

BAPTIST HISTORY

Lesson 6 - Particular and General Baptists in the Seventeenth Century (Part 2)

Recommended Reading: "Baptists Through the Centuries", Chapter 4

I. Introduction

II. The Emergence of General and Particular Baptists

- A. There were two groups of Baptists among the Dissenters
 1. General Baptists
 - a) Views similar to Smyth and Helwys
 - b) Arminian (believed in general redemption)
 - c) Closed membership churches
 - d) 1625 - 5 churches totaling 150 members
 - e) Serious decline by 1690's
 - f) By 1720 they all became unitarians
 2. Particular Baptists
 - a) Progression in the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church (named by historians after its successive pastors)
 - (1) At first "more separatist than Baptist, but gave rise to a whole series of Baptist developments" (Bebbington, 45).
 - (a) Henry Jacob
 - i) "...a Puritan clergyman, had been one of the prime movers in the petition for further reform in the Church of England presented to James I at the opening of his reign" (Bebbington, 45).
 - ii) Like John Smyth, "disillusioned with the inadequate royal response"
 - iii) Like Smyth, "found refuge in the Netherlands"
 - iv) Like Smyth, "stressed the kingly office of Christ"
 - v) Unlike Smyth, "refused to break entirely with the established church of his own land, declaring in 1612 that 'for my part I never was nor am separate from all publike communication with the congregations in England'" (Bebbington, 46).
 - vi) Simi-separatist
 - vii) In 1616 constituted a church in Southwark, south of the river Thames in London
 - viii) In 1622 or 1623 moved to the colony of Virginia where he soon died
 - (b) John Lathrop
 - i) Succeeded Henry Jacob as Pastor
 - ii) In 1630 a member of Lathrop's church took infant to CoE for baptism; John Duppa challenged the legitimacy of the CoE; his objections were not recognized by the church and so he left with about a dozen to start a fully separatist congregation
 - iii) In 1633 another congregation was established under the leadership of Samuel Eaton who fully rejected the CoE
 - (c) Henry Jessey
 - i) Succeeded John Lathrop as Pastor
 - ii) Former Anglican
 - iii) **In 1638 six members left to join a church led by John Spilsbury on the grounds that baptism should be restricted to those already professing faith in Christ.**
 - (1) Spilsbury's church may have been an offshoot of Duppa's
 - (2) Spilsbury's church probably practiced believers baptism by pouring from a bowl**(3) This is the first Particular Baptist church**
 - iv) A member of Jessey's church named "Richard Blunt reached the conclusion that baptism ought to be observed by wholly plunging the candidate under water" (Bebbington, 45).
 - (1) 1640 Conference - lengthy discussions between individuals about the Bible.

- (2) For a year they looked at the issue of Baptism and came to the position of believers baptism by immersion
 - (3) The record states that no one in England was practicing this
 - (4) They found out through trade that there was a group in the Netherlands called the Reinsburgers who practiced immersion - (kind of like para-church)
 - (5) Sent a man (Richard Blunt) who spoke Dutch to observe.
 - (6) They determined they would practice immersion.
 - (7) Church divides into two because they were too large
 - (8) January 1642 53 people were baptized in the Thames
 - (9) 1645 the other segment begins to baptize believers by immersion - Jessey himself is baptized, though he pastored a partly paedobaptist congregation until his death in 1663
 - (10) From the complicated history of the JLJ church three congregations came to the position of believers baptism by immersion by the end of the year 1642 - Blunts church, an offshoot of that, and Spilbury's church who eventually came to the position of immersion.
 - (11) William Kiffin and Hanserd Knollys soon emerged as leaders
 - (12) By 1644 there were 7 Particular Baptist churches
 - (13) In 1700 there were over 200 Particular Baptist churches
- (2) These 7 churches issued a confession of faith in 1644
 - (a) Clearly "Calvinistic" - believed in particular redemption
 - (b) Closed communion
 - (3) Opposition
 - (a) Daniel Featly, "an apologist for the Church of England, published, in 1645, based partly on notes of a disputation he had undertaken against William Kiffin years earlier. Called *The Dippers Dipt*, the book identified the new body with the continental Anabaptists and tarred them all with the brush of the crimes of Munster. The volume was extremely popular, reaching a sixth edition by 1651... Baptists were taken to be social subversives" (Bebbington, 48).
 - i) Intro to the 1644 Confession: "A CONFESSION OF FAITH of seven congregations or churches of Christ in London, which are commonly, but unjustly, called Anabaptists; published for the vindication of the truth and information of the ignorant; likewise for the taking off those aspersions which are frequently, both in pulpit and print, unjustly cast upon them. Printed in London, Anno 1646.
 - (1) Featly read this confession and had six criticisms, none being serious.
 - (2) He understood what the 1LBC meant, but he accused them of lying. He said It was a "rats bane covered in sugar."
 - (4) Spread
 - (a) Many Particular Baptists served in the New Model Army, "carrying Baptists opinions wherever they went" (Bebbington, 48).
 - i) Planted 10 churches in Ireland by 1653
 - (b) Roger Williams "proceeded from separatist views to create a Baptist church at Providence, south of the Massachusetts colony in what would become Rhode Island.
 - (c) In the 1640's "a separatist church at Newport, Rhode Island, under John Clarke, moved toward a Baptist position, which it attained by 1648. At first it contained both Calvinists and Arminians. In 1644 the Massachusetts legislature, fearing that the growth of Baptist views might subvert the commonwealth, made the denial of infant baptism a crime... In 1654, Henry Dunster, the president of Harvard College, the Puritan seminary established in the colony, decided not to have his infant baptized. He

