

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Baptist Expansion in North America.

BAPTISTS were not numerous in America during the Colonial period. Few indeed were the colonies which granted them the full right of citizenship. The democratic principles adhered to by the Baptists were in opposition to the established order of most of the governments under which they lived. Early in the seventeenth century Baptists under the leadership of Roger Williams, Ann Hutchinson and Dr. John Clarke were forced to leave Massachusetts Bay Colony, and full freedom was never granted them within that Theocracy. The same was true of the other New England Colonies. As late as 1768 there were 30 Baptist churches in Massachusetts, 12 in Connecticut, and 36 in Rhode Island. A few had been formed in New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine.

At this same period there were but few in the middle colonies and the farther South. Statistics are difficult to secure. But in 1762 the Philadelphia Association, formed in 1707, which extended from the southern portion of Connecticut through New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland to Virginia, comprised 29 churches and a total membership of 1,318.

Baptist growth came with the Great Awakening and the War of the Revolution. Both of these movements emphasised those principles which the Baptists had proclaimed—civil and religious liberty. Many of the new churches which arose out of the ministry of Whitefield and his associates were Baptist, and the winning of the War guaranteed these rights to the colonists. Thus, in 1790, Baptists in the United States had a record of 688 churches, 710 ordained and 422 licensed ministers, and a total membership of 64,975.

Most of these were to be found within the territory of the old thirteen colonies, that is, upon the Atlantic seaboard, from Maine to Georgia. Few had by this date (1790) crossed the Alleghanies. But at the close of the Revolutionary War the people of the early colonial regions were very poor. The War had been a heavy burden, and trade and commerce had not yet been established by the new nation. The fertile lands beyond the mountains beckoned to the people as a land of promise, for homes and economic security. Indeed, it was England's effort to prohibit migration for a time into these territories which had been one cause of the War.

When, therefore, these restrictions were withdrawn, a swift movement set in toward the West. The first settlements were in Kentucky and Tennessee, by the gateway of the Cumberland Pass. Naturally, the majority of these immigrants were of the middle class, those who were seeking to improve their economic condition—the class to which the Baptists belonged. It is interesting to note that in some instances groups migrated as completely organised Baptist churches—pastor and members. One was the Upper Spottsylvania Church of Virginia, which under the leadership of its pastor, Lewis Craig, made the long trip to Kentucky to become the Gilbert's Creek Church. Another was Dorris's Baptist Church of North Carolina which, led by its pastor, Joseph Dorris, settled in Tennessee.

The increase among Baptists was rapid in these new territories. In 1790 there were but 42 churches with a membership of 3,105 in all Kentucky. Ten years later they reported 106 churches and 5,110 members. It was about this year that a great revival broke out in the State, and in three years the Baptists added to their number 111 churches and over 10,000 members. In 1820 there were 491 churches with a membership of 31,689, organised in 25 distinct associations.

The following decade witnessed the rise of the "Disciples" under the leadership of Alexander Campbell, and during the years 1829-1832 some 10,000 Kentucky Baptists withdrew in their loyalty to him and his new churches.

Baptists moved from Virginia and North Carolina into Tennessee at the same time as into Kentucky, but the migration was not as numerous as the latter. In 1792 the denomination reported 21 churches and 900 members, which had increased in 1812 to 156 churches with a total membership of 11,325.

From New England, New York and New Jersey land-seekers in the new West moved down the rivers into Ohio, a considerable population having settled in the territory by 1790. In that year the Rev. Stephen Gano, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Providence, Rhode Island, visited a settlement on the present site of Cincinnati and organised a church—the first in this North-West Territory. Developments here were much slower than in the new States to the South. In 1790 there were only two churches in the entire area, with a membership of 64; in 1812 these had increased to 60 churches of 2,400 members.

But the stream of new settlers pushed steadily westward. With the defeat of the Indians by Wayne at Fallen Timbers in 1794, safe homesteading was assured. Families from Kentucky moved northward over the Ohio river and in 1798 the first Baptist Church in Indiana was established at Silver Creek, some fifteen miles from the present city of Louisville, Ky. Among the early

ministers was Isaac McCoy, pioneer missionary to new settler and Indian alike. Churches quickly rose throughout the land, one of which, the Pigeon Creek, Abraham Lincoln's father helped to build. Thus in 1812 the records for Indiana indicate 29 churches and 1,726 members.

By 1786 settlers from old Virginia had pushed as far westward as the Mississippi, and had taken up land on the fertile prairies of Illinois. By 1790 Elder James Smith, a Baptist from Kentucky, had arrived with the Gospel, and soon after a Baptist church was organised. Growth, however, was very slow, and in 1812 Illinois had but 7 Baptist churches with 153 members.

