

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

THE AMERICAN BAPTISTS

IX. BAPTISTS OF CONNECTICUT AND NEW YORK

In considering the introduction and spread of Baptist principles into the other colonies, it will be proper to take them up in the chronological order in which their first Churches severally were formed. First of all, then, we have Connecticut, which colony lived under the charter of Charles II, as regards religious privileges, until 1818. As early as A.D. 1674 some Baptists of Rhode Island occasionally crossed the borders and immersed converts in Connecticut, who united with their Churches in Rhode Island. These, however, were regarded as unwarrantable innovations; they attracted the attention of the Standing Order (Presbyterial-Congregational), and the secular power was invoked to suppress them. One of these invasions took place at Waterford, but they were not oft-repeated. The ministers of the State Church were supported by levying and collecting their salaries regularly with other taxes. Trumbull informs us that before 1706 the persons of the ministers were free from all taxation, but their families and estates were taxable; in that year the Legislature exempted these from taxation. The law made the State Church the lawful congregation, and subjected all persons who neglected attendance there on 'the Lord's Day' to a fine of twenty shillings. It also forbade 'separate companies in private houses,' and inflicted a fine of ten pounds, with 'corporal punishment by whipping, not exceeding thirty stripes for each offense,' on every 'person, not being a lawful minister,' who 'shall presume to profane the holy sacraments by administering or making a show of administering them to any person or persons whatever, and being thereof convicted.' Connecticut and New Haven were separate governments till the reign of Charles II, when they were united under one charter. But this basis of government did not contain a single clause authorizing the Legislature to enact any religious laws, establish any form of religion or any religious tests, and, properly speaking, the attempt to bind these on the colony was of itself a usurpation.

A few scattered Baptists in the south-eastern part of the colony humbly petitioned the General Court in 1704 for liberty to hold meetings and establish a Church in Groton. Their prayer seems not to have been noticed, but, nothing daunted, the same band sent a fraternal request to Valentine Wightman, a gifted young preacher in Rhode Island, to become their leader, and in 1705 he came and organized them into the First Baptist Church of Connecticut. This pioneer body numbered less than a score, but they were firm, united and liberal minded. They presented their brave young pastor at once with twenty acres of land, and Deacon William Stark erected upon it a suitable parsonage. It is still a flourishing Church in the village of Mystic, after a life of one hundred and eighty-one years. Wightman was a descendant of Edward, who was the last martyr under James I, and whose ashes fell amongst the fagots of Lichfield marketplace in 1611. This first Baptist pastor of Connecticut was

an extremely serene and quiet character, but his amiable soul flashed the fire of a true witness from his eye upon the bigots who would interfere with him. He possessed sound learning, great zeal and deep piety. A certain calm discretion made him symmetrical and consistent, and adapted him to cautious but intrepid leadership in his new and trying position. He was a close student of the Scriptures and a powerful preacher, caring tenderly for the flock of Christ. Then, he brought from his native commonwealth a mild tolerance of spirit for all men, with a love for their salvation which disarmed opposition. Yet no Church could legally exist without permission from the secular power; but it was doubly difficult to secure this tolerance for Baptists. Moreover, Wightman sought not the approbation of the neighboring clergy, for he contended that it was the right of every man to worship God as he pleased. His quiet firmness had much to do with that gradual relaxing of the law which at last permitted a man to show that he was a member in a Baptist Church and paid toward its support, and so could be furnished with a certificate of exemption from liability to distraint or imprisonment for refusing to pay the minister's tax of the State establishment.

Mr. Wightman and his flock never were so severely oppressed as were some Baptists in the colony. His sterling worth commanded the respect of the neighboring clergy from the first, and the enlightened tact by which he led his people often silenced the clamor of the Standing Order in that vicinity. But in many other places nothing could prevent seizure of the property of Non-conformists for refusing to pay the clerical tax, enforced as it often was by fiery zealots clothed with brief authority. At one time a number of Baptists, including their minister, were taken in the very act of worshiping God. They were promptly incarcerated in the New London county jail for attending a religious meeting 'contrary to law on the Sabbath day.' One of the prisoners was a babe at its mother's breast; the prison was fireless and the weather bitterly cold, yet the child lived and grew up to be a successful preacher of the Baptist faith, for which he innocently suffered.

Ebenezer Frothingham, of Middletown, wrote a book in 1767, in which he says that as a Separate he was confined in Hartford prison for nearly five months, for nothing but exhorting and warning the people after the public worship was done and the assembly dismissed. And while confined there five others were imprisoned for the same crime. He also says that 'Young Deacon Drake, of Windsor, now in Hartford prison for the ministers' rates and building their meeting-house, altho' he is a Baptist, is accounted a harmless, godly man; and he has plead the privilege of a Baptist through all the courts, and been at great expense, without relief, till at last the Assembly has given him a mark in his hand, and notwithstanding this, they have thrust him to prison for former rates, with several aggravations which I shall omit. But as to what the Constitution does to relieve the poor deacon, he may there die, and the cry of blood, blood, go up into the ears of a just God.' In other cases, venerable ministers of the Gospel were whipped at the town-post, or at the tail of an ox-cart, as they were driven through the town. Sometimes they were placarded and placed on horseback, and otherwise ignominiously treated for preaching Christ.

Nathan Jewett, of Lyme; a member of the Baptist Church there, was expelled from the Legislature because he was not of the Standing Order.

