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PURITAN THEOLOGY AND GENERAL BAPTIST ORIGINS

The rise of the English General Baptists, which began in the first instance with the notorious self-baptism of John Smyth in 1608 (1), has provoked considerable discussion concerning the source of this novel twist in the history of early English dissent. The major issue has hinged upon the question of whether the continental Anabaptists or the English Separatists provided the nursery for Smyth's antipaedobaptist convictions (2). In one of the most recent studies of the matter, published in the *Baptist Quarterly* (vol.XXX, No.6, April 1984), James R. Coggins has argued persuasively on historical grounds that Smyth's self-baptism was more likely the logical consequence of ideas he had garnered during his brief sojourn among the Separatists than through any direct influence on the part of the Waterlander Mennonites in Holland, with whom he eventually sought union (3).

This was not, however, the conclusion Coggins reached with respect to Smyth's theological shift away from a Calvinistic to a more Arminian understanding of saving faith. On this issue, Coggins appears to agree with Michael Watts in *The Dissenters* (1978). There Watts disclaimed the conclusions of Lonnie Kliever who had once stated that Smyth probably modified his Calvinism through the influence of the English Arminian, Peter Baro, who lectured at Cambridge in the 1590s when Smyth was still a Fellow at Christ's College (4). In opposition to Kliever, Watts and Coggins each insisted that the timing of Smyth's theological transformation indicates that Dutch Anabaptism was the probable cause of his theological change (5).

The present study argues that both Smyth's self-baptism as well as his theological alteration may be understood more naturally as a derivative of his participation in Puritan English Separatism, rather than the result of Anabaptist influences. While this study, therefore, supports and expands many of Kliever's conclusions reached more than twenty years ago regarding the Puritan Separatist background to General Baptist origins (6), it does take issue with his conviction that Smyth's theological about-face was likely prompted by English Arminians of the 1590s. As Watts and Coggins have argued, it is more likely to have occurred through the influence of the Waterlanders. But beyond that possible Anabaptist influence, there are also intriguing indications that an ideological continuity may be traced, beginning with the Puritan context of Smyth's early public ministry, through all the various phases of his career. This continuity of Puritan and Separatist thinking with Smyth's Baptist and 'Arminian' convictions - which is the focus of the present study - may well have set the stage for both his theological and ecclesiological transformation.

One of the curious aspects of Smyth's astonishing act of self-baptism was the fact that so few from among the brethren of the Separatists in Amsterdam followed suit. If Separatism inevitably led to Anabaptism, as many of their contemporaries within the Church of England contended, why then did not all Separatists adopt the same procedure as Smyth and reconstitute their churches in a similar fashion? William R. Estep assumed that the reason there was no mass defection of Separatists along with Smyth was that the se-baptist's

action arose primarily as a result of his contacts with the Waterlanders, independent of his Separatist convictions (7). There are, of course, other ways of understanding the lack of Separatist enthusiasm for Smyth's novel pilgrimage. As Keith Sprunger has observed, Separatism did not inevitably lead to Anabaptism for most English Separatists because they themselves practised something very close to the believer's church ideal, making the revolutionary - and for many of them repugnant - step into Anabaptism unnecessary.

This, however, need not cloud the fact that for others, like Smyth and his followers, the inner logic of the leftward drift in radical Puritanism compelled them into Anabaptism, a process which was encouraged immeasurably by some of the concerns that were peculiar to radical Puritan and Separatist theology and ecclesiology. Admittedly, this is a difficult thesis to pin down precisely, but it becomes more apparent in the light of the direction in which late Elizabethan and early Stuart Puritan theology seems to have been moving. There is evidence which indicates that those subtle modifications within English Puritan theology which R. T. Kendall has recently so meticulously explored in *Calvin and English Calvinism* (1980)(9), may well have provided the backdrop for Smyth's curious pilgrimage from the Puritan nest at Cambridge, where he began his non-conformist career, into the hazy netherworld of English General Baptist beginnings in Amsterdam. His self-baptism, as well as his theological shift from Calvinism to Arminianism, both appear to be the logical products of a new emphasis among second-generation English Calvinists upon visible faith and conditional covenant theology. In this respect, Smyth's career illustrates effectively the wisdom of Henry G. Weston's remark, made near the end of the last century, that 'a given theology and a given polity are rarely disassociated'. 'A scheme of doctrine', Weston explained, 'leads to a cognate theory of the church.' (10) This indeed appears to be what happened with Smyth: changes in late sixteenth and early seventeenth- century English Calvinism prepared the way for the genesis of a new ecclesiological form in English nonconformity which Smyth became the first to adopt.

