

TWELVE POINTS OF LIGHT

POINT 11: BAPTISTS - ENGLISH REFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

A. Notes

1. William Kiffin, *...for you baptize children, and that is not agreeable to God's Word: If you say it is, how do you prove it by scripture?*
2. Johannes Oncken, *Every Baptist a missionary...*
3. One reason why King James I called for a new version of the Bible was to end the use of Geneva Bible which he felt contained translations that led to political criticisms of his authority by Baptists and Independents.
4. The first Baptist college was founded at Bristol, England in 1679. Graduates of Bristol helped found the College of Rhode Island (now Brown University), in 1764, the oldest Baptist college in the United States.
5. Baptists helped found the colony of Liberia. Lott Carey, former Virginia slave, was first missionary there.

B. Background of the English Reformation

1. Henry VIII (1509 - 1547)
 - a. The Church
 - 1) Owned 1/5 of all property in England.
 - 2) Clergy was not popular and corruption was widespread.
 - 3) Heresy trials were on the increase.
 - b. Influence of Oxford and Cambridge
 - 1) By 1521, Reformation developments were known in Oxford.
 - 2) Cambridge was home to many who would be instrumental to reform in England, including William Tyndale, Miles Coverdale, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer.
 - c. Some of his marriages
 - 1) Catherine of Aragon
 - a) She was his brother Arthur's wife.
 - b) They had five children but only one survived infancy, Mary.
 - c) A male heir was needed to carry on the Tudor line.
 - 2) Anne Boleyn.
 - a) They lived together for 17 years because Church would not annul his marriage to Catherine.
 - b) Henry said his conscience troubled him and God was not pleased with union since he had no male heir.
 - c) He married Anne (4 months pregnant) in 1533; Elizabeth was born.
 - d) Anne was beheaded in 1536.
 - 3) Jane Seymour gave him a son, Edward.
 - d. Legal actions
 - 1) Act of Supremacy (1534) declared Henry *...the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England.*
 - 2) The Dispensations Act (1534) put financial control of church revenues in hand of the King.
 - 3) Act of Succession (1534) declared Mary ineligible to succeed and named Elizabeth successor.
 - 4) Six Articles (1539) - tried to keep the form of Catholicism without Roman hierarchy.
2. Edward VI (1547 - 1553)
 - a. He came to the throne at the age of 10.
 - b. He was educated by Cranmer and became an ardent Protestant.

- c. Reform spread
 - 1) Images were removed from churches.
 - 2) Devotional life was stressed.
 - 3) Marriage of ministers was legalized.
 - 4) Priests became ministers.
 - 5) First book of common prayer produced in 1548 and was made law of the realm by Parliament.
 - d. He died in 1553 at the age of 15.
3. Mary Tudor (1553 - 1558)
- a. Daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine and came to the throne at 37.
 - b. Devout Catholic faith with a Spanish fervor.
 - c. Had mass restored privately at first for herself and public mass was restored in 1554.
 - d. Protestants were persecuted and more than 300 were killed, including Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer who were burned at Oxford, *Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, said Latimer, play the man; we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.*
4. Elizabeth (1558 - 1603)
- a. She was Protestant but the majority of the country was Catholic.
 - b. Exiles from Mary's reign returned with *puritan* leanings.
 - 1) They sought to *purify* church life and establish patterns in accord with Scripture.
 - 2) They sought to reform the church from within along Calvinistic Presbyterian lines.
 - c. *Separatists*
 - 1) They saw no hope for the church from within and separated to establish their own congregations.
 - 2) Called for a believer's church membership and were forerunners of congregational churches.
 - d. Legal actions
 - 1) Act of Supremacy (1559) - she declared herself supreme governor of the Church.
 - 2) Act of Uniformity (1559) - *Book of Common Prayer* was reinstated.
 - 3) Thirty Nine Articles (1563) - clergy required to subscribe to a fairly Calvinistic but ritual compromise.
 - a) Asserted predestination and reprobation, justification by faith, spiritual presence in Lord's Supper.
 - b) Mass was abolished but vestments worn by priests and altars continued.
 - e. Papal Bull against Elizabeth (1570)
 - 1) France and Spain called to carry out the Bull.
 - 2) The Spanish Armada of 1588 failed.
5. James I (1603 - 1625)
- a. Son of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the beginning of the Stuarts; reared in Presbyterian Scotland.
 - b. King James Bible
 - 1) It could be called the Contra Geneva Bible.
 - 2) There were strong leanings toward Calvinism due to the notes in the Geneva Bible.
 - 3) He authorized a new translation which had no notes.
 - c. Puritans mistakenly hoped he would introduce Presbyterianism but he refused.
 - 1) 300 Puritan clergy were ejected from parishes in the opening years of his reign.
 - 2) Some became Separatists and fled to the Netherlands.
6. Charles I (1625 - 1649)
- a. There was much persecution with great migration to America.
 - b. Westminster Confession (1643) - a revision of the *39 Articles*.
 - c. Civil war in England resulted in Charles' defeat by Cromwell.

