

A HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS **By Thomas Armitage**

THE AMERICAN BAPTISTS

V. CHAUNCEY--KNOLLYS--MILES AND THE SWANSEA CHURCH

Several hints are found in the early colonial writings, that an individual here and there amongst the colonists inclined to Baptist views in relation to infant baptism and immersion before the immersion of Williams. Governor Winslow wrote of the Baptists, in 1646: 'We have some living amongst us, nay, some of our Churches, of that judgment;' and Mather states that 'many of the first settlers of Massachusetts were Baptists, and they were as holy and watchful and faithful and heavenly a people as any, perhaps, in the world.' [Hypocrisy Unmasked, Magnalia, ii, 459] We have seen that when Williams was banished he was not a Baptist, nor does it appear that there was then one immersed believer in America. There is no evidence that he expressed any difference with his Pedobaptist brethren as to the proper subjects and method of baptism before he found himself in the wilderness. Yet we have seen that while he was teacher at Plymouth, Elder Brewster read his Baptist tendencies in his preaching, and predicted that he would run into 'Anabaptistry.' It is, therefore, a singular fact that Rev. Charles Chauncey who had been an Episcopal clergyman in England, and who arrived in Boston in 1638, should have brought the doctrine of immersion with him, and made directly for that same Plymouth, where somehow there was an 'Anabaptist' taint in the air, to the scant edification of Brewster. Felt writes that Chauncey arrived at Plymouth 'a few days before the great earthquake on the 1st of June,' 1638.

At that time Mr. Reyner was teacher to the Church at Plymouth, and Morton's manuscript reports this: 'After Mr. Reyner had been in place a considerable time it was desired that Mr. Charles Chauncey should be invited, who, being a very godly and learned man, they intended upon trial to choose him pastor of the Church here for the more comfortable performance of the ministry with Mr. John Reyner, the teacher of the same; but there fell out some difference about baptizing, he holding it ought only to be by dipping and putting the whole body under water, and that sprinkling was unlawful. The Church yielded that immersion or dipping was lawful, but in this cold country not so convenient. But they could not and durst not yield to him in this--that sprinkling, which all the Churches of Christ, for the most part, at this day practice, was unlawful and a human invention, as the same was pressed; but they were willing to yield to him as far as they could and to the utmost, and were contented to suffer him to practice as he was persuaded, and when he came to minister that ordinance he might do it to any that did desire it in that way; provided, he could peaceably suffer Mr. Reyner and such as desired it to have theirs otherwise baptized by him, by sprinkling or pouring on of water upon them, so as there might be no disturbance in the Church thereabouts. But he said he could not yield thereunto, upon which the Church procured some other ministers to dispute the point with him publicly, as Mr. Ralph Patrick, of Duxburrow, who did it sundry

times, ably and sufficiently, as also some other ministers within this government; but he was not satisfied; so the Church sent to many other Churches to crave their help and advice in this matter, and, with his will and consent, sent them his arguments written under his own hand. They sent them to the Church of Boston, in the Bay of Massachusetts, to be communicated with other Churches there; also they sent the same to the Churches of Connecticut and New Haven, with sundry others, and received very able and sufficient answers, as they conceived, from them and their learned ministers, who all concluded against him. But himself was not satisfied therewith. Their answers were too large here to relate.

They conceived the Church had done what was meet in the thing.' While this Baptist principle was planting itself, by the hands of one who was not a Baptist, in the very Mayflower Church--and possibly Chauncey practiced immersion from the very rock on which the Pilgrims landed--the same leaven was working its way into the heart of the Plymouth colony, at Scituate. In Chap. II, of the British Baptists, we have seen that Spilsbury's Church, London, came out of the Church of which Lathrop, the Separatist, was pastor, in 1633. In 1634 Lathrop himself left London, with about thirty of his members, and settled at Scituate, Mass. Dean, the Scituate historian, agreeing entirely with Wilson about the troubles of that Church in regard to baptism, says: 'Controversy respecting the mode of baptism had been agitated in Mr. Lathrop's Church before he left England, and a part had separated from him, and established the first Baptist (Calvinistic) Church in England in 1633. Those that came seem not all to have been settled on this point, and they found others in Scituate ready to sympathize with them.'

