

The Baptists

Faith Bowers, Baptist Historical Society, London (1978)

<http://www.baptisthistory.org.au/articles/00003.pdf>

In 1978 the London-based Baptist Historical Society published an information pack titled "Who are the Baptists?" It included reprints of 11 historical documents, notes and questions on the documents, and this paper on the origins, development and characteristics of British Baptists. The text is unedited; references to "doc." and "fig." refer to items in the 1978 pack. Australian Baptists share these historical origins and bear the influence of many of the shaping forces and personalities mentioned here. Social and cultural change, and developments in theology, ecclesiology, missiology and liturgy have led to major shifts in Australian Baptist life in the years since 1978, and we are increasingly exposed to American and global influences, but many of the themes and issues identified by Bowers remain deeply relevant.

– Rod Benson, Baptist Historical Society, Sydney (March 2009).

People were thinking hard about religion in the 17th century. Throughout the Middle Ages they had accepted the teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church which dominated Europe, but after 1500 new ideas began to challenge the old and familiar, but sometimes superstitious or even corrupt, ways. New, Protestant church systems were developed in Germany and Switzerland. The Bible was translated into the language of the people: the first printed English New Testament by Tyndale in 1526, and the whole Bible by Coverdale in 1535. In Tudor England the Church seemed at the mercy of politics, and ordinary people must have found it hard to follow all the changes. Loyalty switched between King (or Queen) and Pope, ritual and decorative fittings were moved in and out of churches, the Latin liturgy alternated with English, priests sometimes wore elaborate vestments, sometimes plain black gowns. By the time James I came to the throne in 1603, people were beginning to decide for themselves what seemed right.

Some sought to reform the Church of England from within with a simpler style of worship and strictly moral ('pure') lives. They were called Puritans. Some thought more drastic change was needed to return to the pattern of the New Testament Church.

In the Roman and Anglican systems the parish church was for everyone living in the parish. They were expected to be baptized, married and buried there, to attend its services and give to it, and to accept as a body the Christian faith for which it stood.

The New Testament suggested a different concept of the Church: 'men and women, individually convinced of the truth of the Gospel, should covenant together as a *gathered community* of believers who shared the same ideas. (Covenant implies a solemn agreement between themselves and with God). Such groups separated from the Church of England. They were known as *Separatists* or *Dissenters* because they dissented or differed from the Church of England. Later when dissent was tolerated, the term Nonconformist was preferred, and eventually their positive position was

underlined by the term Free Churches. There were further distinctions between groups of early dissenters according to their forms of church government. The Presbyterians were led by Elders, the Independents (later called Congregationalists) and Baptists adopted a 'congregational' system in which decisions were made by all the members meeting together. (The Methodist Church arose later, in the 18th century revival).

The early dissenters were persecuted as dangerous extremists. Many fled to Holland where they were free to develop. From among these came the first Baptists.

THE FIRST BAPTISTS: 17th CENTURY

A group of Independents in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, covenanted together in 1606 "as the Lord's free people ... to walk in all His ways ... whatsoever it might cost. Led by John Smyth, who had been an Anglican priest, and Thomas Helwys, a wealthy lawyer, they went to Amsterdam. By 1609 their study of the Bible persuaded them that *a church should be a body of baptized believers*. Smyth baptized himself, then Helwys and the others. This was baptism of adult believers on profession of their repentance and faith in Christ, although it was done by sprinkling, not immersion. Later Smyth, feeling he had been wrong to baptize himself, joined a Dutch Mennonite church which already practised believer's baptism.

Helwys and a few others did not like other Mennonite practices and returned to England to bear witness in their own land. They founded a Baptist church in Spitalfields, just outside the City of London. Here in 1612 Helwys published *The Mystery of Iniquity* (Doc. 1). This plea for religious liberty was soon followed by others from Baptist pens.

By 1626 there were similar Baptist churches in Lincoln, Coventry, Salisbury and Tiverton, and others followed. These were all General Baptists, who practised baptism on profession of faith and who believed in general redemption. They thought that Christ died for all men, that no one was beyond the reach of saving grace, and that every man was free to respond. Evangelists like Thomas Lamb and Samuel Oates were sent out to preach this good news.

In the 1630s other Independent Separatists in London arrived through Bible study at a similar understanding of the Church. They formed new fellowships of baptized believers. Although their way of joining and system of church government was like that of the General Baptists, some of their theology was quite different. As Calvinists they believed in particular redemption: God had already determined the course of each man's life, and would only save his chosen or 'elect'. Man was not free to decide his own destiny. This group of Christians became known as Particular Baptists. In 1642 they began to baptize by immersion. The General Baptists also adopted this method about the same time.