I. The Puritan and Separatist Theological Context

B. R. White has claimed that the significant contribution which the Separatist Robert Browne gave to the English Separatist tradition was to place ecclesiology within a 'mutualist' or 'conditional covenant' framework (11). In so doing, Browne tied the issue of soteriological assurance to ecclesiology: one must obey the laws of God with respect to the organisation of the church, as well as all other moral and spiritual laws, in order to keep the covenant relationship intact. For Browne, there was but one precise pattern for the church given in Scripture, which was obligatory for all Christians by its inclusion within the Decalogue in the second commandment. Thus, ecclesiology was not *adiaphora*, but a matter of salvation which demanded careful obedience. Those who consciously stood outside the walls of a biblically ordered church were, according to Browne, in 'grievous bondage' that could cause 'endless hurt' to their immortal souls; conversely, only those within a true church 'hath assurance of salvation in Christ' and 'the promise of blessing and life forevermore' (12).

Practising biblical churchmanship was similarly important to the second generation Separatist, Henry Barrow. In his controversy with the Conformist, George Gifford, Barrow noted the latter's use of the unconditional covenant idea to defend the 'mixed' assemblies in the Church of England. Gifford had cited the words of the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 20, 'I will be their God and the God of thy seed', as proof that God accepted the people of Israel unconditionally, 'yea, though many of them were wicked, idolators, and reprobates'. Barrow responded with the charge that Gifford had intentionally side-stepped the conditional nature of the covenant promise in Exodus 20. He then rounded off his rebuttle with the ominous warning that those who broke the laws of God with respect to church order 'and will not be reduced to his obedience' were to be 'cast out of his favour' (13).

This was the dynamic behind the radicalism of the Separatists. When Browne placed ecclesiology within a conditional covenant framework, the practice of a true polity became a matter of eternal security. Exactly how Browne came to this understanding is one small but important element of the Separatist story that eluded B. R. White's definitive study of that tradition. As White explained:

> It is not easy to assert with any real certainty the source of Browne's rather unusual interpretation of the covenant relationship. While it would certainly be possible for him to derive it directly from Scripture, the fact remains that the 'mutualist' interpretation was by no means characteristic of contemporary Puritan thinking, since this was primarily dominated by Calvinist emphases. This meant that, while stress upon the sovereignty of God did not exclude the implication that obedience was required, God's will, rather than the obedience or disobedience of man, was determinative for the stability of the covenant relationship. (14)

While it would be reasonable to make this judgment by reading only the debates between Puritans and Separatists, in which the Puritans invariably pointed to the unconditional nature of the covenant to defend their unwillingness to abandon the established Church (15), the fact remains that radical Puritans did employ the 'mutualist' interpretation of the covenant as early as the the 1570s, a decade before Browne flourished, in their confrontations with those who supported episcopacy. While the 'Anglican' mainstream before 1590 argued that church polity was indifferent matter not prescribed in the Scriptures, and which therefore could be determined according to historical circumstance by the authority of the magistrate (16), Puritan extremists in their confrontation with the establishment adamantly maintained that matters of polity were indeed prescribed by Christ. He was the Mosaic 'lawgiver' of the new covenant, who gave the church an 'exact pattern of the discipline' (17).

Just as the Separatists were to argue almost a decade later, many Elizabethan Puritans insisted in the early 1570s that the polity of the Bible comprised such a fundamental element of the gospel that failure to exercise it jeopardized the stability of the covenant relationship. In the *Second Admonition,* published in 1573, Thomas Cartwright set his mandate for reform within a 'mutualist' interpretation of the covenant,

seven years before Browne launched his career in Separatism. There Cartwright urged parliament to reform the Church of England according to what he perceived to be the biblical model in order that 'we may keep him our loving God and Father, and be kept by him to be his obedient servants and sons, here to serve him and after to inherit with him that crown purchased and promised unto us' (18). It was a year later that Cartwright, who had fled to the Palatinate to escape arrest, made his famous statement to Bishop Whitgift about the soteriological significance of the Puritan campaign for reform: whereas the bishop of London had maintained that ecclesiology was an indifferent matter and of no consequence for salvation, Cartwright assured Whitgift that 'matters of ceremonies, orders, discipline and government ...[were] of faith and of salvation' (19).

At first glance, Cartwright's response appears to be a departure from Calvin, who said that matters of church organization 'are not to be considered necessary for salvation' (20). It was for this reason that David Hall assumed Whitgift 'emerged from his debate with Cartwright sounding like the better Calvinist' (21). At times, however, Calvin himself seemed to imply something much closer to Cartwright's convictions. While asserting that matters of 'outward discipline and ceremonies' were circumstantial, Calvin also declared that 'the Lord has in his sacred oracles faithfully embraced and clearly expressed both the whole sum of true righteousness, and all aspects of the worship of his majesty... therefore in these the Master alone is to be heard' (22). And although Calvin was willing to approve of 'human constitutions', he argued at the same time that the constitution of the church should be 'founded upon God's authority, drawn from Scripture' (23). Calvin, like his Puritan progeny, also described Christ as the new Moses, 'the sole lawgiver' of the church's constitution, who revealed God's wishes concerning the church with even greater clarity than the Old Testament lawmaker (24). There was, then, this thread in Calvin's thinking about the church that could have been so easily picked up and woven into the more doctrinaire position of the Elizabethan Puritan reformists.

