# SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PARTICULAR BAPTIST VIEWS ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

by

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To my husband, whose aid was invaluable this past semester, and the elders of Christ Reformed Baptist Church, who encouraged me all the way through seminary

Abstract

The trend in the literature is to treat the 17th century English Particular Baptists' views on religious liberty as an anomaly of Baptist views on the subject or even to bypass them entirely. Given that the Particular Baptists emerged a distinct group with a self-conscious identity of standing in the Reformed tradition and heavily influenced by the English Congregationalists, it is better to treat their views as distinctive in their own right and to seek to understand them on their own terms, independent of what the General Baptists did or wrote. This work seeks to understand the Particular Baptists first in their historical and religious context and then examines the foundations and practical outworking of their argument before comparing their views to those held by other religious groups of the day.

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# 1. The Matter at Hand

## Introduction

Seventeenth century England was a tumultuous period.[1] It remains a significant part of Western history for the role that the events and ideologies in play would have in shaping the development of the American colonies as well as in shaping the future British Empire. The events that unfolded had a lasting impact both on the political and religious future of England.

For centuries, religion and politics had been closely intertwined. Julius Caesar, after all, had been given the title of *pontifex maximus*; Constantine had called the Council of Nicaea; Augustine had offered a religious explanation for the fall of Rome; the Crusaders went forth at a pope's behest; the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire struggled with the pope for political power; Luther enjoyed the favor of a German prince; Calvin struggled with the Geneva City Council on a variety of issues; Henry VIII broke England away from the Roman communion; and it was all neatly summarized by James I of England and VI of Scotland in 1604 at the Hampton Court Conference when he said, "No bishop, no king."[2]

James' words brought him into conflict with the English reformers, and most of the 17th century was an ongoing battle between the Stuart monarchy and the growing number of religious groups in England. This created the perfect stage for discussions of religious liberty. The 17th century saw the emergence of radical groups such as the

1. This is shown in the title of Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1975).
2. John Milton, *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England*, ed. Will Taliaferro Hale (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), 154.

Quakers,[3] Seekers, and Ranters,[4] as well as less radical groups such as the General and Particular Baptists and the Congregationalists. While there had been a time in history when sects such as the above were put down with relative ease by the church, 17th century England was no longer that time. Despite the passage of laws designed to restrict the movements of dissenters, the groups continued to grow. As a result, discussions arose about freedom of conscience and the liberty to worship accordingly.

Due to the heretofore entanglement of church and state, especially the way in which citizenship was tied to baptism, this was no small matter. Many felt strongly that civil order rested on a uniformity of religion while others argued that there could be honest differences on religious matters while maintaining an orderly society.[5] The other matter at hand was just how far that liberty ought to extend—some argued that only those within the greater Protestant tradition could have the freedom to worship according to their religion while others, such as Roman Catholics and heretics, did not have the right to enjoy this liberty. The magistrate, it was thought, still had the duty to enforce the first table of the law, even if this did not extend to such things as enforcing a particular view of church government, the sacraments (especially baptism, in this case), or even of worship itself.

These debates on religious liberty have received considerable attention due to the effect they had on the developing American colonies as well as the latter half of the 17th century. These questions were just as significant for the fledgling colonies as they were

3. For more on Quakerism, see T. L. Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism, and the Lamb's War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
4. For more on Seekers and Ranters, see J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
5. The clearest example of this can be seen in the events occurring at Massachusetts Bay Colony with Roger Williams, see Timothy Hall, *Separating Church and State: Roger Williams and Religious Liberty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

for the established nation: the Congregationalists at Massachusetts Bay colony dealt with frequent challenges from Quakers and Baptists, challenges that culminated in the founding of Rhode Island under Roger Williams. Letters debating these issues were exchanged across the Atlantic, and while communication was slow and difficult, neither region was untouched by what went on in the other's land. Thus, the nature of the discussion in England had significance for the development of the idea in the colonies so that today's discussions on the subject must take into account what went on across the Atlantic even when they focus on American developments.

One group amongst the many voices of the 17th century that receives relatively little attention is that of the Particular Baptists.[6] Their writings on the subject are relatively few. Most well-known are the writings of the General Baptists, as they were particularly vocal in calling for religious liberty. Nonetheless, the Particular Baptists made their own contributions on the subject. The Particular Baptists believed in the importance of liberty of conscience, and though they consistently maintained that the magistrate was obligated to enforce the first table of the law, their writings laid important groundwork for the future.

## The State of the Literature

### *The Present Day Discussion*

The story of religious liberty is a long-debated one. The traditional story, as told by Samuel Gardiner, is that it was the inevitable result of progress brought on by the

6. The Particular Baptists were the Calvinistic Baptists, so called because they held to a particular view of Christ's atonement rather than the universal (or general) atonement advocated by the Arminian General Baptists. I will go into further detail in both groups in chapter three.

Puritans, especially during the Civil Wars.[7] In this version of the tale, the Puritans were the harbingers of radical change that would re-order English society with greater liberty for all. The emphasis is placed on the inevitable nature of progress, and the Puritans, as a significant force in this period, receive the credit for that progress.

In recent decades, though, this story has been challenged by historians who sought to revise that tale to take into account that most of the Puritans did not actually believe in religious liberty for all. Writers such as Avihu Zakai and David Zaret have pointed out that the Puritans continued to believe that the magistrate should enforce the first table of the law; therefore, there could be no religious liberty for unitarians (such as the Socinians), radical dissenters (such as the Quakers), or Roman Catholics. Zakai specifically argues that the Puritans, rather than being agents of innovation, fought to maintain traditions. Thus these historians argue that religious liberty came about as a result, not of religious thought, but of irreligious thought.[8]

Other historians, however, point to more religious origins for religious liberty. Whereas the revisions to the traditional tale have brought attention to the limited nature of religious liberty in Puritan thought, others have turned to the Separatists, Independents, and radical dissenters for the cause of religious liberty, and it is here that both Particular and General Baptists receive attention.

In a 1985 article in *Baptist History and Heritage*, G. Hugh Wamble examines the Baptist contributions to the separation of church and state.[9] He gives an overview of eight

7. S. R. Gardiner, ed., *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625–1660* (Oxford: 1906), ix–x.
8. Avihu Zakai, "Orthodoxy in England and New England: Puritans and the Issue of Religious Toleration, 1640–1650," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 135, no. 3 (September 1991): 401–441. David Zaret, "Religion and the Rise of Liberal-Democratic Ideology in 17th Century England," *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 2 (April 1989): 163–179.
9. G. Hugh Wamble, "Baptist Contributions to Separation of Church and State," *Baptist History and Heritage* 20, no. 3 (July: 1985): 3–13.

ideas that the Baptists contributed to the discussion. In his argument, he does briefly mention Particular Baptists, but, for the most part, his argument is built upon the work of American Baptists (such as Roger Williams and Revolution-era work). In the same issue, Slayden A. Yarbough discusses the Separatist influence upon Baptist thinking on religious liberty.[10] His conclusion to the article looks only at Thomas Helwys and John Smyth, two of the founding General Baptists. Four years later, B. R. White did the same in his article on the Baptist arguments for religious freedom.[11]

The General Baptist authors tended to hold to a more radical form of religious liberty; namely, they believed that religious liberty ought to be for all without limitation or exception. As a result, General Baptist writings are both more directly connected to today's views on religious liberty and more prevalent. The early Particular Baptists were more concerned with establishing their orthodoxy in relationship to the more mainstream Presbyterians and Independents to gain a measure of tolerance than they were with tackling the issue of religious liberty outright. Inherent to their writings is a conservatism not shared by the Arminian General Baptists who did not have an orthodox, generally accepted theological group to latch onto. As a result, the writings of the two groups ended up looking very different to one another.

The larger, more prevalent groups, such as the Independents, and the smaller, but more vocal radical groups tend to receive the most attention in the literature. The Particular Baptist view of religious liberty was not, on the whole, drastically different from that of their Presbyterian and Independent brethren; what set them apart was the

10. Slayden A. Yarbough, "The English Separatist Influence on the Baptist Tradition of Church-State Issues," *Baptist History and Heritage* 20, no. 3 (July: 1985): 14–23.
11. Barrie White, "Early Baptist Arguments for Religious Freedom: Their Overlooked Agenda," *Baptist History and Heritage* 24, no. 4 (October: 1989): 3–10.

breadth of those to whom they would grant religious liberty, but this is not a drastic difference in substance. As a result, it is easy to pass over the Particular Baptists, even though many of them were politically involved during the Interregnum and Civil Wars.

One exception to the rule comes in the form of a biography. Muriel James wrote a biography of Hanserd Knollys, a Particular Baptist minister whose life spanned nearly the entirety of the 17th century (1599–1691). The book is titled *Religious Freedom on Trial: Hanserd Knollys—Early Baptist Hero*. James clearly sees Knollys as a hero of religious liberty; unfortunately, she never truly delves into how Knollys is that hero.

As one reads through the book, one gets the distinct impression that Hanserd Knollys saw religious liberty no differently than a 20th or 21st century American might. She cites his refusal to aid in toleration for Roman Catholics under James II as evidence that he feared that the Roman Catholics would take over politically and then suppress dissent even more than the English government currently was; this analysis, however, falls short as it does not take into account the whole of Particular Baptist theology, its relationship to Roman Catholicism, and the Particular Baptist tendency to exclude Roman Catholics from religious liberty for religious reasons.

This same sort of indifference to the distinctive views of Particular Baptist theology can be seen in a *Baptist Quarterly* article by Paul Weller titled "Freedom and Witness in a Multi-Religious Society."[12] There, he argues that the broad consensus amongst Baptists was for the radical view of religious liberty for all people. He then takes the qualified views of Christopher Blackwood[13] against toleration for Roman Catholics to

12. Paul Weller, "Freedom and Witness in a Multi-Religious Society: A Baptist Perspective, Part I," *Baptist Quarterly* 33, no. 6 (1990): 252–264.
13. Christopher Blackwood (1606–1670) was a Particular Baptist minister in the 17th century; I will discuss him in further detail later.

be an anomaly amongst Baptist theology.[14] In so doing, he blurs the distinctions between Particular and General Baptists so that they are seen as one group.

John Coffey treats the Baptists in a similar fashion. In his article, "Puritanism and Liberty Revisited," Coffey seeks to offer a rebuttal to the revisionist history that said that the Puritans had not very much to do with religious liberty.[15] He begins by defining Puritanism according to practice. The religious culture of Puritanism is (both for him and other historians) marked by a religious zeal that expresses itself in

> "'a ceaseless round' of 'Bible-reading and Bible-study, sermon-attendance and sermon-gadding, fasting, and whole-day sabbatarianism'. Participants in this culture–those whom we call puritans–could be moderates close to the heart of the established church, Presbyterians, separatists, or even 'seekers' belonging to no church but awaiting God's restoration of true forms."[16]

Coffey's broad definition highlights the difficulty of the term "Puritan" in the literature; it is as a result of his broad definition that he is able to argue that a radical form of religious liberty can indeed be found amongst Puritans.

His treatment of Baptists specifically is similarly broad: he treats both General and Particular Baptists as nearly the same group so that those Particular Baptists who disagree with a radical notion of religious liberty are cast into the minority as an oddity of the group. Likewise, Coffey's subset of Particular Baptists is somewhat broad: he does not take into account that the Particular Baptists he has calling for a radical religious

14. Weller, 259.
15. John Coffey, "Puritanism and Liberty Revisited," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 4 (Dec., 1998): 961–85.
16. Ibid., 962.

liberty are also the same Particular Baptists who departed from the tradition in significant ways. As a result, he includes amongst his Particular Baptists the antipaedobaptist Anglican minister John Tombes (1603–76), who never departed from the Church of England.[17]

### *The Historical Discussion*

The Particular Baptists were not Puritans.[18] They emerged from a Separatist church and had no designs upon reforming the Church of England. They nonetheless had much in common theologically with the Presbyterians and Independents. They saw themselves as standing in the same tradition, even if they departed from the aforementioned two groups on some matters. It should come as no surprise, then, that their views of religious liberty are as similar as they are to the Puritans, though their experiences of persecution drove them to a broader definition of religious liberty.

The blurring of lines of General and Particular Baptists with no real attention to the distinctive contours of Particular Baptist theology results in a skewed picture of what, exactly, they believed. To be a Particular Baptist meant to hold very specific theological views.[19] These views cannot be separated from what they believed about religious liberty. Their theology underscored their beliefs about why religious liberty should be limited to exclude certain groups—even when there were also political reasons to do so.

The body of literature of Particular Baptists on the subject of religious liberty is rather small. William Kiffin wrote an apology on behalf of the Baptist churches pleading

17. John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. by Richard Barber, (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1982), 301–302.
18. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be using the term "Puritan" to refer to those part of the movement *within* the Church of England to reform her in line with Reformed convictions. While the secondary literature will make reference to "Radical Puritans," for clarity's sake, I will use the term solely for the English Reformers in the Church of England from the 1540s to 1662, when they were forced to leave the church upon the enactment of the Act of Uniformity.
19. The Particular Baptists were confessing churches who published several confessional documents over the century in 1644, 1646, 1677, and 1689.

for religious liberty, and this sets the general tone of Particular Baptist literature. The Particular Baptists faced considerable opposition because their views on baptism resulted in their theological opponents labeling them as Anabaptists. As a result, they expended a great deal of energy defending themselves from that claim; indeed, they ended up needing to spend considerable time writing against groups such as the Quakers. Instead, they desired to align themselves with the Reformed groups in England. Many of their efforts went to defending orthodoxy and their practice of baptizing only professing believers.

Nonetheless, they did make their own, unique contributions to the discussion. The political and religious climate of Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary England fostered a climate in which the Particular Baptists came to the conclusion that a stable civil state may be maintained that allows for a variety of theological positions within the Protestant traditions. At the same time, they continued to believe, both for theological and political reasons, that the magistrate ought to continue to enforce the first table of the law against heretical and non-Christian groups.

The Particular Baptists were a distinct group unto themselves in the 17th century, and the literature of both then and today tended to conflate all Baptists into a nebulous grouping that does not do justice to their work. In the 17th century, they were frequently mistaken (and subsequently dismissed) as Anabaptists, while today's writers will often refer to "Baptist writings" and then cite only General Baptists such as Thomas Helwys or Leonard Busher. As a result, there is a distinct lack of clarity in the literature. In examining specific Particular Baptist writings and how they fit into their day and place in

between the radical dissenters and English Reformed, my goal is to allow the Particular Baptists to speak for themselves so that they might be set apart amongst the Baptists as a distinctive voice. The Particular Baptists were influenced heavily by the Independents in their theology and their arguments concerning religious toleration followed likewise.

Central to this issue are both political and religious concerns. Religion was just as much an important part of the English Civil Wars as were discussions of political theory. Thus, I intend to make my case by examining the political situation and how that intersected with religious concerns. Integral to this is also the place of Roman Catholics.

## 2. The Political Context of the 17th Century

The religious and political climates of 17th century England were complex and tumultuous.[20] The Stuart monarchy's clashes with Parliament and frequent constitutional crises made for an unstable political climate. The political intrigue surrounding Roman Catholicism and later Stuarts' sympathy for it were also key factors in the religious developments in the century. The political changes were accompanied by religious changes that were significant to the development of the Particular Baptists; thus it is important to understand the political context surrounding the Particular Baptists in order to see how they situated themselves.