7. Later rulers
 - a. Cromwell (1653 - 58) - a devout Calvinist who held the country together for five years.
 - b. Charles II (1660 - 1685) - tried to enforce conformity to Anglican church.
 - c. James II (1685 - 88) - Roman Catholic who was overthrown by Glorious Revolution of 1688.
 - d. William and Mary (1689 - 1702) - Episcopalians who promoted toleration

BAPTISTS

A. 17th Century Formation (note Timeline at end)

1. Separatist movement
 - a. Separatists came from the Puritans who were loyal members of the established church who sought reform and to purify the church from within.
 - b. Became impatient with reform in the established church and called for *separation* from the state church.
 - c. Sought to form congregations patterned after New Testament teaching and practice.
 - d. The first Baptists in America, Pilgrims, emerged from Separatists during the reign of James I.
2. General Baptists
 - a. The Gainsborough congregation in Holland
 - 1) Arrived there in 1608 and given hospitality by Mennonites.
 - 2) John Smyth (1570-1612)
 - a) An ordained Anglican priest who went through Puritan and Separatist stages.
 - b) He came to believe that baptism should be administered only to believers.
 - c) Smyth baptized himself and the rest of the group including Thomas Helwys.
 - d) Later he and 31 others concluded that they had been in error and sought fellowship with Mennonites.
 - e) They backed away from separating themselves from an organized church.
 - 3) Thomas Helwys
 - a) Close friend of Smyth and made arrangements for Gainsborough group's emigration to Holland.
 - b) He and others pursued separation from an organized church structure, *...contrary to the liberty of the Gospel, which is free for all men at all times and in all places; yea, so our Savior Christ doth testify-wheresoever, whosoever, and whensoever two or three are gathered in his name, there is he in the midst of them.*
 - c) He became convinced that they were wrong to leave England and must return and appeal to James I to stop persecuting the faithful and they returned in 1612 and settled in Spitalfields near London.
 - d) Helwys wrote an appeal to James I entitled *The Mystery of Iniquity*, and said *The King is a mortal man, and not God, therefore he hath no power over the mortal souls of his subjects to make laws and ordinances for them and to set spiritual lords over them.*
 - e) He was thrown in Newgate Prison and died in 1616.
 - 4) William Bradford (came to America on the Mayflower), spoke of Gainsborough group, *as the Lord's free people joined themselves...in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all his ways, make known or to be made known unto them (according to their best endeavors) whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.*
 - 5) James I threatened to *make the Puritans conform or else harr[y] them out of the land.*
 - 6) The leadership of Gainsborough decided to leave for Holland in 1607.
- b. Development
 - 1) The Helwys congregation is called the first General Baptist church.
 - 2) Other congregations developed in Lincoln, Coventry, and Tiverton.
- c. Distinctives
 - 1) No person is destined by divine decree to damnation.
 - 2) They were considered Arminian which was heresy in Calvinistic England.

3. Particular Baptists

a. Origins

- 1) Henry Jacob founded a church on the *gathered church* principle in Southwark in 1616.
- 2) John Spillsbury's congregation adopted believer's baptism.
- 3) By 1640, these churches concluded that immersion was the only biblical mode of baptism.

b. London Confession (1644) endorsed by seven congregations

- 1) Limited view of atonement.
- 2) Baptism is door into church fellowship and should only be administered to professing believers.
- 3) Ministry to be controlled by the Christian community.
- 4) No state interference in church matters.
- 5) Mutual cooperation of churches in church planting, financial assistance and resolution of controversial matters within a local church.

c. Outreach

- 1) Establishment of first Baptist church in America by Roger Williams at Providence, RI, 1639.
- 2) They sent John Myles and Thomas Proud as missionaries to Wales in 1649.

B. 18th Century Development

1. General Baptists

- a. Serious decline due to a very inward perspective.
- b. They denied membership to any who married outside the General Baptist community.
- c. Lacked an educated and trained ministry which left them open to anti-Trinitarian views.
- d. Many General Baptist churches became unorthodox and Unitarian.

2. Particular Baptists

- a. Bristol Baptist Academy supplied evangelical ministers for England, Wales, Ireland and American colonies.
- b. An evangelical Calvinism was developed to counteract the *high* Calvinism of Dr. John Gill whose interpretation reduced the need for evangelical efforts since it assured the elect of salvation.

3. Seventh Day Baptists - worshiped on the Old Testament Sabbath, Saturday.

4. Mixed communion

- a. Closed - confined membership to those baptized as believers.
- b. Open - left the issue of baptism to the individual.