Lathrop remained in Scituate as pastor until 1639, when he and a majority of his Church removed to Barnstable, and Chauncey became pastor at Scituate. Dean further says that a majority of those left at Scituate believed in immersion, but 'nearly half the Church were resolute in not submitting to that mode.' One party held to 'infant sprinkling; another to adult immersion exclusively; and a third, of which was Mr. Chauncey, to immersion of infants as well as of adults.' Winthrop shows that down to June, 1640, Chauncey was still at Plymouth, though not as pastor, and considerable excitement arose there about his views on baptism. On November 2d, 1640, Hooker, Williams's opponent, wrote to Shepherd, his son-in-law, thus: 'I have of late had intelligence from Plymouth. Mr. Chauncey and the Church are to part, he to provide for himself, and they for themselves. At the day of fast, when a full conclusion of the business should have been made, he openly professed he did as verily believe the truth of his opinion as that there was a God in heaven, and that he was as settled in it as that the earth was upon the center. If ever such confidence find success I miss my mark. Mr. Humphrey, I hear, invites him to Providence, and that coast is most meet for his opinions and practice.' [Felt, Ecc. Hist., i, p. 443]

He seems to have been greatly beloved at Plymouth, for Winthrop writes that the Church there 'were loath to part with him;' and Bradford that he 'removed to Scituate, against the earnest wishes of the Plymouth Church to retain him.' He

continued his ministry at Scituate till 1654, and, the minority of his Church there having formed a new Church, February 2d, 1642, those that were left seem to have been a unit on the subject of immersion. [Dean, Hist. Scit., p. 60] Some of the records in this case are interestingly quaint, such as this: 'Cotton answers Chauncey's arguments,' and the 'Church at Plymouth dissents from Chauncey's views, one of the reasons being 'that immersion would endanger the lives of infants in winter, and to keep all baptisms till summer hath no warrant in God's word.' [Felt, i, 442] It does not appear, however, that he or his congregation became Baptists, for they retained infant baptism.

Felt says of him, July 7th, 1642: 'Chauncey at Scituate still adheres to his practice of immersion. He had baptized two of his own children in this way. A woman of his congregation who had a child of three years old, and wished it to receive such an ordinance, was fearful that it might be too much frightened by being dipped, as some had been. She desired a letter from him, recommending her to the Boston Church, so that she might have the child sprinkled. He complied, and the rite was accordingly administered.' [Felt, i, 497] November 27th, 1654, he became President of Harvard College.

HANSERD KNOLLYS had avowed himself a Non-conformist in England, and had been made a prisoner at Boston, in Lincolnshire, but his keeper allowed him to escape, and with his wife he arrived at Boston, Mass., July, 1638. There he was looked upon with suspicion, and reported to the authorities as an Antinomian. Two men in Piscataqua (Dover, N. H.) came and invited him there to preach, and in August he went. He remained there and formed a Church, to which he preached till September, 1641, when he removed, with certain of his congregation, to Long Island, N.Y` where Forrett, agent of the Duke of York, protested against his remaining; and he arrived in London, December 24th, 1641. While in Dover he had trouble into which baptism entered as an element, although Knollys was not a Baptist at that time. Lechford, an Episcopalian, who visited Dover in 1641, speaks of him as then engaged in a controversy about baptism and Church membership. The baptismal point appears to have concerned infant baptism, and on this wise. Another Church sprang up in Dover, whether de novo or as a split from Knollys's, does not appear, but a majority of the people went to the other Church, under the lead of a Mr. Larkham, an English Puritan and a graduate of Cambridge, who could not agree with the Congregationalists here. At Dover Larkham 'received all into his Church, even immoral persons, who promised amendment, he baptized any children offered, and introduced the Episcopal service at funerals'