### The Stuart Monarchy

Seventeenth century England was marked by the relatively short-lived Stuart monarchy, but Stuart rule would leave its mark on both England and Scotland well after their reign had come to an end in 1689. Religious tensions ran high in the reigns of all of the Stuart monarchs. Whereas James I clashed principally with the Puritans over reforming the Church of England, the remaining Stuart monarchs would all face political problems due to their familial ties to Roman Catholicism.

#### *James I of England*

James I of England and VI of Scotland came to the throne with a high view of the monarchy. While in Scotland, in 1598 and 1599, James wrote two works on the kingship, including his views on the divine right of kings. The first was *The True Law of Free*

20. The content in this chapter is derived primarily from Lacey Baldwin Smith, *This Realm of England, 1399–1688*, 8th ed. (Boston: Houghton Press, 2001). Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, *1603–1714* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), was also consulted.

*Monarchies* and the second was the *Basilikon Doron*.[21] In his reign, James would clash with Parliament over a variety of issues, especially financial ones, but the problems were compounded by James' insistence on the divine right. For example, in 1610, he told Parliament, "Kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God Himself they are called gods."[22] James seemed to have forgotten that England was the same nation who had forced her king to sign the Magna Carta in 1215.[23] Parliament resented James' beliefs on the power of the monarchy, and as a result, they were continually at odds with James, spurred on by unmet expectations on both sides.

James also faced opposition on religious concerns. His ascension had brought renewed hopes to the struggling Puritans. They hoped that James' experience with presbyterianism in Scotland would encourage him to bring further reform to the Church of England.[24] Thus, in January 1604, Puritan ministers met with James at the Hampton Court Conference, where they brought the Millenary Petition to the king. The petition asked for a variety of reforms to the church, especially concerning papal ceremonies and a better education and salary for the clergy.

James, for his part, had not had good experiences with Scottish presbyterianism, and was, in fact, seeking to solidify his power. The Church of England was a significant unifying force in the country, and he thus saw it as too important to to give up. A presbyterian system of government would never enable him to keep the control over the

21. Both works may be found in James I, *The True Law of Free Monarchies and Basilikon Doron*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1996).
22. James I, *The Kings Maiesties Speach To the Lords and Commons of this present Parliament at Whitehall, on Wednesday the xxj. of March*, (London, 1609), no page number.
23. Danny Danziger and John Gillingham, *1215: The Year of Magna Carta* (New York: Touchstone, 2004), 245ff.
24. W. M. Hetherington, *History of the Westminster Divines* (New York: Mark H. Newman, 1843), 53.

church that he currently had; as a result, he rejected the Millenary Petition in favor of a continuing episcopacy.[25]

James also faced problems from Roman Catholics at both the beginning and end of his reign. In 1605, the Roman Catholic Guy Fawkes led a conspiracy to blow up Parliament on the fifth of November; the event would come to be known as the Gunpowder Plot.[26] The conspiracy was stopped, but the incident disinclined James towards any sorts of toleration towards Roman Catholics. It also served to give heavy political weight to the arguments against toleration for Roman Catholicism.

At the end of James' reign, the Thirty Years' War began on the European continent, the result of a Protestant uprising in Bohemia against the Roman Catholic Habsburg monarchy.[27] At the time, the Habsburg dynasty ruled over several of Europe's nations, including Spain. The consequence of this was that many nations were drawn into the conflict. Spain's powerful response upon entering the war led to the Protestant nations fearing that Roman Catholicism would again dominate in Europe.

The English shared these fears and they strongly desired that James enter into war against Spain, but James was hesitant because of the expense that would result. After some back-and-forth between the two and a failed attempt by James' son, Charles (1600–1649), and the Duke of Buckingham to romance the youngest daughter of the Spanish king, James yielded to his Parliament. As a result, England entered into an alliance with the Netherlands, and attempts came underway to bring France into the war against the

25. F. C. Montague, *The History of England From the Accession of James I. to the Restoration (1603–1660),* vol. 7 of *The Political History of England*, ed. William Hunt and Reginald D. Poole (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 11.
26. Ibid., 24–28
27. Ibid., 90–91.

Habsburgs.[28] As part of those attempts, Charles was married to the French (and Roman Catholic) Henrietta Maria (1609–1669).

As a result of the war, anti-Roman Catholic fervor reached new heights in England, and Charles' marriage to Henrietta would have a considerable influence on the way in which he dealt with religious matters. Thus, Roman Catholic and Protestant tensions continued in England.

### *Charles I*

Charles' reign (1625–1649) did not begin well. He began by informing Parliament in no uncertain terms that he intended to continue in his father's footsteps concerning the divine right of kings. He said that he "thanked God that the business of this time is of such a nature that it needs no eloquence to set it forth, for I am neither able to do it, nor doth it stand with my nature to spend much time on words."[29] Second, though he had sworn an oath as the Prince of Wales never to give aid to Roman Catholics should he ever marry a Roman Catholic, it did not take long for him to begin doing just that. In order to take Henrietta Maria as his wife, he had made several promises, including ones to provide his wife with a chapel that would also be open to all English Roman Catholics and to stop persecution against Roman Catholics. While he did not live up to all of his promises to his wife, the latter two he did fulfill. As a concession to Parliament, however, he sent Henrietta Maria's Roman Catholic ladies-in-waiting back to France.

To make matters worse for Charles, Parliament was unhappy with the way in which the war on the continent was being managed, and they responded by withholding

28. Ibid., 117–124.
29. Charles I, "King Charles the First's Speech at Opening Session," in vol. 1 of *The Eloquence of the British Senate; Being a Selection of the Best Speeches of the Most Distinguished English, Irish, and Scotch Parliamentary Speakers, from the Beginning of the Reign of Charles I,* ed. William Hazlitt (Brooklyn: Thomas Kirk, 1810), 1.

further funds. This came after they had already underfunded the war efforts. Furthermore, while it was traditional for Parliament to give the new monarch the right to tax certain imports at the beginning of a reign for life, in Charles' case, they had given him that right only for one year.[30] For Charles, who was perhaps even more insistent upon the divine right of kings and the royal prerogative, this was a considerable insult.

The early days of Charles' reign established the general nature of relations between the king and his Parliament. Twice, he dissolved Parliament in order to avoid disputes. By 1626, matters had culminated in the Petition of Right, which Parliament brought as a means of demonstrating to Charles that he had gone too far.[31] The petition stated that Parliament had to grant permission for taxation, forced gifts, and loans; in addition, it banned forced housing of soldiers upon civilians, imprisonment without known cause, and the use of martial law against citizens. Charles had no choice but to sign the petition if he hoped for any future cooperation from Parliament.

Matters, however, were not so easily resolved. The financial conflicts between Charles and Parliament continued, as did Buckingham's disastrous mishandling of the war. At the same time, Charles faced continuing opposition from the Puritans, who were suspicious of his sympathy towards his wife's Roman Catholicism, and they objected to the high-church Arminianism that he had adopted. Finally, in 1629 Charles began what is known as his personal rule.[32] He dissolved parliament and did not recall it until 1640.

In 1633, George Abbot died, and Charles appointed William Laud to be the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud was a high-church Arminian who had no tolerance for

30. Montague., 133.
31. Ibid., 151.
32. Ibid., 164.

dissent in the Church of England.[33] He was known for his sacerdotal theology, a fact which would have significance for developments in Separatist theology. He used the ecclesiastical court of High Commission to root out Puritan clergy, and he supported Charles against his political opponents through the secret trials held in Star Chamber. Once again, the persecuted Puritans fled England: some to the continent and others to the New World.

The 1630s came to a close with the Bishops' War between England and Scotland as a result of William Laud's attempt to force an Arminian and episcopal book of service upon the Presbyterian Scots.[34] One historian describes it thus: "A year later, Charles was bluntly told that he must make a choice: either give up his prayer book or send forty thousand armed soldiers to enforce Arminianism on the dour Scots."[35] Not unexpectedly, this did not go over well with the king who was determined to maintain the royal prerogative that went along with the divine right to rule.

The Bishops' War only served to enforce the king's problems. Charles did not have the funds for a war, and efforts to raise money failed. He was left with untrained troops whom he quickly realized would not be able to face an army of Scotsmen, so he attempted to negotiate with the Scots. That endeavor failed, so, in the face of an invading army at the English/Scottish border, he called a new Parliament in April of 1640.

With good reason would the new Parliament become known as the "Short Parliament." Charles dismissed them after a mere three weeks when their response to his

33. Hill, 70.
34. Montague., 164.
35. Smith, 284.

request was to give him a list of reforms for both church and government.[36] Afterwards, in the summer, he again attempted to engage the Scots on the battlefield.

Charles' troops fled without ever making it to battle, and by August the Scottish army successfully invaded England. The Scots demanded £850 per day until matters could be settled. Charles, still lacking in funds, had no choice but to call another Parliament. In times past, Parliament had understood and accepted its limitations as a temporary body with little real power. This time, however, Parliament had had enough of Charles' way of doing things, and the balance of power suddenly became decidedly unbalanced.[37]

### *On to War*

In 1641, Parliament began a legal struggle with Charles. They made key adjustments to the way in which the state functioned, practically rewriting the constitution, giving themselves more power. The first set of laws to be passed contained two acts concerning the summoning and dismissal of Parliament.[38] Parliament would now be called every three years with or without the king's permission, nor could they be dismissed without their own permission. In addition, another act was passed that took away the king's personal traditional forms of income as all non-parliamentary taxes were rendered illegal. Parliament also took steps to abolish those parts of the government that were solely under the monarch's control: Star Chamber and High Commission were both abolished. Finally, they also arrested and eventually executed two of Charles' key councilors: Thomas Wentworth (1593–1641) and William Laud.

36. Hill, *Century of Revolution*, 10.
37. Ibid., 94.
38. Ibid.

Parliament's changes began peacefully: Charles yielded to the pressure and signed the acts into law; however, tensions remained high. Not everyone believed that Charles would go along with Parliament so willingly—at some point he was sure to seek revenge; furthermore, suspicion of his tolerance for Roman Catholicism continued.

In October of 1641, the situation was further inflamed by the the Irish Rebellion.[39] Many Protestants had been massacred and a response was necessary. Though it was traditionally the monarch's job to lead the military in such matters, Parliament feared that Charles would turn against England and attempt to bring her again under Roman rule. John Pym, an English parliamentarian who had been a long-time critic of the Stuart monarchy, did nothing to help matters: amongst other things, he urged Parliament to impeach the queen.

By the early days of 1642, Parliament had again taken drastic steps to reduce the power of the monarchy. In September, the Commons had passed the Root and Branch Bill, which abolished the episcopacy, and they began a debate about the Book of Common Prayer.[40] In November, they brought forth the Grand Remonstrance, an official list of grievances against the king that included needed reforms. In February, Parliament took on the authority to make naval and military appointments with the Militia Bill—one of the few remaining key powers of the monarch.[41] Charles refused to sign the law, but Parliament declared it valid anyway.

Though the laws made it through Parliament, it was clear that the king still had his supporters: the Grand Remonstrance passed with only 11 votes and the Militia Bill with

39. Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: England 1603–1714,* 2nd ed. (London: Longman Group, 1994), 199.
40. Ibid., 195.
41. Ibid., 200–203.

23 votes. Tensions rose: Parliament's gathering of power, Pym's call for impeachment of the queen, and growing riots in London all meant that the nation was on the brink of revolution.

The summer saw the outbreak of civil war. Charles made the first moves toward violence, and in response Parliament sent him the Nineteen Propositions, in which they claimed that the true power of the government lay in themselves, and they required that everything the king did be open for their inspection and approval.[42] After this, they created the Committee of Safety, a separate ruling body from the crown, and formed an army before declaring Charles to be an aggressor. Charles could only respond by gathering his own army, and in August of 1642 the first of the two English civil wars began.

The exact causes of the war, with all their nuances, are still debated, but there are some aspects that are clear. The conflicts surrounding the emerging rebellion were driven by both religious and political ideas. The English feared the reversion of the kingdom to Roman Catholicism in a political fashion for theological reasons. In addition, Mary I of England's bloody reign cast a long shadow that was only reinforced by the attempt of Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators to blow up Parliament and the king. It is little wonder, then, that any discussion of religious liberty was primarily exclusive of Roman Catholicism. Charles' tolerance of Roman Catholicism, the presence of his Roman Catholic queen, and the high-church Arminianism of William Laud coupled with Charles' insistence on the royal prerogative and divine right meant that he and Parliament would

42. G. E. Aylmer, *A Short History of 17th Century England: 1603–1689* (London: Blandford Press, 1963), 123.

be at odds on both constitutional and religious matters. The two were simply too intertwined for it to be otherwise.

### *The Civil Wars and the Regicide of Charles I*

The war began badly for Parliament. English bureaucracy fell apart as so many essential offices were held by royalists who fled. Administrative issues were solved by the creation of committees. Financial problems abounded since Parliament did not want to raise taxes too far, and so they resorted to loans. At the same time, Parliament faced the problem of just how to fight the war: as radical as their actions had been, they remained essentially conservative in how they wanted to proceed, for there was no real desire to be rid of the monarchy.

As a result of these problems, Parliament turned to the Scots for help. In September of 1643, they agreed to the Solemn League and Covenant, in which they promised religious reform.[43] Shortly after, the parliamentary forces underwent major reform for the creation of the New Model Army. With new leadership, good training, and pay, the army was able to defeat the royalist forces. The result was that in April of 1646, several months after the New Model Army won decisive battles at Naseby and Langport, Charles fled to the Scots to surrender.[44]

A closer examination of the religious forces at work is forthcoming, but it must be here noted that the development of the Civil Wars into a more radical movement went along with religious developments. Many new Protestant sects emerged, many of whom held to radical positions, both politically and religiously. In addition, the Westminster Assembly met from 1643–49 having been called by Parliament as a result of the Scottish

43. Coward, 213.
44. Ibid., 219, 223.

National League and Covenant. Its first duty had been to reform the 39 Articles of the Church of England, but it had eventually set that aside in order to write a new confession of faith, the 1646 Westminster Confession.

At the same time, radical political groups, such as the Levellers, appeared. The Levellers sought a truly radical freedom for their day, for they believed in the notion of universal inalienable rights.[45] The even more radical Diggers combined religion and politics in their desire to create something of a Christian utopia in which land was communal property, there was a universal right to education, and no laws were necessary.[46]

Though both sorts of radicals were in the minority in these years, they were a vocal minority. There was a clamor in the kingdom as reforms were debated, the army grew discontent, and conservatives feared the growing voice of radicalism. The conservatives responded by attempting to dismiss the New Model Army, and after their failure, they fled to Charles and entered into an alliance with him and Scotland. This was the start of the second of the two English civil wars.[47] It was briefer than the first, for the conservative-royalist-Scottish forces were defeated in late 1648.

### *Oliver Cromwell and the Interregnum*

With the king in custody, another conflict arose: this time between the army and Parliament. Many were reluctant to move against the king. Shortly after, the royalists were removed from the army. In December of 1648, after the army had taken London, Colonel Thomas Pride purged Parliament of 110 members who were hesitant to act

45. Michael A. Freeman, *Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 23.
46. Coward, 243–44.
47. Ibid., 234.

against Charles.[48] Another 160 members refused to take their seats, and the remaining parliamentary members were barely enough for a quorum—the Rump Parliament had taken session.

