

7. Persecution Unto Death for Faith Under Queen Elizabeth

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I. Terwoort and Pieters Burned for Faith Under Queen Elizabeth

In the latter part of the sixteenth century the Anabaptists, as they were called in derision, began "wonderfully to increase in the land." Strangely enough they were persecuted by all other Christian bodies. The Anglicans and Presbyterians in England, the Lutherans in Germany, and the Reformed in Switzerland, though differing from one another and refusing intercommunion, regrettably were united in persecuting the Anabaptists, who were everywhere spoken against and harassed by confiscation of goods, imprisonment, banishment, and even death. [1] After the dreadful St. Bartholomew's Massacre of the Huguenots in France in 1572[^] persecution raged in the Nether lands under the Duke of Alva. As a consequence large numbers, including Anabaptists, fled for refuge to other parts of the Continent and to England. But so great was the severity of Elizabeth's government that Separatists, and particularly the Anabaptists, were marked for expulsion because, along with the "heresies" of their belief, they refused to regard the Church of England as the only true church. As a consequence they were forced to hold their religious meetings in strictest secrecy.

1 Thomas Crosby, The History of the English Baptists From the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I, vol. 1, pp. 69, 70.

In 1575 one such group of Flemish (or Dutch) Anabaptists fled to England to escape the mounting pressures in the Low Countries. But they found neither hospitality nor refuge in Protestant England from a Protestant queen and her advisers.

A group of about twenty-seven were arrested on Easter day, April 3, 1575, while assembled for worship in a private house on the outskirts of London, just beyond Aldgate Bars. They were taken before a magistrate and committed to prison. Brought before the commissioner, they presented a carefully drawn Confession of Faith to Queen Elizabeth, which she flatly rejected.

Under duress, four recanted and were released. Eleven were condemned and approximately eight were sent back to the Continent to almost certain death, while five were placed in heavy chains in a damp, filthy dungeon in Newgate. There they were segregated from others, lest they contaminate them by their Anabaptist sentiments. One died in prison, and two of the "most obstinate" were sentenced to burn at Smithfield.

Their signed Confession—dated, "In our prison in London, the 21st of July, in the year of our Lord, 1575. By me, Hendrik Terwoort, By me, Jan Pieters"—consisting of thirteen articles, makes noble reading. After stating that their hope for everlasting life was in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for their sins, was raised from the dead, and is now seated at the Father's right hand, they affirmed their belief in the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. Article XII then states:

"We believe in the resurrection of the dead, as it is written, Isaiah 26.19, John 11.25, Dan. 12.2, John 5.25, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, 15.22, 1 Thess. 4.16. That we shall rise from the dead in our own bodies, Job 19.25, Isaiah 26.19, 1 Cor. 15, when the Lord shall come in the clouds with His angels, then shall each one be judged according to his works; Matt. 25.34, Rom. 2.6." [2]

Such a statement was virtually identical with other Conditionalist Anabaptist statements of the time.

John Foxe, the martyrologist, "interceded" in their behalf.

2 Quoted in Mills, Earlier Life-Truth Exponents, p. 14.

Foxe, addressing Elizabeth as the "ornament of the age," and referring to the group under indictment as a "fanatical" sect, approved the banishment. He only asked that the "sharpness" of the sentence of burning of the two be modified. But he received a "flat denial" from the queen. He also wrote to the prisoners, appealing to them to abandon their errors, but without success. [3] In the "Form of Recantation," those who recanted were compelled to confess that they had been "seduced by the devil, the spirit of error, and by false teachers," and were forced to affirm that they therewith repudiated their "damnable and detestable heresies," from henceforth "utterly abandoning and forsaking all and every Anabaptistical error," including Conditionalism. [4]

3 Crosby, op. cit., pp. 70-74.

4 Ibid., op. cit., pp. 68, 69; Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, Vol. 4, pp. 326, 327.

The response of the steadfast to the appeal from Foxe was explicit. After refusing to recant they concluded by saying:

"Thus they who treat us in this manner, set before us one of two things, temporal or eternal death. Temporal, if we adhere to what our consciences witness to be right and true. Eternal, if we speak contrary to the dictates of conscience. But we have better hope of the Queen's clemency, . . . knowing well, that true faith is a special gift of God implanted in man, not by fire and sword, but by the Holy Ghost, and by the preaching of the pure Word of God.

