

Baptist Theology

I. Introduction

A. Baptists: Classic evangelicals

1. Conversion-centered
2. Gathered church: converted membership

B. Notable Baptist Creeds

1. (Second) London Confession (1689): “Westminster Confession immersed”
2. Philadelphia Confession (1742): Revision of London Confession
3. New Hampshire Confession (1833)
 - a. Mildly Calvinistic
 - b. Most popular—basis of other confessions (SBC, GARBC, etc.)
4. Baptist Faith and Message (1925, 1963, 2000): Southern Baptist revision of the NH Confession

C. Baptist Distinctives

1. Baptism of believers by immersion
2. Congregational church polity
3. Separation of church & state/soul liberty

II. Landmarkism: Baptist Confessionalism?

A. Founder: James R. Graves

B. Tenets

1. No universal church, only local churches
2. Baptist perpetuity: Baptists have always existed
3. Baptist successionism
 - a. A succession of Baptist churches back to Christ
 - b. A “trail of blood”
4. Only Baptist churches are true churches
 - a. Only Baptist baptism is true baptism
 - b. Only true churches (Baptist) may truly administer the Lord’s Supper → “closed communion” (only Baptists may participate)
 - c. Differentiates between “bride of Christ” (those belonging to Baptist churches) and “friends of the bridegroom” (non-Baptist Christians)
5. Also popularized Dispensationalism among southern Baptists

C. “High church” Baptists?

1. Visible church only
2. Historical (not apostolic) succession
3. Baptism now a means of grace? (necessary for membership in Bride of Christ)

III. Theologians

A. Developers of Baptist Theology

1. John Gill

- a. First noted Baptist theologian
- b. Background
 - 1) Baptists emerged in Great Britain in the 17th century, but legal restrictions kept them from flourishing theologically until the 18th century
 - 2) Early Baptists divided between the General (Arminian) Baptists and the Particular (Calvinistic) Baptists

- c. 9-volume exposition of the Bible, one of the first to draw upon Jewish writings and traditions in illuminating the background
 - d. *Body of Divinity*
 - 1) First Baptist systematic theology
 - 2) Spurgeon, however, called it “a continent of mud”
 - e. Accused of hyper-Calvinism: Not offering Christ to unregenerate & instead preaching gospel to “awakened” sinners
2. Roger Williams
- a. Influential but not Baptist for long
 - b. Development: Puritan → Separatist → Baptist → “Seeker”
 - c. Major Contribution: Separation of church and state (to protect the *church*) and religious liberty
 - d. Leading anti-Quaker polemicist
3. Andrew Fuller
- a. Evangelical Calvinism
 - b. Mediated between Hyper-Calvinism and Sandemanianism (“easy-believism”)
 - c. Book: *Gospel of Christ Worthy of All Acceptation*
 - 1) Stressed free offer of the gospel
 - 2) Theological framework for William Carey & missions movement
4. C. H. Spurgeon
- a. Evangelical Calvinism (like Whitefield)
 - b. Evangelical Puritanism
 - c. Downgrade Controversy: Defense of evangelical truth
- B. Early Southern Baptists
- 1. Systematic Theology → Calvinistic emphasis
 - a. John L. Dagg: *Manual of Theology* (1857)
 - b. James Petigru Boyce: *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (1887) and defense of inerrancy
 - 2. Biblical studies/exegesis
 - a. John Broadus: *Gospel of Matthew*
 - b. A. T. Robertson: Work in NT Greek
- C. Liberal Baptists
- 1. William Newton Clarke
 - a. Pioneer for Baptist liberalism
 - b. *An Outline of Christian Theology* (1898)
 - 2. Walter Rauschenbusch: Social Gospel
 - 3. William Rainey Harper and Univ. of Chicago: Center for liberals
 - 4. Harry Emerson Fosdick: Popularizer of liberalism
- D. “Progressive” Conservatives
- 1. A. H. Strong
 - a. Much like Mediating Theologians
 - b. President of Rochester Theological Seminary
 - c. Ethical monism
 - 1) Philosophical key to Strong’s approach
 - 2) Tries to balance immanence and transcendence
 - 3) All revelation, natural & special, comes through Christ

- d. Proponent of theistic evolution
- e. *Systematic Theology* (1886)
- 2. E. Y. Mullins
 - a. Somewhat progressive, but generally orthodox Southern Baptist
 - b. Original author of *Baptist Faith and Message*
 - c. *Axioms of Religion* and “soul competency” (1908)
- 3. Carl F. H. Henry
 - a. Father of the New Evangelicalism
 - 1) Engagement w/ culture & scholarship
 - 2) *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*
 - b. Defender of inerrancy and propositional revelation: *God, Revelation, and Authority*