

## ISAAC BACKUS AND THE ENGLISH BAPTIST TRADITION

English Baptists trace their heritage to the important theological advances among certain Separatists and Independents during the opening decades of the seventeenth century which resulted in the birth of a self-conscious antipedobaptist community in Puritan England. In a similar way American Baptists tend to emphasize the community which arose somewhat simultaneously in New England, citing especially the work of Roger Williams as its genesis. Often overlooked, however, is the fact that a third series of events, occurring a century later, was equally crucial to the establishment of the Baptist cause in America (and ultimately worldwide), namely the development of what has been called the 'Separate-Baptists' of New England in the mid-1700s.

In the New England colonies the thrust spawned by Williams had largely dissipated by the turn of the 18th century, leaving the Baptists a small and hopelessly divided sect tolerated by the Puritan commonwealth. The ecclesiastical status quo, however, was soon radically altered by a new wave of dissent, one which arose within the Congregational establishment itself, and one from which the Baptists would greatly profit. The arrival of the British evangelist, George Whitefield, in the colonies in the early 1740s precipitated the Great Awakening, a revival of such significance that it has been called the American 'national conversion'. Yet at that time it produced a deep cleavage within the established Congregational Churches of the New England region. At first the 'New Lights' - those who had been touched by revival or who supported the revivalists - were content to remain within the established churches, seeking to be catalysts for the new life which the revival had produced in them and for the ecclesiastical reform which the revival demanded. Inevitably, however, conflict arose as their efforts were met with antagonism and opposition especially among the clergy, and as the revival party in turn began questioning the spiritual integrity of an ecclesiastical system which opposed itinerant preaching and which failed to emphasize the necessity of personal conversion which was a hallmark of the revival. These disagreements led finally to schism, as many New Lights began holding separate worship services apart from the established churches, earning for themselves thereby the name 'Separates'. The more radical revivalists embraced separation as the necessary and justified response to the standing churches which had proven themselves by their resistance to reform to be Antichrist.<sup>1</sup> The Separates' programme included a renewed stress on the authority of the New Testament in all ecclesiastical matters. But this 'back to the Bible' emphasis introduced a new and explosive controversy among the schismatic congregations, the issue of baptism. The ensuing debate eventually resulted in the demise of the Separate movement, as many adherents came to adopt an immersionist position and eventually to abandon the Separate cause in order to form closed-communion churches. These 'Separate-Baptist' congregations then joined fellowship with the older Baptists

of New England, bringing new life to the older immersionist cause but also redefining what it meant to be a Baptist in America.

A man whose ecclesiastical pilgrimage was typical of many Separate-Baptists, a man who became the leading figure in raising again the fallen Baptist banner and in redefining the nature of the Baptist movement in eighteenth century New England, was Isaac Backus. Backus was born on a Connecticut farm in 1724. Prior to the Awakening, his parents were nominal Congregationalists, but the fervent preaching of the itinerants which was sweeping the area in 1741 resulted in revival in the life of young Isaac's recently widowed and severely depressed mother. Observing the changes in others caused Isaac to desire personal conversion himself, which he did experience while working in the fields. Five years later a second divine encounter came to him as he received 'an internal call to preach the gospel'. In the meantime the Backus family had become part of the newly formed Separate congregation in the neighbouring community of Norwich, Connecticut. Soon Isaac, now only 24 years old and lacking any formal theological education, was called to pastor a similar group in Titicut, Massachusetts.

The years as a Separate were filled with strife for Backus. Because theirs was an illegal congregation, his church members faced conflicts with the Massachusetts government concerning religious taxation. The situation worsened as the theological controversy which was already threatening to split the entire Separate movement came to Titicut - the explosive issue of baptism (infant vs. believer's). After much personal study, Backus himself was immersed on 22nd August 1751. For five years he struggled to maintain an open-communication congregation, but the presence of theological controversy within the church proved to be too divisive. Finally the pastor terminated the struggle, dissolved the congregation, and formed an immersionist church in adjacent Middleboro in 1756. Soon thereafter, the new closed-communication group joined fellowship with the Baptists. Once this decision had been made, Backus remained a loyal Baptist, serving both his congregation and his adopted denomination faithfully until his death in 1806.