Still, one Church slowly grew up after another. In 1710 a Baptist Church was organized at Waterford; in 1735 another in Wallingford; one in Stonington, one in Lyme and one in Colchester the same year, and one at Saybrook in 1744. The first Baptist meetings were not held in Norwich till 1770, and in other large towns it was much later still before Churches were formed. When the minister's tax was to be collected, the dissenting layman's cow or the contents of his corn-crib were seized and taken to the town post to be sold, and the contumacious delinquent considered himself fortunate if he escaped the stocks, always found hard by the signpost or the jail. Here follows one of the old forms under which these outrages were committed: 'LEVY.' To Samuel Perking, of Windham, in Windham County, a Collector of Society Taxes in the first Society in Windham: 'Greeting: By authority of the State of Connecticut, you are hereby commanded forthwith to levy and collect of the persons named in the foregoing list herewith committed to you, each one his several proportion as therein set down, of the sum total of such list, being a rate agreed upon by the inhabitants of said Society for the purpose of defraying the expenses of said Society, and to deliver and pay-over the sums which you shall collect to the Treasurer of said Society within sixty days next coming; and if any person shall neglect or refuse to pay the sum at which he is assessed; you are hereby commanded to distrain the goods, chattels, or lands of such person so refusing; and the same being disposed of as the law directs, return the overplus, if any, to the respective owners; and for want of such goods, chattels, or lands whereon to make distress, you are to take the body or bodies of the persons so refusing, and them commit to the keeper of the gaol in said County of Windham within the prison, who is hereby commanded to receive and safe keep them until they pay and satisfy the aforesaid sums at which they are respectively assessed, together with your fees, unless said assessment, or any part thereof, be legally abated. Dated at Windham, this 12th day of September, 1794.'

The efforts of the Baptists to throw off this yoke are matters of well-attested history. They adopted resolutions in Churches and Associations, they carried up petitions from year to year to the law-making bodies, and sent the ablest counsel, at heavy expense, to seek the redress of grievances and demand complete equality before the law, for many years. Indeed, the 'Baptist Petition,' as it was called, came to be almost a by-word amongst the State officers, and when at last, in 1818, the rights of conscience were secured in the new constitution, it was a matter of surprise, and most of all were the Baptists themselves surprised, to find that the article which changed the fundamental law on that subject was drawn by Rev. Asahel Morse, one of their own ministers from Suffield.

As in Massachusetts, so in Connecticut, the New Light or Separate movement under Whitefield and Edwards resulted in the rapid advancement of the Baptist cause. For about twenty years, from 1740 to 1760, perpetual excitement abounded and about forty Separatist Churches were established, taking the very best elements, in many

cases, out of the State Churches. In process of time a number of them became Baptist Churches bodily, and in other cases they gradually blended with the Baptists, for their cause was one in essence. They demanded deliverance from the curse of the Half-way Covenant and freedom to worship God as regenerate people. So enraged did the State Churches and the Legislature become, that they repealed a former act under which Baptists and others of 'sober consciences' had enjoyed partial liberty, and then, as Trumbull says, there was 'no relief for any person dissenting from the established mode of worship in Connecticut. The Legislature not only enacted these severe and unprecedented laws, but they proceeded to deprive of their offices such of the justices of the peace and other officers as were New Lights, as they were called, or who favored then-cause.'

The two Clevelands, students, and their tutors were expelled from Yale College by President Clapp because they attended a private meeting 'for divine worship, carried on principally by one Solomon Paine, a lay exhorter, on several Sabbaths in September and October last.' These two young men pleaded that this was the meeting where their godly father went, and for this crime of bowing before God they were excluded from that honorable institution. The same spirit prevailed in the Congregational Churches. According to Whittemore, the Church at Middletown had for some years a few members in its fellowship who entertained Baptist views.

But at a meeting held August 9th, 1795, it passed the following: 'When members of this Church shall renounce infant baptism and embrace the Baptist principles and practice baptism by immersion, they shall be considered by that act as withdrawing their fellowship from this Church, and we consider our covenant obligations with them as Church members dissolved.'

When it is remembered that their membership was not of choice but of law, we see the injustice of this act. 'Rev. Stephen Parsons, who had been pastor of the Church for seven years, announced one Sabbath morning that he had embraced the opinions of the Baptists and was immediately dismissed. . . . He with a number of his brethren and sisters withdrew, were soon after baptized, and on the 29th of October, 1795, a meeting was held in the house of a Mr. Doolittle for the purpose of recognizing the Church.' The venerable Judge Wm. H. Potter, an alumnus of Yale, thus eloquently sets forth the temper of the times. He says: 'The unfortunate Separates were pursued into every calling, hunted out of every place of trust, hauled before clergy and Church, dragged before magistrates, and suffered without stint and without much complaint countless civil and ecclesiastical penalties, as heretics or felons, but oppression only confirmed their faith and thrust them into a closer union with their Baptist fellow-sufferers who, as in duty bound, joyfully espoused the cause and rights of the Separates. And why should they not fraternize?

The Baptists, upon whom persecution had well-nigh exhausted its impotent attempts, either to extirpate or seduce, were, to be sure, regarded by the hierarchy as impracticables, and had been invidiously permitted under the Act of the first year

of William and Mary to organize Churches. But they were still laboring under many legal impediments and more prejudices. Their memories, if not their backs, were still smarting under the pungent discipline of the same hierarchy. Their preachers had been familiar with fines, forfeitures and prisons, and their people with distrains, odium and disfranchisement. Herein there must have been a common sympathy.

Then, the soul-stirring doctrines of New Lights were already the cherished doctrines of the Baptists. The same annunciation of the rich, free and sovereign grace of God, and the doctrines of the cross which Whitefield and Wheelock made on a wider field and with such signal success, were identical with those of Wightman and the Callenders. The Separates, therefore, had little to sacrifice in coining to the Baptists.'