"And we ought indeed to consider, that afore-time we all have been heretics, and if we had then been put to death, both body and soul must have perished. But we will here make an end." [5] Since the rest refused to recant, and the queen would not relent, on July 15, in harmony with the supreme penalty exacted in those days for liberty of faith and conscience, Queen Elizabeth I signed the writ for the execution of the two leaders who signed the Confession, commanding the sheriffs of London to burn them alive at Smithfield." [6]

Thus it was that in "defence of the holy church, her rights, and liberties," HENDRIK TERWOORT, twenty-five-year-old gold smith, and JAN PIETERS were, as "incorrigible" heretics, led to the place of execution on July 22, 1575. Before a great crowd they were bound to the stake. Pieters, middle-aged father of nine, whose wife had been martyred in Flanders, simply said, "We dare not be ashamed of this way, for many prophets went the same way." They were again promised freedom if they would but recant. But they refused, and the torch was applied. [7] It was a black affair. These Anabaptists, being Dutch, were not Elizabeth's subjects. Furthermore, they were refugees and had claimed the queen's protection as exiles from their own land for religion's sake. Moreover, they were living peaceably and causing no disturbance. All they could be charged with was that they would not go to the parish churches and that they worshiped God according to their understanding of the Scriptures—and held to Conditionalism. But Elizabeth's bishops, "Sandys and Whitgift were furious against the Baptists," and had denounced them as professing sentiments incompatible with the well-being of society. [8] So they died for their faith.

5 T. J. von Braght, *Het Bloedig Toonel of Martelaers Spiegel der Doops-Gesinde of Weereloofte Christenen*, pp. 704, 705; quoted in Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

6 See Crosby, Holmshed, Von Braght, Cramp. See also *Documentary Annals*, vol. 1, pp. 201, 360, 394. According to *Prebendary Townsend, Life of Foxe*, vol. 1, p. 201: "I have examined the writ, by virtue of which they were burnt: and am sorry to say that it is worded exactly as the old writs for burning the episcopal, and other protestants in the reign of [Catholic] Mary."

7 T. J. von Braght, *Bloody Theatre, or Martyrs' Mirror of the Defenceless Christians* (tr. by I. Daniel Rupp), pp. 915, 916; also J. M. Cramp, *Baptist History*, pp. 276-278.

II. Conditionalists Legatt and Wightman Burned at Stake Under James I

James I was just as despotic as Elizabeth had been. In Scotland, while he was still James VI, he was very zealous for Presbyterianism and severely critical of the king of England and episcopacy. But on becoming king of Great Britain, James reversed his views, championed episcopacy, and threatened to harry the Puritans and Separatists in the land. [9] Sentence of excommunication was pronounced upon any who impugned the true apostolical character of the Church of England or any part of its outline of worship or ceremonies.

Many fled to Leyden and Amsterdam, including Brownists (or Congregationalists) and Anabaptists.

In 1606 the latter group drew up a Confession of Faith in twenty-six articles, and a company of thirty later returned to London, meeting for worship in strictest secrecy. But the fires of persecution had again been lighted, and men were still being burned for "heresy." Thus it was that Bartholomew Legatt (Legat, Legate), "unblameable" in life and "skilled in the Scripture," suffered at the stake in Smithfield, and Edward Wightman (or Thomas Withman) was similarly put to a martyr's death in Litchfield. [10] Note the setting: In 1611, the very year of publication of the epochal Authorized or King James Version of the Scriptures, a work opposing the Conditionalist contentions was like wise issued. It was entitled *The Soule is Immortal; or discourse defending the immortality of the soul; against Anabaptists [such as Legal and Wightman], atheists, etc.*, by John Jackson. The accusations were harsh, in accordance with the times.

8 Cramp, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

9 Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans, or Protestant Non-Conformists*, vol. 2, pp.

10 Cramp, *op. cit.*, pp. 289, 290; see also Mills, *Earlier Life-Truth Exponents*, p. 32.

Astonishing as it may seem today, Anabaptist-Arians BAR THOLOMEW LEGATT and EDWARD WIGHTMAN were burned at the stake at Smithfield and Litchfield, respectively, under man date of King James I of Great Britain. The story is told in *A True Relation of the Commissions and Warrants for the Condemnation and Burning of Bartholomew Legatt and Thomas Withman . . . in the Year, 1611*. Signed with K. James his own hand? [11] The title page refers to the "most Blasphemous Heresies and false Opinions" of the accused, adding that the document is "Published by Authority."