In the month following Pride's Purge, Charles I was charged with treason, put on trial, and executed on January 30, 1649.[49] By the following week, the national government was revolutionized: the Rump Parliament became the center of power, and the monarchy with all its bureaucratic trappings were abolished. The final push for the king's execution had come from Oliver Cromwell, one of the leaders of the New Model Army who saw no way forward but through regicide. He was so insistent, in fact, that he claimed he would go so far as to "cut off the king's head with the crown on it."[50]

The next few years were spent on organizational matters. After Charles' execution, the Rump Parliament appointed the Council of State to be the executive ruling body.[51] Meanwhile, the army was kept busy keeping order, both within its ranks and outside, in the realms of Scotland and Ireland. Internal dissension arose as a result of conflict between the radicals and the remaining conservatives in the army, men such as Oliver Cromwell, who was of the landed gentry. The conservatives had come to fear the radical murmurings of the Levellers and Diggers, and in March of 1649, Cromwell came to urge the Council of State that the radicals must be dealt with. The radicals responded with mutinies, and Cromwell's vengeance was swift and thorough. The government responded by reinstating censorship over the press, which had been busy printing

48. Ibid., 237.
49. See Geoffrey Rush, *The Tryrannicide Brief* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005).
50. Oliver Cromwell and Wilbur Cortez Abbott, vol. 1 of *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 736.
51. Aylmer, 149.

pamphlets and tracts of every political stripe. In this way, the radical elements of the Civil Wars were stemmed and a conservative tone reasserted itself.

Once he finished dealing with internal matters, Cromwell turned to Ireland and Scotland.[52] Royalist, Roman Catholic Ireland was still in a state of rebellion, and there, again, Cromwell's response was swift and thorough. Ireland was devastated. Meanwhile, the Scottish had turned to support Charles II. Again, Cromwell brought the Scots into submission with his army. He then turned to matters closer to home as conflict between the Rump and the New Model Army emerged.

The army had lost its respect for the Rump as it had lost its zeal for reform. It had come to see the Rump as an arbitrary ruling body who was, at that point, not much better than the monarchy had been. Cromwell decided to take matters into his own hands, and he staged a military coup.[53] He forcibly dissolved the Rump in April of 1653.

In July, the army made a show of good faith and called another Parliament, one that would come to be known as Barebones Parliament, for one of its members, Praisegod Barebones, an Independent.[54] The members of this Parliament had been chosen from nominees named by various churches in the nation. They were to seek after religious reform as well as political reform. Unfortunately, piety could not make up for lack of experience, and they were unable to function effectively. In frustration, Cromwell dismissed them. By December, some of the generals of the New Model Army drew up the Instrument of Government, which named Cromwell Lord Protector of the

52. Aylmer, 150.
53. Coward, 252–253.
54. Ibid., 259.

Commonwealth along with creating a new system of government, including a parliament.[55]

The Instrument did not last long: in January of 1655, Cromwell, like his predecessor, again grew frustrated with his parliament and dissolved it in favor of ruling on his own.[56] Cromwell's problems were complicated by the constitutional issues at hand. While the monarchy had been backed by ancient tradition and law, it was only the army who gave Cromwell power behind the authority he was claiming for himself. As a result, Cromwell could only govern through his army, and he did so by placing his major generals as sub-heads in the government. Each was given a different geographical assignment, and there they were responsible for the collection of taxes and maintaining order. This created distrust between the wealthy landowners and the army. The rich began to see the monarchy and England's old constitution as the only sure way to maintain their property and position.

Taxation troubles were compounded by the fact that the Instrument of Government called for a standing army, which was costly to maintain: Cromwell's budget was three times higher than that of Charles. In addition, England again found herself at war with the Dutch and Spanish in the 1650s. The war-time expenses forced Cromwell, just as it had Charles, to seek funding from those who had serious constitutional concerns with Cromwell's actions.

The Humble Petition and Advice in 1657 provided a solution.[57] Through it, the monarchy was restored in essence, though not in name. Cromwell was offered the crown

55. Aylmer, 156–157.
56. Coward, 270.
57. Ibid., 274.

(though he declined it), was given the ability to name his own successor, and a second parliamentary house was created to echo the old House of Lords. The new upper house, however, was filled with Cromwell's military allies and it did not take long for an impasse to develop between the upper and lower parliamentary houses. Again, Cromwell dissolved parliament. By the time of his death in September of 1658, no real solution had been reached.

Upon Cromwell's death, his son, Richard Cromwell, a civilian, became the new Lord Protector.[58] The younger Cromwell could not maintain the respect of the army, and the commonwealth quickly fell apart. The protectorate was dissolved and the Rump Parliament was reinstated. Again, Parliament and the army found themselves at odds, and order in the nation was in quick decline. The army was itself divided on how best to proceed until General George Monck, then in Scotland, took decisive action. He removed his forces from Scotland and brought them into London where he reinstated the formerly purged members of Parliament.[59] The new Commons established the Council of State to invite Charles II back to the throne, ordered new elections, and then dissolved itself. On May 29, 1660, Charles II returned to London and to his throne.

### *The Restoration & Religious Liberty*

The Civil Wars and the Interregnum had seen many changes in Protestantism. These years were full of unprecedented levels of religious freedom, enough that there had been an explosion of various sects, most of which were radical. Religious ideals had played key roles in the previous years: some revolutionaries were motivated by millennial hopes, others by dreams of Christian utopias. With the Restoration of the monarchy at hand, a

58. Ibid., 275–76.
59. Ibid., 277.

key question was that of religious liberty. In the Declaration of Breda, Charles II appeared to put those worries to rest. Amongst other political promises, he also promised to ensure liberty of conscience.

The promise did not last. During Charles' reign, three laws were passed to re-establish the episcopalian Church of England. The return of the monarchy practically demanded the accompanying return of the episcopacy, and the changes brought about as a result of the Westminster Assembly were eventually swept away.

In the 1660s, Parliament passed a series of laws known as the Clarendon Code for one of the king's close advisors that dealt with the Puritans and Nonconformists.[60] In 1662, the Act of Uniformity was passed; roughly 1,800 Puritan ministers were removed from their posts, and the Anglican Prayer Book was re-established. This followed on the heels of the 1661 Corporation Act, which required all officials not only to swear allegiance to the crown, but also to take communion in the Church of England at least once a year. The law effectively rendered Dissenters second-class citizens who could not violate their consciences in order to hold a government office. Two more laws followed, first in 1664 and then in 1665. The Conventicle Act limited the meetings of Nonconformists for worship to five people, else they were considered seditious, and the Five Mile Act limited the movements of dissenting ministers. Such a minister could not live within five miles of a town, nor could he preach without taking an oath of allegiance.

Like those of his predecessors, Charles' reign was plagued with political trouble. The regicide and restoration had struck serious blows to the doctrine of divine right; the restoration had come about due to necessity, and both parliament and the king knew it.

60. Coward, 282.

Some of Charles' trouble came about as a result of one of his advisors, Edward Hyde (who later received the title of the Earl of Clarendon). Hyde had fled with Charles II, remained with him in France, and then returned with him when Charles was restored to the throne. The Declaration of Breda and the Clarendon Code were both his work. Just prior to the restoration, Hyde had been appointed Lord Chancellor, and, as such, he continued to hold a high position of authority in Charles' government.[61]

As part of the restoration agreements, Parliament retained the power to impeach the king's advisors as a check on his power. In 1667 they used that authority to impeach Hyde as Lord Chancellor for various political disasters. Parliament found Clarendon's leadership in England's war with the Netherlands sorely lacking, and her position had been further weakened by the losses from the Great Fire of London in 1666 as well as the plague in 1665–66. Whether rightly or wrongly, the Lord Chancellor was made the scapegoat for England's ills by both Parliament and Charles. He was replaced by an inner council of men named Clifford, Arlington, Buckingham, Ashley, and Lauderdale (whose collective initials led to them becoming known as the Cabal).[62]

The members of the Cabal came from a variety of religious backgrounds; included amongst them were Roman Catholics and a Scottish Presbyterian. As a result, they sought religious toleration for their benefit—it was also the only matter on which the five could agree. While Charles did not find them overly convenient, their existence did enable him to pursue various political goals, amongst them the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence, which suspended the Clarendon Code.

61. Ibid., 285.
62. Aylmer, 185.

Once again religion and politics were closely intertwined. Due to his French mother, Charles wanted to better relations between England and France. His suspension of the Clarendon Code brought relief to Roman Catholic subjects, an act which endeared him to his French relatives at court (Louis XIV was his cousin). In 1670, he had signed the Treaty of Dover with France in secret.[63] Louis promised Charles an annual pension (relieving him of his dependence on Parliament) and a guarantee to send troops to England to aid Charles in giving help to Roman Catholics. For his side, Charles had only to promise that when it was convenient, he would publicly confess Roman Catholicism. The Declaration of Indulgence was also part of this promise.

This alliance between Charles and Louis had the result of bringing the English into a third war with the Dutch. The war brought Charles into disfavor with his Parliament who supported neither the war nor Charles' Roman Catholic sympathies. Indeed, the sitting Parliament had no desire for religious tolerance for anyone. They gave Charles an ultimatum: either he could sign the Test Act, which would forbid Dissenters and Roman Catholics alike from any government office (either civil or military) and receive £1.2 million for the war effort, or he could continue to have the Declaration of Indulgence sans funds.[64] Charles chose the Test Act. In the end, Parliament also succeeded at ending an official alliance between France and England.

The rest of Charles' reign was a struggle between himself and Parliament over the matter of his Roman Catholic brother, James. James was next in line for the throne since Charles had no legitimate children, and Parliament could think of nothing worse. Anti-Roman Catholic sentiment ran high and fear of popish plots was ever-present in London.

63. Ibid., 187.
64. Ibid., 198.

In 1678, the queen was accused of having plans to poison her husband to lead the way for a Roman Catholic take over. In response, Charles dissolved Parliament, though he recalled them less than a year later. Parliament responded with the Exclusion Bill, which would exclude James from taking the throne, and, again, Charles dismissed them.[65]

Matters eased quickly, however, when in August it was announced that Charles was gravely ill. Parliament realized that if it did not step back, civil war would return to the nation, as James would struggle for power with Charles' illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth. The hysteria abated, and though Charles recovered, the situation remained calm until the king's death in 1685.

Despite all the effort that Charles had gone to to secure the throne for his brother, he believed that James would lose it in four years. He was right. As a Roman Catholic, James ascended to the throne without Parliament's trust and with only one thing in his favor: the two protestant daughters born to his first wife. His second wife, Maria of Modena, was also Roman Catholic, but by the time James had come to the throne, Maria was still childless. Thus, Parliament had decided that it could simply wait out James' rule until his elder daughter, Mary, could take the throne.

There was an early rebellion during James' rule. The Earl of Argyll and the Duke of Monmouth led a brief uprising.[66] Argyll was defeated without a battle and executed shortly after, and Monmouth was defeated in battle relatively quickly. James' vengeance, however, was not limited to Monmouth: four hundred peasants were executed and another 1,200 were deported. His revenge raised questions about whether he was actually seeking justice for rebellion, or if he was engaged in a minor religious crusade to bring

65. Coward, 329.
66. Aylmer, 208.

Roman Catholicism back to England. His actions felt too similar to those taken by Mary I in the 16th century.

To his further detriment, James followed the incident by demanding that Parliament repeal the Test Act as his standing army was then staffed primarily with Roman Catholic officers.[67] At the same time, Louis revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had granted tolerance to French Protestants and James grew more vocal in his support of Louis. The religious questions at hand once again angered Parliament, who refused to go along with the king's demands. Again, a Stuart dismissed an uncooperative Parliament.

James tried to unify Dissenters and Roman Catholics to his cause by passing another Declaration of Indulgence in April of 1687.[68] This allowed freedom of religion to both groups and served as a repeal of the Test Act. Following this, James went on an all-out offensive for Roman Catholicism.[69] He purged the Church of England, replaced various officials with both Dissenters and Roman Catholics, gave military commissions to Roman Catholics, and gave bishoprics to Roman Catholics. When the Church of England resisted, he responded by placing three Oxford colleges under Roman Catholic control (Christ Church, University, and Magdalen). He even went so far as to force Dissenters and Roman Catholics onto local governments.

In 1688 matters came to a head. James ordered home six regiments that had been stationed in the Netherlands, and a few months later he issued another Declaration of Indulgence, ordering that every pulpit in the nation read it to their congregations. He charged those who refused with sedition. In June, James' wife gave birth to a son, and

67. G. M. Trevelyan, *The English Revolution 1688–1689* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 25.
68. Aylmer, 211.
69. Ibid., 210–11.

Parliament could take no more. They sent a message to William of Orange, the Stuart husband of James' daughter Mary, asking him for aid against James.[70]

William of Orange set sail for England with his troops in November of 1688, and James found himself utterly without support.[71] In December, James tried to flee, dropping the Great Seal into the Thames as he did so. His attempt failed, and he had to try again, this time succeeding. He then fled to the French court. His flight was then taken by the English as an act of abdication.[72] Though there was some debate about how to proceed, since the lack of a monarch meant that even Parliament's existence was not legal, eventually the situation resolved itself in the joint rule of William and Mary. Some in Parliament wanted Parliament to elect William as the next monarch, while others were primarily concerned with the hereditary nature of the monarchy. William insisted that he, as the grandson of Charles I, had a right to the throne, and he demanded that he receive equal authority with his wife.[73] As a result, William and Mary were crowned in February of 1689 as joint monarchs, which solved both problems.

The reign of William and Mary also brought the Act of Toleration in 1689 at William's insistence, because the two were of differing religious persuasions (William was a Calvinist and Mary was an Anglican).[74] While the Act of Toleration did not grant full toleration—it excluded heretics and Roman Catholics—this was the farthest England had come under a monarchy. Finally, after nearly a full century of political and religious discontent, a measure of peace returned to England.

70. Trevelyan, 50.
71. Coward, 344.
72. Trevelyan, 66–69.
73. Coward, 356.
74. Ibid., 363.

# 3. The Religious Context of the 17th Century

Seventeenth century England was filled with many developing religious sects and there was no small amount of religious confusion. The changing face of the Church of England in light of William Laud's policies led many to question the church's purity. Earlier years had led to the rise of Separatist groups, those who rejected the Church of England completely, while others left the Church of England but continued to be in communion with her. It is out of one of these churches that the Particular Baptists arose.

The changing religious landscape brought the Particular Baptists into contact and conflict with a variety of groups. In order to understand the Particular Baptists' thinking on religious liberty, it will be helpful to understand who the most significant of these groups were. In addition, in order to see how the Particular Baptists related to the Independents, it is also important to understand the early developments of the Baptists and how the General and Particular Baptists differed from each other. I will be limiting my discussion here to the groups with which the Particular Baptists came into the most contact in order to provide a basic context for Particular Baptist interactions with their fellow Dissenters.[75]

## Baptist Groups

There were two primary Baptist groups in the 17th century, the General and Particular Baptists. Other groups arose as well (such as Seventh Day Baptists), but they were smaller and did not have an impact on the question at hand. The General Baptists arose first, and so I am beginning with them.

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75. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) is a compact reference on these groups.