Knollys and his Church excommunicated Larkham and his adherents, and a tumult arose in the community that brought no great honor to either side. One of the things that drove Knollys out of the English Church, says Wilson, was his scruple against 'the cross in baptism, etc., and he objected to the admission of notoriously wicked persons to the Lord's Supper.' His refusal to take immoral persons into the Church, and to baptize children, 'any offered' as Larkham did, implies that he believed in personal regeneration as a qualification for membership, but not

necessarily that he rejected infant baptism entirely, as he might have thought, with John Robinson, that the children of believers only should be christened. Indeed, it is quite probable that he did not then reject infant baptism altogether, for on March 23d, 1640, we find him bearing letters from the Dover to the Boston Church, asking advice about the scruples of the former Church as to whether they should have any fellowship with excommunicated persons, 'except in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?' In their answer the Boston Church calls them 'godly brethren, who came from the Church of Dover,' and tells them that the excommunicated might be present at preaching or prayers, and other ordinances of the Church, but not at the Supper. To this Knollys replied: 'It is desired by our Church that the elders of this Church would certify their judgments by letter.' All of which is inconsistent with the idea that either he or his Church were Baptists at that time, while seeking the advice of a Congregational Church. Nor, had they been Baptists, should we have found Knollys first writing from Dover to friends in London, complaining that the government of the Bay was 'worse than a high commission,' and then sending, July, 1639, a retraction to Winthrop, and afterward, February 20th, 1640, making a public confession, in a lecture delivered before the elders and magistrates of New Hampshire, that he had slandered the Bay government. In fact, this body would not have heard a lecture from a Baptist. [Felt, ii, pp. 449,399,448] All the power of England could not have compelled him to humble himself thus ten years later. Baptist principles had clearly begun to work their way into his mind in Dover, and on his return to London the work was completed. For a time he kept school in his own house on Great Tower Hill; then he was chosen master of a free school in St. Mary Axe, where in one year he had one hundred and fifty-six scholars; after which he went into the Parliament army to preach to the soldiers. When Episcopacy was laid aside he preached again in the parish churches, till the Presbyterians began to persecute him. This brought out his Baptist sentiments, which he avowed with great boldness when preaching one day in Bow Church, Cheapside.

There his attack on infant baptism was so strong that, on a warrant, he was thrown into prison. As in the case of Clarke and Holmes. we have no account of his baptism, but we find him immersing Henry Jesse in June, 1645, and in the same year he formed a Baptist Church at Great St. Helenas, London, where he preached to a thousand people, and became one of the noblest heroes that ever proclaimed the Baptist faith; probably New England having more to do in making him what he was as a Baptist than Old England. [Wilson, Hist. Dissenting Chs; Evans's Eng. Baptists, ii, 131] This agrees with Evans, who, speaking of Knollys becoming a Baptist, says of him: 'Knollys, some years before, had fled from the fierce anger of the hierarchy to the wilds of the New World, but had now returned.' By some means a little Baptist leaven had found its way to Weymouth, Mass., in 1639. Robert Lenthal was to be settled there as pastor, when it was discovered that he held that 'all the requisite for Church membership should be baptism,' whatever this might mean. He, therefore, with several others, attempted to collect a Church, and got many subscribers to a paper with this in view. They were summoned before the Court in Boston, March 13th, 1639, when John Smith was fined twenty pounds, and committed during the pleasure of the Court; Richard Sylvester was disfranchised,

and fined forty shillings; Ambrose Morion was fined ten pounds; John Spur, twenty pounds; James Brittain was sentenced to be whipped eleven stripes, because he could not pay his fine; and Lenthal was required to appear at the next Court. He went to Rhode Island, and we find him there with Clarke. It is hard to understand exactly what his views were, but the 'Massachusetts Records' say he held 'that only baptism was the door of entrance into the visible Church,' such a Church 'as all baptized ones might communicate in,' which looks like adult baptism.

