

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS

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Now I want to introduce, just for a moment, a question of historic interest concerning the founding of the first Baptist church in America. There is a great deal of historical discussion concerning that one question, and I must say that our best historians are not agreed as to the exact time of the founding of the first Baptist church of America or as to what church was really the first church — whether the church connected with Roger Williams at Providence or the church located at Newport. The records are somewhat conflicting. Now the Baptists of America are in no sense indebted to Roger Williams or his congregation. In fact, Roger Williams was never really a Baptist. He was a great man, and I honor him for his great defense of soul liberty and freedom of conscience, but, as a Baptist, I owe nothing to him whatever.

Roger Williams never organized a legitimate Baptist church. The church he did gather went to pieces in a short time, and no Baptist minister ever went out from it nor any other Baptist church. Dr. Newman shows that in a little while after Roger Williams founded his church it divided and the original part of it held on for a while and then ceased to exist.

We trace our connection with the English Baptists. Dr. John Clark organized the first Baptist church at Newport, R. I., in 1638. In the same year Hanserd Nollys gathered a Baptist church at Dover. In 1644 Gregory Dexter united with the Baptist church at Providence, R. I., being a minister of the Baptist faith in England, before his arrival. John Emblem, from England became pastor in Boston in 1684. John Burrows came from the west of England as a Baptist preacher in 1711, and labored in Philadelphia. Jasper Menz came from England in 1727, and settled in Virginia, where he labored about 30 years in the ministry. The list of ministers who came to America could be extended if it were necessary.

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The American Baptists are also descended from the Welch Baptists. John Miles, with several Baptists, came from Swansea, Wales, in 1663, and organized a church in Massachusetts, from which many of the present churches are descended. Thomas Griffeth from South Wales, emigrated with the church of which he was pastor, in the year 1701. They settled at first near Penepeck, Pennsylvania, and remained two years, and then at Welch Tract, Penn., now Delaware. From this solid church has come a long line of American Baptist churches.

Morgan Edwards came from Wales, to this country in 1761; Samuel Jones in 1686; Hugh Davis in 1710; Nathaniel Jenkins, in 1701; Griffith Able Morgan in 1711.

All these were Baptist before they left Wales, and they have a large succession in America. From these two lines — the English Baptists and the Welch Baptists — came the Baptists of America.

The English Baptists did not originate with John Smyth for he was first an English churchman, and afterwards united with the Brownites, and died in Holland, and never did have any connection with an English Baptist church. He did not practice immersion for baptism, but sprinkling.

The English Baptists originated from the Netherlands. History shows that there were Baptists living in the Netherlands long before Luther was born; and Flanders was of them in the year 1223. The Netherlands were descendants of the ancient Waldenses; and the Waldenses were direct descendants from the apostolic age.

And through the Welch Baptists the American Baptists have an equally if not a more direct descent from the days of Christ.

The Welch Baptists were the first movers in the great reformation. In the year 1400, Walter Brute was a leader of the hosts, and suffered much persecution. He was a Baptist preacher. In the year 606 the Welch Baptists had

their associational meetings, and among their leading preachers may be named Dyfrig, Iltyd, and Dinaw. Dinaw was president of a college, and was the chief speaker in a debate with the celebrated Austin in the year 600, on the subject of infant baptism. In the first century Lucien, a Welch king, and many others of the noble rank were added to the Baptists. The Welch Baptists descended directly from the Apostles, and the American Baptists are their successors and hence, descended from the Baptists in Christ's day.

These historic facts, briefly stated, show Baptist connection back to the days of the Saviour. Christ is the founder of Baptist churches.

He sent a Baptist preacher before His face to make ready the material. Christ took this material and organized it into a Baptist church. He said that this church should stand forever. The American Baptists are descendants from this Baptist church, the material of which was made ready by John the Baptist — the first Baptist preacher — and constituted into a Baptist church.

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