Next follows the salutation of "James [I] by grace of God, King of England, Scotland," et cetera, and "Defender of the Faith," to Thomas Lord Ellesmere, Chancellor of England.

The recital tells how the bishop of London had proceeded in a "Cause of Heresies" against Legatt of London, accused of "divers wicked Errors, Heresies, and blasphemous Opinions," thirteen in number. He was then publicly pronounced an "obstinate and incorrigible Heretick" and, under sentence of ex communication, was turned over to the sheriff of London for "the execution of justice."

1. "ROTTON CONTAGIOUS MEMBER" Is "CUT OFF."

In the warrant to the sheriff, written in the horrific language of the day, Legatt is "pronounced, decreed, and declared to be an obdurate, contumacious, and incorrigible Heretic," and described as a "rotten contagious Member to be cut off from the Church of Christ." The "Holy [Anglican] Mother Church," having "not further to do" with this "blasphemous Heretic," turned him over to "our secular Power to be punished with condign punishment," to "root out and extirpate," namely, to be "burned with fire." The sheriffs are thereupon commanded to "commit publicly to the Fire," in West-Smithfield, the said Legatt to "be really burned in the same Fire." [12] This was executed amid a vast "conflux of people."

11 Copy in the British Museum; photostat in Immortality Source Collection.

In the bill of particulars Wightman was charged with "wholesale" heresy—that is, of cherishing the combined here sies of the arch heretics Ebion, Cerinthus, Valentinus, Arius, Macedonius, Simon Magnus, Manes, and Photinus, together with the specific deviations of the Anabaptists, [13] which included soul sleep. His name was obviously so blackened as to make him appear hideous, and fit only for the fire. "No sane man could possibly hold all the multifarious" and conflicting opinions imputed to him, and Crosby points out that "many of the heresies they charged upon him are . . . foolish and in consistent." [14] Indeed, Bishop Neile, one of the commissioners who condemned him, later wrote an apology for his death.

2. INCLUDED "HERESY" OF "SOUL SLEEP."

Under the pro vision of rooting out such "wicked Heresies" as the "Anabaptists" hold, it is to be particularly noted that after the com mon charges against the Anabaptists are listed, Wightman is thrice charged specifically with holding to the "heresy" of "soul sleep" and of the saints' not going immediately to heaven at death:

"11. That the Soul doth sleep in the sleep of the first death, as the body, and is mortal! as touching the sleep of the first death, as the body is: And that the Soul of our Saviour Jesus Christ did sleep in that sleep of death as well as his body. 12. That the Souls of the elect Saints departed, are not [now] Members possessed of the triumphant Church in Heaven." [15]

That, of course, is straight Conditionalism. As to other heresies, number thirteen was specifically against the baptizing of infants, and number sixteen "that Christianity is not wholly possessed and preached in the Church of England, but only in part." Therefore, in the writ of execution, pursuant to the king's "Regal Function and Office" and authorized under the "great Seal of England," the warrant to the Lord Chancellor is cited and the commission to the sheriff of Litchfield is given, "according to exigence of the Ecclesiastical Canons, and of the Laws and Customs of this Our Kingdome of England." Wighman, then, as an Anabaptist- Arian holding "cursed Opinions belched by the instinct of Satan," is "Adjudged and Pronounced an Heretic, and therefore is a diseased Sheep out of the Flock of the Lord." And "lest Our Subjects he do infect by his contagion," he is decreed to be "cast out and cut off." [16] As with Legatt, Wightman — charged with every conceivable heresy, including denial of man's inherent immortality — on April 11, 1611, was turned over to the secular power according to law by James I, "Defender of the Catholic Faith," to be "burned with fire" in Litchfield, specifically — "in some public and open place below the City aforesaid, for the cause aforesaid, before the people, and the same Edward Wightman in the same fire cause really to be Burned in the detestation of said Crime and for manifest example of other Christians, that they may not fall into the same crime." [17]

12 A True Relation of the Commissions and Warrants for the Condemnation and Burning of Bartholomew Legatt and Thomas Witkman (1651), pp. 1-6.

13 Ibid., p. 7; see also Mills, Earlier Life-Truth Exponents, p. 32.

14 Crosby, op. cit. vol. 1, p. 108.

Such was the cruel fate of these Conditionalists.