JOHN MILES AND THE BAPTIST CHURCH AT SWANSEA, MASS. So far as is known Miles was the first Welsh Baptist minister who ever crossed the Atlantic. He was born in 1621, at Newton, near the junction of the historic rivers, Olchon and Escl. He matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford, March 11th, 1636, and is on record as 'a minister of the Gospel ' in 1649, in which year he formed the first Strict Communion Church at Ilsten, near Swansea, Wales (so spelled at that time, according to Thomas), now Swansea. His love of truth, his art in organization, together with his perseverance and courage, soon made him a leader in the denomination; and in 1651 we find him representing the Welsh Baptists at the Minister's Meeting in London. Persecution soon selected him as one of its first victims, and when the cruel Act of Uniformity, 1662, ejected two thousand ministers, and opened all sorts of new sufferings to God's servants, he, with a large number of his Church, removed to America, carrying their Church records with them, which are still preserved. They settled at Wannamoisset, then within the bounds of Rehoboth, but afterward, 1667, called Swansea, and but ten miles from Providence, though in the Plymouth Colony.

The finger of God guided them to this as a field prepared for Baptist culture, and a fruitful one it became. In 1646 Obadiah Holmes had removed there from Salem, of which Church he had been a member and united with the Congregational Church, under the pastoral charge of Mr. Newman. But, in some way he and eight others had imbibed Baptist principles, possibly from Williams, and in 1649 they established a separate meeting of their own. For this they were excommunicated and punished by the civil authority. The whole commonwealth of Plymouth was stirred and petitions against them came pouring in, one signed by all the clergy of the colony except two, and one from the government of Massachusetts itself. In June, 1650, Holmes and Joseph Torrey were bound to appear at the next court, and in October they, with eight others, were indicted by the Grand Jury. It is difficult to find what penalty was inflicted on them, but, suffice it, their meeting was broken up, and Holmes, with most of his brethren, removed to Newport, where, in due time, he became the pastor of the Baptist Church. The following is the presentment by the grand inquest: 'October the 2d, 1650. We, whose names are heer under written, being the grand inquest, doe present to this Court, John Hazael, Mr. Edward Smith and wife, Obadiah Holmes, Joseph Tory and his wife, and the wife of James Man, William Deuell and his wife, of the town of Rehoboth, for continueing of a meeting uppon the Lord's day from house to house, contrary to the order of this Court enacted June 12th, 1650.' [Plymouth Records, ii, p. 162]

Things were in this condition when Miles and his brethren arrived on the ground, and in 1663, soon after their arrival, they formed the first Baptist Church in what is now the State of Massachusetts. Seven men, whose names have come down to us with that of 'John Miles' at their head (the names of the females are not given), formed a Church covenant in the house of John Butterworth, and a noble band they were. From the first, Miles was a favorite in the community, and on March 13th, 1666, the people of Rehoboth voted that he should lecture for them on the Sabbath and once in two weeks on the week-day. After the death of Mr. Newman, who opposed Miles earnestly, Mr. Symmes had preached for several years in the Pedobaptist Church, and still preached there. Hence this action made great disturbance. So, May 23d, the town agreed: 'That a third man alone for the work of the ministry should be forthwith looked for, and such an one as may preach to the satisfaction of the whole, if it be the will of God, for the settling of peace amongst us.' Richard Bullock protested against this act 'as the sole work of the Church.' This infant Church suffered various legal difficulties, and the Court at Plymouth fined Miles five pounds, July 2d, 1667, for setting up a public meeting without the knowledge and approbation of the Court. They were ordered to stop the meeting where it was then held, but if they would remove to another point, and behaved well there, perhaps they might be permitted to remain in the colony.