Until 1803 the western boundary of the United States was the Mississippi River. With the Louisiana purchase of that year a vast new empire was opened to the land-hungry multitudes ever seeking homes farther on. Before that date a few Protestants, Baptists among them, had settled in Missouri. When the Spanish restrictions were removed and religious freedom was enjoyed, Protestant churches began to spring up in the territory. Between 1804 and 1806 two Baptist churches were formed, the Tywappity with about ten members and the Bethel with fifteen. In 1812 Missouri had 7 Baptist churches and a membership of 192.

In this same year the territory of the present state of Mississippi had 17 churches with a membership of 764. Louisiana with 3 Baptist churches had 130 members.

In the little more than 20 years (1790-1812) Baptists had almost trebled in America. In the latter year statistics report a membership of 172,972, with 1,605 pastors and 2,164 churches. From the Atlantic seaboard they had stretched into the far Middle West beyond the Mississippi, the "Father of Waters." It was this marvellous expansion, numerically and geographically, that gave rise to new organisations within the denomination.

Associations were formed, binding the churches into fellowship, and missionary and educational societies were organised to further the work.

The great name of this period is that of Luther Rice who, with Adoniram Judson, had gone to India in 1812 as a missionary under the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Having become Baptists, these two felt the necessity of securing the support of American Baptists, and in 1813 Rice returned for this purpose to the United States. Largely owing to his efforts, thirty-three delegates from eleven States met in Philadelphia on May 18th, 1814, and organised the "General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions." Since it was decided it should meet every three years it came to be happily

known as the Triennial Convention. At its second meeting in 1817 action was taken looking toward the provision of more adequate facilities for ministerial education, out of which developed Columbian College, which opened in 1822 in Washington, D.C. At the same time the need of the new West was recognised, and Home as well as Foreign Missions became an interest of the Convention. Under its authorisation John Mason Peck and James E. Welch were solemnly set aside for labour on the frontier of the Mississippi. In this action the Board expressed the conviction that "Western as well as Eastern regions are given to the Son of God as an inheritance, and that His gospel will triumph amid the settlers of the Mississippi and the sublimer Missouri, and extend to the red inhabitants of the Wilderness."

So completely was this prophecy fulfilled that the Foreign Mission Society felt it impossible to meet the growing demands of this new Western frontier. Consequently, in 1832, The American Baptist Home Mission Society was organised to be wholly responsible for the extension of the work in America. Its motto, "North America for Christ," has been a great dynamic, driving active missionaries into every part of the continent. In its first year 50 missionaries were employed, in the second year 80, and in the third 96.

Already, as an aid in the spread of the gospel among the scattered settlers in the pioneer regions, the Baptist General Tract Society had been organised in 1824. The purpose was to publish little leaflets and brief portions of the Scriptures, which might be carried in large quantities but small compass by the missionary as he travelled on horseback over a vast extent of territory, bringing the gospel message to poor people in remote and lonely sections. From the first it proved a most successful means for the support and extension of the missionary enterprise. In 1840 the name was changed to the American Baptist Publication Society.

With the formation of these new forces of promotion there was a rapid expansion of the field of labour. In 1834 the first church was organised in the present State of Iowa. In the northern State of Minnesota a church was formed at St. Paul in 1849. Farther west the Societies sent their missionaries, and in Kansas in 1860 there were thirty churches and 537 members. Nebraska organised its first Baptist church in 1855; Colorado, a Rocky Mountain State, formed its first in 1863. The Dakotas, North and South, were entered before 1868, and Montana, in the far North-West, sparsely settled, had a church of 20 members in 1870.

Over the mountains and into the Pacific slope moved the

home-seeking migration as early as 1840. The first Baptists to follow this Oregon trail arrived in that territory late in 1843, and on May 25th following seven lay members organised the West Tualatin Baptist Church. There was no recognition council and no fraternal greeting from a sister church, for its nearest neighbour was 2,000 miles eastward, which would require six months to reach by the transport methods of that day. No Baptist preacher arrived to minister to the church until November 1844, six months after it had been founded. The following year the American Baptist Home Mission Society occupied the Pacific slope as a mission field, and sent out its first two missionaries. From this beginning the work pushed northward into Washington in 1853, and still farther north into Idaho about 1862.