15 *A True Relation*, p. 8, nos. 11, 12. (*Italics supplied.*)

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

3. LAST PUBLIC BURNING FOR "HERESY" BY PROTESTANT MONARCH.

Such violent language and action by a Protestant king, in the significant year of our Lord 1611, may to us today seem terrible and unthinkable—and it is, for persecution is an outrage of Protestant principle. But it was the hangover of the custom of the times, brought over from centuries of Roman Catholic violence against "heretics," and such "heresy" included Conditionalism. (Martyrdom pictured on page 136.)

The Protestant Wightman, let it not be forgotten, died under the charge, among other "heresies," of believing and teaching "that the Soul doth sleep in the sleep of the first death, as well as the body, and is mortal as touching the sleep of the first death" (Art. 11). For this aggregation of heresies listed he was deemed worthy of martyrdom, and the decree was duly executed. But this, it should be added, is said to be the last public burning for "heresy" authorized and executed by a Protestant monarch of England.

III. 20,000 Baptists Declare "Faith" in Confession of 1660

Around 1549 many Anabaptists fled from Germany to England, some of them holding variant views on the Godhead, thus bringing considerable censure on all Anabaptists. A commission was set up to "search after" and examine all Anabaptists and other "heretics," with power to "excommunicate, imprison, and deliver them over to the secular arm." [18] By 1644 there were no less than forty-seven Baptist congregations in England, with at least seven in London. [19] Many among these held that immortality is not man's inherently, but is to be bestowed at the resurrection, and that man sleeps in death until the resurrection.

Several of these Anabaptists—or Baptists, as they really were—were likewise burned for their faith under the common law of England.

In 1644 these Anabaptists, or Baptists, issued several Confessions of Faith, the most "notable" being published in 1660 and presented to Charles II in printed broadside form (twelve by fifteen inches). This document was titled "A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith." [20] It states solemnly that it is "Set forth by many of us, who are (falsely) [21] called Ana-Baptists, to inform all men (in these days of scandal and reproach) of our Innocent Belief and Practise; for which we are not only resolved to Suffer Persecution, to the loss of our Goods, but also Life itself, rather than to decline the same."

18 *Neal, op cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 40, 41.

19 *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 111.

Then follow twenty-five articles, which are "Subscribed by certain Elders, Deacons, and Brethren, met at London," adopted in March, 1660, "in behalf of themselves, and many others unto whom they belong"—both in London and in several counties of England—"who are of the same Faith with us."

The Confession, signed by forty-one signatories, is followed by the highly informative statement that it is "owned and approved by more than 20000." In the publisher's line at the bottom is the statement that it was printed in London "for Francis Smith," one of the signatories and their representative.

And still more illuminating is the fact that the more detailed and explicit views of another signatory, Matthew Caffyn, or Caffen (presented in the next section), help to define the views here set forth in the more general terms of this over-all declaration, designed as a covering statement to which all subscribed.

1. COMPREHENSIVE PORTRAYAL OF BELIEF.

Article I declares belief in "God the Father, of whom are all things, from everlasting to everlasting." Bypassing Article II for the moment, let us note that Article III specifically affirms belief in Jesus Christ, "by whom are all things, who is the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; yet as truly Davids Lord, and Davids root, as Davids Son, and Davids Off-spring," giving "himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. 2. 5, 6, tasting death for every man, Heb. 3.9, a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2.2." [22]

20 *Original in British Museum; photostat copy in Immortality Source Collection.*

21 *Parenthetical expression in this form is in the original.*

22 That is clearly "General," or Arminian, Baptist belief of unlimited atonement.

Then follow articles that are typically Baptist—the love and grace of God for all men, justification by faith, the operation of the Holy Spirit (clearly Trinitarian), baptism of regenerated adults by immersion, not sprinkling of infants, assembly for the Lord's Supper, the Christian ministry, separation for all heresy, poor members of the church of Christ supported by the church, the resurrection, the second personal advent of Christ, the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice, liberty of conscience and worship, and separation of Church and state. This they believed to be the "apostolical way." And they denied all dis loyalty to the crown, which attitude they do "utterly abhor, and abominate."

2. CONCEPT OF NATURE AND DESTINY OF MAN.

But scattered among the twenty-five are Articles II, XX, XXI, and XXII, bearing upon the nature and destiny of man. Because of their importance they are here quoted verbatim, in the original form of the 1660 Confession. Article II declares that from man's original sinless state, by "transgression" he fell into a "mortal estate, subject unto the first death." Thus:

"II. That God in the beginning made man upright, and put him into a state and condition of Glory, without the least mixture of misery, from which he by transgression fell, and so came into a miserable and mortal, estate, subject unto the first death. Gen. 1.31. Eccles. 7.29. Gen. 2.17. 3.17, 18, 19."