It is important to remember that by a *church* Baptists understand the *local* community of believers, not the building where they meet. At first churches were known by geographical location or by the pastor's name. Both could change repeatedly in the life of one church. For Baptists the church is always this local unit and Associations and Unions are voluntary groupings of churches for common purposes. The denomination as a whole is not 'The Baptist Church'.

It is easy today to think persecution was something that happened to the Early Church, and still happens to Christians in some countries, but to feel Britain is above such things. We accept freedom of conscience as every citizen's right. It was not so in the 17th century and the early nonconformists suffered under all the Stuart kings. Most of their leaders spent long periods in prison. Although the conditions often ruined their health, they continued their witness. Some, like John Bunyan, used the time to 'write books. The *Records of Broadmead, Bristol* (Doc. 2), show in detail how a church survived and grew stronger in the face of severe attacks. Many churches had similar experiences.

Puritan pilgrims of all denominations, despairing of the situation in Britain, went to America. The first Baptist church there was formed about 1639 on Rhode Island. There has always been contact between British and American Baptists. Later, British Baptists supported the colonists in the American War of Independence.

The rise of Cromwell was welcomed by the Puritans. The Long Parliament was predominantly Presbyterian, but Cromwell's triumphant New Model Army consisted mainly of Baptists and Independents, with many Baptist officers. They spread Baptist ideas around the country. Of the 120 churches founded before 1700 which are now in the Baptist Union, 50 were formed in the sixteen year period of Civil Wars and the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth was shortlived and the restored Anglicans were more severe after suffering themselves. A series of Acts against dissenters, the Clarendon Code, was enforced.

The Baptist and other non-Anglican churches were only free to worship openly and in peace after James II was deposed. William and Mary's Toleration Act of 1689 did not repeal earlier laws against dissenters but allowed them to meet for worship, provided they promised political loyalty and held certain basic beliefs.

Apart from the theological difference between the more radical General Baptists and the Particular Baptists, who were closer to the mainstream of the Puritan movement, other issues divided early Baptists. Some were Seventh Day Baptists, worshipping on the Old Testament Sabbath or Saturday. More troublesome was the issue of mixed communion: should they practise 'strict' or 'closed' communion, confining membership to those baptized as believers, or have open membership for all believers, leaving the issue of baptism to the individual conscience? Most Particular Baptists practised strict communion, but there were some important exceptions, like Henry Jessey's church in London, John Bunyan's at Bedford, and Broadmead, Bristol.

If the church was to be a community of believers, it demanded godly lives of its members. They had to set themselves apart from the world; they must themselves be beyond reproach. The discipline of church members who "walked unruly" was a matter of communal concern, and the records of church meetings show sad examples of those punished for immorality, drunkenness and debt.

Although Baptists stressed that the local church should be free, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret Scripture for its own situation, they were ready to work together for the common good. In 1644 seven London Particular Baptist churches issued a joint Confession of Faith, and in 1651 thirty General Baptist churches in the Midlands produced their first Confession. By the 1650s Particular Baptists were active in regional associations in several parts of England, South Wales and

Ireland. After the Toleration Act of 1689 Particular Baptists from England and Wales began to hold an Assembly in London, although their involvement in the regional Associations remained more important to them. General Baptists also grouped in district associations, but from 1654 their General Assembly became important, with increasing authority over the member churches.

BAPTISTS TOLERATED: EARLY 18th CENTURY

Having at last gained freedom to worship, Baptists might have been expected to flourish under the new regime. but in the early 18th century they were quiet, even declining. People no longer felt so passionately about religion; reason and science caught the imagination as Britain moved into the Industrial Revolution, helped by the pastor of Dartmouth Baptist Church, Thomas Newcomen, who invented the first steam engine about 1705. Baptists were mostly in the background, not enjoying full citizen's rights (see p. 6), and they tended to look more to their own affairs. Many General Baptists gradually drifted into a less vital theology, in which Christ the Saviour of all was no longer central. Some Particular Baptists took an extreme form of Calvinism, which saw no point in preaching to the unconverted, for if God had chosen them they would be saved anyway. Both attitudes halted evangelism. Many churches maintained their work, quietly but steadily, without being involved in doctrinal controversy.