Just when Baptists entered California it is impossible to say. But when the Rev. O. C. Wheeler, who was appointed a missionary to the Coast in 1848, arrived in San Francisco on February 28th, 1849, he found a number of Baptists in the little community. His first church service was held on March 18th and four months later (July 6th, 1849) he organised a church with six members. The erection of a meeting house was commenced immediately, and it was the first Protestant house of worship to be erected in California. In December of the year 1937 there was opened in the building the first free public school of the State, so that the First Baptist Church of San Francisco has the honour of being the birthplace not alone of the denomination within the Golden State, but also of the State's efficient education system.

* * * * *

As the Baptists increased numerically and expanded to the continental dimensions of the nation, advance was made culturally also. In the earlier years Baptists of America were charged with being indifferent, if not antagonistic, to ministerial education. However, in the early eighteenth century they had a number of academies, and in 1764 established Rhode Island College (now Brown University) in Providence.

Little progress was made beyond this until the early years of the nineteenth century. Dr. William Staughton, who became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia in 1805, had a private school for the training of ministerial students. Under the leadership of Luther Rice this became the nucleus for Columbian College, established in Washington, D.C., in 1821. Rather rapidly there came other institutions in the East. Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution, N.Y. (1820) becoming Madison University (1846) and Colgate University (1889). Newton Theological Institution was founded in Massachusetts in 1825; the University of Rochester and Rochester

Theological Seminary, N.Y. in 1850. Vassar College for Women in New York was founded in 1865.

In Pennsylvania, Bucknell Academy was opened at Lewisburg in 1846, and this through a varied course of history has become Bucknell University. Crozer Theological Seminary was begun in 1868 at Chester, Penna., by the transference of the Theological Department from Bucknell to that city and institution. In New Jersey, Peddie Institute at Hightstown (1867) and South Jersey Institute at Bridgeton (1869) reveal the interest of the Baptists of this State in education.

As the migration moved steadily westward, colleges sprang up upon the line of march. In 1827 John Mason Peck opened at Rock Island, Ill., a school of general and theological education which, later, uniting with the institution at Upper Alton, became Shurtleff College. Granville Institution arose in Ohio in 1832, to be elevated to the status of a College in 1845 and to Denison University in 1856. In 1835-1836 a manual-labour school was opened at Franklin, Indiana, which is now Franklin College. In Michigan, Kalamazoo College was founded in 1855.³²

The Baptist Union Theological Seminary, established in Chicago in 1867, became the Divinity School of the University of Chicago when the latter was founded in 1890. The Baptists of Missouri erected their school at Liberty under the name of William Jewell College in 1849. Ottawa University, Kansas, was opened in 1865; Sioux Falls University, South Dakota, in 1883. On the Pacific Coast, McMinnville College, Oregon, was founded in 1859, and in 1905 a Theological Seminary was established at Berkeley, California. In 1909 Redlands University opened its doors at Redlands in Southern California.

Interest in education awakened early among the Baptists of the South. As early as 1791 the Charleston Association had formed an Education Fund. In 1824 the Baptists of South Carolina were negotiating with their brethren of Georgia for the founding of a joint educational institution. These proving unsuccessful, South Carolina established her own school in 1826, known as the Furman Academy and Theological Institution. In 1832 Georgia did likewise by opening Mercer Institute, later known as Mercer University. In this same year Baptists of North Carolina began activities toward building a college for their State, and in 1834 founded the Wake Forest Institute, now Wake Forest College.

Though Baptists had been numerically strong in Virginia, nothing had been accomplished until 1832 toward the erection of an educational institution. In that year a manual-labour school was begun near Richmond, to become a college in 1840 and later the University of Richmond. In Kentucky, a charter was secured for Georgetown College in 1829. In 1859 the Baptists of the

South had opened the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Greenville, South Carolina, but in 1877 moved it to Louisville, Kentucky. Other institutions of the South are Baylor University, Waco, Texas (1845); Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee, and the South-Western Baptist Theological Seminary (1908), Fort Worth, Texas.

Other schools and colleges have been founded by Baptists, some wisely and some otherwise; and some have survived while others have succumbed to the lack of funds and the over-enthusiasm of their founders.

It may be mentioned here that this splendid advance by the Baptists of the United States has been made not without difficulties. From their earliest entrance into the West, which seemingly required official organisation for the promotion of the denomination, opposition arose in the form of anti-missionary societies, anti-Sunday Schools and anti-educational societies. This opposition was in some instances financial in motive and in others theological.

One very serious difficulty, which for a time threatened disaster to the denomination, was the division between North and South which occurred in 1845 over the questions of slavery and missions. However, it was soon recognised that this division was chiefly one of administration, not of principle and ideal.

