

BAPTIST HISTORY

Lesson 7 - Baptists and Revival in the Eighteenth Century

Recommended Reading: "Baptists Through the Centuries", Chapter 5

I. Introduction

- A. Toleration
- B. Enlightenment

II. Rational Theology

- A. The rise of anti-confessional, rationalistic biblicism
- B. The Particulars
 - 1. Confessional
 - a) Philadelphia
 - 2. John Gill
 - a) Defended Trinitarian orthodoxy
 - b) But promoted hyper-calvinism (strong double predestinarian)
 - c) Eternal justification
 - d) Some of his contemporaries began to question the legitimacy of the free offer of the gospel.
 - e) Antinomianism
 - f) Lack of prestige
 - g) In 1750 Gill himself wrote, "A sleepy frame of mind has seized us"
 - h) Sharp decline
 - (1) England
 - (a) 1715-1718, 40,500 Particular Baptists in England; by 1750, 16,500
 - (2) American colonies
 - (a) Sardis-like state! (Read Philadelphia Associations 1743 Circular Letter, P. 71)

III. The Evangelical Awakening

- A. "The Evangelical Revival in Britain and the Great Awakening in America were branches of the same vast movement" (Bebbington, 71).
 - 1. Moravian movement, directed by Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf carried the message of justification by faith across the globe.
 - 2. The Puritans of New England emphasized need for new birth
 - 3. Sermons sought to arouse spiritual commitment
 - 4. "Mass turnings of whole congregations to authentic faith, were the result" (Bebbington, 72)
 - 5. In Northampton Massachusetts a 1734 sermon by Jonathan Edwards on justification provoked a revival - the Great Awakening.
 - 6. The movement soon developed elsewhere:
 - a) Howel Harris and Daniel Rowland
 - b) George Whitfield
 - c) John Wesley
 - 7. The Baptists at first looked with suspicion at the novelties around them
 - a) Emotionalism
 - b) Sheep stealers
 - (1) Wesley took from the Generals
 - (2) Whitfield from the Particulars
 - 8. "Some Baptists found the new style of religion irresistible" (Bebbington, 74).
 - 9. To others, "the revival seemed at odds with their understanding of the faith" (Bebbington, 74).
 - a) "The awakening was not the result of careful imitation of the New Testament church order, but an expression of a delusive attachment to what was called 'New Light'. The Old Light drawn from scripture sufficed most Baptists. Most crucially, none of the revivalists in the early years practiced believers baptism" (Bebbington, 74).
 - 10. The point of contact between the Baptists and the revivalists was the doctrine of justification by faith. Both groups required that members demonstrate faith.

11. The gulf between the revivalists and the Baptists eventually narrowed, a major bridge being Bristol Baptist Academy run by the minister of Broadmead Baptist Church.
 - a) Sole Baptist denominational training institution down to 1765
 - b) Turned out ministers who maintained a form of Calvinism and were evangelistic
 - c) Many converts from the revival attended and added "knowledge to their zeal"
 - d) Many synthesized Baptist traditions with revival influences
 - e) "Of the thirty-seven Particular Baptist ministers in London between 1760 and 1820 whose background is known, twenty-three came from non-Baptist origins. Baptist life was revitalized by permeation from outside" (Bebbington, 75).
12. The influence of the New England Congregationalist Jonathan Edwards
 - a) "Freedom of the Will"
 - (1) A defense of the Reformed perspective on salvation
 - (2) "A rejection of the fatalism inherent in the double predestination taught by high Calvinists such as Gill" (Bebbington, 75).
 - (3) Evangelism was God's means for fulfilling God's purposes
 - b) Members of the Northamptonshire Association of Particular Baptists read and discussed Edwards' work and were reinvigorated in their missions efforts.

IV. New Vigor

- A. In America, the revival converts of New England often felt uncomfortable in their Congregational churches.
 1. The minister might not preach the gospel clearly or oppose the revivalists
 2. Membership usually included people who gave no evidence of conversion - New Lights wanted no fellowship with unbelievers
 3. "From the 1740's onwards, there was... a steady hemorrhaging of New Lights out of the standing order of Congregational churches into congregations of 'Separates'. In the... quest for a purer church, many Separates began to question whether infant baptism was legitimate. Individuals adopted Baptist principles, groups within churches left to form churches practicing believers baptism, and even whole Separate congregations went over to the Baptists" (Bebbington, 76).
- B. Isaac Backus
 1. Converted in 1741 under preaching of James Davenport
 2. Helped found a Separate congregation in Middlesborough, Massachusetts
 3. After being convinced of believers baptism was himself immersed 1751
 4. Remained minister of Separate church which contained both paedobaptist and anti paedobaptist members
 5. Eventually decided this arrangement would not last
 6. Founded a Baptist church in 1756
 7. This was one of a growing number of Separate Baptist Churches which was organizationally distinct from the long established Regular Baptists. A new denomination was being formed.
- C. The Separate Baptists
 1. A Very dynamic movement
 2. Free to itinerate in the manner of Whitfield
 3. Preached the need for new birth
 4. Spread to the South
 - a) "Shubal Stearns, minister of the Separate church of Tolland, Connecticut, was baptized in 1751 and set off to preach in Virginia... joined by brother-in-law, Daniel Marshall, who also became a Baptist preacher. The extended family settled at Sandy Creek, North Carolina, where the church they created became the epicenter of missionary tours in the region... By 1772 Sandy Creek had spawned 42 churches and 125 ministers" (Bebbington, 78).
 5. "A revival temper ensured rapid denominational growth."
 6. The approach of the Separate Baptists was so effective that other Baptist groups changed their ways.
 - a) Arminianism seemed dead and was discarded by many.
 - b) "Nearly all of the General Baptists of North Carolina, for example, went over to the Calvinism of the revival by 1775" (Bebbington, 78).

- c) There was cooperation between the Regulars and the Separates
- 7. "The expansionist Evangelical Calvinism of the Separates became the dominant among the Baptists of America" (Bebbington, 79).
- D. General or Free Will Baptists were also influenced by the revival
 - 1. Europe
 - a) "A church begun in 1745 at Barton in the Beans in Leicestershire fostered the growth of societies in the villages of the area by sending out preachers on Methodist lines" (Bebington, 79).
 - b) "Dan Taylor, originally a Methodist local preacher, retained his Arminian convictions after he was baptized in 1763. Taylor founded a New Connexion of General Baptists" (Bebington, 79).
 - 2. America
 - a) "Benjamin Randall, a sailmaker who had been converted under Whitfield, organized an entirely new Arminian movement. He set up a Free Will Baptist Church in New Durham, New Hampshire, in 1780" (Bebington, 79). This became a denomination of which Randall was head.

V. Conclusion

- A. See pages 80-82