THE HISTORY OF BAPTISTS IN ENGLAND

In the early 1700’s, the religious picture in England was awful. The major group’s had many of its members and leaders that were skeptics when it came to Bible truths. Likewise, immorality was rampant in the highest levels of leadership to the members in the smallest churches. When the Gospel is not “lived”, it is not “contagious” or effective in reaching others. The results were that the church was ignored, neglected, and the topic of disgusted scoffers. Only God could clean up the mess and bring revival. And, that is just what He did!

_The Great Awakening was an evangelical and revitalization movement that swept Protestant Europe and British America, and especially the American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s, leaving a permanent impact on American Protestantism. It resulted from powerful preaching that gave listeners a sense of deep personal revelation of their need of salvation by Jesus Christ. Pulling away from ritual, ceremony, sacramentalism and hierarchy, the Great Awakening made Christianity intensely personal to the average person by fostering a deep sense of spiritual conviction and redemption, and by encouraging introspection and a commitment to a new standard of personal morality._

The movement was a monumental social event in New England, which challenged established authority and incited rancor and division between traditionalist Protestants who insisted on the continuing importance of ritual and doctrine, and the revivalists, who encouraged emotional involvement. It had a major impact in reshaping the Congregational church, the Presbyterian church, the Dutch Reformed Church, and the German Reformed denomination, and strengthened the small Baptist and Methodist Anglican denominations. It had little impact on most Anglicans, Lutherans, Quakers and non-Protestants. Throughout the colonies, especially in the south, the revivalist movement increased the number of African slaves and free blacks who were exposed to, and subsequently, converted to, Christianity.

Unlike the Second Great Awakening, which began about 1800 and which reached out to the unchurched, the First Great Awakening focused on people who were already church members. To the evangelical imperatives of Reformation Protestantism, _18th-century American Christians added emphases on "outpourings of the Holy Spirit"_. Revivals encapsulated those hallmarks and spread the newly created evangelicalism into the early republic. _Evangelical preachers "sought to include every person in conversion, regardless of gender, race, and status."_ (Taken from Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Great_Awakening).

The movement that touched England later flourished in America. The primary preachers of this Awakening were John and Charles Wesley (founders of the Methodist Church) and George Whitefield. These three men became friends during their days at Oxford. Their preaching and the music in their meetings proclaimed a supernatural and life-changing gospel. As a result, God moved in great power, and the impact was felt in every sphere of life….law and court cases, morals in daily living, religious fervor and renewal, and in genuine evidences of God’s Spirit at work in the lives of men.

**THE GENERAL BAPTISTS...**

This group moved from “death to life” as a Baptist entity. The doctrines that were the foundation of sermons preached in the Awakening were what Baptist’s had preached and believed for years. So, this new resurgence in Biblical truth and genuine conversion greatly helped to bring revival and restoration to the General Baptists.
One of the major preachers that helped to “fan the flames” of revival was a man named Dan Taylor. He was the son of an English miner. After being converted in a Methodist meeting, he started preaching in 1761. However, he could not agree with Wesley’s doctrines on several points. Two of those that most troubled him as he read the New Testament was the practice of infant baptism which Wesley had continued to practice and the matter of security of one’s salvation in Christ Jesus vs. “falling from grace” to be lost again having been saved.

In 1763, he withdrew from the Methodist church, and along with others that were also struggling under those beliefs, he was baptized in a General Baptist Church. He organized a General Baptist Church that year and became the pastor. He would be responsible for the formation of various Baptist organizations such as a foreign missions society, aid to needy churches in the homeland (England), and assistance in training of young ministers seeking to become pastors and missionaries.

**THE PARTICULAR BAPTISTS….**

They were also tremendously blessed by the Great Awakening of 1730’s and 40’s. The biggest impact was a movement away from the chilling spirit of extreme Calvinists*… (see asterisk below this paragraph)…which had no intention of doing evangelism or missions. The belief of Particular Baptists was and is that God will save who He chooses so we do not need to be outreach oriented at home or abroad. One name that appears as a tremendous influence in bringing change to Particular Baptists’ belief in that area was Andrew Fuller.

*Fuller, a Particular Baptist, was a controversialist in defense of the governmental theory of the atonement against hyper-Calvinism (God will save those He chooses and man has no responsibility to tell folks about Jesus…God will save them without our witness) on the one hand and Socinianism (taught that God is not a Trinity, and Jesus was not divine. Therefore, the death of Jesus on the cross did not save us from sin) and Sandemanianism on the other (which taught that “intellectual assent of Jesus’ life and death was the same as being saved). Abraham Booth accused him of giving up true Calvinism. Fuller debated theology with the General Baptist Dan Taylor, but they remained on good terms.*

According to Christianity Today, Andrew Fuller was:"“Tall, stout and muscular, a famous wrestler in his youth,” this self-taught farmer’s son became a champion for Christ, “the most creatively useful theologian” of the Particular Baptists. His book, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, 1785, restated Calvinist theology for Baptists influenced by the Evangelical Revival. His Doctorate of Divinity was bestowed by Brown University, Rhode Island.” (This article was taken from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Fuller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Fuller)).