The law treated the Separates as malefactors and outcasts, and some of them were handled so much worse than many of the Baptists that the latter sympathized with them, succored them and threw open their doors to make them welcome as brethren in like tribulation. At first, when a Baptist and Separate Church became one, or when large numbers of Separates united with a Baptist Church, the chief difference between the two was found in the lax views of the Separates on the subject of communion. The Supper had always been grossly perverted by the Standing Order to ecclesiastical-politico uses, and these notions the so-called New Lights brought with them to the Baptists. They could not easily rid themselves of this relic of State Church life, but in process of time they adopted healthier views and, falling into Baptist line, fully embraced their principles. While the few Baptist ministers of that day were not men of learning, they commonly possessed a fair public school education, which they used with sound sense in laying broad foundations for their free and independent Churches. They had slight salaries or none at all, which, for the general good of Baptist interests, left them free to devote a portion of their time to other fields besides their own pastorates, doing the work of evangelists and planting new Churches in many places. Wightman did much of this work, extending his labors as far as New York city. Three generations of Wightmans succeeded to the pastorate of the First Church, Groton, covering, with short intervals, a century and a quarter.

Our few and feeble Churches were thoroughly evangelical and simple in their utterances of divine truth, and their Declarations of Faith were little else than a succession of quotations from the Bible, whose text alone was their creed. Their general practice also was as consistent as their doctrines, but at one time they partook to some extent in their worship of the general excitement which attended the preaching of Whitefield, Davenport and the elder Edwards. No part of America was more deeply moved than Connecticut under the labors of these men. Whitefield's preaching, especially, agitated the Churches of the Standing Order to their center. They had foolishly closed all their pulpits against him, and multitudes assembled in the open air to listen to his preaching. A fair proportion of their clergy, however, sympathized with him and went with their people, nor were they alarmed

at those physical and so-called fanatical manifestations which accompanied his preaching, described by Edwards. Often a subtle but irresistible influence would fall upon his congregations, somewhat resembling a panic on a battlefield.

Multitudes would surge back and forth, would raise a simultaneous cry of agony, many would fall to the earth, remaining long in a state of unconsciousness, and then awoke as from a trancelike state enraptured with an ecstatic joy.

The Baptists, with such of the Standing Order as co-operated with Whitefield and his immediate followers, all blended in his support, and wonderful things occurred through this new discipleship. It is stated on good authority that the parsonage at Center Groton was the scene of one of the most remarkable sermons of this great preacher. The upper windows of the house were removed and a platform raised in front, facing a large yard full of forest trees. When Whitefield passed through the window to this stand and cast his eye over the multitude, he saw a number of young men who, imitating Zaccheus in the sycamore, had climbed these trees and were-perched on their limbs. The kind hearted orator asked them to come down, saying: '

Sometimes the powder of God falls on these occasions and takes away the might of strong men. I wish to benefit your souls and not have your bodies fall out of these trees.' He expected to see them come down to the ground as birds that were shot; and choosing the valor of discretion they came down, only to be prostrated under the sermon. Great numbers of his hearers went home to lead new lives, and it is said that more than one of these young men became preachers of the new faith.

No Baptist Church in Connecticut fought a nobler battle for life and freedom than that at Norwich. Dr. Lord was the pastor of the State Church there, and appears to have been a very excellent man. He was inclined at first to work with the revivalists, but the breaking up of the ancient order of things amongst what were known as the Old Lights alarmed him, and the bent of circumstances forced him into ultra-conservatism. Then he began to oppress and persecute those of his congregation who took the other side, and the result was that a large secession from his Church formed a new Separatist body. In due time a Baptist Church sprang chiefly out of this and Norwich became a large source of Baptist power. Poor Parson Lord had hard times generally in these contests and, in particular, was compelled to collect his own taxes. Denison tells us that 'he called upon a Mr. Colher, who was a barber, when the following dialogue ensued :

Dr. L. "Mr. Colher, I have a small bill against you."

Mr. C. "A bill against me, Dr. Lord? for what?"

Dr. L. "Why, your rate for my preaching." '

Mr. C. "For your preaching? Why, I have never heard you. I don't recollect that I ever entered your meeting-house."

Dr. L. "That's not my fault, Mr. Colher, the meeting-house was open."

Mr. C. "Very well. But, look here; I have a small bill against you, Dr. Lord."

Dr. L. "A bill against me? for what?"

Mr. C. "Why, for barbering."

Dr. L. "For barbering? I never before entered your shop."

Mr. C. "That's not my fault, Dr. Lord, my shop was open!"

The Norwich Church prospered, and our brethren met for worship in their own houses until want of room compelled them first to gather in a rope-walk, and then to erect a meeting-house of their own. But they, as well as the Separates, were slow of heart to learn all that the Baptists taught them, and it is quite delicious to know that they burnt their own fingers in consequence. In those days, when the State Churches wanted to build a meeting-house, they commonly asked the Legislature for a Lottery Grant on which to raise money. The Norwich Baptists, thinking it no harm for them to be as ridiculous as other respectable folk, applied to the General Assembly for such a Grant. Whereupon, that august body refused: first, because the Baptists did not indorse the Ecclesiastical Laws; secondly, because they were not known in law as a denomination; thirdly, because Rev. Mr. Sterry, the Baptist pastor at Norwich, was the co-editor of a Republican paper.

For these reasons, our brethren were informed that they could not be allowed to gamble like good, legal and orthodox saints. This word to the wise had a wholesome effect upon them, for although they have now built a number of excellent church edifices, and have liberally helped others to do the same, they have never once since asked for a State Lottery to help them in building houses for God. Few States in our Union can show a nobler list of pioneer Baptist pastors or a more illustrious line of successors than Connecticut. Amongst the first we have the three Wightmans, Valentine, Timothy and Gano; then follow the four Burrowses, Silas, Amos, Peleg and Roswell. The three Allens follow: Ichabod, Rufus and Stephen; and the two Bolles, David and Matthew, the Palmers and the Rathbuns: together with Backus and Baldwin and a list that cannot now be named. In later times we have had Knapp and Cushman, Swan and Hodge, Ives and Miller, Turnbull and Phelps, Palmer and Lathrop, their illustrious peers. Many of these have long since entered into their Master's joy, and over a few others the sheen of their holy Home begins to glow, falling softly on their scant locks. To these their departed brethren begin to look like shining ones sent back with lamps of Christ's trimming to escort them to the celestial gate. Heaven bless the waiting band, and when their work is done give them a triumphant entrance into the city of the great King.