5. Baptist growth accelerated due to the Great Awakening and Baptist support of the American Revolution.

C. 19th Century Development

1. Baptist churches formed in Germany, Scandinavia, France and southern Europe.
2. Societies formed to send missionaries like William Carey to India and Adoniram Judson to Burma.
3. Missionary efforts included China, Japan, Africa, and Latin America.
4. Denominational split in America over slavery with formation of Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

D. Doctrinal Distinctives

1. Authority of Scripture - Thomas Helwys (1611), We acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word..."
2. Believer's Baptism - *The London Confession* (1644), *Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispersed only upon persons professing faith. The way and manner of dispensing this Ordinance the Scripture holds to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water.*
3. Local Church Autonomy - Benjamin Griffiths (1746), *Each particular church has a complete power and authority from Jesus Christ to administer all gospel ordinances, provided they have sufficient, duly qualified officers...to receive in and cast out, and also to try and ordain their own officers, and to exercise every part of gospel discipline and church government, independent of any other church or assembly whatever.*

4. Preaching and Evangelism - *The work of the Christian ministry, it has been said, is to preach the gospel, or to hold up the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as the only way of a sinner's salvation. This is doubtless true; and if this be not the leading theme of our ministrations, we had better be anything than preachers. Woe unto us, if we preach not the gospel!*
5. Separation of Church and State - Isaac Backus (1781), *As religion must always be a matter between God and individuals, no man can be made a member of a truly religious society by force or without his own consent, neither can any corporation that is not a religious society have a just right to govern in religious affairs.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Primacy of Scripture
- B. Priority of the local church in spiritual concerns
- C. Prominence of evangelism and missions

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17th CENTURY TIMELINE

Year	Contemporary Events	The Baptists
1604	James I ordered Roman Catholic priests banished from England	
1607	Founding of Jamestown, Virginia	Two Separatist congregations flee England for Amsterdam
1609		John Smyth dialogues with the Waterlander Mennonites and baptizes himself and forty others
1611	Publication of the King James Bible	
1612	Tobacco first planted in Virginia	Thomas Helwys, formerly of Smyth's congregation, returns to England and forms the first General Baptist church. His <i>A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity</i> , is the first claim for freedom of worship in the English language
1618	Outbreak of Thirty Years War between Catholics and Protestants in Europe	
1619	First Negro slaves in North America	
1620	Pilgrims found Plymouth Colony	
1628	Charles I forced to accept Parliament's petition of civil rights	
1629	Charles I dissolves Parliament	
1633		John Spillsbury organized the first "particular" Baptist church in London
1639		Baptists persuaded Roger Williams and Ezekial Holliman to accept their view of the church, and thus the first Baptist congregation in America was formed in Providence, Rhode Island
1641	Catholic rebellion in Ireland; 30,000 Protestants massacred	
1642	Charles I attacked Parliament, leading to civil war	
1644		Seven English churches drew up the First London Confession to distinguish themselves from Anabaptists and General Baptists
1646	New England Puritan theocracy enacted laws requiring church attendance and belief in the Bible	
1648		George Fox founded Society of Friends
1649	Charles I executed; England declared a Commonwealth	
1653		First meeting of the General Assembly of General Baptists at London. Baptists are prominent in Parliament and Cromwell's New Model Army
1654		Henry Dunster, first president of Harvard College, is forced to resign his office because of Baptist views
1661	First American Bible edition, Algonquin translation by John Eliot	Members of the Seventh Day Baptist congregation at Bull-Stake-Alley in London were jailed at Newgate Prison and their pastor, John James, was hung, drawn, and quartered
1661-64		Parliament passed a series of acts excluding Baptists and other Nonconformists from holding public offices, forcing them out of schools and penalizing them for not attending Anglican services and for preaching without a license.

1663		John Myles, founder of the first Baptist church in Wales, persuaded most of his congregation to emigrate to the colonies, and they settled at Swansea, Massachusetts
1665	Great Plague of London killed over 68,000	Thomas Goold refused to allow his children to be baptized in the Puritan church and was banished from the colony. Later in the year he helped to organize the first Baptist church in Boston
1677		English Particular Baptists wrote the Second London Confession to show agreement with the Westminster Confession on most points except baptism
1678		The first Baptist meetinghouse in the colonies was raised in Boston. English General Baptists produced the Orthodox Creed that sought to unite all Protestants against the Catholic tendencies of King Charles II
1679	England passed Habeas Corpus Act - imprisonment without trial forbidden	Edward Terrill left a great sum of money in his estate for training of Baptist ministers. Eventually the fund developed into Bristol Baptist College, oldest Baptist college in the world.
1687	James II granted toleration to all religions	
1689	Parliament issued Bill of Rights; Constitutional Monarchy	
1690		General Six Principle Baptists, who practiced the laying on of hands, organized the first Baptist association in America near Providence, Rhode Island
1692	Salem witchcraft trials in New England	
1702		Baptists in colonial Carolina sent seven pounds, 12 shillings to the English General Baptists for either a minister or books
1703	John Wesley born Jonathan Edwards born	
1707		Baptist congregations in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys united to form a regular association. The first meeting was held at Philadelphia Church in July

Adapted from "The Christian History Timeline," *Christian History* (6:1997)