

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Christian Heritage

Topic: Reforming the Reformation (1525-1689)

Spring 2024

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. The topic this week is Reforming the Reformation, which covers the years 1525 to 1689.

The Anabaptists

By 1524, some of **Ulrich Zwingli's** disciples were frustrated that the reformation in Zurich was not proceeding fast enough. A group of pastors led by **Conrad Grebel**, **George Blaurock**, and **Felix Mantz** tried to convince the Zurich city council to reject the mass, icons, and infant baptism, but they were unsuccessful. On January 21, 1525, these men and a small group of their followers were meeting at the Mantz's home. They embraced believer's baptism by pouring. They called themselves the Swiss Brethren, but Zwingli, Luther, and Catholics called them **Anabaptists** ("re-baptizers"). Eventually, the magisterial reformers and Catholics applied the Anabaptist label to anyone who wasn't Reformed or Lutheran.

The Anabaptists were more radical than the Lutherans and Reformed because they sought to bypass all human traditions and restore pure apostolic Christianity. They rejected both the Catholic Church and the magisterial reformers because these movements continued to embrace practices that the Anabaptists believed were based upon unbiblical traditions. Other leading Anabaptists included **Michael Sattler**, **Balthasar Hubmaier**, **Pilgram Marpeck**, and **Menno Simons**.

Anabaptists rejected the territorial church and argued for **congregational freedom**, **religious liberty**, and **regenerate church membership**. They rejected infant baptism in favor of various forms of **believer's baptism**. Most were pacifists, refused to take oaths, and argued that Christians couldn't serve in government positions. Anabaptists were very diverse theologically. They were all over the map on justification. Some were legalistic. A few became violent revolutionaries. Most held to what would eventually be called an Arminian view of salvation.

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

church. Helwys also rejected Calvinism, so his movement came to be called the **General Baptists** because they believed in a general atonement.

In 1616, Henry Jacob planted a Separatist church in London, called the **J-L-J Church** after the initials of its first three pastors. Between 1630 and 1639, the church split numerous times. In 1639, **John Spilsbury**, the pastor of one of those splits, led his congregation to embrace believer's baptism by pouring. Spilsbury's church is probably the first **Particular Baptist** church; they were Calvinists who embraced particular (limited) atonement. In 1642, the J-L-J Church itself embraced Baptist convictions, opting for immersion over pouring. By 1650, both General and Particular Baptists had embraced immersion as their standard baptismal practice.

In 1630, Separatists established the Massachusetts Bay colony in New England. One of the early pastors to settle there was **Roger Williams**. In 1636, Williams fled the colony after being convicted of heresy and sentenced to return to England. His heresies consisted of arguing for freedom of religion and advocating Native American land rights. Later that year, he founded Providence Plantation (Rhode Island). In 1638, Williams rejected infant baptism, embraced believer's baptism by pouring, and founded the First Baptist Church of Providence, RI. He soon rejected his Baptist views, but the Providence church continued to be Baptist. In 1643, **John Clarke** founded the First Baptist Church of Newport, RI, which became the first known church in America to practice baptism by immersion.

Like the Separatists, Baptists advocated congregational freedom, regenerate church membership, and religious liberty. Through the Separatists, Baptists also inherited mainstream Protestant convictions about the supreme authority of Scripture, justification by faith alone, and penal substitutionary atonement. But they combined these emphases with a couple of views championed by the Anabaptists: believer's baptism and an emphasis on intentional evangelism and church planting. Baptists were a new group that was similar in various ways to both Separatists and Anabaptists, but Baptists weren't identified completely with either of those movements.

Civil War, Restoration, and Religious Toleration

Puritans finally gained control of Parliament in 1642, resulting in the English Civil War between Parliament and