The significance of the efforts of Isaac Backus on behalf of the Baptist denomination in America cannot be overestimated. No single person played a more significant role in Baptist development in eighteenth century New England than he. In fact the Middleboro pastor has even been called 'the Father of American Baptists'.<sup>2</sup> Backus's importance lies in several areas. First, he was instrumental in bringing together into one denomination the older Baptist churches (which were divided among themselves) and the newer closed-communication revivalist congregations. Almost immediately upon forming an immersionist church, Backus saw the importance of close ties among all churches holding Baptist beliefs. Between 1756 and 1767 he travelled nearly 15,000 miles within New England, visiting older Baptist churches, open-communication congregations, and groups of former Separates who were seeking to organize themselves into immersionist churches as the Middleboro group had done. His labours were rewarded, for the New England churches, with the assistance

of the Philadelphia Association, organized themselves into the Warren Baptist Association in 1767 and co-operated in the founding of Rhode Island College during the same decade.

Secondly, Backus became the chief spokesman for the 'evangelical Calvinism' which replaced the Arminianism prevalent among the older Baptist churches. In spite of the Calvinism of the earliest New England Baptists, a shift to the Arminian outlook had been completed by the time of the Awakening.<sup>3</sup> The revivalists, out of whose ranks the Separate-Baptists were born, however, largely followed the 'evangelical Calvinism' of Jonathan Edwards. As these Calvinistic Separates joined the Baptists they engulfed the older group both numerically and theologically. Backus was their chief spokesman, articulating in the Baptist context the themes of sovereign grace which had been so eloquently espoused by Edwards. This basic theological outlook has been widespread in American Baptist circles since Backus's day.

Thirdly, the Middleboro pastor articulated anew and in a new situation the traditional Baptist hallmark of religious liberty, struggling successfully to enshrine separation of church and state into the civil life of the new American republic.<sup>4</sup> Concerning Backus it has been said, 'no individual in America since Roger Williams stands out so pre-eminently as the champion of religious liberty'.<sup>5</sup> But more important for Baptist history than any of his other accomplishments, is the fact that Backus was instrumental in the process of transforming an outcast; sectarian group on the fringe of the Puritan Commonwealth into an accepted and respected member of the American religious community. When the Middleboro minister became a convinced anti-paedobaptist he was accepting for himself the scorn which New England society cast upon all 'Anabaptists' within the region. But by the closing decades of the eighteenth century a broad climate of toleration had developed, even in Puritan Massachusetts. Although there were many factors which had contributed to this amazing transformation of public sentiment, Backus's role in formulating, articulating, defending, and gaining sympathy for the Baptist position vis-à-vis the entire Puritan reformation was of crucial importance.

Backus's ability to win a place for the Baptist movement within the larger Puritan reformation was due to a large degree to his keen concern for history and ecclesiastical roots and to his ability to utilize history as an ally in the fight to advance his denomination's cause. He was completely convinced that the stands he and the Baptists were taking concerning the crucial issues of his day were not only logical and biblical, but actually formed the natural outgrowth of the entire Puritan heritage of both Old and New England. In keeping with this conviction, he sprinkled his 35 published tracts with references to and quotations from many leading figures in the Puritan movement. But beyond this, Backus became convinced that his adopted denomination, rather than being a radical, sectarian group as the Puritan establishment suggested, actually stood at the very forefront of the entire Reformation. These despised 'Anabaptists', he maintained, constituted the cutting edge, the vanguard of Christ's work of reform in his church. This thesis

was developed in his tracts and in his three-volume work, *A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists*.<sup>6</sup>

Backus's vision of the scope of Reformation history, however, was in no way provincial; nor was the outlook which the Middleboro minister came to hold concerning the Baptist denomination limited to the immediate situation. Rather, Backus was convinced of the essential oneness of all Baptists, whether in both the colonies or the mother country and that all the various and diverse Baptist groups of both the 17th and 18th centuries belonged together, forming a single ecclesiastical tradition. For this reason, Backus's writings reflect not only an awareness of the New England situation but also a keen interest in the history of the movement in England as well. In short, it was the entire Baptist tradition which was incorporated as a whole in Backus's thesis concerning the Reformation of Christ's church.