The Baptists of Connecticut now number 6 Associations, 122 ordained ministers; 124 churches. and 21,666 members.

NEW YORK. The Documentary History of New York first mentions Baptists in 1644, and calls them 'Mnists,' Mennonists or Mennonites, but does not tell us in what part of the colony they were found. The Director and Council of New Netherland treated them harshly enough. On the 6th of June, 1641, they gave the 'free exercise of religion' to the Church of England, and October 10th, 1645, granted a special charter to the town of Flushing with the same right. They soon found, however; that sundry heretics, Independents, of Middleburg (Newtown), and Lutherans, of New Amsterdam, were using the same liberty, and they took the alarm. On February 1st, 1686, the authorities decreed that all 'conventicles and meetings' held in the province, whether public or private, should be 'absolutely and expressly forbidden;' that only the 'Reformed Divine service, as this is observed and enforced according to the Synod of Dootrecht,' should be held, 'Under the penalty of one hundred pounds Flemish, to be forfeited by all those who, being unqualified, take upon themselves, either on Sundays or other days, any office, whether of preacher, reader or singer, in such meetings differing from the customary and legal assemblies, and twenty-five like pounds to be forfeited by every one, whether man or woman, married or unmarried, who is found in such meetings.'

They disclaimed all intention to put any constraint of conscience in violation of 'previously granted patents,' and imprisoned some Lutherans, which act excited such indignation that they were compelled, June 14th, 1656, to permit the Lutherans to worship in their own houses. Not content with this, they threw themselves into direct collision with the town of Flushing, in violation of their patent granting religious freedom to that town. Under its charter Flushing, by resolution, claimed the right of Quakers and other sects to worship God within their jurisdiction without restraint. On the 26th of March, 1658, therefore, the New Netherland authorities passed an ordinance annulling the right of Flushing to hold town meetings, forbidding heresy in the town and requiring its magistrates to select 'a good, honest, pious and orthodox minister,' subject to the approval of the provincial authorities, and requiring each land-owner of that town to pay twelve stivers annually for his support, together with tenths if necessary, and that all who would not comply with these demands within six weeks should lose their goods, which than be sold, and they must take themselves 'out of this government.'

We have seen in a previous chapter that many of the New England colonists fled to the Dutch for liberty to worship God and keep a good conscience. Amongst these were some of the friends of Hanserd Knollys in 1641, and a little later Lady Deborah Moody, widow of Sir Henry of Garsden, in Wiltshire. She, together with Mrs. King, of Swampscott, and the wife of John Tillton, was tried at the Quarterly Court, December, 1642, 'for houldinge that the baptizing of infants is noe ordinance of God.' It does not appear that she was actually banished from Massachusetts, but having first fled from England on account of persecution, and finding herself an object of arraignment and reproach in her new home, for the free expression of her

religions views, her sensitive and high spirit revolted, and she determined to abandon Massachusetts and seek peace amongst strangers. In 1643 she went to New Amsterdam, thirteen years before the New Netherland authorities issued their tyrannical decree. Governor Winthrop tells us that she did this 'against the advice of all her friends.' Many others affected with Anabaptism removed thither also. She was after excommunicated from the Salem Church. In a letter written by Endicott to Winthrop, dated Salem, the 22d of the second month, 1644, he says that Mr. Norrice had informed him that she intended to return, and he advises against her return, 'unless shee will acknowledge her ewill in opposing the Churches & leave her opinions behinde her, ffor she is a dangerous woeman. My brother Ludlow writt to mee that, by meancs of a booke she sent to Mrs. Eaton, shee questions her owns baptisme, it is verie doubtfull whether shee will be re-claymed, shee is so far ingaged.' On her way from Massachusetts she stopped for a time at New Haven, where she made several converts to her new views and fell into fresh difficulties in consequence. As Winthrop tells us, Mrs. Eaton, wife of the first Governor of New Haven Colony, was one of these converts. She also was a lady of high birth and culture, the daughter of an English Bishop. Davenport, her pastor, was at unwearied pains to reclaim her from the 'error' of 'imagining that pedobaptism is unlawful.' It was alleged against her, that she importuned Lady Moody 'to lend her a book made by A.R."

The records of the Congregational Church at New Haven show that she was severely handled for stoutly denying that 'Baptism has come in the place of circumcision, and is to be administered unto infants.' By some Lady Moody has been called a follower of George Fox, but this was three years before he began to preach in England. On the southwest coast of Long Island, near New Amsterdam, a settlement had been formed in 1643, which Governor Kieft had named Gravesend, after a Dutch town on the Maas. Lady Moody took a patent of laud there of him, December 19th, 1645, which, among other things, guaranteed 'the free libertie of conscience according to the costome of Holland, without molestation or disturbance from any madgistrate or madgistrates, or any other ecclesiastical minister that may pretend jurisdiction over them.' For a time, her religious sentiments disturbed her amicable relations with the Dutch authorities, without regard to her patent. Here she died, it is supposed, about 1659. Many others of like sentiments gathered about her, 'with liberty to constitute themselves a body politic as freemen of the Province and town of Gravesende,' according to the patent. The learned James W. Gerard says: 'The settlers at Gravesend seem to have been generally affected with Anabaptist views, and to have had no settled Church.'

Clearly, there were two Baptist ministers at Flushing in those days, the first in order of time being Rev. Francis Doughty. Mandeville, in his 'Flushing Past and Present,' says that he fled from 'the troubles in England, and found that he had got out of the frying-pan into the fire.' He preached at Lynn and Taunton, Mass., 'and denied baptism to infants.' At Taunton he was dragged out of the public assembly and brought before the magistrates, charged with saying that 'Abraham ought to have been baptized.' He then fled to Long Island and became the first pastor at Flushing,

but in 1656 went to Virginia. 'He was unquestionably the first religious teacher in Flushing, and had adopted Baptist views of the ordinance of baptism.'