Benjamin Keach (Doc. 3) was a leading London minister. At Horsley Down he first introduced congregational hymn-singing into public worship. This new idea caused heated debate. The General Baptists, to whom Keach formerly belonged, would only permit a single voice to sing psalms. The Particular Baptists were used to congregational psalm singing, often in metrical versions (e.g. "All people that on earth do dwell"). After initial doubts, they accepted the idea and soon produced a number of hymnbooks. Women were among the early hymn writers, and two hymns by Anne Steele (1717-78) are in the modern *Baptist Hymn Book*. The practice was well established by 1787 when John Rippon (Doc. 4) first published his *Selection*. (Keach and Rippon both ministered to the same Southwark, church, which later, after several moves, built the Metropolitan Tabernacle when Spurgeon became minister).

Most early Baptist pastors were self-educated, with the Bible at the centre of their studies. A few had been trained as Anglican clergy and then separated, but most worked in other trades and were set apart for the ministry by a church because of their dedication and ability. Many continued their trades, or taught, to earn their living (see Fig.2).

Baptists at first resisted the idea of a specially trained ministry they had seen too many clergy whose better education left them out of touch with their congregations. The Presbyterians had continued to insist on higher education and so lost some able preachers, like Christmas Evans (Fig.8). In 1689 the Particular Baptist Assembly agreed to raise a fund to help weaker churches support their ministers, to send evangelists into new areas, and to help ministers learn Greek and Hebrew. Edward Terrill (Doc. 2) left money in his Will for an educated minister at Broadmead to instruct young men. From this grew Bristol Baptist College.

Other ministers ran private academies, like John Fawcett (1740-1817) at Hebden Bridge. He trained William Ward of Serampore. In 1804 Fawcett helped to found Horton Academy (later Rawdon College and now incorporated in Northern College). Fawcett's hymn, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts" is still loved by Baptists worldwide.

MISSIONARY ZEAL RENEWED: LATE 18th CENTURY

In the later 18th century an evangelical revival swept the country, from which grew Methodism and Evangelical Anglicanism. The older dissenters were rather suspicious, but gradually the impact was felt in Baptist circles, chiefly through Whitefield and the writings of the American Jonathan Edwards. A group of Wesleyan converts in Leicestershire came, once again through independent study of the Bible, to practise believer's baptism. Another convert in Yorkshire, Dan Taylor (1738-1816) sought baptism from local Particular Baptists, who suggested he should apply to the General Baptists in Lincolnshire whose theology was more like his. Taylor and his friends founded the first General Baptist church in Yorkshire at Wadsworth in 1763. This group and those in Leicestershire had much in common and, while many of the older General Baptists drifted into Unitarianism, these evangelical churches formed the New Connexion of General Baptists in 1770. They were particularly active in the new industrial towns of the Midlands and North.

Meanwhile, among the Particular Baptists, younger men became dissatisfied with extreme Calvinism. The Northamptonshire Association, formed in 1764, gave a new lead. Andrew Fuller urged a more evangelical form of Calvinism. In 1784, at the suggestion of John Sutcliff of Olney, the Northamptonshire Association issued a Prayer Call, asking all churches to establish monthly meetings to pray for revival. It was among these men that William Carey pleaded for new missionary effort and the Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792 (see Doc. 5). Soon men were travelling the country, seeking support for the Society. In 1793 a founder member, John Ryland, who had baptized Carey, moved from Northampton to become pastor of Broadmead and president of the Bristol Academy. He encouraged the new ideas in the West.

Enthusiasm for evangelism overseas led to renewed efforts in home mission too. The Baptist Missionary Society sent missionaries to tour Cornwall, and soon several societies were formed to sponsor 'itinerant' or travelling preachers in various parts of the British Isles (Fig. 8).

By now various Baptist groups had arisen independently in Scotland. These too were the result of Christians being led through study of the Bible to adopt believer's baptism. The Baptists in England had influenced them relatively little, but the Missionary Society found support among Scottish churches. Vigorous mission work was also carried out within Scotland.

The question of open or closed communion continued to trouble Baptists. John Ryland favoured open; his friend Andrew Fuller closed. Abraham Booth (1734-1806), another convert of the Midland revival who was the first London minister to support the Baptist Missionary Society, argued for closed communion. So did Joseph Ivimey (1773,-1834), although the minister before him at Eagle Street had practised open. In the early 19th century the matter was again keenly debated between

Joseph Kinghorn (1766-1832) of Norwich for closed and Robert Hall (1764-1831) for open. Hall was an outstanding preacher, who also championed the freedom of the press and early efforts to improve labour conditions. Later the open practice increasingly won favour but some churches, not happy with these trends in theology and practice, remained aloof from the more evangelical Calvinists and became the Strict and Particular Baptists. One of their principal leaders at this time was William Gadsby of Manchester.