### *General Baptists*

The General Baptists preceded the Particular Baptists by roughly 30 years, emerging in 1608.[76] They originated from a group of Separatist exiles in Amsterdam under the leadership of John Smyth (1570–1612) and Thomas Helwys (1575–1616).[77] Together, the two men came to the conclusion that believer's baptism only was the Scriptural practice. Following this conclusion, Smyth baptized himself before administering the sacrament to his followers.[78]

Shortly after his se-baptism[79], Smyth became involved with the Mennonites. He came to believe that his se-baptism was incorrect, that it should have been administered by another group who was practicing the sacrament correctly. He proposed that his church should join a local Mennonite faction.[80] This brought a split in the church between Smyth and his followers and Helwys, who disagreed with Smyth on this idea of succession, and his followers.

This split resulted in further theological differences. While both men were Arminians who believed in believer's baptism alone, Smyth had taken on Anabaptist theology in other ways. He affirmed, for example, their Christology of "celestial flesh," denied original sin, and he denied the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone, believing instead that a person is justified both by the imputation of Christ's righteousness and by righteousness that was already present in that person.[81] Helwys, on

76. This section draws upon the material in James McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism* (Philadelphia: The American Theological Library Association, 1994). See also B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1996) and Michael Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).
77. Watts, 43.
78. Ibid., 45.
79. "Se-baptism" is the technical term for a self-baptism. It comes from the Latin reflexive pronoun *se*.
80. McGoldrick, *Baptist Successionism*, 126.
81. Ibid., 128.

the other hand, never denied original sin, and his declaration of faith in 1611 rejected Anabaptist positions on the government, pacifism, and oaths, as well as containing a denial of the Anabaptist Christology that Smyth had embraced.[82]

In 1611, Helwys brought his congregation back to England, and there they established the first Baptist church in England.[83] Within three years, however, he was arrested and died in prison. Helwys was succeeded by John Murton, who ended up being a vocal proponent for religious liberty.[84]

For much of the 17th century, the General Baptist congregations grew in number, but by the end of it they had fallen into a general decline. Many General Baptists fell into unitarianism and rationalism, while many others, sometimes entire congregations at once, became Quakers. James McGoldrick summarized their situation by writing, "Their defection from historic Christianity led eventually to their demise as an influential body in Britain, so that Baptists of today must look to others as their progenitors in early modern history."[85]

### *Particular Baptists*

The first Particular Baptist congregation developed in the late 1630s in a situation completely independent of the General Baptist developments. In fact, the two groups rarely mixed with one another.[86] Thus, it is surprising when historians speak of the Baptists as though they were a monolithic group.

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82. Ibid.
83. Ibid., 129.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., 130.
86. J. F. McGregor, "The Baptists: Fount of all Heresy," in McGregor and Reay, eds. *Radical Religion,* 28.

It is agreed upon that the Particular Baptists arose out of what is now known as the Jacob/Lathrop/Jessey Church (for the last names of her first three pastors) in the late 1630s.[87] The church was founded in 1616 by Henry Jacob (1563–1624). Today that church is often called a semi-Separatist congregation in order to indicate that the congregation continued to treat the Church of England as a true church and maintain a relationship with those within her. Michael Watts, however, has argued that this would be a misnomer. Rather, he believed that this level of communication with the Church of England was one that was not recognized as any form of separation in its day, and that it is better to use the contemporary term "Jacobite" (the name being given after Henry Jacob) to describe their position.[88] He points to William Ames as the leading theologian of the Jacobites.[89]

Beginning in 1630, the congregation underwent a series of splits over the issue of baptism. William Laud's sacerdotalism, which seemed to the Puritans, Jacobites and Separatists to bring the Church of England back to Roman Catholicism, led many congregants to question the validity of their baptism. This brought on a nearly decade-long discussion in Jacob's church. These early splits were over the nature of the baptism offered by the Church of England rather than the proper subjects of baptism.[90] It was not until 1638 that several members left Jacob's church to join with John Spilsbury (1593–

87. An account of this can be found in the Kiffin Manuscript transcribed in Champlin Burrage, vol. 2 of *The Early English Dissenters in Light of Recent Research (1550–1641)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912). See also Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675–1705* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), and B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1996).
88. Watts, 53.
89. Ibid.
90. White, 59–60.

c1662) because they had come to the conclusion that infant baptism was not the correct practice. Spilsbury is considered to be the first Particular Baptist pastor.[91]

In 1640, the Jacob/Lathrop/Jessey Church split again, though this time because the size of the church had grown too large. Half of the church remained with Henry Jessey (1603–1663) while the other half went with Praisegod Barebone (1598–1679).[92] Under Jessey, the baptism discussions continued, and in the 1640s, more members of the church became convinced that it was biblical only to baptize professing believers—in 1642, 51 members of the church were baptized in the River Thames.[93] Most significantly, in 1643, Hanserd Knollys (1599–1691), a member of the church there, came to question the practice of infant baptism, and, as a result, the church began to study the issue.[94] By 1645, Henry Jessey, too, was baptized.

Some may suggest that this development of the Particular Baptists arose as a result of influence from the General Baptists, and, indeed, this was already being suggested in the 17th century. Hercules Collins (d. 1702) wrote in 1691 to answer these questions:

> Could not the Ordinance of Christ, which was lost in the Apostacy, be revived, (as the Feast of Tabernacles was, tho lost a great while) unless in such a filthy way as you falsly assert, viz. that the English Baptists received their Baptism from Mr. John Smth? It is

91. James M. Renihan, "John Spilsbury" in vol. 1 of *The British Particular Baptists*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 1998), 21
92. "Kiffin Manuscript," in Burrage, 302.
93. Ibid., 303–304.
94. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 12.

> absolutely untrue, it being well known, by some yet alive, how false this Assertion is.[95]

Collins thus makes clear that the Particular Baptists saw themselves as having rediscovered the biblical doctrine of baptism on their own, without any outside influences.

In 1644,[96] the Particular Baptists wrote the first London Baptist Confession of Faith, which was composed in order to demonstrate the orthodoxy of the group. It begins:

> The Confession of Faith, of those churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists: presented to the view of all that fear God, to examine by the touchstone of the word of truth: As likewise for the taking off those aspersions which are frequent both in pulpit and print (although unjustly) cast upon them.[97]

In 17th century England, the term "Anabaptist" still carried the historical weight of the Peasants' Rebellion under Thomas Müntzer and the Anabaptist take-over of Münster in the 1500s.[98] To label a theological opponent an Anabaptist was nearly level with marking him an enemy of the state. Naturally, then, it was very important for the Particular Baptists to distance themselves from the Anabaptists and to align themselves with theological orthodoxy.

The Particular Baptists were so called because of their view of the atonement,

95. Hercules Collins, *Believers Baptism from Heaven and of Divine Institution* (London, 1691), 115.
96. It should be noted that the 1644 Confession was not written from scratch, but, rather, was modeled after *A True Confession* of 1596, a Separatist document that affirmed Calvinist doctrines. *A True Confession* may be found in Jaroslav Pelikan's *Creeds and Confessions,* vol. 3. See also James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four Century Study* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009), 57. Another important source for the confession was William Ames' *The Marrow of Theology*, for more on this see Stanley A. Nelson, "Reflecting on Baptist Origins: The London Confession of Faith of 1644," *Baptist History and Heritage* 29 (April 1994): 33–46.
97. *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition,* vol. 3, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 47.
98. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 7.

namely, that it was made only for the elect, as in the Calvinist doctrine. They were staunch Calvinists who aligned themselves with Reformed theology.[99] Though they disagreed with the Puritans and Continental Reformed on the subject of baptism, they agreed with them on nearly every other point of doctrine. As a result, the 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith is modeled upon the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Congregationalist Savoy Declaration, in many places following the documents word for word.

There were a number of significant Particular Baptist theologians. As noted above, Hanserd Knollys was instrumental in Henry Jessey's church, and he remained an important figure throughout the century as he came to pastor his own congregations as well as for being involved in the confessional documents and writing several notable Particular Baptist works, some of which I will be examining later.

Two other significant figures were William Kiffin (1616–1701) and Benjamin Keach (1640–1704).[100] Kiffin was a wealthy merchant who had a certain level of political involvement in addition to being a pastor in London.[101] Benjamin Keach had started out his ministry as a General Baptist, but he later became a Particular Baptist. Though he is notable primarily for the singing controversy that he brought to the Particular Baptists, he was also a prolific writer.[102] Both men wrote works concerning the eschatology of their day, which played an important role in the Civil Wars.

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99. Ibid., 15–17.
100. For more thorough biographical details, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach* (Leeds: Reformation Today Trust, 1996) or Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., vol. 1 of *The British Particular Baptists* (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 1998).
101. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach*, 46–48.
102. Benjamin Keach re-introduced congregational singing to the Particular Baptists, which caused a great controversy. For a summary see Watts, *The Dissenters*, 310–311.

## Radical Dissenters

While the mid-17th century had a vast variety of radical groups, the groups most significant to the discussion at hand are the Fifth Monarchists, Levellers, and Quakers. The Particular Baptists had significant encounters with these groups, either to oppose them (as in the case of the Levellers and Quakers) or as part of them (as in the case of the Fifth Monarchists). These groups were not all active at the same time, rather their movements were described by B. Reay as something of an "ebb and flow."[103] The Levellers dominated the 1640s, followed by the Fifth Monarchists in the early 1650s and the Quakers in the later 1650s, while the Baptists maintained a constant presence throughout both decades.

### *Levellers*

While the Levellers can be considered a radical group, they were not primarily a religious group. Instead, they were part of the left-wing parliamentarians.[104] Their members came from a variety of different religious backgrounds. Some of the General Baptists became Levellers, but the Particular Baptists disavowed their beliefs; indeed, William Kiffin led a group before the Commons to say that their meetings had nothing to do with disturbing the civil order and were solely for the purpose of worship.[105]

Brian Manning sums up the Levellers by saying that while the Levellers came out from radical religious groups, they did not truly remain so, as their goals became

103. B. Reay, "Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction," in *Radical Religion*, 20.
104. Watts, 117.
105. White, 76.

politically oriented. He does see, however, that there are religious views that the Levellers held in common, which may have driven their political ideology.[106]

First, they believed that laws should be simplified so that the common people may understand them easily. They thought that lawyers had complicated matters unnecessarily, claiming that one must have specialized training in order to understand the legal system. This, Manning argues, flowed from their belief that the essential doctrines of Scripture are easy to understand, and that the clergy deliberately made doctrines obtuse so as to protect their place in society.[107]

Other key Leveller beliefs included an emphasis on good works as part of social conduct and the importance of community.[108] In this they emphasized the need to seek the good of one's neighbor. They had a strong sense of mercy work in aiding the poor. Again, these beliefs flowed from their religious beliefs about the importance of works in a true believer. They de-emphasized faith and elevated works in the individual. Christopher Hill described their beliefs as the "Arminianism of the left," since they placed salvation into the hands of the individual and his work rather than the church and its sacraments in the way that the "Arminianism of the right" did.[109] Despite their strong belief that neighbors should help the poor, that poverty was the greatest ill of society, and that the government should provide some aid, they continued to affirm traditional ideas of property ownership, even when other radicals of the day denied them.

The final key mark of the Levellers was their belief in religious liberty. Again, Manning ties their religious beliefs to their political beliefs by noting that it is difficult to

106. Brian Manning, "The Levellers and Religion," in *Radical Religion*, 66.
107. Ibid., 67.
108. Ibid., 68.
109. Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*, (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 106.

say whether for the Levellers religious liberty flows out of political liberty, or whether political liberty flows out of religious liberty.[110] Either way, the Levellers believed that each man should have the ability to worship according to his conscience and that the government was limited to enforcing only that which is contained in the natural law. They did not believe that this gave a man the liberty to say that his religious taught him to steal, commit adultery, or murder; instead, they said that these matters were forbidden by the natural law, and that it was thus right for the state to say that these things were wrong and unacceptable.

Nonetheless, while they believed that the government had the right and duty to enforce more levels or morality than many today would say is good, they did believe in religious liberty for all people, including heretics.[111] Furthermore, they believed that the state could establish a state church for the goal of educating the people in religion. Again, they did limit this: the state could not compel attendance and force people to worship in a manner that violated their consciences.[112]

### *Fifth Monarchists*

The Fifth Monarchists believed that the earthly establishment of the heavenly kingdom by supernatural means was imminent.[113] Seventeenth century England was in such an upheaval with drastic changes made to the basic (and ancient) structures of society that it is of little surprise that such a society would see themselves as fulfilling biblical prophecies concerning the end times. Indeed, such eschatological thoughts were at the forefront of many religious groups. The Fifth Monarchists took their name from the book

110. Manning, 81–82.
111. Ibid., 80.
112. Ibid., 81.
113. B. S. Capp, "The Fifth Monarchists and Popular Millenarianism," in *Radical Religion*, 165.

of Daniel, specifically from Daniel's prophecy about the fifth kingdom that would be established by Christ. Bernard Capp describes them as a "pressure group rather than a new denomination and party," and he says that they came from a variety of religious groups: Baptists and Congregationalists; Calvinists and Arminians.[114]

Their goal, Capp says, was to create a "church-parliament" that was "modelled on the ancient Jewish Sanhedrin."[115] As a result, their support for Cromwell wavered somewhat: at first, they saw both the Rump and him as stalling forward progress of the eschatological kingdom. Once, however, Cromwell staged his coup in 1653, their support for him increased again, particularly in light of the way in which the new Parliament was chosen with the nominations coming from the local churches rather than in the old election style. The Fifth Monarchists quickly grew disillusioned with Cromwell, though, because he did not produce much of substance. His opening speech to the Barebones Parliament was full of millennial imagery, drawing especially from Daniel, but he never implemented the reforms that the Fifth Monarchists wanted, such as the abolition of tithes.

In their discontent, the Fifth Monarchists were mostly harmless. Their numbers came largely from army officers and landed gentry who wanted to protect their interests, and they knew that if they stepped too far out of line that Cromwell's vengeance would be swift. Nonetheless, they were able to bring up political problems for Cromwell for not going along with their plans: they worked to bring about division between Cromwell and the army, and they tried to form a broader political opposition with other groups, such as

114. Capp, 170.
115. Ibid.

former Levellers.[116] Cromwell dealt with these challenges during the time that he spent purging the army of various radicals.

Furthermore, not all of the Fifth Monarchists were content to leave matters solely in the political arena. Lower class Fifth Monarchists had nothing to lose in turning to violence, and their poverty hardened their views differently to those in the upper classes. For example, in 1657, Thomas Venner, a cooper, led an uprising, and though it was quelled quickly, he himself survived long enough to lead another, this time bloodier, rebellion against Charles II.[117] Other Fifth Monarchists thought that their millenarian visions could be furthered through the assassination of Cromwell—he survived multiple attempts during the Protectorate.

In some respects, the aims of the Fifth Monarchists were very similar to those of the Levellers. They, too, sought simplified laws that could be understood by all, but they wanted those laws to be based on the Mosaic law. They based this on the argument that human reason could never surpass God's wisdom. Furthermore, in contrast to the Levellers, they sought the complete abolition of a state church along with all that went with it, such as tithes. I will go into further detail on Fifth Monarchist views on religious liberty elsewhere, but for now suffice it to say that there was a great deal of variation on the subject.