Aside from Lady Moody and Mr. Doughty, the first full account that we have from the records of New Motherland that there were Baptists in the colony, is found in an official paper on 'The State of Religion,' drawn up 'and signed by two clergymen of the Reformed Church, Megapolensis and Drissius. It is dated at 'Amsterdam, in N. Netherland,' the 5th of August, 1657, and is addressed to the 'Classis of Amsterdam.' They report Long Island religion as in a sad condition.

At ' Gravesend are reported Mennonites; yea, they, for the most part, reject infant baptism, the Sabbath, the office of preacher and the teachers of God's word, saying that through these have come all sorts of contention into the world. Whenever they come together the one or the other reads something for them. At Flushing they hitherto had a Presbyterian preacher who conformed to our Church, but many of them became endowed with divers opinions. . . . They absented themselves from preaching, nor would they pay the preacher his promised stipend. The said preacher was obliged to leave the place and repair to the English Virginias. . . . Last year a fomenter of evil came there. He was a cobbler from Rhode Island, in New England, and stated that he was commissioned by Christ. He began to preach at Flushing and then went with the people into the river and dipped them. This becoming known here, the fiscaal proceeded thither and brought him along. He was banished the province.'

The same paper states that at Middleburg (now Newtown) and at 'Heemstede' there were a number of people who were willing to listen to the preaching of Richard Denton at the Dutch Church: 'When he began to baptize the children of such parents as were not members of the Church they sometimes burst out of the church.'

'The cobbler,' a mere term of contempt, who 'dipped' his converts at Flushing 'last year,' that is, in 1656, was Rev. William Wickenden, of Providence. He was one of the first settlers of that city, resided there in 1636, signed the first compact in 1637, was a member of the Legislature in 1648, and from 1651 to 1655, again 1664, and died in 1669. In 1656 he visited Flushing, preached, immersed his converts in the river, and administered the Lord's Supper. Both Broadhead and O'Callagan give a full account of his treatment in consequence. Under date of November 8th, 1656, O'Callagan says: 'The Baptists at Flushing were the next to feel the wrath of the law. William Hallett, sheriff of that place, "had dared to collect conventicles in Ills house, and to permit one William Wickendam [properly Wickenden] to explain and comment on God's Holy Word, and to administer sacraments, though not called thereto by any civil or clerical authority." He had, moreover, assisted at such meeting and afterward "accepted from the said Wickendain's hands the bread in the form and manner the Lord's Supper is usually celebrated."

For this violation of the statute Hallett was removed from office and fined fifty pounds, failing to pay which he was to be banished.' On the 8th of November, 1656, the General Assembly of New Netherland 'ordained' that Wickenden should be condemned to pay a fine of one hundred pounds Flemish and be banished out of the province of New Netherland, 'the aforesaid Wickendam to remain a prisoner till the fine and cost of the process shall be paid.' The Council being informed, however, by reliable parties, that he was a very poor man, 'with a wife and many children, by profession a cobbler, which trade he neglects, so that it will be impossible to collect anything from him,' the fine and costs were remitted, and he was condemned on the 11th of November 'to immediate banishment, under condition that if ever he be seen again in the province of New Netherland he shall be arrested and kept in confinement till the fine and costs are paid in full.' Like other religious tyrants, the more the Dutch authorities persecuted the heretics the worse off they found themselves, and the more indignant they became. Hence, on September 21st, 1662, they say that because they 'Find by experience that their hitherto issued publications and edicts against conventicles and prohibited assemblies are not observed and obeyed as they ought, therefore, by these presents, they are not only renewed but enlarged in manner following. Like as they have done heretofore, so they prohibit and interdict as yet that besides the Reformed worship and service no conventicles or meetings shall be kept in this province, whether it be in houses, barns, ships, barks; nor in the woods nor fields, upon forfeiture of fifty guldens for the first time, for every person, whether man or woman or child that shall have been present at such prohibited meetings, and twice as much for every person, whether it be man or woman or child, that has exhorted or taught in such prohibited meetings, or shall have lent his house, barn, or any place to that purpose; for ye second time twice as much, for the third time four times as much, and arbitrary punishment besides.'

A further provision prohibited the importation, circulation or reception of any books, writings or letters, deemed 'erroneous,' fining the importers and circulators a hundred gulden, and the receivers fifty gulden. From this time onward there are numerous indications that many individual Baptists were found around Gravesend, Newtown and Flushing, and some signs that now and then one of the Mennonites from Long Island had crossed the river into what are now New York and Westchester Counties, but it is not likely that they had any visible Church existence.

The next trace of Baptist life that we find in New York came also from the East. Nicholas Eyers, supposed to have been a native-born citizen, a brewer, residing 'in the broad street of this city, between the house of John Michel Eyers and Mr. John Spratt,' invited Valentine Wightman, of Groton, Conn., to come and preach in his house. Eyers shows in his petition to the Governor that in February, 1715, his house had been registered by the Quarter Sessions 'for an Anabaptist meetinghouse,' and 'that he had been a public preacher to a Baptist congregation within this city for four years.' There is a perplexity of dates here, as between 1711, when he is said to have been a Baptist preacher, and 1714, when his name appears in the list of the baptized, which the writer sees no way of reconciling without

further data. In 1711 or 1712 Wightman began a series of preaching visits, continuing them for about two years, and in 1714 he baptized Nicholas Evers and eleven others. At first it was resolved that for fear of the rabble these twelve converts than be baptized in the night and the company went to the river, where the five females received the ordinance. At that point Mr. Evers was seized with the conviction that they were doing wrong in shunning publicity, he remembered the words of the Lord Jesus: 'No man doeth any thing in secret, when he himself seeketh to be known openly.' He, therefore, consulted with the other six brethren and they agreed to postpone their baptism till morning. The next day they waited on Burnet, the Governor, with a request for protection; this he not only gave them but went to the river side with many of the most respectable citizens to witness the ordinance. All stood reverently, and at its close the Governor remarked: 'This was the ancient manner of baptizing, and is, in my opinion, much preferable to the practice of modern times.'