ORGANIZED FOR ACTION: EARLY 19th CENTURY

Joint missionary efforts drew Baptists closer, in spite of their differences and love of independence. They were becoming more aware of the range of the rapidly expanding denomination, helped by Rippon's *Baptist Annual Register* (Doc. 4). Ivimey, supported by Rippon, began to urge the idea of a central body. Ivimey asked, "Does not the constitution of our churches, which prevents all external interference, and therefore preserves them independent of each other, require some general bond of union?" On 25 June 1812 Particular Baptists agreed to form such a General Union. The early years were not easy, but gradually the Baptist Union proved its usefulness and won support. In 1832 a new Constitution was adopted, which made it possible for New Connexion General Baptists to join. The two denominations merged completely in 1891.

In Wales and Scotland too Baptists gradually saw that a joint organization could support the weaker churches and help extend the witness. In 1866 the Baptist Union of Wales was formed, and in 1869 that of Scotland. In 1872 both became affiliated to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

In the 19th century whatever had to be organized was done in a businesslike way, by a Society with a Properly appointed committee. Christians were active in many societies, evangelistic, philanthropic, and political. Some were interdenominational, like the British, & Foreign Bible Society and the Sunday School Union' (Doc.6); others were denominational, like the Baptist Missionary Society, Home Mission Society, Baptist Irish Society. Local churches too, especially in towns, ran many societies: District Visiting Societies, Clothing Societies, Mutual Improvement Societies, and many more. Later in the century more organizations for children and young people were introduced, like Band of Hope, Christian Endeavour and Boys' Brigade.

Nonconformists, tired of being second class citizens, again became politically active. In 1828 the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts allowed them to be elected to municipal corporations without fear of penalty. The 1832 Reform Act gave the vote to many dissenters, who strongly supported the Whig government. Soon dissenters were able to make legal marriages without Anglican ceremonies (1837); could graduate at Oxford and Cambridge (1854-56); no longer had to pay Church Rates (1868); and could be buried in parish churchyards by their own ministers, according to their own rites (1880). They campaigned against the establishment of the Anglican Church (that is, its official relationship with the State). The Church in Ireland was disestablished by an Act of 1868, and the Church in Wales in 1920. but nonconformists dropped this aim in England after 1914.

Baptists played a lively part in the campaign to abolish slavery. Edward Terrill and his friends, had imported West Indian sugar without qualms, but by the later 18th century many families were refusing to use sugar because of the conditions associated with its production. The slave trade was prohibited in British dominions in 1807, but slavery continued. A Baptist missionary, William Knibb, returned from Jamaica in 1832 and travelled the country pleading for an end to all slavery. He gave evidence to Parliamentary committees. He used to display a pair of manacles for chaining slaves and a whip used on them; these can still be seen in Baptist Church House in London. Slavery ended in British territories in 1838.

BAPTISTS OVERSEAS

The Baptist Missionary Society continued to expand its work. In 1814 missionaries had gone to Jamaica, where there were already native churches. The New Connexion sent missionaries to China in 1845 and the BMS in 1860. From 1869 Timothy Richard led spectacular development there. In 1878 work began in Congo (now Zaire), where the missionaries had a mobile base, the river steamer Peace. In Africa the early missionaries had to be explorers as well as evangelists.

In Europe new Baptist churches were appearing. A young German, J G Oncken, after some years among British dissenters returned to his own country in 1823, as a missionary. Study of Scripture led him to seek believer's baptism from a visiting American in 1834. With six friends he formed the first German Baptist church in Hamburg, from which there was a steady expansion across Europe, in spite of persecution. American Baptists were generous in their support of this work. British Baptists also formed a Continental Society. The Baptist Missionary Society sent Welsh missionaries to their fellow Celts in Brittany, and supported a Baptist mission in Rome.

British Baptists continued to keep in touch with those in America and were influenced by their revival movements, receiving visits from many American evangelists, of whom the best known were Moody and Sankey.