was... removed from office. Although Baptists long remained a weak force in America, they had established a foothold there" (Bebbington, 48).

- (5) Actually five groups among the English Baptists
 - (a) General Baptists (Arminian and Episcopalian appearing)
 - (b) Seventh Day Baptists (Particular Baptists otherwise)
 - (c) Particular Baptists, Closed Membership (Believers Baptism is necessary for membership in the church)
 - (d) Particular Baptists, Open Membership, (received infant baptism)
 - (e) Particular Baptists, Open Membership, (baptism was a private matter and had nothing to do with church membership - belief in the gospel is what mattered - J. Bunyon's church in Bedford held this position ((Interesting that Nehemiah would end up in Bedford))

III. Differences Between Particular and General Baptists

A. Doctrine of Salvation

1. "The Particular Baptists were stoutly Reformed" agreeing with the "standard of Calvinist orthodoxy [that] had been laid down by the Council of Dort in the Netherlands in 1619" (Bebbington, 52).
 - a) The 1644 LBC clearly articulated the Reformed position
 - b) The 1677/89 LBC, being modeled on the Savoy Declaration of the Independents (1658) of the Westminster Confession (1648) also clearly articulated the Reformed doctrine of salvation.
2. "The General Baptists, by contrast, professed the faith in a form that can be called Arminian" (Bebbington, 53).
 - a) There was theological flux amongst the GBs in the 1640's.
 - b) As late as 1645 Lambe (one of their key leaders) still rejected free will while embracing a universal atonement - more Amyraldian than Arminian.
 - c) "Soon... the General Baptists came to repudiate all the distinctive conclusions of Dort" (Bebbington, 53). They consciously rejected the so called five points of Calvinism.
3. Strong division
 - a) The Particulars considered the Arminianism of the Generals heretical
 - b) The Generals label the Particulars "the gates of Hell, their common enemy" and required one who desired to transfer membership from a PB church to be baptized as a believer a second time, saying, "Because You were baptized into the wrong Faith and so into another Gospel" (Bebbington, 54).

B. Church Polity

1. Particular Baptists, like the Independents, considered local churches to be self-governing communities, under the authority of Christ.
 - a) Unlike the Independents "they formed associations for mutual advice, financial support, and joint work" (Bebbington, 55).
2. The General Baptists did not form independent churches, but a single church of Christ. The authority of the church was centered in the General counsels and assemblies. "Messengers" had authority that extended beyond a single congregation (like the Apostles of the New Testament) .

C. Authority

1. Particulars, like the Reformed, looked to the word
2. Generals, like the Quakers, believed in an "inner light"

D. Worship

1. Particulars, like the Puritans, were committed to regulative principle
2. Generals were open to innovations

IV. Similarities of Particular and General Baptists

A. Persecution

1. Both GB and PB suffered in the ebb and flow of toleration leading up to 1689
 - a) In 1660 PB and GB came together to issue an apology professing loyalty to the crown.
 - b) William Kiffin (prominent PB pastor), using his influence, saved 12 General Baptists from possible execution.

2. Those PBs who differed over the open or closed communion came together in 1689
 3. Even the PBs and GBs enjoyed more friendly relations in the 1700's than they did in the 1650's
 4. So too with the Presbyterians and Independents
- B. Against the Church of England
1. Against Bishops
 2. Against portions of the Prayer Book
 3. Agreed that worship should not be regulated by state
 4. Inspected prospective members requiring that they make a profession of faith and show evidence of it initially and continually
- C. Believers Baptism
- D. Kingship of Christ over his church - Christ is Prophet, Priest, *and King*
- V. **Conclusion** (see Bebbington, 62-63)