In 1715 the Quarter Sessions licensed Evers' house for a Baptist meeting place. On January 1, 1720, he seems to have hired another place of meeting, and he asked the Governor to permit him to exercise the functions 'of a minister within this city to a Baptist congregation and to give him protection therein,' under the Act of Toleration. Rip Van Dam, 'one of His Majesty's Council for the Province of New York,' had rented this place to Evers, 'only to be a publick meeting place of the Baptists wherein to worship Almighty God.' On the 13th of the same month the Mayor, Recorder and Aldermen certified 'that to the best of our knowledge and understanding he is blameless and free from any notorious and public slander and vice, has given himself the good name and reputation of his neighbors of being a sober, just and honest man, and is said to be an Anabaptist as to his profession in religion.' January 23d, 1721, Governor Burnet gave him a permit to preach under the laws of William and Mary. This curious document begins thus:

'Whereas, Mr. Nich. Evers, brewer, a freeman and inhabitant of ye City of New York, pretending to be at present a teacher or preacher of a congregation of Anabaptists, which has had its beginning about five years ago within this city and has so continued hitherto.' "

This date implies that the congregation had taken a somewhat settled form in 1715, but Parkinson states that the Church was not constituted nor Evers ordained till September, 1724, when Elders Valentine Wightman, of Groton, and Daniel Wightman, of Newport, conducted the services. This Church was so prospered that they bought a piece of ground on 'Golden Hill' and built a meeting-house in 1728. A map made from a survey by Wm. Bradford, dated 1728, shows that 'Golden Hill' took its rise at Queen Street (now Pearl) and continued up John Street to William, and also shows this meeting-house to have been located on the west side of Cliff, a little north of the northwest corner of Cliff, apparently on the property now occupied by Messrs. Phelps, Dodge, & Co. Benedict says that he found a letter amongst the papers of Backus, addressed by Elder James Brown to his Church in Providence, asking aid toward paying the debt on this church edifice, which had cost a

considerable sum. He stated that the Rhode Island brethren had helped them the year before, but that the wealthiest member of the New York Church having left them, and the rest being poor, they were unable to discharge their debt. Mr. Brown thought that \$25 or \$30 would be the just proportion of the Church in Providence, and he subscribed \$1 thereof. A number of others gave 'thirteen barrels of cider' Between the brewer of New York and the cider-mills of Providence they were bound to float that church building on Golden Hill; yet the plan would not work. Evers removed to Newport in 1731, where he died, and John Stephens took his place in New York. But he soon removed to South Carolina. Then one of the trustees claimed the church building and sold it as private property, when the Church, which had existed about eight years and consisted of twenty-four members, disbanded. This closed the history of the first General Baptist Church in New York city.

That which is now the First Baptist Church in that city was organized on June 10th, 1762, and under most interesting circumstances, especially interesting because its history is indirectly connected with Roger Williams through Long Island and Block Island. In 1661 a company of sixteen Baptist emigrants from England, who found that they could not enjoy religious liberty in Massachusetts, united in purchasing Block Island and settled there. They soon applied to Roger Williams and John Clarke for aid and counsel, and through their influence, in 1663, Block Island was admitted to share the privileges of the charter which Rhode Island had secured from Charles II. In 1664 a deputation was sent from Block Island to the General Assembly of Rhode Island to ask for civil protection. Their request was referred to a committee, of which Roger Williams was chairman, who reported, that as his majesty had granted in the charter 'that no person within the said colony at any time hereafter shall be in any way molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any difference in opinion in matters of religion, and do not actually disturb the civil peace of the said colony,' the people of Block Island were entitled to the same rights. The islanders, therefore, organized a miniature democracy for local civil government, and, in 1665, sent their first representatives to the Rhode Island General Court. In civil polity it adopted the principles of Roger Williams, and in the exercise of its religious freedom it introduced worship after the order observed by Baptists. The sixteen original proprietors set apart a portion of land to be known as the Ministers' Lot, for the maintenance of that worship.

James Sands, one of the first settlers and the first representative from Block Island in the Rhode Island Assembly, was an 'Anabaptist,' and Niles, his grandson, the historian of the Island, says that 'he did not differ in religious belief from the other settlers.' For about ninety years lay preachers, taken from amongst themselves, continued regular worship after the Baptist order, and without the formal organization of a Church. Until that time they met in each other's houses, but then they built a meeting-house, and from that period to this they have built seven in succession. In 1759 they engaged Rev. David Sprague to preach for them: 'So long as said Sprague shall serve the inhabitants of the town by preaching to them the Gospel of Christ according to the Scriptures of truth, making them and them only the rule of his faith, doctrine and practice.' A Baptist Church was organized on Block

Island October 3d, 1772, with Elder Sprague as pastor and Thomas Dodge as deacon. They adopted the ordinary articles of faith used at that time, that on the ordinances being the ninth and reading thus: 'We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Christ to be continued in his Church and practiced by believers, after his own example and in obedience to his commandments, until his second coming, and that the former is requisite to the latter.' From that day there has been a Baptist Church on the island, and none other; and now, out of a resident population of about 1,500 the Baptists number fully 500 members in communion. Livermore, a late historian, says that,

'In no part of the world, perhaps, has religious freedom been maintained so purely for two hundred years as on Block Island. Here it has never been disturbed by any civil enactments. Here no ecclesiastical authority has ever infringed upon private opinions of religious faith and practice. Here the Church has never felt the overruling power of bishops or synod. Here no religious duties have been enforced upon helpless infants. Here the ordinances have ever been administered in their primitive simplicity. Here the acts of sprinkling, pouring and signing with the cross have never been witnessed. Here the minister has no more ruling authority in the Church than the youngest member. No authority is recognized in it except that which comes from the Scriptures.'