It is not surprising, of course, that an appeal to English Baptists did not play a major role in Backus's published works. In spite of his interest in the affairs within the mother country, his chief concern always remained that of the situation in New England. This was perhaps in part the case because he had accepted the reigning attitude of his countrymen that Christ's reforming work had been transferred from England to the colonies. But perhaps beyond this, the lack of an abundance of references to his English brethren was due to the nature of his writings, for these were largely polemical and directed toward an audience which would not be moved by any appeal to a group which was considered sectarian and even heretical by the New England ecclesiastical establishment. Actually that Backus did refer to the English Baptist movement as part of his apologetic, limited though these references may be, is surprising, apart from an understanding of his overarching thesis concerning his denomination in its entirety.

His historical research gave Backus an awareness of the important ties between Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic which date back to the early years of Baptist witness in Massachusetts. He reported, for example, the intimate relationship which had existed between the English brethren and the first church in Boston. At its inception, according to the Middleboro historian, 'three Baptist brethren came over from England, recommended from churches there, and met with him (i.e. Thomas Gould) and others in private houses'.<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising that this church later claimed adherence to the confession of faith of the London Baptists (1677) in a defence against their oppressors, as Backus reported.<sup>8</sup> He also mentioned the subsequent literary corroboration of the Baptists in both countries. On the one hand, antipaedobaptist literature was being brought from the mother country to New England in the 1640s and 50s.<sup>9</sup> In turn, 'Mr Russell's narrative', written by the Boston Baptist pastor in response to Increase Mather's, *The Divine Right of Infant Baptism*, was sent to London, whereupon six English Baptist pastors added a preface.<sup>10</sup>

These ties confirmed for Backus that Baptists in both countries did indeed constitute one tradition. Convinced of this, he was able to answer the charge of an antagonist that family

prayer is neglected by his denomination by saying,

The joining of these evils with the very name of a *Baptist*, has long been the engine to guard people's minds against looking into their true sentiments;

Then, in a footnote he included an appropriate extract from an English Baptist publication, which he prefaced with these words:

The sentiments of our *Baptist* brethren in *England*, who have had long experience in these things, as they were published in a *letter of advice* to their brethren from an assembly of fifteen churches met at Burton in Gloucestershire, Aug.16, 1765.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Backus was quick to point out the agreement of all Baptists on issues of current debate. After giving his view concerning an educated clergy, he declared, 'In these plain gospel sentiments have the Baptists, on both sides of the Atlantic, preserved to this day'.<sup>12</sup> Speaking to this issue elsewhere, he cited in a footnote 'the comparison that Mr Keach did eighty years ago: Human learning may be a good hand-maid to Religion; but if like Hagar, she must needs be Mistress, then cast her out',<sup>13</sup> and he included in his *History* a letter of 9th March 1720, from Rev. Edward Wallin of London to Ellis Callander, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Boston, in which Wallin articulated the same position.<sup>14</sup> In a similar way Edward Wallin's son and successor, Benjamin, a correspondent of Backus, was elsewhere quoted at length to give a rationale for the great emphasis the Middleboro pastor and the Baptists as a whole placed on polity and especially on immersion as a church membership requirement. This stand of the Baptists arose out of the desire that Christ be allowed to be lord in his church by means of strict adherence to his laws as outlined in the New Testament.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to many English Baptists, John Bunyan was well-known and well-respected in New England. It is therefore not surprising that his name is found in Backus's writings. During his personal struggle with the immersionist question the Titicut pastor apparently was in the process of reading Bunyan's *Holy War*.<sup>16</sup> Then with this issue resolved he utilized the Baptist Puritan's account of his call to preach (described in *Grace Abounding*) in support of his own view of another issue, namely the necessity of an internal call to the gospel ministry.<sup>17</sup> Yet Backus did not shy away from differing with 'the beloved Bunyan',<sup>18</sup> taking issue with him on his open-communion practice, the point at which Backus believed the great Baptist had veered from sound practice. Against Bunyan's position Backus wrote,

And it is very necessary that we well distinguish, between what are the divine commands, and the forbearance that is allowed in some cases towards persons who do not fully conform to them. For want of this distinction, so great a man as Mr Bunyan, improved the instance of forbearance in II Chron.30: 18-20, to establish the custom of communing at the Lord's table with unbaptized persons.<sup>19</sup>