Nevertheless, there was a fundamental difference over this issue between Calvin and his Puritan successors. The difference may perhaps best be understood by drawing out their respective views concerning Christ as the new Mosaic lawgiver in matters of church organisation and the soteriological value of obedience to those laws. Whereas Calvin emphasized the simplicity and, therefore, clarity of Christ's ecclesiastical teachings over against the detailed intricacies of the Mosaic law (25), English Puritans stressed the correspondence of Christ's precision and thoroughness with that of Moses. For the Puritan, Christ offered an 'exact pattern'. He did ' not leave a loop of a curtain unmade, or make a button or clasp more or less than Moses' (26). Although Calvin sought to establish an ecclesiastical order in Geneva that conformed to Scripture, he did not view the Bible as a book of detailed and immutable laws for church organization (27). Furthermore, while he did say that membership in a true visible church was ordinarily 'necessary... to our salvation', he did not tie salvation to the practice of a single form of discipline as his English successors were to do (28).

The background for the conviction among radical Puritans like Cartwright that churchmanship was directly linked with soteriology probably stems from their understanding of the nature of saving faith and assurance. While Puritan theology was ostensibly rooted in the predestinarian system of Calvin, they made several subtle, but nevertheless substantial modifications in the area of soteriology, especially with respect to the assurance of salvation. Calvin described saving faith as something passively received through the grace of God. He was inclined to advise those parishioners at Geneva who had grave doubts about their own election to look to Christ rather than the effects of sanctification in themselves for assurance of their salvation (29). Reformed theologians after Calvin, however, tended to emphasize the importance of active obedience to the moral law of the Bible for assurance of true faith. From Beza to the Heidelberg theologians, the basis for assurance gradually shifted from Christ to the individual believer; particular stress was given to the advice found in II Peter 1:10, where believers were admonished to make their election more sure through perseverance in good works, a warning that was underscored by the conditional covenant motif of the Heidelberg school (30).

In England, the more radical Puritans followed much the same pattern. By the 1570s and 80s, they showed, as George Yule has observed, a marked predilection for the 'new legalism' of second generation Calvinists (31); assurance of salvation was sought through a vigilant obedience to the laws of Scripture. As the London Puritans, John Field and Thomas Wilcox, explained: even though 'we hold ourselves freed from the law, and the ceremonial keeping of the same, yet we keep the doctrine thereof, as well for the better framing of our lives, as also for the more confirming of us in the promises of the Gospel'. Visible obedience to the law of God enabled them to be assured 'thereby of salvation' (32).

The link between soteriology and churchmanship was made when the more progressive Puritans combined this emphasis on obedience to the laws of God for assurance with the recognition that ecclesiological matters in Scripture were not *adiaphora*. Rather, they were clearly delineated by the Mosaic lawmaker of the New Testament and were therefore a perpetual requirement for all generations of God's people because of their inclusion in the Decalogue under the second commandment (33). According to Puritanism's first systematic theologian, Dudley Fenner, the second commandment prohibited all humanly devised worship - i.e. forms of worship not found in Scripture expressly or by implication - and commanded everyone 'to acknowledge, love, desire, delight in, and outwardly practise all those parts of [Christ's] worship, which he in his word hath commanded' (34). Here again, the link between ecclesiology and soteriology, so characteristic of Separatist ideals, was forged when Fenner explained that a breach of the second commandment dissolved the covenant bond between God and his children, while faithful obedience brought 'them into a covenant of life and blessedness, yea and that eternal' (35). This theological shift towards legalism on the part of those Puritans, who have been labelled by K. T. Kendall as 'experimental predestinarians', appears to provide the background for the tendency among Separatist and left-wing Puritan propagandists to

place ecclesiology within a 'mutualist' covenant framework. This same theological shift also appears to have had significant implications for their understanding of the meaning of church membership, which in turn prepared the ground for Smyth's plunge into Anabaptism and planted the seed of his modified Calvinism.