Twelve years after the organization of this Church Thomas Dodge became its pastor, and some of the best families in New England have sprung from this settlement, especially the descendants of the Sands, Ray, Terry, Rathbone, Dodge and Niles. Roger Williams was deeply concerned in the welfare of this little republic, was intimate with its early settlers, and Simon Ray, Jr. married his granddaughter. Thomas Dodge, grandson of Tristram Dodge, one of the original settlers of Block Island, settled at Cow Neck, Long Island, about 1705-10, and was soon followed by Samuel, another grandson. Thomas, it is supposed, built the old homestead still found on Dodge Pond, and from there the family spread to Cow Bay, where we find Dodge Island, near to Sands Point, named after John Sands, who was one of Elder Sands' family from Block Island. Jeremiah Dodge, a great-grandson of the original Tristram, was born at Cow Neck, May, 1716; he was a shipbuilder, having learned his trade from his brother, Wilkie. He removed to New York to follow his business not far from the years 1737-40, and died there in 1800. He brought the old Baptist principles of the family with him, and in 1745 we find the few scattered Baptists of New York meeting in his house and that of Joseph Meeks for prayer-meetings, Dodge and Dr. Robert North, a former member of the disbanded Church, being the leaders of the little congregation. Joseph Meeks was converted in 1745, and Elder Benjamin Miller, of Scotch Plains, N. J., came to New York to baptize him. Soon John Pyne, a licentiate living at Fishkill, was invited to come to their help. In 1750 Mr. Pyne died, and Elder James Carman, of Cranberry, near Hightstown, N. J., visited them and baptized several. They numbered thirteen members in 1753, and became a branch of the Scotch Plains Church. Mr. Miller came to break bread to them once in three months. Their numbers increased so rapidly that they were obliged to hire a room to contain the congregation. In what is now called William

Street (between Fulton and John) there was a rigging-loft, on which hung a large sign of a horse and cart, from which the street was known as Cart-and-Horse Lane. Here they met from three to four years, when its owner sold it and they returned to Mr. Meeks' house, where they met about a year longer. They then purchased ground and built the second Baptist meeting-house on Golden Hill, and entered it in March, 1760. A map in Valentine's Manuals shows the location of this building to have been in Gold Street, on the west side, just south of the south-west corner of what is now Fulton. Their membership having increased to twenty-seven, they took their letters from Scotch Plains and, with the assistance of Benjamin Miller and John Gano, were constituted a Church in 1762, adopting the London Confession of 1688. On the same day they elected Mr. Gano their pastor. As he was one of the first men of his times a brief sketch of his life may be necessary here.

John Gano was a direct descendant of the Huguenots of France, his grandfather, Francis, being obliged to fly from persecution in the Isle of Guernsey in consequence of the bloody edict revoking the Edict of Nantz. He settled in New Rochelle, in the State of New York. His son, Daniel, lived at Hopewell, N. J., and was the father of John, who was born at Hopewell, July 22d, 1727. While quite young John united with the Baptist Church there, and was ordained by that body May 29th, 1754, Isaac Eaton preaching the sermon. Before his ordination he had gone with Mr. Miller and Mr. Thomas on a tour into Virginia, and while there had followed what he believed to be a divine impulse to preach. On returning, his Church called him to account for such disorder, but before proceeding to condemn him, asked him to preach before them, hence his ordination; and at the next meeting of the Philadelphia Association he was sent on a mission to the South. There he traveled extensively as far as South Carolina. While in the back settlements of Virginia he lodged with a family and overheard one of them say: 'This man talks like one of the Joneses.' On inquiry he was told that they were a family living over twenty miles thence who did nothing but pray and talk about Jesus Christ. He said: 'I determined to make it my next day's ride and see my own likeness.' He found a large family, many of whom had been lately converted, engaged in worship. The sick father was lying before the fire groaning with pain, and Gano asked him how he did? He replied: 'Oh! I am in great pain.' 'I am glad of it,' said the young preacher. The old man demanded with spirit what he meant. He answered: 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,' and the sick man fell in love with him.

On reaching North Carolina, in company with another young man, they arrived at a plantation where they were invited to stay all night. The planter asked him 'if he was a trader,' to which he answered 'yes.' He then asked him how he succeeded. Gano replied, not so well as he wished. Probably the goods did not suit. The preacher said that no one had complained of that. The planter suggested that he might be holding his goods too high, to which his friend replied that any one might have them below their own price. The man said that he would trade on these terms. Gano then asked him: 'If gold tried in the fire, yea, that which was better than the fine gold, wine and milk, durable riches and righteousness, without money

and without price, would suit him? 'O' said the planter, 'I believe you are a minister,' and then he declared to him the freeness and fullness of grace.

On arriving at Charleston, he preached there for Mr. Hart; and in his account of the services Mr. Gano writes: 'When I arose to speak, the sight of so brilliant an audience, among whom were twelve ministers and one of whom was Mr. Whitefield, for a moment brought the fear of man upon me; but, blessed be the Lord! I was soon relieved from this embarrassment. The thought passed my mind, I had none to fear and obey but the lord.' On his return to North Carolina, during the French War, he was informed that he was to be seized as a spy; but when he reached the place, instead of passing through secretly, he stopped at the public house and asked the landlord whether the people would come to hear a sermon on a week-day. The man replied that shortly there was to be a general muster there for the county, and Gano sent to the colonel who was to arrest him, to know if it would be pleasant to him to have a short sermon addressed to the regiment before military duty. They all paid profound attention but one man, to whom Gano said that he was ashamed of him and wondered that his officers would bear with him. The colonel thanked the preacher, rebuked the man, and the evangelist pushed on his way. On reaching the Blue Ridge he entered a house in a storm, the owner of which was alarmed and asked him if he was 'a press-master.' He replied that he was. In great alarm the man wished to know whether he 'took married men.' Gano told him that he surely did, that his Master's service was good, with high wages, and he wanted his wife and children to enlist also. The man was very uneasy, however, while he was exhorted to volunteer for Christ. On reaching New Jersey he first settled at Morristown for two years, and then at Yadkin, N. C., whence he was obliged to flee before the Cherokee Indians in the ravages of war. Shortly after this he took the New York pastorate, in which he remained five and twenty years with the most marked success, when he removed to Kentucky; where he died at Frankfort in 1804. We shall meet him again in the Revolutionary War. It is but needful to add here that he was one of the most remarkable men in America in all the resources which native strength, sound judgment, wit, ingenuity, retentive memory, zeal and godliness furnish in times which try men's souls.