### *Quakers*

Quakerism began in 1652 under George Fox in northern England. He and some other dissenting preachers moved through the north gathering converts.[118] Reay notes that these

116. Ibid., 172.
117. Ibid.
118. B. S. Reay, "Quakerism and Society," in *Radical Religion*, 141.

converts were usually agriculturalists of some sort, and that they tended to be in conflict with their landlords or to have been protesting the collection of the tithes. This led him to describe them thus, "From the start, the Quaker movement was a movement of political and social as well as religious protest."[119]

By the mid 1650s, the Quaker movement had spread to the south. It spread quite quickly through the rural areas, largely through proselytization of those whom they thought would be the most likely to be receptive to their views (especially Seekers, though they also converted Baptists and Fifth Monarchists). Reay notes, too, that their converts were largely from what is essentially a middle-class: laborers and the elite tended not to become Quakers. In addition, many of their converts were women because they allowed women to preach in their gatherings and had a much more expansive place for women in their midst.[120]

In the beginning, the Quakers did not have a system of theology, defining themselves rather in terms of what they were not.[121] They were not predestinarians, believing that men need only to see the light within themselves for salvation. They did not believe in the Bible as the ultimate authority. They did not believe in the Trinity, believing that God could not be distinguished into three persons; nor did they believe in the unique work of Christ, elevating to that position the inward experience of an individual. They also did not have a physical eschatology; instead, they spoke of an inner resurrection and an inner heaven.

119. Ibid., 141.
120. Ibid., 144–45.
121. Ibid., 145.

Their doctrine of the inner light within was central to their beliefs, and it led to them being an ecstatic movement similar to the Shakers. Reay tells the account of one member who felt led "to put his hand in a pan of boiling water, to burn his leg by the fire, and to thrust a needle into his thumbs (to the bone)."[122] They also believed that they had gifts of healing, sometimes even going so far as to attempt resurrections.

In terms of more broadly political beliefs, they were staunchly against the tithe; were anti-clerical and wanted the class system abolished (charging that the nobility only owed their positions to the Normans who had conquered England in 1066). They were against taxes and laws more generally. In their ideal society, wealth would have been re-distributed to the benefit of those who had actually worked the land. And while Reay notes that they were not actually communists, their analysis of the Civil Wars had a decided proto-Marxist tone to it, as they saw the whole matter in terms of class, with the rich tyrants on one side, and the poor workers on the other.[123]

When the Quakers made headway into the army, Cromwell and his officers had to purge them from their ranks, for their beliefs concerning the social order were not conducive to maintaining a military-level of discipline.[124] Likewise, their civil and religious actions were frequently disruptive, their interruptions of church services had the government enforcing old laws against them or even writing new ones to address the new problems that arose as a result of their presence. Their anarchy and anti-clericalism led the social leaders to consider them dangerous to the very structures of society. Their

122. Ibid., 148.
123. Ibid., 151.
124. Ibid., 155.

radicalism led to a sharp increase in social conservatism that had the end result of re-ordering English society with the ultimate end of the Restoration.[125]

## Roman Catholics

The place of Roman Catholics in England during the 17th century was a complicated one. Political intrigue was intertwined with religious convictions. This was especially clear during the latter days of Charles I under William Laud's rule of the Church of England, where Puritans saw Roman Catholicism lurking under his sacerdotalism. Puritan conviction was that Rome was a false church and that the pope was anti-Christ. There was a deep religious conviction that lay behind their feelings towards Rome, one that cannot be under-estimated.

At the same time, there were political reasons to be untrusting of Rome. The bloody reign of Mary I had left a long shadow, which was only reinforced by the actions of Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators in November of 1605. Second, as was mentioned earlier, England was at war with Roman Catholic Spain at various times, which further fed the fuel. In addition Roman Catholic actions on the continent itself, by Spain or France, were also scrutinized lest the Protestant nations fall. Finally, Charles I's marriage to Henrietta Marie, her open Roman Catholicism, and Charles' resulting tolerance for Roman Catholicism along with his secret treaty with France did not help matters. Instead, they only served to further inflame the situation for the Englishmen who feared that these political machinations could only result in a Roman Catholic take-over of England. They feared that this would lead them back into the dark days of Mary I's reign. Thus it was that throughout the seventeenth century, fear of Roman Catholicism remained high.

125. Ibid., 164.

The matter of Roman Catholicism was closely intertwined with religious liberty. Increased freedom for dissenters went hand in hand with increased freedom for Roman Catholics, since both Charles I and James II used those occasions to slip in advances for Roman Catholicism for their own political purposes. Charles II faced a similar dilemma since parliament feared what the ascension of James II to the throne would mean for the country. Indeed, English anti-Romanism was the driving force behind the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89. The world of England was not made right again until the Calvinist William of Orange and his Anglican wife, Mary, took the throne. Other kings may have been able to increase toleration for Protestant groups, without raising suspicious glances, but the ties of these men were close enough to Rome that their actions concerning tolerance could not be simply accepted. The place of Roman Catholicism in English society, then, is significant to the matter at hand.

# 4. An Analysis of Particular Baptist Thought

## The Particular Baptist Argument

The Particular Baptist view on religious liberty set them apart from the other sectarians. They had a broader range of groups to whom religious liberty should be granted (all Protestants) than did the Presbyterians, for which they argued on the basis that the government did not have the authority to speak on spiritual matters, but they also believed that certain groups should be restricted from having religious liberty, particularly heretics and Roman Catholics. This placed the Particular Baptists in a relatively moderate position: on one side stood those like the Anglicans and Presbyterians who believed that no religious views except theirs should be tolerated, while on the other end stood groups such as the General Baptists, who thought that there should be no restrictions on religious liberty of any sort.

This position suited the Particular Baptists who, though they consciously stood in the same tradition as the English Reformed, also believed that they were taking further steps in reform by believing that their doctrine of baptism better reflected the Bible's teachings concerning the covenants.[126] This placed the Particular Baptists in the position of needing to defend their orthodoxy against those who insisted that they were not different to the German Anabaptists who had turned the civil order on its head.

Throughout the 17th century, regardless of who held the seat of power in London, the Particular Baptists expressed their firm belief in obedience to the civil magistrate, whose position was ordained by God, except where obedience to the law meant going

126. See, for example, John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, (London: 1642). Also of note is an account by Edward Terrill, a Particular Baptist elder at the Broadmead Bristol church, where he traced the development of his church through the Reformation. For more detail see James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, fn. 52, on page 14.

against their consciences.[127] The result of this was a belief in religious liberty grounded in an understanding of liberty of conscience. As long as a person's beliefs did not cause that person to disrupt society, as long as a person continued to live peacefully and morally, that person should have the right to worship God according to his conscience.

Their insistence on the importance of maintaining peace while preserving liberty of conscience can be seen in their arguments against toleration for Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholicism as a political force was well-feared in England, and the Particular Baptists shared this concern.[128] By contrast, even though Quakers held radical political beliefs, as I will show later, they believed that the Quakers should be tolerated as long as they lived peacefully within the nation.

The emphasis on preserving the civil order even as religious liberty is gained should come as no surprise. This was a hotly debated idea across the Atlantic in Massachusetts Bay colony where the New England congregationalists saw any deviation from the accepted religious beliefs as a serious threat to the civil peace.[129] Religion in Europe had been determined by the prince since the days of the Reformation and pluralism of any sort was a new idea.

There were two primary foundations for Particular Baptist thought on religious liberty: first, liberty of conscience, and, second, the separation of authority between ecclesiastical and civil spheres. In practice, however, these two ideas did not bring the Particular Baptists to see a universal scope for religious liberty; furthermore, there were

127. 1644 Confession, Article 48. Can be found in William Joseph McGlothlin, *Baptist Confessions* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 171–94.
128. See chapter two for how the English saw Roman political machinations working in and even against their government.
129. Timothy Hall explains how this worked out in practice once Roger Williams and other dissenters began to appear in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Timothy Hall, *Separating Church and State: Roger Williams and Religious Liberty*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

some variations to their views that can be found amongst their writings. The purpose of this chapter is to put forth the actual arguments used by the Particular Baptists on religious liberty as well as to examine the variations that emerged.

### *Foundations for the Argument*

The Particular Baptist argument for religious liberty is founded upon two principles: the first of which is liberty of conscience. Liberty of conscience was an important principle of the Reformation, especially for the Reformed churches whose reformation of the church's worship was based in part on this principle.[130] In the 1644 London Baptist Confession, it was expressed this way:

> "The rule of this knowledge, faith, and obedience, concerning the worship and service of God, and all other Christian duties, is not man's inventions, opinions, devices, laws, constitutions, or traditions unwritten whatsoever, but only the word of God contained in the Canonical Scriptures."[131]

The confession succinctly summarized the ultimate authority of Scripture in ordering worship for the Church. No one could bind another person's conscience on the matter outside of what Scripture taught and required. The corresponding statements in the 1689 confession are nearly identical to those in the Westminster Confession of Faith and contain the same essence of this doctrine even if not sharing the exact wording.[132]

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130. See, for example, Westminster Confession of Faith, 20.2, "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship." The same statement occurs in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith.
131. 1644 Confession, article 7. The edited 1646 version of the confession combines articles seven and eight of the 1644 with only non-essential changes in wording.
132. Westminster Confession of Faith, 21 and London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), 22.

Closely connected to the importance of liberty of conscience was the second principle, that the civil magistrate did not have the authority to speak on ecclesiastical matters. An excellent summary of this is found in Thomas Collier's 1647 work, *The Exaltation of Christ*.[133] Thomas Collier (1620–1691) was a Particular Baptist minister who worked principally in the west of England.

Collier's book was about the offices of Christ and his work in each, and it is in his examination of Christ in his office as king that he turned to discuss the spirituality of the church, and it is there that his work intersects with the matter of religious liberty. Christ, he argued, is king even though the kings of this world rage against him:

> The most great and learned men in the World at this day rage against the Kingdom of Christ, they would set up a kingdome of their owne, and then compell men unto it: who-ever it is that establishes a Worship with Lawes and Edicts, to compell all unto it, and to inflict bodily punishments, upon all that refuse it or cannot joyn with it, doth what in him lyeth absolutely to destroy the Kingdome of Christ.[134]

He continued:

> ...for men to set up a Law in matter of worship, and compell unto it, and judge and condemne body and soule, for not submitting is to exalt themselves above Christ, and so indeed is Antichristian: not

133. Thomas Collier, *The Exaltation of Christ*, (London, 1647).
134. Ibid., 222.

> but that the Churches of Christ have power to judge and determine amongst themselves, about the spirituall affairs of Christ.[135]

Collier assumed the spiritual nature of the church in his argument based upon Christ's words that his kingdom is not of this world. With the above words, he brought out the implications of that fact. Because Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and the church is the manifestation of that kingdom, no one but the church has the authority to speak to matters within it. He saw the establishment of a state church with compulsory attendance to be an attempt of the government to usurp Christ's authority over his church.

These two principles are intertwined for undergirding the Particular Baptist view on religious liberty. Scripture is the ultimate authority for the individual believer as well as over the church, and no man may be compelled to go against his conscience on spiritual matters. The church has Christ as her head, and his kingship over the church means that only his word, as expressed in Scripture, has a binding authority upon her members. Thus, the civil magistrate has no authority to interfere with ecclesiastical matters.

### *Practical Outworking*

In the practical outworking of this theology, limitations emerged. The Particular Baptists placed a high priority on the maintenance of the civil order, and religious liberty could not clash with that. As a result, their toleration was limited to those within the Protestant tradition.

The clearest statement from the Particular Baptists on the subject of religious toleration came in a 1659 declaration. The declaration was written in response to five

135. Ibid.

misrepresentations of the Particular Baptists, among them that they "endeavour a Toleration of all miscarriages in things Ecclesiastical and Civil, under pretence of Liberty of Conscience."[136] In their elaboration on their denial of the charge, the authors declared definitively that they did not want any sort of toleration for civil miscarriages, and their following statement on religious issues went into some detail. They were against toleration for popery, for those who worship a false god, for those who "speak contemptuously and reproachfully of our Lord Jesus Christ," and for those who deny that Scripture is the Word of God. At the same time, however, they supported toleration for episcopalianism and presbyterianism, "provided they do not compel any others to a compliance therewith, or a conformity thereunto..."[137]

In the section that follows, wherein they denied the charge that they set out to murder those who disagree with their religious position, they said, "for all we desire, is just liberty to men, as men; that every man may be preserved in his own just rights, and the Christians may be preserved as Christians, though of different Apprehensions in some things of Religion."[138] Unlike the Anglicans who sought to suppress Puritanism and the various Separatist groups, unlike the Presbyterians who sought to suppress Anglicanism and the various sects, the Particular Baptists saw room for genuine religious disagreement amongst Protestants.

The document's statements on Quakers demonstrate the room that the Particular Baptists saw for religious disagreement within the boundaries of toleration. They wrote that even though they stridently opposed Quaker theology, they believed that Quakers

136. *Declaration of Several of the People Called Anabaptists In and About the City of London*, (London, 1659).
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.

should not be deprived of their liberty as long as they do not disturb the civil order in any way.[139] Nonetheless, their statements concerning Scripture and the person of Christ firmly place heretics outside of the boundaries of toleration.

A similar idea is found in Thomas DeLaune's *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned*.[140] DeLaune (d. 1685) was a Particular Baptist minister imprisoned in 1683. He had written a response to Benjamin Calamy, an Anglican minister, who had given a challenge to the dissenters to justify their nonconformity. DeLaune's writing received no acknowledgement from Calamy and he later died in Newgate prison.[141]

Throughout *Compulsion Condemned*, DeLaune argued for toleration for dissenters without qualifying it to any specific group of dissenters. Nonetheless, in his conclusion, he made clear that he was not arguing for a universal toleration, "I purposed likewise to lay down some Demonstrative Reasons, why the profession of Popery is intollerable in a Protestant Kingdom, (whom they account Hereticks) because their Principles are Pernicious, and their Practices have been Dangerous, &c."[142] DeLaune's conclusion is primarily a list of topics that he did not have the space to include in his work, so he never gave more detail on his thoughts concerning the lawfulness of Roman Catholicism, but it is nonetheless a clear indicator that he did not intend to argue for universal religious tolerance even if in the work proper he never placed any qualifiers around his arguments for toleration.

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139. An excellent example for the vehemence with which the Particular Baptists opposed the Quakers may be found in "Heart-Bleedings for Professors' Abominations," in Edward Bean Underhill, ed. *Confessions of Faith And Other Public Documents Illustrative of the Baptist Churches in England in the 17th Century*, (London, 1854), 293–310.
140. Thomas DeLaune, *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned*, (London, 1684).
141. The account of DeLaune's sufferings in prison and his attempts to receive a fair hearing in light of Calamy's challenge is recorded in Thomas DeLaune, *A Narrative of the Sufferings of Thomas DeLaune*, (n.p., 1684).
142. DeLaune, *Compulsion of Conscience Condemned*, 45.

Roman Catholicism was universally condemned and excluded from religious liberty by the Particular Baptists. Hanserd Knollys' 1679 work, *Mystical Babylon Unvailed* concluded with a call to the Roman Catholic kings of Europe to come out of Babylon and a universal address to "hate the Whore, to make her Desolate, and to burn her with Fire."[143] His language was quite univocal. The book was written at a time when fear of Roman Catholic political plots in England was high, and served as Knollys' argument that the various parts of Rome fulfilled the roles in the book of Revelation of mystical Babylon, the Beast, the great Whore, and the false prophet.