William Perkins, the Puritan theologian and prominent preacher at Cambridge, identified for his generation of followers the primary signs by which they could be assured of their election and membership within the church universal. Writing in 1591, Perkins explained that there were two kinds of evidence necessary: 'knowledge of God's will', by which Perkins meant doctrinal orthodoxy, 'joined with obedience', or godly conduct, were considered 'infallible' signs of true saving faith (36). These two criteria also became the two primary requirements for church membership within the reformist sector of the Elizabethan and early Stuart church. Thus, they carried the implication that those who qualified for membership could be accounted true visible saints in communion with Christ.

Although all Puritans explored various ecclesiological issues of their day within the framework of the English parish system, it is also clear that among the more advanced Puritans there was a drift toward congregationalism and a nascent form of believer's churchmanship (37). There was an increasingly compellling tendency throughout the period to devise exclusive rather than inclusive models for the parish churches, in which the more radical members of the movement sought to limit membership to a select company of the saints, those called by God, separated from the ungodly and dedicated to visible works of charity in accordance with the commandments of Christ. Field and Wilcox, for example, defined a true visible church as being

> a company or congregation of faithful people, whom God hath chosen to himself, and gathered out of the world by the preaching of the Gospel, who following the same and embracing true religion, do in the unity of the spirit strengthen and comfort one another, daily growing and increasing in true faith, framing their lives, government, orders and ceremonies, according to the word of God. (38)

The church was to strive for visible purity from moral 'pollution', as the Elizabethan Puritan, Walter Travers, explained, and restrict itself to 'lovers and professors of the truth' (39).

By the time Smyth's Separatist career was in full bloom, many Puritan radicals insisted that church membership be restricted to those who showed 'good signs of regeneration' (40). When, for example, the Puritan, William Ames, defined the church on earth as a 'community of the elect', he did not mean simply those chosen in the secret councils of God, but rather those who possessed an

> effectual calling, which is a kind of external election as it were made in time. Therefore the Church hath her name rather from this calling..., that by this means the company or community of actual believers is fitly designed, seeing that none are ordinarily called effectually, but such as by *actual* faith answer that call. (41)

By 'actual faith', Ames meant a faith that was visible, or as Puritans in general understood it, a faith made manifest 'in action' (42). While admitting that true faith ultimately depended upon the secret and invisible elective love of God, Puritan radicals, steeped in the philosophical tradition of Peter Ramus who stressed experimental over abstract knowledge (43), were inclined to identify saving faith with the manifestation of good works. The method of distinguishing true faith from general faith involved the use of a practical syllogism. One simply examined the evidence of visible good works in oneself or others, the presence of which would allow one to conclude that true faith was also present (44). Thus, sanctification provided the key for discerning the elect: 'So when God now hath by faith and sanctification, taken one out of this world; we may know that he has chosen forth of the world, unto life' (45). This was the basis upon which the more progressive Puritans desired to build congregations of the regenerate; as Robert Parker explained the admission procedures, 'inward virtues' are not to be examined by the presbyters and people, but rather 'sanctity is required' (46).

The Separatists adopted the same 'experimental' approach to knowledge of election used by their radical Puritan contemporaries. The two distinctive marks of saving faith, according to the Separatists, were knowledge of orthodox doctrine and visible obedience (47). In the words of the Separatist, Smyth, which echo the sentiments of William Perkins, evidence of true doctrine and good works are a 'proper note of eternal life' (48).

If visible Christianity was the basis for judging the reality of individual faith, it was also a test of a true church. This was one reason why the Separatists rejected the argument that many parish churches were true because some of their members possessed true saving faith. The Separatists never doubted that, as Barrow explained to Whitgift, 'the Lord had many precious and elect vessels' in the Church of England, but they 'could not ... count them faithful' because they were not visibly elect (49). This was, in effect, the response of the Separatist, Henry Ainsworth, to John Sprint's defence of Puritan parishes on the basis that 'true members of our best assemblies... are endued with true saving faith'. Ainsworth said, 'while you plead but for the true members of your best assemblies; yet neither tell you us which are your best assemblies, nor who be the true members of them; that how to follow or where to find you we cannot tell'. 'You say', he continued, that true members

> are endued with true saving faith. I answer, faith is in the heart... The heart no man knoweth but God alone... So then I ask you how you know that your members have true faith, your answer must needs be, (unless you will make yourself a God) you know it not but by their words and works.

A church was true only if it was made up of those who showed their faith in words and works; to define it only in terms of 'inward graces' was, according to Ainsworth, 'mere delusion' (50).