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**NOTE:** This “insert below” about Calvinism will help to explain the influence of this belief system and how it has been present since 1500’s in Christian movements. Once I have reviewed this material with you, we will return to how God worked in the Particular Baptist group.
John Calvin (1509-1564) was a prominent French theologian during the Protestant Reformation and the father of the theological system known as Calvinism. Martin Luther and Calvin are arguably the most significant architects of the Reformation. "If Luther sounded the trumpet for reform, Calvin orchestrated the score by which the Reformation became a part of Western civilization." (http://www.theopedia.com/john-calvin).

There are two mains camps of theology within Christianity in America today: Arminianism and Calvinism. Calvinism is a system of biblical interpretation taught by John Calvin. Calvin lived in France in the 1500's at the time of Martin Luther who sparked the Reformation.

The system of Calvinism adheres to a very high view of scripture and seeks to derive its theological formulations based solely on God’s Word. It focuses on God’s sovereignty, stating that God is able and willing by virtue of his omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence, to do whatever He desires with His creation. It also maintains that within the Bible are the following teachings: That God, by His sovereign grace predestines people into salvation; that Jesus died only for those predestined; that God regenerates the individual where he is then able and wants to choose God; and that it is impossible for those who are redeemed to lose their salvation.

Arminianism, on the other hand, maintains that God predestined, but not in an absolute sense. Rather, He looked into the future to see who would pick him and then He chose them. Jesus died for all peoples' sins who have ever lived and ever will live, not just the Christians. Each person is the one who decides if he wants to be saved or not. And finally, it is possible to lose your salvation (although some Arminians believe you cannot lose your salvation).

Today, the Calvinism movement is once again making a resurgence. It is called “Reformed Theology” and is very popular among some of the leading voices that are shaping the new generation in America. This group holds to five primary points. They are.....

Calvinism is known by an acronym: T.U.L.I.P.

- **Total Depravity** (also known as Total Inability and Original Sin)
- **Unconditional Election**
- **Limited Atonement** (also known as Particular Atonement)
- **Irresistible Grace**
- **Perseverance of the Saints** (also known as Once Saved Always Saved).

(This material was taken from: http://www.calvinistcorner.com/tulip.htm).
And. the greatest change and progress following the revitalizing of the Particular Baptists was in the area of mission work. One of the men at the heart of this modern mission’s movement was William Carey. William Carey was a member of the Church of England (Anglican) and as a young man, had become a journeyman cobbler. However, his life would radically change when he was invited by a friend to attend an evangelistic service in a group that was not aligned with the high church tradition. He heard the Gospel and was saved. Soon, he became a “lay preacher” and the more he studied the New Testament, the more convinced he was that he could not stay in the Church of England. So, in 1783, he joined the Baptist church. He would become a Baptist pastor

Carey was extremely smart. He “taught” himself the subjects that he needed to excel as a pastor and missionary. On Mondays and Tuesdays, he studied what we would consider college curriculum. On Wednesdays through Fridays, he studied what would be offered today in seminary. He was his own teacher and he was the student….and a very good student, indeed.

Carey was a born linguist, for it took him only six weeks to master Latin so that he could read it readily. In three weeks, he learned to read French. Within seven years, he read the Bible daily in six or seven languages, having only his spare time from the cobbler’s shop in which to learn them. He also mastered history and zoology. His love for learning came from his grandfather who was a schoolmaster. At an early age, he demonstrated a love to read, draw, and study. As a child, he began a collection of birds and insects, which he placed in the Carey home, much to the disgust of his family. Because of his love for natural history, he became “the authority” on the subject in his home town. (10 BOYS AND GIRLS WHO BECAME FAMOUS MISSIONARIES, Zondervan Press, 1949, p.6-7).

As he read about Captain Cook’s voyages to the South Sea Islands, he became heavily burdened for people that did not know Christ around the world. He began to post maps that were hand drawn by him on brown paper all around his cobbler’s bench. These maps reminded Carey of two things…1) a divine promise that was yet unclaimed; 2) a divine duty that had been neglected. Every day that he was making or repairing shoes, the world was more and more on his heart. Finally, in May, 1792, he had the chance to preach for the Northampton Association at Nottingham. He preached what would become the sermon most mentioned that he would ever preach. The text was Isaiah 54:2-3. His title was, “EXPECT GREAT THINGS FROM GOD; ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR GOD!” His sermon was powerful and passionate. Following the sermon, he gave an invitation. To his dismay, there was no response.