Immediately upon the division the churches of the South organised the Southern Baptist Convention, which has carried on a most successful labour in Home and Foreign Missions. In the North the Triennial Convention became the Baptist Congress, until the Northern Baptist Convention was organised in 1907.

One indication of the expansion of the Baptists of America during the past one hundred and fifty years may be gathered from a glance at statistics. Reiterating, we have the following records for 1790: 688 churches, 710 ordained and 422 licensed ministers, with a total membership of 64,975. Records for the year ending in December 1937 present these grand totals:

Members within the Northern Baptist Convention, 1,476,330; of the Southern Baptist Convention, 4,482,315; various other Baptist groups, 519,375.

This leads to another subject of interest in the study of Baptist growth in the United States. Before their emancipation there were very few Baptist churches exclusively for Negroes; most of the coloured people worshipped in the churches of the whites, in which galleries had been provided for their accommodation. For instance, in 1795 the Philadelphia Baptist Association recommended that the churches should make subscriptions or collections to the Baptist church in Savannah, Georgia, to enable

it to build a meeting-house "large enough to admit hundreds of blacks to the galleries." However, in some of the larger cities, Negroes had their own organisations; and in Richmond, Virginia, President Ryland of Richmond College was pastor for years of a large coloured Baptist church.

Soon after their emancipation the Negro Baptists formed their own churches, the number increasing rapidly. To-day, they have two conventions, the National Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention of America, each of which is nationwide. The total number of church members is 3,796,645, most of whom live within the Southern States, though there are churches reporting 10,000 members in some of the large cities of the North. Increasing interest is being manifested by the Negro Baptists in higher education. There are some fifteen Negro Baptist educational institutions in the country. In Nashville, Tennessee, the American Baptist Theological Seminary for Negro Students is supported by both the Southern and the National Baptist Convention.

The total number of Baptists in the United States in 1938 is thus well over the ten million mark.

* * * * *

Baptist work in Canada began in the latter half of the eighteenth century in the Maritime Provinces, into which section New Englanders began to migrate about 1760, after the defeat of the French in 1755. Few Baptists were among these early settlers, and although a Baptist minister, the Rev. Ebenezer Moulton, moved from Massachusetts to Nova Scotia in 1761, no church was organised until in 1778 the Rev. Nicholas Pierson formed one at Horton, now Wolfville, Nova Scotia. In 1790 there were but two Baptist churches in the whole of Maritime Canada, this one and a smaller at Halifax, and the total number of members was perhaps less than 100. In 1795 the Rev. Theodore Seth Harding became pastor of the Horton (Wolfville) Church, which he served until his death in 1855—an exceptionally long pastorate. At the close of his ministry there were 200 churches and a membership of 18,000.

Splendid work was accomplished by evangelists from New England who had come under the influence of the Great Awakening in those colonies. A large number of revivals took place, so that by 1800 six churches and six ministers were reported, and in June of that year the first Association was organised of representatives of these churches, which, however, included Congregationalists as well as Baptists in membership, and practised open or mixed communion.

The swift growth of Baptists in this eastern part of the

British Dominion may be seen by a few statistics. In 1810 there were fourteen churches and 924 members. In 1821 the membership had reached 1,827, nearly double that of ten years earlier. In 1827 it had increased to 3,429.

So encouraging was this advance that the denomination in the following year considered the advisability of establishing an educational institution, which resulted in the formation of Horton Academy in 1829 and of Acadia College in 1838, the story of which achievement is one of almost unprecedented heroism and faith. These Baptists had little money, but they had timber and stone, and by these materials and spiritual convictions were the institutions erected.

Additional strength was given to the Maritime Baptists by the organisation of the Convention of the Three Provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, in 1846. Since that time numerical increase has been significant. While the population of the three Provinces increased in the fifty years from 1846 to 1896 by about 80 per cent., the Baptist membership increased by nearly 218 per cent., or from one member in every thirty-four of the population to one in every nineteen.

In 1900 the Maritime Baptists reported 250 ministers, 411 churches and a membership of 51,390. To-day there are 278 ministers, 589 churches and a total membership of 60,489.

The history of Baptists in Central Canada, Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba, differs considerably from that of their brethren in the East. Quebec has always been strongly French, and the work in that Province has developed slowly. The eastern portion of Ontario was largely evangelised by British ministers, while the central and western part is indebted to missionaries from New England and New York. Only four or five churches were in existence before the dawn of the nineteenth century.