Because of what they believed visible, or 'actual', faith proved about inner faith, the Separatists, while never claiming to have

established congregations with the purity of the invisible church, nevertheless considered their churches to be in a practical sense communities of the elect. Those who were received into church membership were to be examined, Smyth said, for 'faith testified by obedience', and upon that basis accounted 'holy, faithful, and elect' (51). Entrance into church fellowship commenced in the act of covenanting which included for all an 'open and voluntary profession of their own faith and obedience' (52), the purpose of which was to manifest to the church that they were filled with the Holy Spirit and so qualified for membership. Barrow explained in some detail the theology and purpose of a profession of faith:

> But now while we acknowledge the whole work of our salvation, from the beginning to the end, to be of God and not of our selves, to proceed from and to be established upon his free grace... yet make we not thereby the grace of God and his Holy Spirit which he hath given to all his elect, to be idle, vain, or fruitless in any of them, but to regenerate, change, enlighten and sanctify them, to bring all their affections into, and to keep them in the love and obedience of the truth. By the profession of which truth they are known and received as members of the visible church, made partakers of the common comforts and covenant of the saints. (53)

Those who could thus testify to their faith in word and deed were then admitted into that select company of those whom, in the words of Browne, 'Christ hath redeemed ... unto holiness and happiness for ever, from which they were fallen by the sin of Adam' (54). They then entered into 'the secret and congregation of the righteous: which looked forth as the morning, fair as the moon, pure as the sun ... the house of the living God, the gate of heaven, the pillar and ground of truth' (55).

It is clear, then, that the Separatists' understanding of a profession of faith for church membership was soteriologically far more significant than Edmund S. Morgan concluded when he wrote: 'The faith implied in a [Separatist] confession of faith was not saving faith but simply an intellectual understanding of, and consent to, a set of doctrines; it was the product, not of grace but of instruction' (56). Morgan's conclusion was based on his view that Separatists were concerned only with evidence of doctrinal knowledge and Christian conduct, but not of an inward experience of grace. Yet within the context of Elizabethan and early Stuart Puritan soteriology, doctrinal knowledge and Christian conduct were seen to comprise *the* touchstone of true faith; a person accepted into membership on this basis would therefore have been received as one who bore the marks of election (57). To an impressive extent, then, radical Puritan and Separatist ecclesiology emphasized the value of visible, active faith as evidence of saving faith and a necessary requirement for church membership.

II. Puritan Churchmanship and the Logic of Anabaptist Ecclesiology

As in the Reformed tradition generally, Separatists defended infant baptism on the basis of the Old Testament rite of circumcision. Baptism

was the sign or seal of God's promise and unconditional covenant of grace with the faithful and their children (58). While the weight of this argument rested heavily on the unconditional nature of the Abrahamic covenant, Puritan and Separatist soteriology and ecclesiology, as we have seen, laid stress on the conditional nature of the covenant relationship and on the importance of visible obedience both for the assurance of salvation and as a requirement for church membership. When, for example, the Separatist, Richard Clifton, argued on the basis of the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 17, that children of believing parents were to be included in church membership through the rite of baptism because 'the promise is made to you and to your children, and to all that are a far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call' (59), he was, in effect, undercutting the whole principle of visible churchmanship that dominated Puritan and Separatist ecclesiological thinking.

It was Smyth among the Separatists who first challenged and rejected the practice of infant baptism for this very reason. The seal or sign or a true covenant relationship with God, he said in reply to Richard Clifton, was not baptism but the Holy Spirit which manifested itself in visible obedience (60). His difficulty with infant baptism was not that children were incapable of receiving God's grace, but rather that they could not exhibit evidence of saving faith: 'Infants are not to be esteemed actually under the possession of the New Testament, which New Testament is visible in the visible ordinances thereof' (61). Infants were capable of inward faith, but not 'actual faith' (62). But what was Smyth to do with the persuasive argument from Genesis 17 employed by Clifton? Rather than deny the validity of appealing to the Abrahamic covenant, Smyth justified its use for his own purposes by placing a 'mutualist' interpretation on the passage. He explained to Clifton that true baptism only appertained 'to them that are of Abraham's faith, that is *actually* believing to justification, and *showing* the faith of Abraham by the *works* of Abraham' (63). Since, as we have shown, church membership for Puritan radicals and Separatists belonged only to the visibly elect, Smyth's rejection of infant baptism on this basis was thoroughly consistent with the drift of Puritan ecclesiology.

The same could be said about the theological switch of Smyth and several of his followers to a modified Calvinism (64). For example, John Murton's 'Arminian' convictions that 'the promise of God's election is free, without any desert in us originally, yet upon condition of faith and obedience of Christ's gospel', and that though God loves men first, 'yet after they must love him and continue in his love, by keeping his commandments' or be subject to the wrath of God (65), were essentially of one mind with the soteriology expressed in the experimental predestinarian tradition within English Puritanism and Separatism. With respect to their understanding of saving faith, it appears that the change from Calvinism to 'Arminianism', then, did not necessitate a radical readjustment on the part of the first General Baptists. Puritan soteriology, apart from the question of whether or not God's grace could be resisted, was highly compatible with Arminianism, a point recognized by Jacob Arminius himself in his critique of the theology of William Perkins (66).