Backus gleaned a great amount of data relating to the brethren in the mother country from the English Baptist historian of the preceding generation, Thomas Crosby.<sup>20</sup> In addition to historical facts, Crosby's *History* proved to be a source for many of the arguments which the sister group had employed in their own struggles against the English ecclesiastical establishment,<sup>21</sup> especially concerning the explosive issue of baptism.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Crosby aided in confirming in Backus's mind that the Baptist tradition had always been essentially Calvinist in theology. For example the English historian suggested the non-Calvinist practice of laying on of hands had been imported into the Baptists by an attempt to adopt the Anglican confirmation rite.<sup>23</sup> In Crosby, Backus read the strongly Calvinist London Confession of Faith adopted by the Baptists in 1643, concerning which the New England leader said, 'wherein they ... fully express their belief of absolute sovereignty in election'.<sup>24</sup> However, Backus's personal zeal for Calvinism and his desire to portray his denomination as belonging to the theological mainstream of Puritanism apparently caused him to make some alterations in the historical tradition he received from his English counterpart. Backus suggested that the congregation of John Spilsbury was the first church of that denomination in the British empire,<sup>25</sup> while Crosby gave that honour to the group led by Thomas Helwys, a group which in Backus's eyes 'mainly embraced the baptist principles'.<sup>26</sup>

From Crosby Backus learned of other great Baptist Englishmen, many of whom were well-educated, esteemed personalities in the mother country. Hence, referring to Crosby's *History*, he wrote,

Therein he has shewn, that about the time of the long parliament Mr. John Tombes, Mr. Henry Jessey, Mr. Han/erd Knollys, Mr. Vavasor Powel, and many others, who had been educated at the universities in England, and were as pious and successful as almost any preachers in their day, embraced the baptist principles...<sup>27</sup>

The respectability of the English Baptists, especially in the eyes of the Congregationalists, was of utmost importance to Backus. After referring to those cited by Crosby above, he added,

... Those experimental writers Bunyan and Keach whose works have been greatly esteemed by our pious fathers, were of this denomination; and the author of that masterly piece, Delaulne's pleas for the non-conformists, was a member of Mr. Keach's church, in London. Mr. Thomas Wilcox, who wrote the choice drop of honey from the rock Christ, which has been much esteemed in New England, was pastor of a baptist church also in that city.<sup>28</sup>

Elsewhere he included an entire letter written to 'Captain Oliver of Boston' from the English Congregationalist, Robert Mascall, dated 25th March 1669, in which the positive relationship between English Independents and Baptists and the high regard in the eyes of the Congregationalists which the English Baptists enjoyed is underscored in these words directed at the situation in the colonies:

It is frequently said here, that they are swerved aside towards presbytery; if so, the Lord restore them all. But another sad thing that much affects us is, to hear that you even in New England persecute your brethren; men sound in the faith; of holy life (and) agreeing in worship and discipline with you; only differing in the point of baptism. Dear brother, we here do love and honor them, hold familiarity with them, and take sweet council together; they lie in the bosom of Christ and therefore they ought to be laid in our bosoms. In a word, we freely admit them into churches; few of our churches but many of our members are Anabaptists; I mean baptized again. This is love, in England; this is moderation; this is a right New Testament spirit... Whereas Anabaptists are neither spirited nor principled to injure nor hurt your government nor your liberties; but rather these be a means to preserve your churches from apostacy, and provoke them to their primitive purity, as they were in the first planting, and in admission of members to receive none into your churches but visible saints, and in restoring the entire jurisdiction of every congregation complete and undisturbed. We are hearty and full for our Presbyterian brethren's enjoying equal liberty with ourselves; oh that they had the same spirit towards us! but oh how it grieves and affects us that New England should persecute! Will you not give what you take? is liberty of conscience your due? and is it not as due unto others that are sound in the faith? Read the preface to the declaration of the faith and order, owned and practiced in the Congregational churches in England, pp.6, 7.<sup>29</sup>