Benjamin Keach was another minister who addressed religious liberty relative to Roman Catholicism. In 1666, prior to his becoming a Particular Baptist, Keach had published *Sion in Distress*, which was a poem that he used to write about the plight of the church in light of the persecution and Rome's plots against her. He published a second edition in 1681, near the end of Charles II's reign, that he expanded in order to reflect the changes that had occurred over the last decade and a-half.[144] *Sion in Distress*, he said, was written in order to encourage the right "odium" of England against Rome as "so destructive and malignant an Enemy."[145] He wrote a sequel to the work titled *Distressed Sion Relieved*[146] in 1689 following the ascension of William and Mary to the throne. This work told the story of the church from 1680 to 1688 and served as "an Account of the glorious Deliverance both of Church and State from Popery and Slavery by the hand of His now present Majesty."[147] The two works tie together in illustrating that Keach believed that liberty wrongly given would only make the nation worse.

143. Hanserd Knollys, *Mystical Babylon*, (London?, 1679), 30.
144. Benjamin Keach, *Sion in Distress*, (London, 1681).
145. Ibid., To the Reader
146. Benjamin Keach, *Distressed Sion Relieved*, (London, 1689).
147. Ibid., To the Reader.

The introduction to *Distressed Sion Relieved* gives insight into exactly how Keach viewed the relationship of Roman Catholics to religious liberty. The beginning of the work contained an address to the king and queen in which Keach gave a narrative in poetic form of the ills that had previously befallen the nation. He used the analogy of a sick church being treated by questionable doctors. These doctors sought to make safety for Roman Catholicism in the guise of religious liberty, but this only made the church worse:

> But let us first prescribe a Golden Pill
> To ease her, that she may suspect no ill,
> But may conclude we choice Physicians be;
> The Pill that they prepar'd was Liberty;
> Curiously gilt it was, and tasted well,
> But when 'twas down she int' an Ague fell;
> Then these State-Mountebanks do her assure
> Jesuits-Powder will effect the cure.[148]

This pill, he goes on to explain, merely made the church worse because it was wrongfully given:

> Thus may a Medicine, which is safe and good,
> (As Liberty is, if rightly understood)
> When ill prepared, and unduly given,
> Prove dangerous as any under Heaven;
> And pity 'tis this universal Pill,

148. Ibid., To The King and Queen.

That has wrought wonders, was design'd so ill.[149]

It is clear, then, that Keach does believe that liberty is only for the good of the church, but it must be dispensed wisely and well, else it would only do her harm. The liberty given to the church that he referenced here is the toleration that James II tried to grant. Though it meant more liberty for them, the Particular Baptists did not support his Toleration Act because it also granted more liberty to Roman Catholics.[150] Keach saw William and Mary as saviors of the church sent by Providence to free her from the grasp of Roman Catholicism.

As Keach went on in the address, he described the fear for the safety of the king and queen as they went to sea, spurring the churches on to pray for them. The church feared that all would be lost, that Rome had won, but they landed safely on English soil. He likened their arrival to the coming of spring to the land that brought new life to the flowers. He then concluded the work by expressing his hope that God's light would prevail in the dark places and that their rule would flourish.

The Particular Baptists held strong theological disagreements with Rome, and this disagreement went hand in hand with their political distrust of Rome. English fear of Rome's political power was spurred on by the damage that a theologically corrupt body could do to a nation such as England.[151] As was natural to the time: religion and politics were deeply intertwined so that theological concerns were as paramount as political concerns.

149. Ibid.
150. Leon McBeth, *English Baptist Literature on Religious Liberty to 1689* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 250–251.
151. See chapter 2.

The Particular Baptists' emphasis on the importance of maintaining the civil order can be found in two works, the first of which was actually signed not only by Particular Baptists but also by General Baptists and Congregationalists. The document in question was from 1647 and was titled (in part) *A Declaration by Congregationall Societies in and about the City of London; as well of those commonly called Anabaptists, as others*.[152] This declaration was written to allow the congregational societies to clarify their position on liberty and to answer charges that they were against the magistracy and property as well as supporting polygamy.

The signers of this document explicitly wrote that they supported liberty only as long as the civil order was not disrupted:

> We have indeed thought this but reasonable, that while men behave themselves peaceably and justly, as touching civil conversation, making no encroachments upon the civil power, nor any breaches upon the names and reputations, the estates or bodies of men, nor doing things inconsistent with moral principles, they should not suffer in their names, bodies, or estates, from the hands of the civil magistrate, or any other men whosoever, merely for what they conscientiously do, in things pertaining to the worship of God.[153]

The statement explains their desire for liberty is specifically for worship, which would be for the good of men. In the paragraph preceding this one, they explained that they had no desire for men to have the liberty to live immoral, disruptive lives, but it did seem good

152. This document was unsigned, but a second declaration, written in 1651 identified 18 signatories. This document was, *A Declaration of divers Elders and Brethren of Congregationall Societies, in and about the City of London*, publication information unknown.
153. *A Declaration*, in Underhill, *Confessions*, 275.

to them that men should be allowed to worship according to their consciences. Later in the document they would affirm their belief in the importance of the magistracy to restrain the evil that is amongst men due to the sinfulness of their hearts.[154] Thus it becomes clear that their emphasis is upon the importance of having religious liberty that does not disturb the civil order, nor in using religious liberty as an excuse for all sorts of licentiousness.

The second document in question is William Kiffin's *The Humble Petition and Representation* from 1649.[155] Kiffin presented *The Humble Petition* to the Commons on behalf of the Particular Baptist churches as a response to a Leveller pamphlet that had been published and was being disseminated at their meetings without their approval.[156] The Particular Baptists feared that "through the injustice of historians, or the headiness of some unruly men formerly in Germany, called Anabaptists, our righteous profession heretofore hath been and now may be made odious..."[157] They again found themselves in need of protecting their reputation as orthodox, civilly obedient citizens.

Kiffin stated that the Particular Baptists had nothing to do with the Levellers' pamphlet, that their gatherings were solely for the purpose of furthering the gospel, and that they wanted only to live quiet, obedient lives.[158] He expressed their desire to continue to be able to enjoy the freedom that they had been given by Parliament in their meetings before he concluded by asking that they continue to relieve the poor and oppressed of the

154. Ibid., 278.
155. "The Humble Petition and Representation," in Underhill, *Confessions of Faith*, 287–292.
156. John Lilburne's *The Second Part of England's New Chains Discovered* (1648).
157. "Humble Petition and Representation," 289.
158. Ibid., 290.

nation and that they would execute laws against sins of civil disorder (such as whoredom and drunkenness).[159]

Kiffin brought the petition before Parliament himself before withdrawing. When he returned, his petition was granted by Parliament who replied, "...that for yourselves and other Christians walking answerable to such professions as in this petition you make, they do assure you of liberty and protection, so far as God shall enable them, in all things consistent with godliness, honesty, and civil peace..."[160] Parliament's response indicated that they recognized that the Particular Baptists did not present a threat to the civil order, so they could be allowed to continue to meet without fear of disruption by the state.

## Variations

### *Christopher Blackwood*

Not much is known about Christopher Blackwood (1606–1670). He was originally ordained as an Anglican minister in 1628, but in 1644 he became convinced of believer's baptism after hearing an argument by a man called Francis Cornwell. He later became involved with the Irish Particular Baptists for some years before going to London for a time. In his later years, he moved between London and Amsterdam before eventually returning to Ireland where he died.[161] He seems to have been active in political concerns, though, because in 1657 he signed a letter supporting Cromwell as the Protector. His work, then, on religious tolerance dovetails with that.

159. Ibid., 290–91.
160. Ibid., 290.
161. *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*, s.v. "Blackwood, Christopher," by T. L. Underwood.

In late 1644, Blackwood wrote *The Storming of Antichrist in his two last and strongest Garrisons, of Compulsion of Conscience and Infants Baptisme*.[162] The first part of the work is dedicated to addressing the issue of compulsion of conscience. First, Blackwood gave 29 reasons for why compulsion of conscience should be condemned; second, he listed objections to liberty of conscience followed by answers to each objection; and third, he offered the means by which liberty of conscience might come about, both through the magistrate (who has the power to grant it) and through the people (who would desire it).

In Blackwood's list of 29 reasons compulsion of conscience should be condemned, two broad themes emerged, the first of which was the issue of authority and the conscience. There were multiple layers to this, first Blackwood acknowledged that no one has authority over another's conscience,[163] but he later went on to say that the magistrate has not been given authority to be a judge of faith by Scripture.[164] Indeed, the matter of discipline had been given to the church to deal with as the only appropriate response to sin and persistent error in the church's teachers. Furthermore, this compulsion could be interpreted as an usurpation of Christ's authority, because in the parable of the wheat and tares, Christ taught that the tares should not be separated but rather allowed to grow until the day of the harvest when they will be cast into destruction.[165] Finally, he also argued that Scripture taught that disagreement on things indifferent (or "smaller matters") was permitted.[166]

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162. Christopher Blackwood, *Storming of Antichrist in his two last and strongest Garrisons, of Compulsion of Conscience and Infants Baptisme*, (London, 1644).
163. Ibid., 13
164. Ibid., 27.
165. Ibid., 14.
166. Ibid.

The second theme that emerged was that of the practical consequences of compulsion. First, he believed that persecution caused the persecutor to be incapable of amending error, and if a government were to be committed to a policy of compulsion, then new truths could not ever come to light.[167] Second, he pointed out that when the magistrate is allowed to dictate religion, then a country may find itself changing its religious beliefs even as frequently as every few years.[168] In this he pointed to the changes that occurred in England under the reigns of Henry VIII, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. Similarly, he argued that the persecutors should act according to the golden rule, lest they find themselves in the place of the persecuted. Indeed, he pointed out that the ones doing the persecuting at that time had just a few years earlier been themselves the persecuted.

Blackwood also placed the effects of persecution on Roman Catholics into this category, and it is here that he set himself apart from other Particular Baptists, for he believed that Roman Catholics should not be persecuted. He argued that the kings of Roman Catholic nations would point to the English example and then turn to persecute the Protestants within their borders. He also believed that the persecution of Roman Catholics would only harden them to their errors rather than causing them to be more accepting of true doctrine; likewise, he believed that Jews and ungodly people would only have their hearts hardened by persecution.

The third theme to emerge is that of the more specific effect of persecution on the individual.[169] First, he argued that it is unjust to make a man believe that which he cannot be persuaded of through argumentation. Similarly, it is unjust to persecute when those

167. Ibid., 16.
168. Ibid., 18.
169. Ibid., 14.

doing the persecuting do not know what those who disagree with them have read and heard; the persecuted one may have been persuaded by strong arguments that the persecutors are unfamiliar with. Second, he argued that persecution also harms the innocent. For example, if a husband is judged to be a heretic, his wife and children suffer even though they might share the magistrate's religious convictions.

The objections that Blackwood answered in his second section fall under a wide variety of areas, but there are two that stand out from the rest as particularly significant. First is the issue of the Israelite theocracy, and the second is that of the role of the light of nature in lawmaking.

One of the first objections that Blackwood answered was that the kings of Judah enforced a religion upon their people, so should not the magistrate do so as well in the current day?[170] In his response he argued that this particular compulsion belonged specifically to the Jews and not to the strangers in their land. He also argued that Israel was in a national covenant to worship God, and thus it was their duty to do so. He concluded his argument by pointing out that even if magistrates of the day had the same authority as the kings of Judah had, that authority did not extend to the power to compel belief. He also pointed out that the government of Judah was absolute in that it was directly appointed by God (as in Samuel's anointing of David), whereas the governments of the nations that followed were chosen by men.[171]

The second objection of interest is that of whether or not heretics fall into the category of "evil works" that the government was to put down. To answer, Blackwood distinguished between three types of evil works, only two of which were appropriate to

170. Ibid., 22.
171. Ibid., 23.

be dealt with by the magistrate, for the third should be left to the church. The first set of evil works defined by Blackwood were those "committed against the light of nature and reason," and he included among these such acts as worship of false gods, atheism, polytheism, blasphemy, murder, adultery, falsewitness, perjury, theft, disobedience of parents, sedition, homosexual acts, drunkenness, and disturbing the civil order.[172] The second set of evil works that he defined were those done "against the light of Nations," which is to say that he thought that because there was no nation in the world who did not punish these acts, they should be punished. [173] In this category he placed "rail[ing] against Christ, or [denying] the Scriptures to be his Word, or affirm[ing] the Epistles to be onely Letters written to particular churches; and no rule for us, and so unsettle our faith."[174] The third set of evil works were to be punished by the church because they were "committed against the light of faith," and these acts consisted of things such as hypocrisy, heresy, unbelief, and unrepentance.[175]

Finally, Blackwood concluded the first part of his book with exhortations to both magistrates and citizens who desired religious liberty.[176] He urged magistrates to act justly, to not try to place dissenters into the same category as the Anabaptists in Germany. He urged them to allow for religious liberty. Second, he exhorted the people who desired religious liberty to pray for it and to petition their magistrates for it.

Blackwood's work is unique because it is one of the few Particular Baptist works on religious liberty that we have. Though he was disciplined by the Particular Baptists in the course of his ministry, it was not for theological error or even for personal sin, but

172. Ibid., 23.
173. Ibid.
174. Ibid.
175. Ibid.
176. Ibid., 37–39

rather because he he accepted the tithe from the government, and, as a result, his is the only extant work explicitly on religious liberty from a Particular Baptist.

Blackwood departed from his Particular Baptist fellows in arguing for religious liberty for Roman Catholics, but there, too, he shared with them political concerns in his treatment of the Roman Catholics. While other Particular Baptists were primarily concerned with the civil order in England itself, Blackwood took a broader view and realized that persecution in England had the potential to have an effect on foreign nations.

In other aspects, however, Blackwood was of one mind with the Particular Baptists. He emphasized the liberty of conscience that was the hallmark of all Baptist arguments for religious liberty. In addition, he distinguished between the authority granted to the magistrate and the authority granted to the church. Furthermore, he shared with them the importance that the civil order be maintained: religious liberty did not translate into licentiousness for all the people, but, rather, was restricted to the matter of worship.

### *Samuel Richardson*

Samuel Richardson's (fl. 1637–1658) views on religious liberty deviate somewhat from his Particular Baptist brethren; in light of the fact that he also had some theological deviations, this is rather unsurprising. He seems, for example, to have been a High Calvinist in his formulation of justification.[177] Early in his ministry, he signed the 1644 Confession, and he was closely tied to the early leaders of the Particular Baptists.

Richardson's work on religious liberty went hand in hand with his political involvement. He supported the army and later supported Cromwell's government because

177. Email to the author from Paul Gritz, Ph.D. 8 April 2011.

of the religious toleration and aid for the poor that it engaged in.[178] From 1646–47, he wrote two works concerning religious toleration, *Certain Questions* (Dec. 1646), (which was then expanded in May of 1647 and reprinted as *Fifty Questions Propounded to the Assembly*) and *The Necessity of Toleration* (September 1647).

*Certain Questions* and *Fifty Questions* were both addressed to the Westminster Assembly, and they are exactly what their titles describe them to be: a list of questions on the subject of religious toleration. Neither work added anything significant to the discussion, as the questions that Richardson raised were along the same lines as the arguments that Christopher Blackwood had given in his book only a few years earlier.