Next, Article XX states that through Christ, at the resurrection, our "bodies" are to be raised incorruptible from their graves and "united again to their spirits," thenceforth to reign with Christ:

"XX. That there shall bee (through Christ who was dead, but is alive again from the dead) a Resurrection of all men from the graves of the Earth, ha. 26.19. both the just and the unjust, Acts 24.15. that is, the fleshly bodies of men, sown into the graves of the Earth, corruptible, dishonourable, weak, natural (which so considered cannot inherit the Kingdom of God) shall be raised again, incorruptible, in glory, in power, spiritual, and so considered, the bodies of the Saints (united again to their spirits) which here suffer for Christ, shall inherit the Kingdom, reigning together with Christ, 1 Cor. 15. 21, 23, 42, 43, 44, 49."

Further, it is maintained that the rewards both for good and evil follow—and do not precede—the "eternal Judgement" occurring at the future Second Advent:

"XXI. That there shall be after the Resurrection from the graves of the Earth, An eternal judgement, at the appearing of Christ, and his/ Kingdom, 2 Tim. 4.1. Heb. 9.27. at which time of judgement, which is unalterable, and irrevocable, every man shall receive according to the things done in his body, 2 Cor. 5.10."

And finally, Article XXII says that (1) not until the second, personal advent of Christ do the saints enter the eternal kingdom of righteousness, and (2) the wicked "perish for ever." and men say "Where is he?" This follows in full, for the record:

"XXII. That the same Lord Jesus, who shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, Act. 1.3. which was taken up from the Disciples, and carried up into Heaven, Luke 24.51. Shall so come in like manner as he was seen go into Heaven, Act. 1.9, 10, 11. And when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory, Col. 3.4. For then shall he bee King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Rev. 19.16. for the Kingdom is his, and he is the Governor among the Nations, Psalm 22.28. And King over all the Earth, Zech. 14.9. And we shall reign (with him) on the Earth, Rev. 5. 10 the Kingdoms of this world (which men so mightily strive after here to enjoy) shall become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ, Rev. 11. 15. for all is yours, (O you that overcome this world) for you are Christs, and Christ is Gods, 1 Cor. 3. 22, 23. For unto the Saints shall be given the Kingdome, and the greatness of the Kingdom, under (mark that) the whole Heaven, Dan. 7. 27. Though (alas) now many men bee scarce content that the Saints should have so much as a being among them; But when Christ shall appear, then shall be their day, then shall be given unto them power over the Nations, to rule them with a Rod of Iron, Rev. 2. 26, 27. then shall they receive a Crown of life, which no man shall take from them, nor they by any means turned, or overturned from it, for the oppressor shall be broken in pieces, Psalm 72. 4 and their now vain rejoicing turned into mourning, and bitter Lamentations, as it is written Job 20. 5, 6, 7. The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the Hypocrite but for a moment; though his Excellency mount up to the Heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet shall he perish for ever, like his own dung; they which have seen him, shall say, where is he?" (Italics as in original.)

These expressions of belief, here quoted at length, are to be read in the light of Mosheim's statement that already in the sixteenth century General Baptists were dispersed in large numbers over many provinces of England, holding as an article of faith that "the soul, between death and the resurrection at the last day, has neither pleasure nor pain, but is in a state of insensibility." [23] The conclusion therefore seems incontrovertible that these carefully phrased articles were subscribed to by many who definitely held to Conditional Immortality, the sleep of the soul in the interim between death and the resurrection, the crown of life and the kingdom to be given to the righteous at the Second Advent, with the wicked destroyed forever and passing out of being. This was the view in 1660 of many General Baptists in England.

IV. Signatory Caffyn—Immortality Held in "Promise," Not Present Possession

MATTHEW CAFFYN (1628-1714), one of the signatories to the authoritative Baptist Confession of Faith of 1660, just noted, was born in England. His father had come from Germany, and a relative on his mother's side in England had been burned at the stake for his faith under Catholic Queen Mary. Matthew had been adopted in his youth by a Master Onslow as a companion for his son. Onslow sent both men to Oxford for training. But Matthew was later expelled from the university for his religious convictions. He joined the then despised and persecuted Baptists, and in time became one of their well-known and respected preachers and teachers of the Word in Sussex, likewise suffering severe persecution for his faith.