Finally, the compatibility of a Baptist form of ecclesiology with the soteriology and ecclesiology of Separatism was underlined, if not betrayed, by the response of the Separatists to the threat posed by the defection of Smyth. While they usually invoked a 'mutualist' covenant theology to justify Separatism when confronting Puritans or Conformists, they invariably turned to the unconditional covenant concept when disputing with the new Baptists in their midst. Johnson, for example, responded to Smyth's first Baptist manifesto, *The Character of the Beast,* by emphasizing that Smyth did 'highly... derogate from the grace of God, the fulness of Christ and his Gospel' by rejecting infant church membership (67). In defending paedobaptism, Johnson was in fact driven further than any other Separatist to justify baptism received in Rome or England as true baptism. But in order to do that, he was forced to turn to the unconditional notion of the covenant. Baptism once received in the Church of Rome or England was not to be repeated, he said:

> Because the covenant of God's grace in Christ is an everlasting covenant: into which it pleased God to take us with Abraham our father, when he made that covenant with him and his seed forever. And as the Lord himself, who knoweth his works from the beginning, hath regard unto it in his merciful dealing concerning his people, even when they are as yet in apostatical churches. (68)

In 1617, Johnson outlined his position even more sharply. By then, he not only justified infant baptism on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant of grace, but he also made baptism and not visible faith the foundation of soteriological assurance:

> For the seal of God (in circumcision and baptism) confirmeth a perfect, sure and firm covenant, even the Lord's everlasting covenant of grace... whereas our faith and observation of the Lord's commandments, like as theirs in Israel, is infirm and unperfect... And it is our comfort in temptations, that although we are weak and sinful, yet the Lord's covenant of grace, confirmed unto us in baptism, as it was to them in circumcision, is firm and holy, even an everlasting covenant (69).

There was however, one way in which most Separatists tried to bridge the gap between their ecclesiology, which emphasized visible obedience, and their doctrine of baptism grounded in the grace of God. While they had taught that the baptism of Rome and England was not of itself true baptism, they nevertheless would not say it was utterly false either, because it had the potential of true, effective baptism upon the repentance and obedience of the baptized. But in so doing, they were viewing baptism, like Smyth, in terms of a conditional rather than unconditional understanding of the covenant relationship. Johnson alone, it seems, realized this. Some Separatist arguments justifying baptism received in the church of Rome and Canterbury, he said, were 'plain Anabaptistry, and covert Popery, and Arminianism. Whereby they debase God's grace, and exalt man's works' (70). The only way to justify baptism from Rome or the Church of England, he argued, would be to acknowledge both to be true

churches, not because of their obedience (because they were both yet drenched in apostasy), but because God's grace was larger than their apostasy. Yet to do this, Johnson was compelled to give up the greater part of the conditional covenant theology of Separatism and cast his ecclesiology upon, as he was now inclined to say, the Lord's 'free grace' (71).

Neither Johnson or the other Separatists, it appears, were entirely consistent in their use of unconditional and conditional covenant theology in this regard. Johnson, who came to emphasize the former in his defence of Rome, nevertheless remained a Separatist; but in order to do so, he returned to a 'mutualist' theology saying that one should separate because God 'hath promised to show mercy graciously to them that love him and keep his commandments' (72). The same inconsistency appears in Ainsworth. When writing against Johnson's views of baptism, he stressed the conditional nature of the covenant, saying, 'there is no covenant between God and men, but conditional: for without faith and holiness no man shall see the Lord' (73). Yet when writing against the Baptist, John Murton, Ainsworth - like Johnson - emphasized the covenant of grace. Baptism is 'God's work in grace', he explained to Murton, and is known only through faith, not outward signs. Thus, the saints 'are to believe that our infants are sanctified creatures, and are born believers not infidels, though outwardly they can manifest no faith or sanctification unto us'. The effect was, of course, to undermine the whole principle of visible churchmanship upon which Separatist polity was built. Ironically, it was this same Ainsworth who had said to John Sprint some years earlier that to define faith wholly in terms of 'inward graces' was 'mere delusion' (74).

