

History of the Reformation

Background for Baptist Theology

Part 2

- Protestants in England
 - Time – latter half of the 16th Century
 - Elizabethan Settlement
 - Conformists –
 - claimed that “more than earthly authority” was given to head of state and of church (High church)
 - Non-Conformists – reform the church from within
 - Puritans –
 - Originally within Church of England – wanted full Calvinistic reformation in England
 - Wanted to see Church of England reorganized on presbyterian grounds rather than episcopal lines
 - Englishmen who had fled from Bloody Mary’s persecution
 - Returned to England with a renewed zeal gotten from Geneva
 - Separatists or Dissenters
 - Repudiated State church – favored “gathered church”
 - Church = those who have responded to the call of Christ

- Separatists
 - Also known as Dissenters
 - Frustrated Puritans that had given up hope that church would reform from within
 - Later known as Congregationalists/Independents
 - Repudiated State church – favored “gathered church”
 - Doubted that Church of England was scriptural
 - Church = those who have responded to the call of Christ
 - Leader was Robert Browne
 - 1582 – “Reformation without Tarrying for Any”
 - “and of the Wickedness of those Preachers which will not reform till the Magistrate command or compel them”
 - “The church planted or gathered is a company or number of Christians or believers, which, by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ and keep His laws in one holy communion.”
 - Followers were known as “Brownists”

 - Given up hope of reforming the Anglican Church from within
 - Church is not subject to bishops or magistrates
 - Ordination is in hands of the whole church

 - Persecuted by both Mary and Elizabeth
 - Death penalty for preaching separatism
 - Endured invectives from both Conformists and Puritans
 - Sought religious freedom in Holland
 - By 1603 (accession of James I) a Separatist church remained, in Gainsborough, in charge of pastor John Smyth
 - 1607 – that flock fled to Amsterdam

- Another congregation formed at nearby Scrooby
 - John Robinson, William Brewster, William Bradford
 - 1608 – John Robinson’s congregation at Leiden
 - from which Pilgrims set off in 1620 on the Mayflower
 - Both Puritan and Separatist
- Baptists
 - John Smyth – originally a Puritan
 - Associated with but did not join another English Separatist group in Amsterdam
 - Thomas Helwys, an old friend, joined with him
 - 1608/09 – came to believe that, since most members were baptized as infants, his Separatist Church was invalid
 - Church based on ”covenant” rather than “confession”
 - Came to a new understanding of the church as a company of believers, and the necessity of believer’s baptism
 - Baptized himself, then Helwys
 - On the basis of confession of faith
 - Smyth always bothered by self-baptism, sought Mennonite association
 - Helwys was hesitant because of Mennonite view of Christology
 - “Celestial flesh” Christology
 - Understood baptism by immersion through this group
 - Smyth also gradually moved from his understanding of Calvinistic predestination to Arminianism and Universal Salvation
 - Smyth died 1612 in Holland, before he could be received by the Mennonites
 - His last book was a plea for full liberty of conscience in religion Necessary to ‘reconstitute’ the church rather than “reform” it
- Early Baptist Emphases
 - Personal conversion
 - Baptism to those confessing faith
 - Mode was pouring. Not immersion yet
 - Mutual covenanting among believers
 - Separation of Church from State
- Baptists
 - 1611 – Helwys leads the new pro-Arminian, pro-Anabaptist, separation of Church/State back to London
 - Thoughts of cowardice from “running from persecution” rather than “taking a stand for Christ”
 - Made great efforts to try to convince King James that Baptists were loyal subjects and not heretics
 - 1613 – Helwys arrested, jailed, dies in jail 1616(?)
 - 1625 – General Baptists
 - Term comes into common usage
 - Strongly Arminian and anti-Calvinistic
 - 150 members in 7 churches
 - 1644 – 47 churches in and around London
- Particular Baptists

- Reject any relationship to John Smyth
- Baptists did not divide over atonement (Universal or Specific)
- They developed as two separate churches

- Independent Churches – did not necessarily leave Church of England – even though driven to “separate”
 - 1616 – Henry Jacob – led a small independent congregation
 - JLJ Church – after pastors Jacob, John Lathrop, and Henry Jessey
 - Arrested by Bishop Laud
 - Jacob and Lathrop eventually emigrated to (were exiled to) the New World
 - Constant discussion about meaning of baptism
 - 1633 – a number requested to withdraw and formed a separate congregation which adopted believer’s baptism
 - John Spilsbury – pastored the group
 - 1) the Word of God humbles a sinner to repentance
 - 2) it “sweetens” his character and causes him to live a new life
 - 3) it compels him to join with like minded believers
 - 4) it knits those hearts together to give a corporate witness of God’s goodness
 - 1638 – 2nd break from LJJ
 - Joined the Spilsbury group
 - Historians date 1st Particular Baptist congregation to this congregation
 - seems to have introduced immersion as the mode of Baptism (1641)
 - Convinced of each church’s responsibility to “recover lost ordinances”
 - May 1640 – Council of Independent congregations in London
 - Called to adjudicate question of child baptism
 - Result – new congregation created under leadership of William Kiffin
 - 1643 – Kiffin organized seven congregations together
 - 1644 – Issued London Confession of Faith
 - Signed by 15 Particular Baptist leaders
 - Pre-dates Westminster Confession (1646)
 - 2nd Edition issued 1646 along with appendix by Benjamin Cox
 - A kind of covenant theology, but not one which acknowledges infant baptism

- Baptist Roots
 - Anabaptists (Radical and Evangelical)
 - Evangelical Anabaptists
 - Rejected orthodox view of sin
 - Not bondage both of nature and actions
 - But “a loss of capacity or a serious illness”
 - Followed Rome’s view of justification
 - God makes us righteous and then accepts us on the basis of our righteousness
 - Christ’s flesh was not from Mary, but totally separate from us
 - Therefore, we must separate ourselves from it
 - Rejected Infant Baptism, held to believer’s baptism
 - Mode was mostly sprinkling
 - Very strict interpretation of Scripture
 - Leading to large movements of legalism
 - Some Baptist similarities, but not historically linked

- Continuation or Succession of Baptist teaching
 - “according to History. . . Baptists have an unbroken line of churches since Christ”
 - J.M.Carroll, *The Trail of Blood* (1931)
 - Unbroken chain
 - John the Baptist started it
 - Jesus formed it
 - All churches were baptist for the first 3 centuries
 - Rejected by early English baptists (Smyth, Helwys, Spilsbury)
 - “There is no succession under the New Testament, but what is spiritually by faith and the Word of God” John Spilsbury

- Baptist Issues
 - Scripture alone, not decisions of Churches or States
 - Persecution for conscience sake is anti-Christian
 - Christian Liberty
 - Atonement
 - General vs Particular
 - Hypothetical vs Definite
 - Freedom of the Will
 - Eternal security
 - Baptism
 - Believer’s Only (Credobaptism)
 - Not for infants (Paedobaptism)
 - Pouring vs Sprinkling vs Immersion
 - Congregational Polity
 - Lord’s Supper
 - Zwinglian, not sacramental in any way