Thomas Lawson and John Slee, two Quaker antagonists, interviewed Caffyn with the purpose of refuting his doctrinal views. Lawson published the results of their interviews under a title couched in the characteristically pompous and harsh phrasing of the time. The long-drawn-out title page reads:

An untaught teacher witnessed against, or the old Bottle's mouth opened, its wine poured forth, drunk of drunkards, denied of them who have tasted the new. That is to say the unsound, unseasoned, unsavoury doctrines and opinions of Matthew Caffyn, Baptist teacher, laid open, who in the County of Sussex is cryed up to be as their Battle Axe, and Weapon of Warre, etc. Crowley, Southwater, 1655.

23 Mosheim, Ecclesiastical History (Murdock tr.) i vol. 3, p. 578.

In the interview Caffyn bore witness to his belief concerning the nature and destiny of man. This was tied in inseparably with the personal, visible, second advent of Christ, just as He had ascended visibly into Heaven. This transcendent event was attested by Peter (2 Peter 3:10; 1:14), who declares that Christ will come, and by Paul (2 Tim. 4:6-8), who states that all who love His appearing will then receive their crown of righteousness, along with those holy men of old who have "died in the faith," not yet having received the promise (Heb. 11:13). Quoting Caffyn, Lawson records these two significant and basic principles: "The saint is not now in possession of the kingdom. nor have they eternal life [immortality] really in possession, but have it in promise." [24] The hope of being "translated into the kingdom," Caffyn insisted, is based on a kingdom "LAID UP for them in heaven." His own emphasis is indicated by the capital letters employed. Then they "SHALL [yet future] receive the reward of the inheritance (Col. 3:24)." And he stresses the point that as yet they "not HAVE received, therefore not in possession of the kingdom; which is saints' reward; which they have now by promise." Then Caffyn is quoted as saying specifically as regards the concept of Innate Immortality:

"The apprehension of the present possession of eternal life (which is saints' reward) destroys the truth of that."

Lawson then charges Caffyn with such general "here lies" as:

"He [Matthew Caffyn] said, he ministered from the Word of Truth, otherwise called the Scriptures, through the assistance of the Spirit of God."

"He said, the means that lead to salvation, is without [outside of] man, that is, not dwelling in his mortal body."

24 Thomas Lawson, An Untaught Teacher Witnessed Against, quoted in Mills, Earlier Life-Truth Exponents, p. 24.

Asserting that the Scriptures "guide men to Christ" and reveal Christ, he held that those who accept the provision offered "shall be eternally saved." Then follows the heart of Caffyn's confession of faith regarding Life Only in Christ, according to Lawson—(1) on immortality and (2) on entrance into the kingdom:

"Matthew Caffyn said, no man hath eternal life [immortality] now in him as possessing it, but a promise of it, 1 John 2:25."

"No man is in the kingdom [heaven], and that the chief of saints, have but by promise." [25] And he cites Caffyn on man's dying condition since the Fall.

"He said, Adam did not die the same day he did eat the forbidden fruit, but was in a dying condition, that is growing nearer the time in which he should be put into an hole in the earth." [26] As noted, the name of Matthew Caffyn [27] is the fifteenth signatory to the 1660 Baptist Confession of Faith. This fact is highly significant, for it throws light on the meaning and intent of the more general statements and less explicit phrases bearing on Conditionalism, found in the Baptist articles before cited.

V. Unitarian John Biddle—Persecuted for Conditionalist Beliefs

In 1655 the spirit of persecution again broke forth, resulting in unlawful imprisonment of men in the grim confines of old Newgate prison, and banishment for conscience' sake to the Isle of Scilly for three years for holding, among other "heresies," that in death "the soul of man dies or sleeps when the body is dead." [28] And this, it is to be noted, was done by invoking an abrogated ordinance of the Lords and Commons for "punishing Blasphemies and Heresies," formulated against the Anabaptists. So harassment was by foul means as well as fair.