Soon after, this Church was brought face to face With a new and great danger. Finding that they were decent citizens after all their heterodoxy, the colony was disposed to give them a grant of land, and did so: to 'Captain Thomas Willet, Mr. Paine, Sr., Mr. Brown, John Alien, and John Butterworth,' as trustees for a new town. Willet and Paine were not Baptists, the others were, and amongst other things Willet proposed: 'That no erroneous persons be admitted into the township.' This tried the metal of the Welsh brethren on the tenet of soul-liberty, of which subject they knew but little, and well-nigh tripped. Glad to find a place where they could worship God in peace, they 'gathered and assembled' as a Church, and addressed an 'explication' to the trustees, in which they conceded, that 'Such as hold damnable heresies, inconsistent with the faith of the Gospel; as, to deny the Trinity, or any person therein; the deity or sinless humanity of Christ. or the union of both natures in him, or his full satisfaction to the divine justice of all his elect, by his active and passive obedience, or his resurrection, ascension into heaven, intercession, or his second coming personally to judgment; or else to deny the truth or divine authority of the Scriptures, or the resurrection of the dead, or to maintain any merit of works, consubstantiation, transubstantiation, giving divine adoration to any creature, or any other antichristian doctrine, directly opposing the priestly, prophetic, or kingly offices of Christ, or any part thereof; or such as hold such opinions as are inconsistent with the well-being of the place, as to deny the magistrates power to punish evil doers, as well as to encourage those that do well, or to deny the first day of the week to be observed by divine institution as the Lord's day or Christian Sabbath, or to deny the giving of honor to whom honor is due, or to oppose those civil respects that are usually performed according to the laudable customs of our nation each to other, as bowing the knee or body, etc., or else to deny the office, use, or authority of the ministry, or a comfortable

maintenance to be due to them from such as partake of their teachings, or to speak reproachfully of any of the Churches of Christ in the country, or of any such other Churches of Christ in the country, or of any such other Churches as are of the same common faith with us or them; all such might be excluded!' [Backus, i, 285,286; Weston's ed.]

What were those Welshmen thinking about? Clearly, they had not been to school at Salem yet, and we may be thankful that they were corresponding with a militia officer and not forming a new State, or, in a short time, Swansea would have been as bad as Glamorganshire, from which they had fled. They remind one of birds in the stress of storm, who make for the first bright light, and in their joy dash themselves against it to destruction, rather than use it as a guide. But their folly is more apparent still when we find them drawing a distinction between essential and nonessential Christian doctrines thus:

'We desire that it be also understood and declare that this is not understood of any holding any opinion different from others in any disputable point, yet in controversy among the godly learned, the belief thereof not being essentially necessary to salvation; such as pedobaptisin, antipedobaptism, church discipline or the like; but that the minister or ministers of the said town may take their liberty to baptize infants or grown persons as the Lord shall persuade their consciences, and so also the inhabitants take their liberty to bring their children to baptism or to forbear.'

It is slightly comforting that they were so far in advance of the neighboring colonies as to allow their neighbors to christen their children, if 'the Lord shall persuade their consciences,' while their neighbors would not allow them to be immersed on their faith in Christ, whether the Lord had persuaded their consciences thereto or not. Still, as Baptists, they were far enough from hardpan at that time, on the subject of religious liberty. A little of Roger Williams's back-bone would not have hurt them at all, or even a bit of honest John Price's old Welsh obstinacy. He was a Baptist minister at Dolan, who endured great persecution, and died at Nantmel, 1673. He would not conform to the Church of England in any thing, and as that Church always buried its dead with the head toward the west, he ordered his buried toward the east. Then, a brass plate was to be put on his grave-stone to certify that he would not conform to their whims dead or alive.

John Miles soon became a power in all the region round about. December 19th, 1674, the town appointed him master of a school, at a salary of forty pounds per annum, 'for teaching grammar, rhetoric, arithmetic, and the tongues of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, also to read English and to write.' His house was made the garrison for the military forces when the town was assaulted in the Indian War under King Philip, June 24th, 1675. The Church multiplied and became strong, taking deep root in the colony. They built their first meeting-house about three miles north-east of Warren, and in 1679 a new one at Kelley's Bridge, with a parsonage for Miles. But they were stoutly opposed, until the whole region became Baptist. It is reported of their pastor, that once when brought before the

magistrates for preaching, he asked for a Bible, and turning to Job 19:28, read: 'Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?' He said no more, but sat down and the Court so felt the power of the passage that, instead of cruelty, he was treated with kindness. He died at Tyler's Point, February 3d, 1683.