The First Church prospered so largely under Mr. Gano's ministry that the meeting-house was enlarged in 1763; crowds flocked to hear him. The late Dr. Bowen, of the Episcopal Church in New York, says that his father, who was a clergyman in the city in those days, told him that 'Mr. Gano possessed the best pulpit talents of any man that he ever heard.' Till 1763 this Church numbered only forty-one members, and two years before that it was scarcely known at all, although the little meeting-house had been built. Morgan Edwards came from Wales in 1761, and tells this pleasant anecdote:

'When I came to New York I landed in the morning and thought I would try if I could find any Baptists. I wandered up and down, looking at the place and the people, and wondering who of all the people I met might be Baptists. At length I saw an old man, with a red cap on his head, sitting in the porch of a respectable

looking house. Ah, thought I, now this is one of the old inhabitants who knows all about the city; this is the man to inquire of. I approached him and said: "Goodmorning, sir! Can you tell me where any Baptists live in this city?" "Baptists! Baptists!" said the old man, musing as if ransacking all the corners of his memory; "Baptists! I really don't know as I ever heard of any body of that occupation in these parts."

During the Revolutionary War the First Church was dispersed and its records suspended. No baptisms are recorded between that of Hannah Stillwell, April 28th, 1776, and that of Samuel Jones, afterward a deacon, on September 4th, 1784. The British forces occupied New York above seven years, during which time it was nearly ruined. No city in America was so long in the hands of the enemy and suffered so much. Its best inhabitants found shelter in other colonies, and the Tories made it their place of refuge. Pestilence and two great fires swept it, and the soldiery inflicted all the damage that they could. At the opening of the war there were nineteen churches in the city, but when it closed only nine of them could be used for worship. The Baptist meeting-house, having been used for a horse-stable, was almost in ruins. On his return to the city Gano found emptiness, desolation and ashes. The angels of God had not looked upon a more touching procession since that which united Calvary with Joseph's tomb, than that which solemnly moved into the wasted city from Harlem Heights. Washington and Clinton led it on horseback, followed by Knox with the remnant of the patriot army, some mounted and some on foot, with gaunt cheeks, weather-beaten, footsore and ragged, scarred and limping. Men who had left their bloody foot-prints upon the sharp frozen snows of Valley Forge were there, with the man at their head who had shivered with them through the dreariest winter of the war; the man who had carried them to God in prayer, night and morning, when anguish sat heavily on his camp and his own soul was struggling through the darkest days of life. John Gano soon followed and says: 'We collected of our Church about thirty-seven members out of upward of two hundred, some being dead, and others scattered into almost every part of the Union.' But as soon as the sanctuary could be decently cleansed, he rallied his people and preached to them from Hag. 2:3: 'Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now?' Under his ministry the days of prosperity soon returned until he baptized his last convert April 5th, 1788, and left for Kentucky. During his pastorate he had baptized into the Church 297, and received 23 by letter. Amongst the first Regents of the University of New York we find the name of this heroic man, with this notice: 'Rev. John Gano, a clerical scholar of rare culture, pastor of the infant Baptist Church for sixteen years prior to the war; had been a chaplain in the army, and upon returning to the city with the establishment of peace, could find but thirty-seven out of his two hundred Church members.' His family raised a beautiful monument to his memory in Cincinnati. An altar-like pedestal bears an obelisk of much grace, with deep niches on each side. In every one of these there is an allegorical figure, while angels and rich wreaths of flowers adorn the various parts, the whole being crowned by an elaborate capital and a lambent urn. In the basso-relievo a shattered sepulcher is seen, from which a

family has risen from the dead. Six years were spent in executing this delicate piece of workmanship.

Time fails to trace the remarkable history of this venerable Church through the striking ministry of Dr. Foster and William Colher to the close of the century. Shortly after Gano left, the question of singing disturbed them. The usage had prevailed of lining the verses of hymns sung, and now many wanted to sing from the books, whereupon fourteen persons, who wanted the hymns 'deaconed,' left and started the Second Baptist Church. 1790 this new Church got into a contention and divided, both parties claiming this name, but after a time they both dropped it, one taking the name of Bethel and the other of Fayette Street. The Bethel ceased to exist many years ago, but the Fayette Street had an illustrious history, first as the Oliver Street, and is now a noble body, known as the Baptist Church of the Epiphany, with Dr. Elder as pastor. Dr. Foster became pastor of the First Church in 1788, and before long some of the members, who could scent heresy from afar, discovered heterodoxy in his sermons. A serious disturbance followed, which resulted in the exclusion of thirteen persons in 1789. In 1790 twenty others took letters of dismissal and the Second Church received the excluded, which fact probably fermented their own contentions and led to their division.

The New York Baptist Association was formed in 1791, comprising the Scotch Plains, Oyster Bay, Morris-town, Connoe-Brook [Northfield], Staten Island, with the First and Second New York Churches. So rapidly and noiselessly did the leaven of our principles and practices spread that, by the close of the century, Churches were planted in seventeen counties of New York, extending from Sag Harbor to the New Jersey line, and from Staten Island to the Canada line. In 1794, according to Asplund, the churches numbered 84, the ministers 109, and the members 5,263.