In this case two men—Unitarian John Biddle and Baptist William Kiffin, pastor of a "Baptised Congregation" in London—were the victims. Kiffin was a signatory to the Baptist Confessions of Faith of 1644, 1646, and 1651, for the heresies of the time included "baptism" as well as "soul sleep." The moving story is recorded in "Two Letters of Mr. John Biddle, late prisoner of Newgate, but now hurried away to some remote island." [29] One, dated July 27, 1655, was addressed to the Lord Protector (Cromwell), and the other to the Lord President. Here Biddle, a man of exemplary life, appeals for justice, "or at least a hearing, or trial." The background of the episode is this:

25 Ibid., pp. 24, 25.

26 Ibid.

27 The next year (1656) after the appearance of the Lawson volume in 1655, Matthew Caffyn published a book in London on the "heresies" of the Quakers, regarding the second coming of Christ, the resurrection from the dead, justification by faith, and eternal judgment. This was issued by Caffyn as "an eye and ear witness."

28 Ibid., note 5, p. 21.

JOHN BIDDLE (1615-1662), Oxford-trained (M.A.) logician and theologian, was a devout Baptist who later became the founder of British Unitarianism. Oft imprisoned for his convictions, he lived a stormy life, and died at the early age of forty-seven, as the result of hardships and suffering in prison.

Precocious as a student and a keen reasoner with a penetrating mind, Biddle became a tutor at his alma mater, Magdalen College, Oxford, as well as master of a grammar school in Gloucester. He was "highly proficient" in Scripture, having memorized all the Pauline Epistles in both English and Greek. He was said to be able to give the location of any verse in the New Testament that was quoted to him. Because of this he was naturally a formidable disputant. [30] In 1647 he issued a pamphlet concerning the deity of the Holy Spirit. Complaint was lodged against him, and Biddle was summoned before Parliament for an accounting. After a protracted trial he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

While under duress he wrote Confession of Faith Concerning the Holy Trinity. After the death of Charles I, Biddle was released and he founded the Unitarian Society. But under Cromwell he was twice imprisoned thereafter, and his books were publicly burned. Even after the restoration under Charles II he was again sent to prison, being harried particularly by the Presbyterians.

29 Ibid.

30 Joshua Toulmin, A Review of the Life, Character and Writings of the Rev. John Biddle, M.A., Who Was Banished to the Isle of Scilly, in the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell.

A Parliamentary commission, sitting in Westminster, again put him "in gaol" until he could be brought before the House of Commons. Archbishop Ussher sought to convince him, but failed. Then in 1648 an ordinance was passed inflicting the death penalty upon those who denied the Trinity. Released in 1650, Biddle wrote other tractates. In 1654 he published A Twofold Catechism for adults and for children. Upon acknowledgment of authorship he was once more imprisoned, and in 1655 was banished by Cromwell to the Isle of Scilly for life. However, a Baptist minister interceded and obtained his release in 1658. But again, in 1662, he was sent to prison without bail, dying after six weeks from the ordeal.

In chapter twenty-four of his Catechism, dealing with "The Resurrection of the dead, and the last Judgment; and what shall be the final condition of the righteous and the wicked thereupon," [31] in the customary question-and-answer form Biddle states the standard Conditionalist view of the time, which was one of the "heresies" for which he suffered imprisonment and banishment. In his letter to Lord Protector Cromwell, Biddle set forth the gist of his belief in these explicit words:

"The sum of my doctrine hath bin constantly this, that Almighty God hath by the exceeding greatness of His power, exalted His Son Jesus Christ, to be a Prince and a Saviour, so He is become the author of eternal salvation to none but such as obey Him; and consequently that the power of religion consisted in yielding obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ." [32] That was clearly Conditionalism.

31 John Biddle, *A Twofold Catechism* (1654), pp. 133-141.

32 *Two Letters of Mr. John Biddle, quoted in Mills, Earlier Life-Truth Exponents, p. 21. (Italics supplied.)*

VI. Immortality for Saints; Utter Destruction for Sinners

After Jesus Christ is presented as the Author of life and immortality, these questions and answers appear, limiting the bestowal of immortality to believers in the Son, and denying eternal Hell-torments for the wicked, who instead are to be ultimately and utterly destroyed:

1. ETERNAL LIFE LIMITED TO BELIEVING SAINTS.

"Qu. Shall not the wicked and unbelieving live for ever, (though in torments), as well as the godly and the faithful? or is eternal life peculiar to the faithful?