THE NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE: LATER 19th CENTURY

In Victorian Britain nonconformists were becoming numerous and respectable. Acting together, under the new name Free Churches, they were influential. They were strong supporters of the Liberal Party. The Nonconformist Conscience became the conscience of the nation, demanding high moral standards. Local churches still enforced strict discipline, and were as careful to watch members' business practices as their chastity. They disapproved of gambling, guarded Sunday observance, and pressed for total abstinence (drinking nothing alcoholic). Baptists had always viewed drunkenness severely, but it was only now, with improved public water supplies, that they could really ask people to give up all alcoholic drinks. Thomas Cook, a New Connexion Baptist, first tried his hand as a travel agent in 1841, when he arranged a party outing from Leicester to Loughborough for a Temperance meeting.

The demand for moral standards was carried into public life. In Norwich in 1846 William Brock decided the church should discipline members who took part in the customary bribery at a political election. Christian views were expressed on political issues, like Home Rule for Ireland and the Boer War. Even if Free Church opinion was not always unanimous on political issues, it kept Government and people aware of the principles at stake.

Puritan simplicity was a thing of the past. New chapels were no longer built as plain meeting houses, but could be ornate and impressive (Figs. 6 & 7).

Baptist ministers no longer shunned the title 'Reverend'. Subscribing generously to many deserving causes, the Free Churchman could enjoy his prosperity. The huge chapels filled to overflowing to hear the great preachers of those days, but their message was still one of challenge.

In the later 19th century all the churches were disturbed by new discoveries which seemed to cast doubt on the traditional understanding of the Bible. Evolution, outlined in Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859), seemed to challenge the biblical story of creation. If fossils were millions of years old, what became of the biblical time scale? And if the biblical writers were moulded by their-own times, could they be inspired as well? The apparent conflict between new knowledge and the Bible was for many a serious test of faith.

Two great Baptists reacted to this quite differently. C H Spurgeon (1834-1892, see Docs. 8 & 9) was alarmed, believing that the Bible was under attack. John Clifford (1836-1923, Fig. 11) welcomed the new light shed by science and biblical criticism without fear for essential religious truths. While minister of a growing church, he made time to study at London University so that he could tackle these matters with real understanding.

Spurgeon came to London in 1854 and Clifford four years later. Although so different in appearance, theology and outlook, they were both ardent evangelical preachers and became friends, working together in the London Baptist Association. The two represented different branches of Baptist life. They had so much in common that they could agree to differ. Spurgeon, more than anyone, had a gift for getting the Gospel message over to the 'common people'. Basically conservative, he belonged to the Calvinist tradition, although Calvin would have been amazed at its modified form, for Spurgeon could pray, "Lord, hasten to bring in all Thine elect, and then elect some more!" Clifford was a New Connexion General Baptist, trained at their Midland College. Radical, militant, conscious of the social implications of the Gospel, he cared passionately for freedom, especially freedom of conscience (see Doc. 10). Spurgeon and Clifford were united in the urgent need to preach the Gospel, and they both cared about people's condition in this life, as well as for their souls. They both believed that communion should be open to all believers.

These conflicting aspects of Baptist understanding, the conservative and the liberal, occasionally and unhappily jar against each other. The saddest clash was the Down-Grade Controversy of 1887-88, when Spurgeon withdrew from the Baptist Union. He was deeply loved and respected, and many sympathized with him. Most, including many who shared Spurgeon's outlook, remained in membership. They had come to recognize the value of the Union and thought it better to sink their differences and preserve the central body.

WIDER FELLOWSHIP: THE 20th CENTURY

The Baptist story in the 20th century has been one of increasing co-operation with other Baptists and with other Christians. Baptist churches have always guarded their freedom and independence and are wary of central authority. They recognize that churches should work together, but their co-operative bodies cannot dictate policy to member churches. The co-ordinating work of the Baptist Union is appreciated. Its role as the representative voice of the denomination is difficult but important.

After the full churches of Victorian days, church attendance in the 20th century has disappointed all denominations. However, when many have no faith at all, those who love Christ, whatever their denomination, recognize a common bond and are more willing to treat one another with respect.

To welcome the new century, Baptists raised the Twentieth Century Fund of £250,000. Half was spent on founding new churches, part went towards pay and pensions for ministers, part to education, and the rest to build proper headquarters, Baptist Church House. Here the Baptist Union was led by a vigorous new Secretary, J H Shakespeare (1857-1928). It now had its own paper, the Baptist Times, a publication department and a bookshop. and there was a new Baptist Church Hymnal. New denominational organizations sprang up, like the Baptist Insurance Company in 1905. and the Baptist Historical Society and Baptist Women's League in 1908. In 1916 there were further changes with more financial help to support ministers. provided churches would accept some supervision from the Union and its Area Associations. Ten General Superintendents were appointed. They are sometimes seen as the Baptist equivalent of Bishops, but although they care for Baptists in their area and offer guidance they have no control over churches or ministers.