The mutual respect of the two groups in 17th century England was alluded to again by Backus through the inclusion in his *History* of the testimony written by six English Baptist ministers in the preface to 'Mr. Russell's Narrative':

As for our brethren of the Congregational way in old England, both their principles and practice do equally plead for our liberties as for their own; and it seems strange that such of the same way in New England, yea, even such (a generation not yet extinct, or the very next successors of them) who with liberal estates chose rather to depart from their native soil into a wilderness, than be under the imposition and lash of those, who upon religious pretences took delight to smite their fellow servants, should exercise towards others the like severity that themselves with so great hazard and hardship sought to avoid.<sup>30</sup>

An interesting parallel to these English testimonials is the quotation from the esteemed Massachusetts Congregational pastor, Cotton Mather, concerning the early Baptists, which Backus discovered in Crosby and then utilized in one of his own tracts:

... it is well known, that of later time, there have

been a great many antipaedobaptists, who have never deserved so hard a character among the churches of God. Infant baptism hath been scrupled by multitudes in our days, who have been in other points, most worthy Christians, as holy, watchful, fruitful and heavenly people, as perhaps any in the world. Some few of these people have been among the planters of New England, from the beginning.<sup>31</sup>

One English Baptist of high esteem was cited by Backus with some frequency in support of his own views, namely his contemporary, the learned theologian John Gill, who had personally sent copies of his books on baptism to the Middleboro minister.<sup>32</sup> On most occasions Backus utilized Gill as an exegetical resource. The most interesting exegetical conclusions which he borrowed from the English theologian included the latter's suggestion that II Cor. 11.12 referred to Paul's refusal forcefully to demand financial support, which Backus used to underscore his biblical argument against religious taxation;<sup>33</sup> the conclusion that 'ordination' in Acts 14.23 meant the election of elders by the church through a vote taken by raised hands, which supported Backus's stand for the power of ordination as being in the local congregation;<sup>34</sup> and the suggestion that the Greek word translated 'clergy' actually meant 'heritage', a name which church officers 'usurped' in order to avoid being censured for 'lording it over' the church.<sup>35</sup>

Backus also drew upon Gill for support concerning his stand on the baptism issue. According to Backus, Gill had disproved the thesis of many contemporary paedobaptists that Irenaeus claimed apostolic tradition for infant baptism.<sup>36</sup> Likewise the English Baptist had shown the meaning of 'baptize' in the Greek language to be 'dip'.<sup>37</sup> Further, he had documented the rise of paedobaptism as accompanied by other practices of apostasy all of which should be practised now, Gill had concluded, if the one is kept.<sup>38</sup> Borrowing further from Gill, Backus was able to show that some of the medieval clergy claimed by one of his own antagonists, a New England Congregational minister, as part of a personal ministerial succession back to the apostles, were actually antipaedobaptists.<sup>39</sup> Finally, Gill's statement that the English Baptists were criticized when they answered their opponents' charges and pronounced vanquished when they refrained from doing so was applied by Backus to the situation in New England.<sup>40</sup>

In summary, then, despite the conclusions of others to the contrary,<sup>41</sup> Backus did indeed utilize the English Baptist tradition. The writings of the brethren in the mother country both in his day and in prior generations provided support for his own viewpoints concerning key ecclesiastical issues. But of greatest importance to Backus was the fact that other English dissenters had indeed known what he himself had come to realize: far from being heretical sectarians, the English Baptists were orthodox, pious churchmen. Backus's struggle was an attempt to force the New England establishment, the brethren of the English dissenters, to see the error of their ignorant ways. For the Baptist movement on both sides of the ocean formed one great whole movement, the end-product of the on-going movement of the



Reformation in Christ's Church, of which the Baptists stood at the vanguard: soon this movement would be completed, ushering in the millennial era of Christ's full rule in his Church; but even now the Baptists had come to see and correct the final remaining errors of the church, serving thereby as the foregleam of the millennial reign of Christ.

