. This Roman Catholic ban on translations and reading Scripture would continue until Vatican II (in the early 1960's). Up until then, there was even a ban on reading any book not on the Roman Catholic list of approved books.

"In order to stop this Christ-like proceedings of the Waldensians, the fourth Lateran Council, A.D. 1215, and the Council of Toulouse, 1229, forbade laymen to read the Bible either in the language of the people or in the Latin, and the Council of Tarragona, 1212, bound the prohibition on the clergy also."⁶

As these common *laypeople* began to read the Scriptures in their own language, they grew in numbers in their opposition to Roman Catholicism's practice of infant baptism. The Church of Rome continued to persecute them and scatter them around Europe in an ongoing *Diaspora*. Although some individuals recanted under the overwhelming weight of persecution, many stayed true to the faith and died horrible deaths at the hands of their persecutors. Armitage gives one lengthy account of these persecutions in the city of Strasburg, France.

⁵ Ibid, page 287

⁶ Ibid., page 299

“In 1212 a congregation of five hundred Waldensians was discovered at Strasburg. At first the bishop of that city sought to reason them out of their position against the Catholic faith; but such was their ready use of Scripture that disputations always inured to their advantage. Then he proclaimed that all of them who would not forsake their errors should be put to death by fire without delay. Many recanted, surrendered their books, and reported to him that they had three chief centers and three leaders – in Milan, in Bohemia, and on the ground in Strasburg. These leaders, they said. Were not clothed with the authority like the pope, but owed their influence to the personal confidence reposed in them by their brethren. One of their chief duties was to collect money for the poor. Eighty persons in all, amongst whom were twenty-three women and twelve preachers, would not surrender their faith. John, the Strasburg leader, answered in the name of all. His appeal to Scripture could not be overthrown, and when his persecutors would apply the test of red-hot iron to see if he were sent of God, he replied; ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’ ‘Ah, he does not want to burn his fingers,’ scornfully cried the monks. ‘I have the word of God,’ he answered, ‘and for that I would not only burn my fingers but my whole body.’ All who stood with him were put to death. Before their execution they were charged with all sorts of heresy, to which John replied from the Scriptures, moving the bystanders to tears. And when the final demand was made: ‘Will you maintain your belief?’ he replied, ‘Yes, we will.’ They were then led, amid the cries of kindred and friends, to the church-yard, where a broad and deep ditch had been dug. Into this they were driven, wood was piled around them and they perished in the flames. To this day men tremble when the ‘Heretics Ditch’ is pointed out in Strasburg.”⁷

These extreme persecution events took place about three-hundred years before Martin Luther comes on the scene of the *Reformation* in 1517 A.D. with his writing of *The Ninety Five Theses*. Luther’s *Reformation* was a completely different steam of *Reformation* than that which existed in the ongoing historical struggle by the numerous sects known as the Anabaptist against the theological heresies of Roman Catholicism. Although Luther is credited with rediscovering the doctrine of *justification by faith*, he really did not. He simply reduced the Roman Catholic sacraments from seven down to two – *infant baptismal regeneration* and *Consubstantiation* in the Holy Eucharist, rather than Rome’s *Transubstantiation*. Therefore, this stream of the *Reformation* was almost always in apposition (reformation from within) of Roman Catholicism in its theological

⁷ Ibid., page 300

abuses and practices. These so-called *Reformers* continued Rome's views of Eschatology, Ecclesiology (especially *Theonomy*), Sacerdotalism, and Sacramentalism. These so-called *Reformers* also continued murdering and persecuting the Anabaptists. These ongoing persecutions were the outcome of their *Theonomic* worldview of the Kingdom, which most of them believed was already in existence, or at least being brought into existence, in the *Theonomic Governance* of their various State Churches.