"An. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life: but the wrath [sic] of God abides on him. John 3. 36." [33]

2. WICKED ARE DEVoured, PASS AWAY, PERISH IN "SECOND DEATH."

"Qu. Though this passage which you have cited seem clearly to prove that eternal life agrees to no other men, but the faithful: yet since the contrary opinion is generally held amongst Christians, I would fain know further of you, whether you have any other places that directly affirm that the wicked dye, and that a second death; are destroyed, and punished with everlasting destruction; are corrupted, burnt-up, devoured, slain, pass away, and perish?

"A. The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, Rom. 6.23: also [Rom. 8:13; Rev. 21:6, 8; Rev. 2:10, 11; 1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Peter 3:7; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Gal. 6:8; 2 Peter 2:12; 1 Cor. 3:17 (Greek., corrupt); Heb. 10:39; 2 Peter 3:16; Matt. 3:12; Heb. 10:26, 27 (Greek., fervour or fire); Luke 19:27; 1 John 2:17; 2 Cor. 2:15, 16]." [34]

3. THE SOUL TO BE DESTROYED IN HELL.

"Qu. What is the use that our Saviour himself would have us make of this doctrine touching the destruction of men in hell-fire?

"An. Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Mat. 10:28." [35]

4. FIRST RESURRECTION FOR SAINTS; SECOND DEATH FOR SINNERS.

"Qu. In what manner shall Christ come and administer judgment at the last day?

"An. When the Son of man shall come in his glory. . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. Mat. 25.31, 32, etc." [36]

"Qu. Is there not another resurrection and judgement that shall precede this last and general one, and peculiarly belongs unto the saints that have been slain for the testimony of Jesus, and the word of God? what saith John the Divine concerning this matter?

"A. I saw thrones . . . first resurrection . . . second death hath no power . . . priests of God and of Christ . . . reign with him a thousand years." Rev. 20.4, 5, 6." [37] Such views constituted the standard arguments for Conditionalism. But they were among the terms of incrimination in the case of John Biddle in 1655. The holding of Conditionalist concepts in those still-intolerant times meant persecution, sometimes unto death. This called for men of heroic mould, willing to suffer, and if need be to die, for their faith—even by a scholarly Baptist who became a Unitarian. Conditionalism was not confined to any one group.

33 *Biddle. Catechism, pp. 134, 135.*

34 *Ibid., pp. 135-138. Note: In the original the texts are quoted in full.*

35 *Ibid., p. 138.*

36 *Ibid., pp. 138-140.*

37 *Ibid., pp. 140, 141.*

SUMMARY OF CONDITIONALISM DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

At the very outset of the great revolt, or Reformation, two notable declarations were made against the basic positions of Roman Catholic Immortal-Soulism—its purgatory stipulation and the conscious state of the soul in death. These came from Luther in Germany and Tyndale in England. Thus began the revival of the long-suppressed Conditionalism. Other witnesses followed,

though a majority of the Reformers did not join in the repudiation. However, numerous Anabaptists and Socinians, scattered over Poland, Switzerland, England, and Holland, espoused the same position, now derisively dubbed "soul sleeping."

So in this century the religious, geographical, and international spread included Lutherans and Anglicans, Trinitarians and Anti-Trinitarians, and Calvinists and Arminians in many lands—and even certain sceptics. Ostracism and often bitter persecution were the lot of some in certain times and sections who espoused the Conditionalist view of the "sleep of the soul" during the interim of death.

But apart from the European phase there was the sixteenth-century discovery of the uninterrupted continuance of Conditionalism from Early Church times, on two other widely separated continents—African Ethiopia and Asian India. This belief had apparently been transmitted from generation to generation. These paralleling Reformation-century discoveries attest the unbroken continuity, in widely separated regions, of the teaching of unconscious sleep between death and the resurrection—likewise paralleling the European transmission among the Italian Waldenses in the fastnesses of the Piedmontese Alps. This was in contrast with the recovery of such beliefs by those Old World Reformers who freshly repudiated the traditional Romanist triple dogma of Immortal-Soulism, consciousness in death, and the Eternal Torment of the wicked.

Another conspicuous element of the century was the violent antagonism of Calvin to the "sleep of the soul," and the contrasting moderation of the Anglican Church, with its optional position as regards the nature of the soul and the fate of the wicked, which attitude has largely continued throughout Anglican history to the present. Nevertheless, the sixteenth century closes with persecution unto death for certain Anabaptist adherents to the Biblical principles of Conditionalism. By now the issue had become acute and volatile.

Such is a summary of Conditionalism throughout the sixteenth century.

(This, and subsequent periodic tables, brings the total testimony for any given period before the reader at a glance.)

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