Whether the first appearance of a Baptist ecclesiology within English dissent arose primarily as the result of dynamics inherent to left-wing Puritanism and Separatism or as the cross fertilization of Separatist and Anabaptist ideals, is a problem likely never to be solved to every historian's satisfaction. Nonetheless, when one takes a broad view of the radical Protestant landscape in England, it is evident that there is a certain kinship of ideals between the first General Baptists and those of the English Separatists and Puritans. The compatibility of Smyth's Baptist convictions and his modified Calvinism with the Puritan and Separatist theological context indicates that he may, indeed, not have travelled as far on his religious odyssey as historians are sometimes inclined to think. Smyth himself, at least, suggested that there was something of a direct line of continuity between the two ends of his irregular career, when he explained in *The Character of the Beast* that he had arrived at his new-found destination after having progressed 'from the profession of Puritanism to Brownism, and from Brownism to true Christian baptism' (75). Nowhere does he indicate that ideas he may have received from the Continental Anabaptists played a part in this celebrated pilgrimage. Even if he had, there is sufficient evidence of a shared perspective concerning theology and ecclesiology between Smyth and his co-religionists within radical Puritanism and Separatism to warrant the conclusion that the logic of Smyth's Baptist convictions was rooted in English nonconformity.

NOTES

1 Smyth's uneasiness about the baptism he received in the Church of England surfaced as early as the autumn of 1607. B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, Oxford 1971, 131. Perhaps the earliest reference to the actual event of Smyth's self-baptism is that made by Henoch Clapham in *Error on the left hand*, London 1608, 22.

2 For a most perceptive analysis of the way Baptist scholars have alternatively embraced and repudiated an Anabaptist lineage in Baptist history, see Ian Sellers' important article, 'Edwardians, Anabaptists and the Problem of Baptist Origins', *The Baptist Quarterly*, XXIX (1981), 97-112.

3 James R. Coggins, 'The Theological Positions of the First English Baptists', *The Baptist Quarterly*, XXX,(1984), 13, 23 (typescript).

4 For Lonnie Kliever's views, see 'General Baptist Origins: The Question of Influences', *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 36 (1962), 316-17.

5 Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, Oxford 1978, 45-6; Coggins, 'The Theological Positions of the First English Baptist', 24-5.

6 Kliever, op.cit., 316, where he claimed that General Baptist distinctives were 'the working out of the influences and resources resident within their English Puritan Separatist background' and not the Anabaptists.

7 William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 1975, Grand Rapids, 19-220.

8 Keith Sprunger, 'English Puritans and Anabaptists', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 46 (1972), 128.

9 R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, Oxford 1980. See also N. S. Moon's review of Kendall's book in *The Baptist Quarterly*, XXIX (1981), 93-4, where he suggests the possibility of treating Particular Baptist origins in a fashion similar to that which is presented here.

10 Henry G. Weston, *Constitution and Polity of the New Testament Church*, Philadelphia 1895, 18.

11 White, op.cit., 54.

12 *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, ed. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson, London 1953, 85, 87, 97, 255. The spelling of all citations from primary sources, with the exception of titles from published works, has been modernized and abbreviations have been expanded.

13 *The Writings of Henry Barrow: 1590-1591*, ed. Leland H. Carlson, London 1966, 115-117.

14 White, op.cit., 55.

15 See Stephen Brachlow, 'Puritan Theology and Radical Churchmen in Pre-Revolutionary England', D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford 1979, 115-119.

16 H. F. Woodhouse, *The Doctrine of the Church in Anglican Theology: 1547-1603*, London 1954, 107-123. Cf. also William Lamont, *Godly Rule, Politics and Religion 1603-1660*, London 1969, 56-9, for the beginning of *iure divino* claims for episcopacy by the Laudian bishops.

17 *Parte of a register*, Middelburg 1593, 122.

18 *Puritan Manifestoes*, ed. W. H. Frere and C. E. Douglas, London 1954, 133. See Donald J. McGinn, *The Admonition Controversy*, New Brunswick 1954, 52, 547, for Cartwright's authorship of the *Second Admonition*.

19 Thomas Cartwright, *A reply to an answere made of M. Doctor Whitgifte*, n.p. 1574, 14.

20 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles, London 1960, IV, x, 27.

21 David Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century*, New York 1974, 27.

22 *Institutes*, IV, x, 30.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., IV, x, 17.

25 See ibid., where Calvin explained that the teachings of Moses about the church were 'obscure, so to speak, because of its very many wrappings', whereas Christ brought a 'clearer doctrine'.

26 Walter Travers, *A Full and plaine declaration of ecclesiastical discipline*, n.p. 1574, 15.

27 *Institutes*, IV, x, 30: Christ did not 'in outward discipline and ceremonies... prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended upon the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages)'. See also, Benjamin Milner, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church*, Leiden 1970, 174.

28 *Institutes*, IV, i, 8; 4.

29 Francois Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of his Thought*, London 1976, 274-77.

30 Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 13-47.

31 George Yule, 'Continental Patterns and the Reformation in England and Scotland', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, xxii (1969), 309-17.

32 *Parte of a register*, 535-37.

