## BAPTIST HISTORY Lesson 1 - What is a Baptist?

Suggested Reading: None

## I. Introduction

- A. Overview of Course
- B. Question: Where Do Baptists Come From?
  - 1. There are many kinds of Baptist's today
  - 2. No one was called a Baptist prior to the protestant reformation of the 16th century
    - a) The exception being John the Baptist, but obviously the term is being used differently when applied to him
  - 3. How, then, do we explain our existence?
    - a) This is not a problem unique to Baptists...
- II. Three Prominent Views
  - A. The Succession View
    - 1. Different forms of successionism
      - a) Apostolic (Roman Catholic, Anglicanism)
      - b) Baptismal succession
        - (1) Similar to apostolic succession but relies upon the credentials of the administrator. To validate your baptism you must demonstrate that the administrator was qualified.
        - (2) Must trace back to John the Baptist
      - c) Church succession
        - (1) "Churches come from churches like horses come from horses." (B.H. Carol)
        - (2) This view understands a true church to be a Baptist church.
        - (3) Must demonstrate a succession Baptist church by Baptist church back to the time of the apostles.
        - (4) Different theories
          - (a) Chain link succession (Best example of this theory: "The Welch Succession of Primitive Baptists")
          - (b) Kingship succession (The thought is that Christ has always had a true church in the world, and a true church must be a Baptist church)
            - i) See "The Trail of Blood" chart and book.
            - ii) Usually very opposed to the idea that Baptists came out of the Reformation. To them this would imply that Rome was a true church.
            - iii) See James McGoldrick's, "Baptist Successionism" for a response.
  - B. Anabaptist Spiritual Kinship
    - 1. Not chainlink, but kinship
    - 2. The modern western Baptist tradition traces itself back to the Anabaptists who arose after he Reformation.
      - a) Renihan will come to teach you about the Anabaptists in a couple of weeks.
    - 3. I won't say much here. For now, notice what the introduction to the first London Baptist Confession says: "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 at London, Anno 1646."
  - C. English Separatist Theory
    - 1. Modern Baptist churches emerged in England in the first half of the 17th century out of English separatism.
      - a) General (atonement) Baptists
      - b) Particular (atonement) Baptists
- III. What is a Baptist? (See James McGoldrick's, "Baptist Successionism", pages 6-8)
  - A. "Baptists have historically held to the following theological tenets:
    - 1. The supreme and final authority of the Holy Scriptures in all matters of doctrine and practice;

- the Trinitarian understanding of one God revealed in three fully divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:
- 3. the complete deity and full humanity of Christ, the virgin-born Son of God, who was crucified for sinners but rose bodily from the grave;
- 4. the universal sinfulness of mankind and man's alienation from God because of sin;
- 5. salvation entirely by grace, through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only redeemer and mediator with God;
- 6. the church as the local body of baptized believers associated voluntarily for the worship of God and the proclamation of God's Word to the world;
- 7. the two ordinances or sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, neither of which is essential for salvation; the ordinances of the church are for believers only, and baptism must precede church membership and admission to the Lord's Supper;
- 8. the separation of church and state as divinely ordained but distinct spheres of authority;
- 9. the second coming of Christ and the judgment of mankind for eternal bliss or eternal punishment" (McGoldrick, 7-8).
- B. With these core theological tenets in mind we are now better equipped to evaluate the three views presented above.
  - 1. If we were to reduce what it means to be a Baptist down to the issue of baptism alone then perhaps the successionist or Anabaptist positions could hold some water.
  - 2. But when we consider what it means to be a "Baptist" more broadly those theories crumble.
  - 3. This is particularly true when we consider the theology of Reformed Baptists and ask, "where did they come from?" Our tradition clearly flows out of 17th century English separatism.