We have seen that the authorities of Massachusetts were sorely tried with the leniency of Plymouth in the case of Holmes and his compeers at Rehoboth, but as they could do nothing further in that direction, they proceeded at once to make things as stringent as possible for the persecution of Baptists in their own jurisdiction. Judging by their excited condition, a plague broke out in the colony which might be designated the 'anabaptistical-phobia,' and fright seized them as if some one had been bitten by a live Baptist. The General Court caught the disease badly, and on the 13th of November, 1644, decreed :

'It is ordered and decreed, that if any person or persons, within this jurisdiction, shall either openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the approbation or use thereof, or shall purposely depart the congregation at the ministrations of the ordinance, or shall deny the ordinance of magistracy, or the lawful right and authority to make war, or to punish the outward breakers of the first table, and shall appear to the Court willfully and obstinately to continue therein after due time and means of conviction, every such person or persons shall be sentenced to banishment.' But the reasons which they give in the preamble, are, if possible, more expressive of their unhappy condition than the law itself; hence, they use these words to introduce the enactment: 'Forasmuch as experience hath plentifully and often proved that, since the first arising of the Anabaptists, about one hundred years since, they have been the incendiaries of the commonwealths and the infectors of persons in many matters of religion, and the troubles of Churches in all places where they have been, and that they who have held the baptizing of infants unlawful have usually held other errors or heresies together therewith, though they have, as other heretics used to do, concealed the name till they spied out a fit advantage and opportunity to vent them by way of question or scruple; and whereas divers of this kind have, since our coming into New England, appeared amongst ourselves, some whereof have, as others before them, denied the ordinance of magistracy, and the lawfulness of making war, and others the lawfulness of magistrates and their inspection into any breach of the first table; which opinions, if they should be connived at by us, are like to be increased amongst us, and so must necessarily bring guilt upon us, infection and trouble to the Churches, and hazard to the whole commonwealth.'

This state of high fever brought the patient to a crisis, and left him extremely weak when the black train of his dreams and horrible bugbears had passed away. In other words, it was the beginning of the end with religious tyranny in Massachusetts, and under the ruling of divine Wisdom this was the best day's work that its Court ever did for that present glorious State. Men of conscience and common sense felt it a sorry time when their common brethren in Christ Jesus had

come to be 'banished' as 'heretics' in a free land, for opposing the baptism of infants, or leaving a congregation where it was practiced, as hazarding the existence of a Christian commonwealth, and bringing 'guilt' upon the venerable heads of those who could not keep their hands off the 'first table' of God's law. As might have been expected, this abuse of power awakened a heart-felt indignation all over the colony, for it touched the consciences of men, and without guise or pretense, assumed control over them. Remonstrance and petition soon found expression; many petitions against the law and others for its continuance came in from various sources, some in March, 1645, others in May, 1646. Yet the Court not only refused to repeal the law, but even to alter or explain it, although Samuel Maverick, Dr. Child and five others of great influence, not Baptists, threatened to appeal to Parliament on this and other subjects of grievance. The Court was compelled to issue a 'Declaration' to the people in its own defense, in which they were weak enough to confess that the Baptists were 'peaceable' citizens amongst them. They say, November 4th, 1646, to those that 'Are offended also at our law against Anabaptists. The truth is, the great trouble we have been put unto and hazard also, by familistical and anabaptistical spirits, whose conscience and religion hath been only to set forth themselves and raise contentions in the country, did provoke us to provide for our safety by a law, that all such should take notice how unwelcome they should be unto us, either coming or staying. But for such as differ from us only in judgment, in point of baptism, or some other points of less consequence, and live peaceably amongst us, without occasioning disturbance, etc., such have no cause to complain, for it hath never been as yet put in execution against any of them, although some are known to live amongst us.'