After 1800 steady progress was made so that an Association was formed in 1803. In the third and fourth decades many Scotch-Irish settled in the Province, among whom were Baptists who had come under the influence of Haldane in Scotland. In 1833, out of a total population of 400,000 English-speaking people in the two Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, the Baptists numbered not more than 3,000. In ten years this had increased by 2,000; in 1850 Baptists numbered 7,000; and in 1866 they had grown to 15,000. Statistics for 1937 report the following: 430 churches, 378 ministers, 56,695 members.

Two conditions help to explain the rather slow development of the Baptist cause in this central section of Canada. One is the vast distance between East and West, which in this early period had not adequate transport facilities. The other is the fact of the two sources of Baptist missionary enterprise. The

British were inclined toward open communion, whereas the Americans held more staunchly to close communion. This question was settled in 1851 in favour of the latter position. The Regular Baptist Missionary Society was organised, around which gathered the education and publication activities as well as the missionary.

In 1836 Madame Feller opened a school at Grand Ligne for French Canadians, which is known as Feller Institute. In 1838 the Canada Baptist College was opened in Montreal, but not being centrally located it ceased to exist in 1849. Even before its demise the Baptists of Ontario, which was the centre of their membership, had planned a college. Nothing was accomplished, however, until 1860, when the Canadian Literary Institute was founded in Woodstock, which later became Woodstock College. In 1881 the theological department was moved to Toronto, a larger city, where Senator McMaster had by his gifts erected Toronto Baptist College, which became the McMaster University in 1887. In the following year a gift was received from the widow of Senator McMaster by which Moulton Ladies' College was founded in Toronto.

Baptist missionary labour began in Manitoba with the service of the Rev. A. McDonald in 1873. Two years later the first church was organised in Winnipeg, and in 1881 a Convention was formed which in 1883 included 10 churches and 500 members. In 1900 there were 4,220 members and 75 churches. Educational work was begun soon after the missionaries entered the territory. In 1880 Prairie College was founded, which had a history of some five years. Later Brandon Academy was opened, which became Brandon College in 1899.

As migration reached the great prairie Provinces to the West, the Baptist cause was expanded. But in this territory of Empire extent, with sparsely settled communities, the development has been slow. Nevertheless, flourishing churches were founded in the cities and towns of both Saskatchewan and Alberta. In 1884 the Manitoba Convention became "The Baptist Convention of Manitoba and the North-West Territories" in order to supervise the growing work. Missionaries were sent out into the pioneer settlements, where life was very hard. One missionary tells of how he and his family lived for more than two weeks on oatmeal and water.

In 1887 a superintendent of Missions was appointed with oversight of all the churches of the Canadian North-West. Steady advance was then made, so that the Convention could report in 1900 a total of 69 churches, with 175 additional preaching stations and a membership of 4,111.

Baptists of British Columbia are largely indebted to the

missionaries of the American Baptist Board for their origins, though some ministers from Ontario had entered the Province as early as 1874. In 1897 the "Baptist Convention of British Columbia" came into existence. Eleven churches with an aggregate membership of 1,050 formed this organisation. A Superintendent of Missions was appointed to supervise the missionary activities of this large Province, and a Baptist newspaper was established in 1899. Early in the twentieth century, negotiations were entered into with the Convention of Manitoba and the North-West, looking toward union with that body, which was consummated in November 1907, the new body taking the name, "The Baptist Union of Western Canada." At this time there were in the four Provinces 185 organised churches with a membership of 10,000.

In the "nineties" of the last century, Baptists of vision looked forward to the establishment of an educational institution within the boundaries of this Province on the Pacific. A gift of six acres of land was given to the denomination for this purpose, in a beautiful section of the city of Vancouver. But "hard times" again came, and advantage could not be taken of the splendid donation. However, a similar gift was made by Baptist laymen of Summerland on Okanagon Lake, in the interior of the Province, and here, in 1906, Okanagon College was founded. This College, though opened under most auspicious conditions, was nevertheless compelled, to the regret of many, to close its doors in 1915—one of the tragedies of the Great World War.

One characteristic of the work in Western Canada is the extent to which it has been carried on among the non-English speaking peoples. This section of Canada has been settled by many immigrants from European countries: Germany, Scandinavia, Iceland, Russia, and others of the Slavic countries. From the earliest years missionary labour has been expanded among these peoples by representatives of their own races with the support of the Union, and the response has been most gratifying.

For this Canadian North-West the following statistics of the denomination for 1937 are given: Churches 200; ministers and missionaries 139; membership 22,514. The totals for Canada are: 1,219 churches; 695 ministers and missionaries; and 139,698 members.

R. E. E. HARKNESS.