“Cardinal Hosius said truly that Luther did not intend to make all Christians as free as himself; thus, when they rejected his authority over their consciences, he treated them as the pope treated him; so Luther became a persecutor by slow degrees. He wrote to Spalatin, in 1522, concerning the Baptists: ‘I would not have any who hold with us imprison them.’⁸ In 1528 he also said: ‘I am very sorry they treat the Anabaptists so cruelly, seeing it is only on account of belief, and not because of transgression of the laws. A man ought to be allowed to believe as he pleases. We must oppose them with Scriptures. With fire little can be accomplished.’⁹ And still he sanctioned the degree of the Elector of Saxony, the same year, forbidding any but the regular ministers to preach or baptize, but under penalty of punishment.¹⁰ Charles V. issued the terrible edict of Spire in 1529, commanding the whole empire to crusade against the Baptists. He ordered that: ‘All Anabaptists, male or female, of mature age, shall be put to death, by fire, or sword, or otherwise, according to the person, without preceding trial. They who recant may be pardoned, provided they do not leave the country. All who neglect infant baptism will be treated as Anabaptists.’ This was worse than any thing in mediaeval persecution, for at least the *form* of a trial had been observed; but the Protestant princes who assented to this edict left no way of escape, ‘The design’ being, as Keller says ‘to hunt the Baptists with no more feeling than would be shown to wild beasts.’¹¹ The Peasant’s War had only just closed when this ferocious edict was issued, yet it gives no hint that the Baptists were charged with sedition. The degree of 1529 was renewed in 1551, with this explanation: ‘Although the obstinate Anabaptists are thrown into prison and treated with severity, nevertheless they persist in their damnable doctrine, from which they cannot be turned by any amount of instruction.’¹² If the remedy lay in ‘severity’ they ought to have been cured effectually, for everywhere they were treated much after the manner of serpents. A letter from a priest to his friend in Strasburg says: ‘My gracious lord went hunting

last Sunday, and in the forest near Epsig he caught twenty-five wild beasts. There were three hundred of them gathered together.’^{13,8}

From these accounts, we can see the dedication and unbending commitment of these Baptists to the preservation of the Gospel of the gift of salvation “by grace through faith” apart from any rituals or human “works.” They were fighting for the ongoing testimony of the central truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and they were willing to die rather than surrender. They understood that if they surrendered and allowed infant baptism and infant sprinkling to go on without correction that the very essence of the Gospel, and Christianity itself, was at stake. They were on the front lines of contending “for the faith once *{for all}* delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3). They rightly saw themselves in the light of Scripture as the last bastion of hope in the fight against apostasy. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Melancthon would continue this persecution.

“Wigandus breathes the same spirit when he asks: ‘Do you patiently protect such terrible enemies *{the Anabaptists}* of holy baptism? Where is your zeal for the house of God? Where such people as Jews and Anabaptists are tolerated there is neither grace nor blessing.’¹⁴ Luther,⁹ Zwingli¹⁰ and Melancthon¹¹ uttered the severest things possible against them, without once stopping to show that their faith was contrary to the teachings of Jesus.”¹²
Words in { } added

For centuries, these Baptists were hunted down, imprisoned, tortured, and slaughtered like animals. They had their properties confiscated and their children taken from them. They were burned at the stake, hung, drowned, tortured to death, and brutalized in ways that civilized people do not even speak about and certainly could never imagine. Their persecutors burned their books. Their persecutors sought to eradicate every visage of their beliefs from history. What was their horrible crime? They believed salvation was “by grace through faith” alone and that only those who were already saved and regenerate should be baptized. Casper Schwenckfeld¹³, who “was far from being a Baptist,” writes:

“‘The Anabaptists are all the dearer to me, that they care about divine truth somewhat more than many of the learned ones.’ Then he candidly states what

⁸ Ibid., page 402

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huldrych_Zwingli

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philipp_Melancthon

¹² Ibid., page 402

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspar_Schwenckfeld

he understood the Baptists to believe, thus: ‘The Old Covenant was a slavery, in so far as God, on account of man’s perversity, constrained them to serve him. Hence, the sign of the covenant, circumcision, was put upon them before they desired it. They received the sign whether they were willing or not. But baptism, the sign of the New Covenant, is given only to those who, being brought by the power of God, through the knowledge of true love, desire it, and consent to follow true love. Unless loves forces them they should not be compelled.’ Melancthon fell into the mistake of all history, in compelling infant baptism. It was all right with him that the Council of Nice ordered the rebaptism of Novatians, whether they desired it or not; but when the Baptists baptized a man on his own request, because of his love to Christ, he became at once the worst of all men and must welter in his own blood for his crime.”¹⁴