Why could they not leave Pilate alone in history, to wash his hands in innocency? That business belonged to the Old, not the New, World. Every syllable here shows their misgivings and counter consciousness touching their own Law. They begin by depreciating their enactment into a 'notice' the law itself says that it is a provision for 'banishment.' They say that the Baptist 'conscience and religion' have raised 'contentions in the country; 'their law itself says that they were 'incendiaries of the commonwealth.' Here, they taper down the Baptist offense to a difference 'from us only in judgment in point of baptism;' the law calls them 'heretics' and 'troublers of Churches.' Their Declaration says that those Baptists who 'live peaceably amongst us, without occasioning disturbance, shall have no cause to complain;' but their law also says that it is disturbance of itself, 'to openly condemn or oppose the baptizing of infants, or go about secretly to seduce others from the approbation or use thereof, or shall purposely depart the congregation at the ministrations of the ordinance.' And finally, their appeal to the public says that 'some of the Baptists were known to live peaceably amongst us,' but to deny the right of the magistrates' authority to punish the outward breakers of the first table, is a just reason why they should 'be sentenced to banishment,' and this the most 'peaceful' of them denied. It is a sure thing that both their 'Tenet' and its commentary need washing again thoroughly. Complaints went over to England, and as there was now no chance to glory over this matter under the pretense of civil wrong-doing, as in the case of Roger Williams, the thing must be met there on its naked merits, as a

square act of religious tyranny. Hence, Governor Winslow was sent to England to answer this charge. [Mass. Col. Records, ii, p. 162]

Brought to an account before the home government, it was demanded of him: 'You have a severe law against Anabaptists, yea, one was whipt at Massachusetts for his religion? And your law banisheth them?' To which the gracious old governor meekly answered: 'Tis true, the Massachusetts government have such a law as to banish, but not to whip in that kind. And certain men desiring some mitigation of it; it was answered in my hearing: 'Tis true, we have a severe law, but we never did, or will, execute the rigor of it upon any, and have men living amongst us, nay, some in our Churches of that judgment, and as long as they carry themselves peacefully as hitherto they do, we will leave them to God, ourselves having performed the duty of brethren to them. And whereas, there was one whipt amongst us, 'tis true we knew his judgment what it was; but had he not carried himself so contemptuously toward the authority God hath betruſted us with in an high exemplary measure, we had never so censured him; and, therefore, he may thank himself who suffered as an evil doer in that respect. But the reason whereof we are loath either to repeal or alter the law is, because we would have it remain in force to bear witness against their judgment and practice, which we conceive them to be erroneous.' [Hypocrisy Unmasked, 101]

The person reported by the governor as whipped here was Thomas Painter, of Hingham, whose contemptuous crime against the 'authority' of the magistrates consisted in refusing to have his child christened. True, the governor said, they had no law 'to whip in that kind,' which only aggravates their crime against humanity, for they did whip him, law or no law, and for what the governor says, they knew to be simply his 'judgment.' But from the mild manner in which he speaks of this harmless law, as a mere verbal 'witness' against 'erroneous' 'judgment and practice' on the part of the Baptists, they wished the British government to understand and treat it as a dead-letter. Indeed, he gives the promise in the name of Massachusetts, whose representative he was, that although the law is severe, 'we never did, or will, execute the rigor of it upon any.' How did Massachusetts keep this sacred promise? We shall see. The feeling engendered in England by this new crusade against 'heretics' in America, 1645, was very deep. Some, who had persecuted the Baptists there, supported the colony in its rigor, and some condemned it severely. Richard Hollingworth said: 'Our belief of New England is, that they would suffer the godly and peaceable to live amongst them, though they differ in point of Church government from them.' And another author, a member of John Goodwill's congregation, 'J.P.' wrote in as cool a strain: 'Why do not our Congregational divines write to the brethren of New England, and convince them of their error, who give, as some say, the civil magistrate a power to question doctrines, censure errors? Sure we are some have been imprisoned, some banished, that pleaded religion and mere conscience, and were no otherwise disturbers of the civil peace than the Congregational way is like to be here. If Old England be said to persecute for suppressing sects and opinions because threatening the truth and civil peace, why may not the same name be put upon