*The Necessity of Toleration* was Richardson's principle work on the subject. It is actually a short book that has four sections to it: first, a copy of the Edict of Milan; second, another set of questions to the Westminster Divines on the subject of compulsion of conscience (he expanded the list to 70 questions); third, a list of objections stated and answered; and fourth, a final address to the divines of a list of beliefs that their actions seem to make manifest with a list of reasons for why the Dissenters cannot subscribe to their theology.

The main thrust of Richardson's argument was that no man could compel another man's heart. A man cannot force a man to see the light of truth, for only God can grant the Holy Spirit to enlighten a man. He wrote:

> [I]ts a foolish Reformation in going the wrong way to work, in offering to reforme the outside first, whereas God when he reformes, begins within at the heart, because if that be not first

178. *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*, s.v. "Richardson, Samuel," by R. L. Greaves and B. R. White.

> reformed, its no spirituall Reformation, but a carnall and hipocriticall one, as the Pharises made cleane the outside and filthy within, as *Mat*. 23.[179]

Richardson's focus on compulsion creating hypocrisy was not unlike that of other writers of his day, but he did not focus on the fact of liberty of conscience in his writings as did the other Particular Baptists. For Richardson, the focus was on the damage that could be caused by compulsion.

The other aspect of Richardson's writing that set him apart from the other Particular Baptists is the outright dislike for the Westminster Divines that he expressed in his writing. He thought of the people that "we had as good be under the Pope as under your Presbyterian check."[180] Whereas a hallmark of Particular Baptist writings was their insistence on orthodoxy and their respect for their Presbyterian and Independent brethren, Richardson expressed none of that. Instead, his writings indicated a resentment that the Westminster Divines treated the Church of England as a still true church, and that he thus believed them to only be perpetuating a false church.

The overall picture of Particular Baptist thoughts on religious liberty is fairly uniform. While Blackwood's arguments for the toleration of Roman Catholics do differentiate him from the others, he nonetheless was working from the same paradigm as the Particular Baptists in terms of liberty of conscience accompanied by the distinct spheres of authority of the ecclesiastical and civil powers. Richardson, on the other hand, had a different focus in his writings on religious toleration than did the other Particular Baptists since he looked primarily at the effects of intolerance on a person's heart.

179. Samuel Richardson, *Necessity of Toleration*, (London, 1647), 17.
180. Ibid., 22.

Furthermore, his disdain for the Westminster Assembly while the rest of his Particular Baptist brethren had both affection and respect for the divines places him further outside the scope of what one might call the typical Particular Baptist. He remains, nonetheless, a significant Particular Baptist author on the subject.

## 5. How the Baptists Differed

The secondary literature on the history of religious toleration often treats the Particular Baptists as though they were not a unique voice in the seventeenth century; instead, they are often put in together with the General Baptists so that authors are simply referred to as "the Baptist [x]." Follow up only yields in finding out that the author in question is, more often than not, a General Baptist. Other times, the Dissenters are treated as a monolithic whole. With this section, I aim to demonstrate that the Particular Baptist voice was, indeed, a unique one that must be treated on its own terms.

### General Baptists

General Baptist authors began writing on religious liberty very early on: the founders of the movement, in fact, are often counted as the standard for Baptist views on religious liberty. For example, Barrie White uses Thomas Helwys as the basis for his article on Baptist views of religious liberty.[181] This trickles down into popular level work as well, so that the end result is that the common assumption of people becomes one of a monolithic Baptist view on religious liberty.[182] Since the work of Thomas Helwys on religious liberty is often treated as paradigmatic for General Baptists, it is his work that I will treat here.

There were a handful of exceptions, but overall, the General and Particular Baptists did not mix; this was the reason that Thomas Collier expended effort in attempting to bring the General and Particular Baptists into closer relationship with one another in the west of England. One notable exception to the rule was that of the January

181. Barrie White, "Early Baptist Arguments for Religious Freedom: Their Overlooked Agenda" *Baptist History and Heritage* 24, no 4 (October 1989): 3–10.

182. This effect can be seen in Robert Boston, *Why the Religious Right is Wrong About the Separation of Church and State* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003). Boston's historical survey is simplistic and riddled with errors on the views of men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, but it is a work that is praised for its historical section, thus it serves as a good illustration of the problem at hand.

1661 work *The Humble Apology of Some Commonly Called Anabaptists: In behalf of themselves and others of the same Judgement with them: With their Protestation against the late wicked and most horrid treasonable Insurrection and Rebellion acted in the City of London*, which was signed by both General and Particular Baptists and was written in response to Thomas Venner's 1661 insurrection against the newly restored Charles II.[183] In this document, they ask the government not to punish them for Venner's actions. Not only had Venner's group been primarily made up of paedobaptists, but the men signing the document noted that they had often spoken against the doctrines espoused by Venner. The two groups found common ground in agreeing with whom to disagree as well as in desiring toleration from the state to pursue worship according to their consciences.

The earliest Baptist work concerning religious liberty is Thomas Helwys' *A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity*, published in 1612.[184] The book was not exclusively on religious liberty; instead, Helwys argued that the days of the tribulation prophesied by Christ were upon them, that there had been a great apostasy, that kings hated the whore, and that God had given the kings a great earthly power that everyone either had to obey or suffer the consequences. These kings, however, should be subject to Christ's kingdom and no one should suffer for "transgressing against the spiritual ordinances of the new Testament," because, "such Offences ought to be punished onely with spiritual sword."[185] The rest of the work concerns Helwys' theological complaints against the Puritans and Brownists.

183. "The Humble Apology of Some Commonly Called Anabaptists: In behalf of themselves and others of the same Judgement with them: With their Protestation against the late wicked and most horrid treasonable Insurrection and Rebellion acted in the City of London" in Underhill, *Confessions of Faith,* 343–352.
184. Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity*, (n.p., 1612).
185. Ibid., table of contents

Helwys' book formulated what would become one of the foundational arguments for religious toleration no matter who the author was, that there was a basic distinction between the authority of the church and the civil magistrate, and that the magistrate had no authority to meddle in ecclesiastical affairs. What distinguishes Helwys' thoughts from those that the Particular Baptists would later express was his statement of universal toleration. He wrote, "Let them be heretickes, Turcks, Jewes, or whatsoever it apperteynes not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure."[186] Likewise, he extended this liberty even to Roman Catholics, writing:

> Wee still pray our lord the King that wee may be free from suspect, for having anie thoughts of provoking evill against them of the Romish religion, in regard to their profession, if they be true & faithfull subjects to the King for wee do freely profess, that our lord the king hath no more power over their consciences than over ours, and that is none at all... if the Kings people be obedient & true subjects, obeying all humane lawes made by the King, our lord the King can require no more...[187]

Helwys here differed from the Particular Baptists in thinking that Roman Catholics could be loyal to the king, and that if they could so be, that then they ought to be likewise granted liberty to worship according to the consciences. The Particular Baptists, while they too argued that peaceful, loyal citizens should have the right to worship according to their consciences they, nevertheless, fell short of arguing that Roman Catholics could fall into that category.

186. Ibid., 69.
187. Ibid.

## Radicals

The radicals active in this period also had views on the subject of religious toleration, but even when their goals met, the Particular Baptists generally tended to maintain a distance from them.

### *Levellers*

The Particular Baptists and the Levellers crossed pens, as it were, in that the Particular Baptists rejected many of their basic conclusions and sought to distance themselves from Leveller thought whenever they felt that they would be unfoundedly considered to be of the same mind. As was noted earlier, the Levellers believed in a universal religious toleration, and one of the key figures in this expression of Leveller belief was William Walwyn (1600–80).

Walwyn was a curious figure who, by the end of his life, had converted to Christianity though he was a self-avowed antinomian.[188] As a Leveller he had been a central figure, working closely with the other Leveller leaders such as John Lilbourne and Richard Overton. He was finally imprisoned in 1649 where he remained until after the Leveller political defeat under Cromwell that ended the movement. After his conversion, he continued his writings on religious liberty, but for the purposes of this paper, I will speak only to those works written while he was active as a Leveller.

During his years as a Leveller, Walwyn was a prolific writer who clearly espoused radical notions of universal liberty. He defended an accused Arian (*The Afflicted Christian*, 1646) and opposed a bill that the Commons would have passed to oppose heresy with branding and death (*A Demurre to a Bill*, 1646).

188. *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*, s.v. "Walwyn, William," by L. Mulligan.

Walwyn also appears to have been behind the so-called "Large Petition" to Parliament in 1647.[189] This document is the culmination of Leveller beliefs, and amongst its requests of Parliament appears their desire for religious liberty. In its preface to Parliament, the petition commends them for "suppress[ing] the High-Commission, Star-Chamber, and Councell Table, call[ing] home the banished, deliver[ing] such as were imprisoned for matters of conscience... that you have suppressed the Bishops and popish Lords, abolished Episcopacy."[190] Nonetheless, the Levellers thought that Parliament had not gone far enough.

In the body proper of the petition, there are three statements made concerning religious liberty. The first asked Parliament to stop the statutes and oaths that led to the "molestation and insnaring of religious peaceable and well affected people, for non-conformity or difference of opinion, or practice in religion."[191] The second called for the halting of censorship on dissenting religious publications because judges were not infallible.[192] The third statement concerned the tithe and asked that it be stopped, that all ministers ought to be paid voluntarily by those who chose them.[193] The petition did not distinguish amongst the variety of religious convictions in play in England at the time. Instead it is a clear request for universal liberty. The Levellers called not for a mere toleration that would have led to dissenters being second class citizens, but, rather a full and universal liberty for all people.

189. A discussion of authorship appears in William Haller, vol. 1 of *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638–1647* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), 115ff.
190. "To the Right Honourable and Supreme Authority of This Nation, The Commons in Parliament Assembled," (London?, 1647), 2.
191. Ibid., 5.
192. Ibid.
193. Ibid., 6.

As was noted earlier, Leveller theological convictions tended towards the radical groups, though many were known as General Baptists. Their differing theological views to those of the Particular Baptists illustrates the way in which theological convictions played a role in these matters. Anti-clericalism was born of egalitarianism and commitments to a doctrine of salvation based upon free will led to a heavy emphasis on the liberty of the individual to choose his own religion and to worship accordingly.

### *Fifth Monarchists*

The Fifth Monarchists were a significant radical movement whose role in the 17th century must not be understated. At the same time, however, their views on toleration seem to be varied and complicated. Bernard Capp offers a brief analysis on their views on toleration in his work, *The Fifth Monarchy Men,*[194] but it seems clear that there is still room for much work to be done. They are here mentioned because many Particular Baptists were involved in the movement in some fashion, but their involvement seems to have been limited in an active, political sense, and, rather, while they agreed with their millenarianism, they used it as an impetus towards evangelism.

The Fifth Monarchists were made up primarily of Baptists and Congregationalists, but while these groups were able to get along, Capp describes them as generally hostile to nearly every other religious group.[195] They had a limited level of cooperation with Quakers: some of their members became Quakers, others had joint meetings with them. They did, however, completely reject the Quakers' tendency towards allegorization of eschatological matters, and so their relations to them were usually more inimical. Their rejection of the national church meant that they considered Anglicans to

194. B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972).
195. Ibid., 181–183.

be their enemies throughout their existence, and, while they were generally more hostile to Presbyterians than not, they did join with them a little after 1660. They also rejected the most radical of the dissenters: antinomians, Ranters, Familists, and Socinians, and they were highly intolerant of Roman Catholics.[196]

In terms of religious liberty, however, the Fifth Monarchists took a broader view. In rejecting the national church, they also rejected the idea that the magistrate has the ability, much less the right, to interfere in religious matters.[197] Nonetheless, not all believed in a universal religious liberty; while some did do so, others believed in restricting liberty from heretics (which, for them, included Roman Catholics). Others made clear that while they believed in religious tolerance for all sects, that tolerance did not extend to true religious liberty since they would have the civil liberties of those sects curtailed. A colonel in the army, for example, wanted a man forbidden from being the quarter-master because he was a Quaker.[198]

The Fifth Monarchists, then, had no small amount of diversity in both political and religious matters. They agreed on some minimal basics concerning millennialism, but in the carrying out of the matter there was no universal agreement.

## Independents

While the Independents' views on religious liberty were not entirely uniform and certainly a topic broad enough for a paper of its own, their views must be dealt with here at least in part. The Particular Baptist view on religious liberty clearly set them apart first from the General Baptists and second from the other sectarians, but their views are not

196. Ibid., 183.
197. Ibid., 185.
198. Ibid., 184.

entirely unique. They shared some similarities in these views with the Independents, who likewise sought a broader toleration than the Presbyterians were willing to allow. Given that Particular Baptist theology as expressed in the Second London Confession often followed closely the Savoy Declaration when it departed from the Westminster Confession, this is not very surprising.[199] The Particular Baptists clearly respected their Independent brethren and were heavily influenced by them, following them closely in theological conviction. I will leave my comments to two of the more notable Independents on religious toleration, John Owen (1616–1683) and Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680).[200]

In 1669, Owen wrote a letter on behalf of the Independents to the governor of Massachusetts. Massachusetts Bay colony was well known for its strict, non-toleration policies under Congregational rule, which brought it into conflict with the emerging Baptist and, later, Quaker churches within her borders. Word of the Congregationalist persecution against the Baptists had gotten to England and ended up having negative repercussions for the Congregationalists in England. Owen wrote to relay this news to the governor and asked for a reprieve of the persecution, even though they, too, thoroughly disagreed with the Baptists and Quakers. He said:

> We are sure you would be unwilling to put an advantage into the hands of some who seek pretences and occasions against our liberty, and to reinforce the former rigour. Now we cannot deny but this hath already in some measure been done, in that it hath been

199. While I do not know of a printed equivalent, the reader might find of interest a tabular comparison of the three confessions available online at http://www.proginosko.com/docs/wcf_sdfo_lbcf.html.
200. See Avihu Zakai, "Religious Toleration and its Enemies" *Albion* 21, no. 1 (Spring: 1989): 1–33. Zakai deals more broadly with the Independent view on religious toleration, especially relative to those views held by the Presbyterians.

> vogued that persons of our way, principles and spirit, cannot bear with dissenters from them. As as this greatly reflects on us, so some of us have observed how already it has turned unto your own disadvantage.
>
> We leave it to your wisdom to determine whether, under all these circumstances, and sundry others of the like nature that might be added, it be not advisable at present to put an end unto the sufferings and confinements of the persons censured, and to restore them to their former liberty.[201]

The history of Massachusetts Bay colony demonstrates that the magistrate did not yield to the British Congregationalists' request, but Owen's words are nonetheless clear. Intolerance abroad was having a negative effect on the gains made by those who had once suffered in England. The actions of those who had fled for purposes of religious liberty were proving to be deleterious to those who had remained. Owen and the other Congregationalists saw that there was wisdom in allowing dissenters to remain unchallenged in liberty. This line of thinking is similar to that found in Blackwood's argument that Roman Catholics should be allowed to worship freely lest Protestants in Roman Catholic nations face persecution because of the English treatment of Roman Catholics.