All of these various sects of Anabaptists took the commands of the epistle of Jude as the voice of God to them. They saw the sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic clergy as the very fulfillment of which Jude warned. They saw infant baptism and baptismal regeneration as an enemy of the Gospel of salvation “by grace through faith” alone. They saw these aberrations and stood against them in true militancy. They were willing to die for the truth rather than compromise the Gospel.

“³ Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. ⁴ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵ I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. ⁶ And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. ⁷ Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:3-7).

¹⁴ Armitage, Thomas, *The History of the Baptists Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices from the Time of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Year 1886 -Volume I* (Maranatha Baptist Press 1980 Reprint; copy from the library of Dr. Richard C. Weeks) page 408

This is true biblical, militant fundamentalism as opposed to the *Fundamentalist Movement*. The *Fundamentalist Movement* did not list infant baptism and infant sprinkling as an anathema contrary to the fundamentals of the faith. Although the *Fundamentalist Movement* rejected baptismal regeneration, they did not equally, and adamantly, reject infant baptism. *Historic fundamentalism* has always rejected any acceptance of infant baptism or infant sprinkling. The rejection of infant baptism and infant sprinkling was fundamental to “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Therefore, the *Fundamentalist Movement* included such Pedobaptists as Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Wesleyan Methodists, and other various sects that practiced varying degrees of *infant baptism* and *infant sprinkling* for various reasons. Some of the sects included in the *Fundamentalist Movement* allowed for either *infant baptism* or *infant dedication* depending on the parents’ desire. That is why true, historic Baptists would never align themselves with the *Fundamentalist Movement*. Unlike the fallen angels referred to in Jude 1:6, true Baptists have always sought to keep “their first estate” in their relationship of doctrinal purity with Christ and His infinite Word. Allowing infant baptism in any form, or for any purpose, was a complete *anathema* against their view of the purity of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Therefore, the moment a professed Baptist aligns himself in any way with someone, or some group that accepts infant baptism for any reason, that individual ceases to be a true Baptist and a true *historic fundamentalist*. *Historic fundamentalists*, true contenders for the purity of doctrine, would rather die than make such alliances, and **historically they did!**

A willingness to die for something is the defining factor between having convictions and having preferences. Baptists do not practice baptism of believers only by immersion because we believe it is the preferred way. Baptists baptize believers only by immersion because this is what the Bible says to do (orthodoxy) and this was the historical practice throughout the book of Acts and all the Epistles (orthopraxy).

“²⁸ And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. ²⁹ O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! ³⁰ Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. ³¹ But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do *them* in the land which I give them to possess it. ³² Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded

you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. ³³ Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* ye may prolong *your* days in the land which ye shall possess” (Deuteronomy 5:28-33).

Sadly, for many who profess to be Baptists today, water baptism by immersion is something they have a *take it or leave it* attitude about. Many professing Baptists have never *dug into* the Scriptures to discover the deep spiritual and practical significance of total yieldedness to Christ that water baptism is intended portray – death to the “Old Man” (Romans 6:6), buried with Christ, and risen with Christ (Colossians 2:12) to “walk in the newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Then, the believer with that depth of convictions commits to renew that vision of existence, to which we testify in baptism by immersion, throughout each moment of every day. To never “turn aside to the right hand or to the left” in the depth of that commitment. **“O that there were such an heart in them,** that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever” (Deuteronomy 5:29)! God is talking about a heart that has such depth of character in convictions that it would not hesitate to die rather than move to the right of the left of what He commands. Anything less than this is departure from the straight line of the “old paths.” Many Baptist today are becoming like the Jews to which Jeremiah was called to rebuke.

¹⁶ Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*. ¹⁷ Also I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken” (Jeremiah 6:16-17).