New England, who are found in the same work and way?' Another thing which deepened the intense feeling on the subject was, that works on infant baptism, pro and con, began to flood the colony, and the people eagerly inquired what all these terribly blighting opinions of the 'Anabaptists' were; and when they found that the bugaboo lodged in the right of a man to keep his conscience whole in choosing to baptize his child or not, like reasonable beings they began also to think whether or not it were rather desirable to exercise such freedom where Jehovah had exacted no such service. Discussion was all that the Baptists needed to arrest this tyranny, and the law of 1644 had unintentionally thrown the door wide open for such discussion, Hulbard speaks of 'many books coming out of England in the year 1645, some in defense of Anabaptism and other errors, and for liberty of conscience, as a shelter for a general toleration of all opinions'

As far back as 1643 Lady Deborah Moody, who had bought a farm of 400 acres at Swampscott, was obliged to remove to Gravesend, Long Island, 'for denying infant baptism.' Winthrop says of her: 'The Lady Moody, a wise and amiable religious woman, being taken with the errors of denying infant baptism, was dealt withal by many of the elders and others, and admonished by the Church at Salem. . . . To avoid further trouble, she removed to the Dutch, against the advice of her friends. Many others infested with Anabaptism removed thither also. She was after excommunicated.' [Journal, ii, pp. 123,124] True, she was a member of the Salem Church, which she united with April 5th, 1640, but lived in the Bay Colony, and left it 'to avoid further trouble.' Salem had become disturbed also on this Baptist issue, for July 8th, 1645, Townsend Bishop, a prominent man there, was 'presented,' Bays Felt, for 'turning his back on the ceremony of infant baptism.' He adds with significance, 'he soon left the town.'

But the authorities began to punish Baptists in Massachusetts Bay, under the law of 1644. William Witter, of Lynn, was arraigned before the Essex Quarterly Court, February, 1646, for saying that 'they who stayed while a child is baptized do worship the devil.' Martha West and Henry Collense testify that he charged such persons with breaking the Sabbath and taking the name of the Trinity in vain. Brother Witter certainly did give very free use to his tongue, but the Court had an effectual cure for all 'heretics' who did that. The law would not connive at such 'opinions,' they were a 'hazard to the whole commonwealth;' he had openly condemned infant baptism, and had 'purposely' departed 'the congregation at the ministration of the ordinance,' and for such wickedness he must be recompensed. He was sentenced to make a public confession before the congregation at Lynn? on the next Sabbath, or be censured at the next General Court.

John Wood was arraigned the next day before the same Court 'for professing Anabaptist sentiments and withholding his children from baptism,' and John Spur was bound to pay a fine of ,20. On July 13th, 1651, Spur was expelled from the Boston Church, 'because he ceased to commune with them, on the belief that their baptism, singing of psalms and covenant, were human inventions.'

By this time a spirit of general discontent was settling down upon the public mind, and persons in various places were beginning to express their sympathy for the Baptists and to adopt their sentiments on the subject of infant baptism; a state of things which the magistrates found it difficult to repress, and which at last forced not only resistance, but direct aggression, as the surest method of self-defense. Relief was found only in assuming a firm position and a determined stand against such grinding tyranny. If these Baptists stayed away from Congregational Churches, where they were unhappy, those Churches forced them to attend and treated them shamefully for not coming; then, if they went at their command, their presence made these Churches equally unhappy. They were disturbers of the peace when they kept away, and they were contentious when they went; a contradictory state of things which must cure itself, being a slander on the Lamb of God and a disgrace to the seventeenth century.