33 Ibid., 81.

34 Dudley Fenner, *A brief treatise upon the first table of the lawe*, Middelburg 1587, sig. c1.

35 Ibid., sig. D1.

36 William Perkins, *The Workes of that famous and worthy minister of Christ in the Universite of Cambridge*, M. W. Perkins, Cambridge 1605, 374. See also comments by A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, London 1966, 44-45; Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience*, London 1972, 9; and William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism*, Philadelphia 1972, 299, concerning the Puritan emphasis on visible action for the assurance of election.

37 Brachlow, 'Puritan Theology and Radical Churchman', 35-47; 90-94.

38 *Parte of a register*, 539.

39 *The Second Parte of a Register*, ed. Albert Peel, Cambridge 1915, I, 171.

40 Robert Parker, Parker MS, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, III, 17.

41 William Ames, *The svbstance of Christian religion*, London 1659, 143-44 (my italics).

42 M. vanBeek, *An Enquiry Into Puritan Vocabulary*, Groningen 1969, 77.

43 For the significance of theological Ramism on Puritan theologians like Ames, see Keith Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames*, Urbana, Illinois 1972, chap. VII.

44 See, for example, Ames's discussion of II Peter 1:10 in *The workes of the reverend and faithfull minister of Christ*, William Ames, London 1643, 161-65.

45 Paul Baynes, *A commentarie upon the first chapter of the epistle of saint Paul, written to the Ephesians*, London 1618, 71; see also, William Bradshaw, *A treatise of iustification*, London 1615, 88-89.

46 Parker MS, III, 17.

47 *The Works of John Smyth*, ed. W. T. Whitley, Cambridge 1915, II, 382; *Browne*, 147, 227; *The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1587-1590*,

ed. Leland H. Carlson, London 1962, 61; *Barrow, 1590-1591,* 110-11; Henry Ainsworth, *The Communion of saincts,* Amsterdam 1607, 127.

48 *Smyth,* II, 382.

49 *Barrow, 1587-1590,* 197.

50 Henry Ainsworth, *Counterpoyson,* Amsterdam 1608, 36-37, 18.

51 *Smyth,* II, 382.

52 *Barrow, 1587-1590,* 159.

53 Ibid., 163.

54 *Browne,* 253

55 Ainsworth, *Communion,* 228.

56 Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea,* New York 1963, 43.

57 For a further critique of Morgan's thesis, see Brachlow, 'Puritan Theology', 353-54.

58 Francis Johnson and Henry Ainsworth, *An apologie or defence of such true Christians as are commonly (but vniustly) called Brownists,* n.p. 1604.

59 Quoted in *Smyth,* II, 578.

60 Ibid., 581, 586.

61 Ibid., 638.

62 Ibid., 589.

63 Ibid., 678 (my italics).

64 See Kliever, 'General Baptist Origins', 307-15.

65 John Murton, *A description of what God hath predestinated concerning man,* London 1620, 78, 87-88.

66 Yule, 'Continental Patterns', 317; Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism,* 141-150.

67 Francis Johnson, *A brief treatise against two errours of the Anabaptists,* Amsterdam 1609, 14.

68 Ibid., 17-18.

69 Francis Johnson, *A Christian plea conteyning three treatises,* Amsterdam 1617, 13, 23.

70 Ibid., 32.

71 Ibid., 58–64.

72 Ibid., 215–7.

73 Henry Ainsworth, *A reply to a pretended Christian plea*, Amsterdam 1620, 133.

74 See above, 17.

75 *Smyth*, II, 564.

STEPHEN BRACHLOW

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SUMMER SCHOOL 1985

Members of the Society gathered at Bradford in July for the Summer School on 'Regional Baptist Life'. About 45 were able to attend for the whole or part of the weekend, and the arrangements were in the capable hands of the Secretary, Roger Hayden.

A new generation of Baptist historians was well in evidence: indeed, three of the speakers were Oxford doctoral students. Also enjoyably in evidence were a variety of accents. The interest of both Denzil Morgan's paper on Welsh Baptists and Sam Henry's on those of Fife was increased by the pleasure of hearing native tongues getting round those Celtic place names. It was a delight too for Baptists of the 'old country' to be led lovingly around the Baptist communities of 18th century Wiltshire and Hampshire and of the Pennines by two speakers from the Southern States, Karen Smith and Bill Poe.

The emphasis in Bradford was on northern Baptists, especially on the Saturday, including a coach trip round the former preaching grounds of John Fawcett and Dan Taylor. On a wider front the Society was invited to explore the neglected ground of Baptist financial history, and take a fresh look at 19th century mission fields, where there was already a conflict between imperialism and 'liberation theology'. Most of the papers will appear in the Quarterly in due course.

A happy aspect of these Summer Schools is the mingling of professional and amateur historians, of ministers and laymen, of young and old, enjoying shared interests. Those members who attended this year would encourage others to consider going another time.

FAITH BOWERS