Baptists were among the first Christian bodies to ordain women (in 1922). This practice is now well established, and there are some joint ministries where husband and wife are both Baptist ministers.

Regent's Park College, which moved from Stepney in 1856 to be nearer London University, was transferred to Oxford in the 1930s. From 1949 the Baptist Union Diploma encouraged laymen to follow a course of study in religious knowledge. This work has now been greatly extended in the Christian Training Programme.

The wider fellowship of Baptists was at last properly recognized in 1905 when the Baptist World Alliance was formed. Twenty-three nations took part in the first Congress in London, with John Clifford as first President. The Headquarters were in London until 1940, when they moved to Washington. Two other British Baptists have served as President, Dr J H Rushbrooke (1939-47) and Dr F Townley Lord (1950-55).

In the early years the Alliance did much to help European Baptists, including a relief programme after the First World War when Dr Rushbrooke was appointed Baptist Commissioner for Europe. Today there are significant numbers of Baptists in Eastern Europe. Guided by Dr E A Payne and his successor as General Secretary, Dr D S Russell, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland has had warm relations with Russian Baptists in recent years.

There are now over 30 million Baptists in the world. The vast majority of these are in the United States. There are rather more in Asia than in Europe. Protestant churches in India have united in two large groups: Baptists decided not to join in the Church of South India, formed in 1947, but they are in the Church of North India, formed in 1970. The Bishop of Cuttack and Sambalpur, Jugal Mohanty, is a Baptist minister. There are large numbers of Baptists in South America and Africa. Political changes have made life difficult for the churches in many parts of Africa. British Baptists, through the BMS, have particular interest in Angola and Zaire.

In Britain Free Church co-operation, already strong in late Victorian times, has continued and relations with other Christians, especially the Church of England, have improved. In the early years of this century nonconformists still keenly resented the position of the Established Church (Doc.10). Two World Wars made Christians see their differences and their underlying unity in a new light. The Free Church Federal Council, combining two earlier bodies, was formed in 1940, and the British Council of Churches in 1942 (with Dr Payne as the first Honorary President) – both in meetings at Baptist Church House. The Baptist Union was a founder member of the World Council of Churches in 1948, and Dr Payne served as one of the six Presidents from 1968 to 1975.

The more conservative Baptists have viewed this ecumenical movement with some suspicion. As one might expect, they have found interdenominational co-operation easier at local level. Successive leaders of the Baptist Union, however, have believed that Baptists have something valuable to contribute in these Councils, and that Baptists should not be too proud to learn from other Christians.

Baptists continue to emphasize personal commitment to Christ and the freedom under Christ of the individual and of the local church. In Britain they are no longer a suspect, restricted body, but play a full part with other Churches in the nation's life. The BBC has twice chosen Baptists as Assistant Head of Religious Broadcasting. Some Baptists have been awarded public honours for their services.

William Carey told Baptists to "Expect great things from God, Attempt great things for God". It is in this spirit that Baptists should tackle the present. There are plenty of challenging issues: the decline of the family, the dangers of extreme nationalism and racial conflict, the question of how we use the earth's resources. The message from our history is that Christians who face up to the problems of their own time are well equipped to present afresh the unchanging challenge of the Gospel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

If you wish to know more about the Baptists, the following publications will help:

- R W Thomson, *A Pocket History of the Baptists*, 1964, is a short general account of the denomination.
- A C Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists*, 1947, and
- E A Payne, *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, 1958, are much fuller accounts.

All three books are available from Baptist Publications, 4 Southampton Row, London WC1 B 4AB.

The stories of Baptists in Scotland and Wales are told by:

- D B Murray, *The First 100 Years: The Baptist Union of Scotland*, 1969
- T M Bassett, *The Welsh Baptists*, Swansea, 1977.

The journal of the Baptist Historical Society, the *Baptist Quarterly*, has detailed papers on many aspects of Baptist history.

Document 2 is taken from *The Records of a Church of Christ, 1640-1687*. This lively account of church life in the 17th century is available as the Bristol Record Society's Publication Volume XXVII, 1974, edited by Roger Hayden.

There are many books about individual Baptists, their churches, and things they have done. If you wish to follow up a particular person, local church, or theme in more detail, ask your local librarian, Record Society, or Baptist minister for advice.