## NOTES

- 1 The writings of the English Separatists of an earlier century took on great value in the apologetic of the New England Separates, especially since many early colonial leaders (including the Mayflower pilgrims) had themselves been Separatists.  
A major difference between the English Separatists and the New England Separates, however, must not be overlooked. A prime motivation for separation in England had been ecclesiology, specifically ecclesiastical reform. In New England experiential religion was the original point of contention which then introduced the ecclesiastical issues resulting in schism.
- 2 Mary Hewitt Mitchell, *The Great Awakening and Other Revivals*, New Haven, 1954.
- 3 Hence, the Six-Principle Baptists of Rhode Island whose name was derived from the list of basic principles in Heb.6 despite the Calvinism of their New England forebears.
- 4 The story of Backus's relentless efforts in this area is well-known. Nationally, the struggle was spearheaded, however, by men more influenced by the Enlightenment than by the Baptist tradition. Nevertheless the influence of the New England Baptists both locally and federally was crucial.
- 5 William Henry Allison, "Isaac Backus", in Allen Johnson, editor, *Dictionary of American Biography*, London, 1928, I, p.471.
- 6 Three volumes, 1777, 1784, 1796. The second edition in two volumes, edited by David Weston, was published in Newton, MA, 1871.
- 7 *An Abridgment of the Church History of New England* (Boston, 1804), Second edition, Baptist Tract Depository, 1839, p.94. The Englishmen cited were Richard Goodale of London, William Turner and Robert Lambert both of Dartmouth.
- 8 *History*, second edition, vol.I, p.338-339.
- 9 *Abridgment*, p.70.
- 10 *History*, second edition, vol.I, p.391. These six were William Kiffen, Daniel Dyke, William Collins, Hansard Knollys, John Harris, and Nehemiah Cox.
- 11 *A Fish Caught in His Own Net* (Boston, 1768) in William McLoughlin, ed. *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, p.266.
- 12 *History*, 2nd ed., vol.I, p.395.
- 13 *Spiritual Ignorance Causeth Men to Counter-act Their Doctrinal Knowledge*, Providence, RI, 1763, p.15.
- 14 *History*, 2nd ed., vol.I, p.487.

- 15 *A Short Description of the Difference between the Bondwoman and the Free*, second edition, Boston, 1770, p.82.
- 16 In his diary entry for 1st January, 1751, Backus noted that he had read Bunyan's *Holy War*, 'in particular concerning the soul's being conquered and taken by Emmanuel'.
- 17 *All True Ministers of the Gospel... The Nature and Necessity of an Internal Call*, Boston, 1787, in McLoughlin, p.107.
- 18 *History*, 2nd ed., vol.II, p.116. This phrase may indicate not only Backus's own sympathies but perhaps also those of his readers.
- 19 *A Discourse, concerning the Materials... of the Church of Christ*, Boston, 1773, p.77.
- 20 Thomas Crosby, *A History of the English Baptists from the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I*, four volumes, London, 1738-1740.
- 21 *History*, 2nd ed., vol.I, p.91.
- 22 *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Lord, of Norwich*, Providence, 1764, pp.10, 35, *A Discourse Concerning the Materials...*, p.32.
- 23 *The Doctrine of Sovereign Grace Opened and Vindicated*, Providence, 1771, p.29. This was of interest to Backus because of the earlier quarrel among the Old Baptists concerning the necessity of laying on of hands after Baptism.
- 24 *Ibid.*, appendix, pp.x, xi.
- 25 *History*, 2nd ed., vol.I, p.87.
- 26 *A Letter to... Lord*, p.13, *History*, 2nd ed., vol.I, p.43.
- 27 *A Letter to... Lord*, p.11.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p.12.
- 29 *History*, 2nd ed., vol.I, pp.311-313.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p.391.
- 31 *A Letter to... Lord*, p.13.
- 32 *A Fish Caught*, p.270.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp.192, 194.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p.226.
- 35 *Truth is Great and Will Prevail*, Boston, 1781, in McLaughlin, p.406, *The Doctrine of Universal Salvation - Examined and Refuted*, Providence, 1782, p.28.
- 36 *A Fish Caught*, p.269.
- 37 *Ibid.* p.270, *The Substance of an Address to an Assembly in Bridgewater*, Providence, n/d (1779), p.5.
- 38 *A Discourse Concerning... the Church*, p.139.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p.32.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p.131.
- 41 For example, Thomas Maston claimed that Backus 'had received little from the English Baptists' but rather had his 'roots in the American

soil', being 'primarily a Puritan' (Thomas Bufford Maston, "The Ethical and Social Attitudes of Isaac Backus", unpublished dissertation, Yale University, 1939, pp.140-141). Maston's statement is too strong, as is apparent from this article, reflecting both an underestimation of Backus' own acknowledged indebtedness to, and respect for, the English Baptist tradition and a misunderstanding of the relationship of the Baptists in both countries to the Puritan movement.