Goodwin eventually become one of the handful of Independent divines present at the Westminster Assembly, later known as the Dissenting Brethren.[202] Prior to that, in

201. John Owen, "To the Governor of the Colony of Massachussetts," in *The Correspondence of John Owen*, ed. Peter Toon (Cambridge: James Clark & Co Ltd., 1970), 146.
202. *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*, s.v. "Goodwin, Thomas," by P. S. Seaver.

1639, he had fled to Holland where he met the Independents who would later join him at the Westminster Assembly, Philip Nye, Jeremiah Burroughs, William Bridge, and John Archer. They returned together to London in 1641. Shortly before their return, Goodwin preached a sermon titled *A Glimpse of Syons Glory,*[203] which was then published in England by William Kiffin.[204]

In the 1640s, however, Goodwin found himself needing to defend himself against accusations from the Presbyterians that he sought universal religious toleration. He said, "If any man think I am a pleading for a liberty of all opinions, of what nature and how grossesoever, I humbly desire them to remember that I onely plead for Saints, and I answer plainly, *The Saints they need it not*." (emphasis original)[205] The words came from a sermon he preached before the Commons in February of 1645 which dealt with the way in which the magistrate ought to treat the Saints: namely, well.

The 1640s saw a conflict emerge between the Presbyterians and Independents on the matter of church polity. Goodwin was responding to the attacks of the Presbyterian Thomas Edwards who was well known for his vitriolic and broad-stroked attacks against Congregationalists and Sectarians alike.[206] There was a time when, at least in part, the Independents found themselves needing to justify their existence as a legitimate group just as much as the Particular Baptists needed to, and the parallels between their views on religious toleration, then, may perhaps be taken as fruit from like trees given their

203. Thomas Goodwin, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory*, (London, 1641).
204. *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*, sv. Goodwin.
205. Goodwin, *Great Interest of States and Kingdomes*, (London, 1646), 53.
206. See, for another example, Jeremiah Burroughs, *A Vinidication of Mr Burroughs, against Mr Edwards his foule aspersions, in his spreading Gangraena, and his angry Antiapologia*, (London: 1646), which was written to defend the Congregationalists against the pen of Thomas Edwards. See also Edwards' own *Antiapologia,* which attacked the Congregationalists present at the Westminster Assembly.

similarities not only in experience, but also in religious conviction with a high view of the magistrate's God-ordained duty to maintain a civil society.

## Summary

The Particular Baptist view on liberty developed in a time when the nation was in a state of nearly constant turmoil of one sort or another. The growing number of sects raised questions about the civil order that the Particular Baptists responded to by arguing that citizens could be loyal, obedient, and peaceful without sharing every religious conviction with all of his neighbors. At the same time, they acknowledged that some beliefs had dangerous civil consequences, and they saw a political threat in Rome that they believed needed to be put down. Their confessional documents articulated a high view of the magistrate, one that was shared by the English Reformed confessional documents.[207] They saw a connection between religious beliefs and political actions, but did not connect the two so strongly that there was no room for genuine religious disagreement in a society, provided that it was not outright subversive.

The Particular Baptists along with the General Baptists developed the notion that God rules over this world in different ways in their views on religious liberty. Foundational to their thinking was the distinction between the role of civil and ecclesiastical powers. Given the context of their day and age, they continued to hold to Scripture as the foundational moral authority for their society, but they nonetheless believed that the civil magistrate had absolutely no authority in ecclesiastical affairs.

207. Compare chapter 23 of the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 24 of the Savoy Declaration, and chapter 24 of the 1677 London Baptist Confession. There are significant differences amongst the documents relative to the magistrate's authority concerning heretics, but they all affirm the nature of the office as God-ordained.

While there are some similarities between the beliefs of the General and Particular Baptists, they did have clear differences on the extent of religious liberty. The Particular Baptists, with their more thorough-going theological conservatism and intent on proving their right to stand in the Reformed tradition tended to try to follow their English Reformed brethren in limiting religious liberty, even though they departed from them in arguing for religious liberty at all. The two groups, then, should not be lumped together as a monolithic whole.

# 6. Consequences & Conclusion

## The Problem with the Literature

One glaring issue with the issue of Particular Baptist views on religious liberty is a distinct lack of secondary literature. There is an abundance of literature on a so-called "Baptist" view of religious liberty, but inevitably it nearly always deals exclusively with General Baptist views, ignoring Particular Baptists entirely. In his doctoral dissertation titled, *English Baptist Literature on Religious Liberty to 1689*, Leon McBeth gave an overview of the period's literature that went across doctrinal lines to cover both Particular and General Baptists, but he did not always note who was who or even draw any distinctions between the two.[208] In his work *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*, William Haller briefly mentions Particular Baptist individuals, but nowhere speaks to their writings on the subject proper, though he does discuss the beliefs of the General Baptists (especially of those in the Levellers).[209] Even the briefest of database searches for journal articles on the subject yield article after article dealing with Colonial American Baptists or General Baptists such as Thomas Helwys and John Smyth.[210]

Likely this is because the General Baptist view on religious freedom was a liberal one with a universal scope, a view that has more in common with contemporary views on religious freedom so that the roots of today's ideas can be drawn more clearly than from other prevalent views of the day. Nonetheless, the distinctiveness of the Particular Baptist view on religious toleration demonstrates that there was no one Baptist view on religious

208. Leon H. McBeth, *English Baptist Literature on Religious Liberty to 1689*, (New York: Arno Press, 1980).
209. William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).
210. For example, Fisher Humphreys, "Baptist Theological Contributions: An Intentional Faith Community Achieved by Reserving Baptism for Believers and Religious Liberty Achieved by Separation of Church and State," *Baptist History and Heritage* 45, no. 1 (December 1, 2010): 21–36. Or John D. Hughey, John D, "Baptists and Religious Freedom," *Baptist Quarterly* 17, no. 6 (April 1, 1958): 249–255.

liberty in the 17th century. The two were as distinct from one another as the two groups' respective theologies.

The Particular Baptists arose out of a Jacobite congregation in London after a nearly decade long discussion concerning baptism—the validity of the Church of England's baptism, the nature of baptism, and, finally, to who, exactly, are the proper recipients of baptism. There is no extant evidence that they had any encounters with the General Baptists prior to their official emergence as a proper group, rather, members of the church came to a belief in believer's-only baptism in stages until, eventually, they were spurred on to make a church-wide study of the subject.[211]

These members were Calvinistic in their thought and were concerned with establishing their orthodoxy, and even, beyond that, their credentials as a legitimate group of believers who deviated from their originating tradition. When Daniel Featley (a Calvinist, Anglican minister) criticized the 1644 Confession on several points,[212] the Particular Baptists took his criticisms seriously and revised their confession accordingly to produce the 1646 Confession.[213] The General Baptists, on the other hand, began with a complete break from tradition as Smyth's self-baptism demonstrated. On this the Dutch Anabaptists were more conservative than Smyth was, as his time around them convinced him that what he had done was invalid.[214]

In his conclusion, McBeth admitted that "A blanket statement that all English Baptists advocated complete religious liberty would be inaccurate." Nonetheless, he concluded, "Attention should be focused, however, not on the few who compromised

211. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach*, 44.
212. Daniel Featley, *The Dippers Dipt. Or, the Anabaptists Duck'd and Plung'd over Head and Eares, at a Disputation in Southwark*, 6th ed. (London, 1651).
213. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 140–141.
214. McGoldrick, 127.

religious liberty but on the vast majority who consistently advocated complete religious liberty for those of every religion or none."[215] He cites as examples the limited toleration advocated by Christopher Blackwood and the antipaedobaptist (and Calvinist) John Tombes.

In so arguing, he neglects to take into account the very real theological differences between the General and Particular Baptists, nor does he note that it was nearly universal to the groups to argue for complete and limited religious tolerance respectively. The Particular Baptists were no more exception to the rule that Baptists believed in universal tolerance than the General Baptists were an exception to the rule that Baptists believed in limited tolerance. McBeth's work, then, demonstrates less that there was a majority view that should be taken as the normative view on religious liberty than that General and Particular Baptists should not be taken together as Baptists; their distinctives went beyond ecclesiology and soteriology to the day-to-day business of a proto-religious plurality in society.

## Independency, Arminianism, and the Particular Baptists

In 1991, Avihu Zakai summarized some of the traditional histories of 17th century England (particularly those written by and since Samuel R. Gardiner) as seeing the religious freedom that developed in England after the Civil Wars as a direct result of Puritan notions of freedom and progress.[216] In his article, he argued the contrary: that rather than being progressive revolutionaries, the Puritans were a conservative group who did not believe in religious toleration. In support of this, he quoted Thomas Edwards in saying that "a toleration is against the nature of reformation, a reformation and a

215. McBeth, 276–277.
216. Zakai, *Orthodoxy in England and New England*, 403.

toleration are diametrically opposite."[217] Indeed, Edwards, a Presbyterian, clearly did not support any form of toleration. This illustrates a split between Independent and Presbyterian thought. The Independent writings (as seen in the previous chapter) do indicate that they, like the Particular Baptists saw room for a limited measure of religious toleration in society.

I have already established the way in which the Particular Baptists viewed themselves relative to the Reformed tradition. Their shared ecclesiology with the Independents and ties to them suggest that it should not be a surprise that there are here similarities in view as well. Whereas John Coffey argues that historians make too much of a Calvinist/Arminian split in terms of religious liberty, arguing that regardless of soteriology, both groups make the same sort of foundational arguments for religious toleration,[218] the differences between the General and Particular Baptists and the similarities between the Particular Baptists and Independents strongly suggest that he makes too little of the distinction between Calvinist and Arminian. Though the *foundational* arguments between the two groups are very similar, the limits that the Particular Baptists placed around religious liberty were not accidental to their theology.

On the one hand, there were the General Baptists who were often aligned with various radical sectarian groups (especially, in this case, the Levellers). Beginning with their origins in John Smyth's radical move to baptize himself, there was a clear difference in tone between the General and Particular Baptists. Through the manner in which the General Baptist founders broke away from the reigning orthodoxy of Calvinism and the

217. Zakai, *Orthodoxy in England and New England*, 440. The original quote is found in Thomas Edwards, *Antapologia: Or a Full Answer to the Apologeticall Narration* (London: 1644), 285.
218. Coffey, 971.

traditional paedobaptist doctrines, they demonstrated a willingness to take their views as far as they could go.

On the other hand, there were the Particular Baptists who stood staunchly in the Reformed tradition. Regardless of what other groups saw them as, they self-identified as part of the Reformed tradition, taking great steps to demonstrate their orthodoxy, indeed, their non-radical nature. Their moves into anti-paedobaptism were made carefully, over time, and with much thought, study, and prayer.[219] This is only further evidenced by the seriousness with which they evaluated Featley's criticisms of their confession and even their adaptation of the Westminster Confession and Savoy Declaration into their own confession in 1677.

It is true that none of these characteristics are intrinsic to Arminianism or Calvinism as they pertain to the doctrine of salvation (Coffey specifically relegates them to the issue of the freedom of the will), but Arminianism and Calvinism are about more than simply a view of the will or even salvation. In the course of roughly a century, confession after confession after confession detailed the entire system of doctrine that developed in the Reformed tradition, all of which culminated in the work of the Westminster Divines as a highly technical, nuanced, and developed system of standards that were the result of a century's theological development. The system was thorough, including the role of the civil magistrate. While the nuances were debated, it was nonetheless universally agreed upon by Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Particular Baptists that the civil magistrate had the duty to uphold true religion.

219. "Kiffin Manuscript" in Burrage, 302.

Thus while Coffey is correct in noting that arguments concerning religious toleration have little, if anything at all, to do with the issue of free will, it was intimately connected to the system of doctrine that included the issue of the freedom of the will. The Particular Baptists demonstrated a fundamental agreement with the Congregationalists on the role of the civil magistrate and religious liberty that they did not share with the General Baptists. In so doing, they were distanced further from the General Baptists and closer to the English Reformed.

## Conclusion

The tumult of the Civil Wars, the Interregnum, the Restoration, and the Glorious Revolution all came to an end with the ascension of William of Orange and his wife Mary to the throne. This was followed shortly after by the 1689 Act of Toleration which, though in many respects still limited, brought religious toleration to the nation. While this seems to have come about more because of the differences between Presbyterians and Anglicans, especially as those differences related to William and Mary, than because of the ink spilled by Baptists of various stripes over the issue of toleration, those writings nonetheless are an important part of the historical events that ultimately culminated in the first amendment of the American Bill of Rights.

The 1600s began optimistically, with great hope for reformation that was to have been brought about by the Scottish King James. James' notions of divine right that he passed on to the rest of the Stuart monarchy came into conflict with the hopeful Puritans. Political realities overcame the desire for theological change. In light of this, the sympathies of the later Stuart monarchs towards Roman Catholicism were surely bitter.

While the Puritans warred within the ranks of the Church of England for reform, outside of her walls, Separatism grew, and within a few short decades numerous radical sects developed and spread. Religious unrest was as prevalent as political unrest.

Not insignificant amongst these groups were the developing Baptists. The one doctrine agreed upon by Particular and General Baptist alike was that of baptism, and the impact of the notion that a person should *not* be automatically baptized at birth reached further than mere ecclesiology. In a day when citizenship was tied to baptism, it is easy to see how a belief in adult baptism could be received as a radical notion that threatened to undo society. It would not be surprising if the doctrine of baptism in some way influenced the significance of religious liberty to both General and Particular Baptists, but that is another topic entirely.

The two Baptist groups developed distinctly from one another, sharing very little in common theologically beyond the fundamentals of the faith and their view of baptism. Though the General Baptists dominated the discussion of religious tolerance until the 1640s (in no small part because there were not any Particular Baptists until 1638), the Particular Baptists developed their own views on religious toleration. While some of the foundational arguments to the two are similar, particularly as pertaining to the limits of the authority of the civil magistrate, the nuances of the two views are clear: the General Baptists wanted universal toleration and the Particular Baptists did not.

The Particular Baptists developed their view on religious toleration in the midst of a society undergoing radical changes. Nonetheless, they were insistent that God had ordained the lawful rulers, they owed the magistrate their obedience (where it did not conflict with God's law), and they would very much like to worship according to their

consciences, but if they could not they would endure the consequences. Their obedience, however, was not an absolute one.

The Particular Baptists were free to disagree with the magistrate in his practice, arguing that his authority was only non-spiritual and that so long as people were peaceful, obedient, and orthodox, they should be free to worship according to their beliefs. There were limits: heretics and Roman Catholics needed not apply for toleration. This view of liberty was clearly at odds with the General Baptist pleas for universal toleration, though it was more in line with the limited toleration held to by the Independents.

Since the Particular Baptists were in considerable theological agreement with the Independents this is not a surprise. Some of the tension between the Presbyterians and Independents came about as a result of those Presbyterians who held to a *de iure divino* view of presbyterian church government, which may, in part, serve to explain the differences between the Presbyterians and the Independents on religious toleration.[220] The Particular Baptists, who shared the greater part of their ecclesiology with the Independents, were able to agree with them on religious liberty as a result. The depths to which ecclesiology played a role in this, however, still need to be explored. What is clear is that the Particular Baptists had a view of religious liberty that clearly set them apart from their General Baptist counter-parts even though it was not so unique as to be a complete innovation, but, rather, served as a further demonstration of the ways in which the Particular Baptists followed their Congregationalist brethren.

220. Francis J. Bremer, *Congregational Communion* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 154ff.

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