Slowly, over the next months and years, the people did come around slowly through the continual emphasis given to missions by men like Andrew Fuller. Fuller was the organizer of mission’s supporters and financial backers as the leader of the Baptist Missionary Society and Carey agreed to be the missionary that the BMS would send. Fuller said to Carey, “It is clear that there is a rich mine of gold (souls to be saved) in India; if you will go down, I will hold the ropes.” In 1793, Carey and a surgeon by the name of John Thomas went to India as missionaries.

By 1812, portions of the Bible had been translated into 18 languages and had published Gospel tracts in 20 languages. 10,000 children had heard the teachings of Christian beliefs and 700 people had been baptized. And, a dozen nationals had surrendered to the Gospel ministry! It was greatly encouraging to Carey and others that had joined him in the work.
Carey was a phenomenal servant of God. He mastered Bengali language and set up a printing press to print materials in Bengali to be distributed. Carey recognized the importance of education so he opened grade schools and in time, a Christian college in Serampore. After seven years in India, Carey saw the first Christian convert…a Hindu by the name of Krishna-Pal. For 20 years after his conversion, God anointed his preaching and work and gave Krishna-Pal unusual success. He became a teacher of Bengali at Fort Williams College in which the English had opened to train their officials. He mastered many languages and dialects while serving in this role and used his knowledge to propagate Gospel tracts and Bibles in many languages. By the end of his life, he had translated the Bible in whole or in part into 35 languages. And, his grammar books that he published for learning Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi, and Sikh made it possible for missionaries to learn and master those dialects more readily.

He established a hospital for lepers and opened a school for poor children. He was instrumental in stopping the pagan practice of placing the widow with her dead husband and burning her “alive” with his body so she could follow her husband in death. And, he was a strong opponent that helped to bring attention to the horrible practice of sacrificing human infants to the “River gods” by throwing the babes into the Ganges.

Ten years before his death, he wrote his “missionary creed”……

“Remember three things. First, that it is your duty to preach the Gospel to every creature; Second, remember that God has declared that His word shall accomplish that for which it is sent; Third, that He can easily remove the present formidable obstacles as we can move the small particles of dust.

When Carey died June 9, 1834 at the age of 72, he was content in knowing he had done the best that he could in pouring out his life energies to reach India with the Gospel. His tombstone carries his name, date of birth and death, and the lines taken from a hymn by Isaac Watts, O HELP MY UNBELIEF……

A wretched, poor, and helpless worm, On thy kind arms, I fall.

ADVANCES ON THE HOME FRONT: HOME MISSIONS/MINISTRY IN ENGLAND

Whenever God moves on the hearts of men, there is a great movement in all of the areas of the work. That was true in the work in England. As Baptists had a resurgence in international missions, so there was a greater burden for mission work immediately around them. As a result, several great advances occurred in this era…

1) Lots of direct intervention to stop all religious discrimination and hardships placed on dissenters.

2) Theological schools were established to train prospective pastors and missionaries.

3) The Sunday School movement with Robert Raikes was begun for children trapped in child labor. The Sunday Schools were just that…time for the children that were the labor force through the week to meet on Sunday in order to learn how to read and write by learning the Bible and becoming Christians.

4) Baptists were in the forefront on programs set in place to aid prison reform.

5) Joseph Hughes, a Baptist, instrumental in starting the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) and he was the first Secretary.
6) William Knibb, a Baptist missionary to Jamaica, was one of the pioneers in the Abolitionist movement.

7) Several great preachers became prominent in the years after the Awakening…
   a. Robert Hall (1764-1831).
   b. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892).

One of the most significant things God does when He moves in the hearts of His people is to bring about reconciliation and harmony. That was one of the most powerful outcomes of the Awakening. In 1891, the division that had been in place since the early 1600’s and the founding of General and Particular Baptists was healed as the two groups came together to form one group. The Baptist Union of Great Britain was formed. Again, this would not have happened had it not been for Andrew Fuller. A century earlier, he was responsible for his work to soften the hard stand of Particular Baptists on the tenets of Calvinism and the extreme doctrine of election that eliminated evangelism and missions and resulted in churches experiencing lethargy.

Likewise, Dan Taylor was instrumental in bringing General Baptists out of their liberalism and theological malaise into a renewed commitment to Biblical authority and mandates. Others pastors and leaders certainly helped to move the two groups together.

As you would expect with Baptists, not all were supportive of the Union of the two groups and therefore, some remained outside of the Union to form other groups.

(Unless otherwise noted, this material came from THE BAPTIST MARCH IN HISTORY, by Robert Baker, Convention Press, Nashville, TN, 1958).