STANLEY J. GRENZ

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#### ASTERBY AND DONNINGTON-ON-BAIN BAPTIST CHURCH

The original Minute Book of this church has been lodged with the Archivist of the East Midland Baptist Association: The Rev. T. J. Budge, Flat 2, Halford House, 25 De Montfort Street, Leicester. There is also a microfilm of the book in Lincoln Records Office.

#### EAST MIDLAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION CHURCH RECORDS

We have also been informed that the Association Archivist has facilitated the deposition of local church records at Record Offices, as follows:

##### DERBYSHIRE At the Local Studies Library, Derby

Derby & District Baptist Union from 1900  
 Chesterfield from 1873  
 Swadlincote from 1867

##### LEICESTERSHIRE at County Record Office, New Walk, Leicester

Leicester Baptist Association from 1895  
 Leicestershire Baptist Association from 1834  
 Baptist Lay Preachers Association from 1909  
 Arnesby from 1699  
 Ashby de la Zouch from 1841  
 Barrowden and Morcott from 1710  
 Blaby from 1798  
 Coalville, London Road (now Charnborough Rd) from 1854  
 Earl Shilton from 1819  
 Hinckley from 1816  
 Hose from 1852  
 Hugglescote (and Coleorton) from 1798  
 Husbands Bosworth from 1797-1971  
 Ibstock from 1877  
 Kirby Muxloe from 1883  
 Abbey Gate Mission from 1929  
 Archdeacon Lane (now A.L.Memorial) from 1806  
 Belvoir Street (now united with Charles St as United Church) from 1865  
 Carey Hall from 1898  
 Charles St (now United Church) from 1831  
 Clarendon Park from 1894  
 Emanuel from 1884-1972  
 Harvey Lane (now United Church) from 1760-1867, 1894-1940

Friar Lane from 1749-1961 (now Friar Lane and Braunston)  
 Providence Chapel from 1868-1958  
 Uppingham Road from 1907  
 Victoria Road from 1865  
 Loughborough - King Street from 1905-1962  
                   - Woodgate from 1846  
 Market Harborough from 1830  
 Queniborough from 1901-1949  
 Shepshed, Charnwood Road from 1765  
 Thurlaston from 1859-1897

LINCOLNSHIRE at Record Office, The Castle, Lincoln

Boston, Liquor Pond St later Salem from 1818-1838  
 New Clew (Stanley St Grimsby) from 1893-1953, 1953-1970 (closed)  
 Lincoln, Mint St from 1767 a book, minutes from 1800  
 Grimsby, Zion from 1869-1923  
 Gosberton from 1786  
 Pinchbeck from 1844  
 Maltby le Marsh from 1925-1977  
 Great Whyte, Ramsey Members from 1853, minutes from 1923  
 Whittlesea from 1874-1974 (closed)

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE at Record Office, High Pavement, Nottingham

Notts, Derby & Lincs Association from 1886-1892  
 Nottingham Baptist Union from 1930-1941  
 Arnold, Cross Street from 1883  
 Basford, Palm Street from 1849  
 Collingham from 1762  
 Derby Road from 1847-1926, to 1967  
                   joined with Lenton to form Thomas Helwys Church 1967  
 Eastwood from 1893  
 Edwin Street from 1885-1900  
 Friar Lane and George Street (after 1815) from 1815-1948 (closed)  
 Broughton and Hose from 1804  
 Lenton from 1851-  
 Newthorpe from 1890  
 Newark from 1810  
 Redhill from 1909-1974  
 Kirkby in Ashfield from 1916  
 Ollerton from 1926-1970  
 Sutton on Trent from 1822-1877  
 Nottinghamshire County Committee from 1892  
 Nottingham Baptist Union from 1889

The Mansfield Road Records (1775-1963) have been deposited by the Church at Nottingham University.