

They dared their persecutors to convict them of any crime. Whatever else was purposely mingled with the process, in order to justify or excuse the condemnation, it was really for the rejection of infant baptism, or for being baptized on profession of faith, or for administering such baptism, that they suffered.

In England, men who were themselves afterwards martyrs to Protestantism united in persecuting Baptists, even unto death. Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer were guilty in this matter. Even good old John Fox, the martyrologist, when petitioning Queen Elizabeth, in behalf of condemned Baptists, did not ask that they might be set free, but only that the mode of punishment might be changed—that they might not be committed to the flames.

We pass on to the seventeenth century. It was a time of perplexity, contempt, and oppression. The Stuarts were bent on establishing despotism, and, as a means to that end, on extirpating religious dissent. Nor were they the only foes to freedom. During the ascendancy of the Presbyterians in the Long Parliament an act was passed, decreeing the punishment of death to Athiests, Deists, Arians, and Socinians, and of imprisonment till they should renounce their alleged errors (which was tantamount to imprisonment for life) to the deniers of infant baptism. Then came the restoration of Charles II. which involved all the dissidents in one common trouble. Baptists shared with their brethren of other denominations in the distresses of that period. They were cruelly plundered. Many of their best men lived long in prison: some died there. Bunyan spent twelve years in Bedford jail. Henry Forty the same time at Exeter. Francis Bampfield, Vavasor Powell, "the apostle of Wales," and Thomas Delanne, author of the "Plea for Nonconformity," an unanswerable production, died in prison. And here, on this continent, our predecessors "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment," inflicted by men who had left their native