

BAPTIST BODIES

GENERAL STATEMENT

It is a distinct principle with Baptists that they acknowledge no human founder, recognize no human authority, and subscribe to no human creed. For all these things, Baptists of every name and order go back to the New Testament. And while no competent Baptist historian assumes to be able to trace a succession of Baptist churches through the ages, most of them are of one accord in believing that, if we could secure the records, there would be found heroic groups of believers in every age who upheld with their testimonies and, in many cases, with their lives, the great outstanding and distinctive principles of the Baptist churches of to-day.

As soon as the Reformation gave men opportunity to interpret the teachings of the Scriptures for themselves, and to embody their convictions in speech and act, persons holding Baptist doctrines immediately began to appear. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, they were found in Germany and Switzerland, and were called Anabaptists (Re-baptizers), because they insisted that persons baptized in infancy must, upon profession of conversion, and in order to gain admission into church fellowship, be baptized again, although they do not appear to have insisted always on immersion. These early Anabaptists were in the main of high character, though in some instances they held doctrines which led to fanatical outbreaks which aroused no little prejudice against them.

Gradually, in spite of severe persecution, the Anabaptists grew in numbers. Some of them, driven from Germany, found refuge in the Low Countries and these were gathered, under the lead of Menno Simons, into the groups of Mennonites¹ who passed over into England, and doubtless played an important part in giving currency to Baptist principles. To their influence, in all probability, the English Baptists owe their first churches, established in Amsterdam in 1608 and in London in 1611. Glimpses of them appear in the days preceding the Commonwealth, and during the Cromwellian period they became more prominent. It was due to this Mennonite influence that the early Baptist churches in England were Arminian rather than Calvinistic in type, and were termed General Baptists, indicating belief in a universal atonement, in distinction from Particular Baptists, indicating a limited atonement. The first Calvinistic or Particular Baptist church was formed in London in 1638, its members seceding peaceably from an older Separatist congregation. In 1641 a further secession from the same Separatist church occurred, and the new group became convinced from study of the New Testament that the apostolic baptism was immersion. They sent one of their number to Holland, where he was immersed by a minister of the Collegiate church at Rhynsburg, where the practice of immersion had been introduced, and on his return the rest of the church were immersed. Gradually this practice was adopted by all the Baptist churches and became in the popular mind their distinguishing feature. The General and Particular Baptists were united in 1891.

The first Baptist church in America was probably established by Roger Williams, the "Apostle of Religious Liberty," in Providence, R. I., in 1639, although this honor is disputed by the First Baptist Church of Newport, R. I., organized, it is claimed, with John Clarke as its pastor, the same year or shortly after.

¹ See Mennonite Bodies, p. 842.

Roger Williams was a Separatist² minister who came to the Massachusetts Colony in 1631, and was banished from that colony because "he broached and divulged new and dangerous opinions against the authority of magistrates." Having established himself at Providence, he adopted essentially Baptist views and soon gathered a number of converts to this faith. As there was no Baptist church in existence in America at that time, he baptized Ezekiel Holliman, who thereupon baptized him. Williams then baptized 10 others, and this company of Baptist believers organized themselves into a church. John Clarke came from New Hampshire to Newport about the same time, and, apparently without any connection with the work of Williams, established a Baptist church in that town.

These early American Baptist churches belonged to the Particular, or Calvinistic, branch. Later, Arminian views became widely spread for a time, but ultimately the Calvinistic view of the atonement was generally accepted by the main body of Baptists in the Colonies. The divisions which now exist began to make their appearance at a relatively early date. In 1652 the church at Providence divided, one party organizing a church which marked the beginning of the General Six Principle Baptists. The Seventh Day Baptist body organized its first church at Newport in 1671. Arminianism practically disappeared from the Baptist churches of New England about the middle of the eighteenth century, but General Baptists were found in Virginia before 1714, and this branch gained a permanent foothold in the South. As a result of the revival movement, generally known as the New Light movement, which followed George Whitefield's visit to New England in 1740, the Separate Baptists came into existence and at one time were very numerous. The Free Baptists,³ in 1779, once more gave a general and widely accepted expression in New England to the Arminian view of the atonement.

Soon after the Revolutionary War, the question of the evangelization of the Negro race assumed importance, and a Colored Baptist church was organized in 1788. With the general revival movement at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, to which the Free Baptists owed no small part of their growth, there developed, especially in the mountain sections of the Middle West and in the Southern States, a reaction toward a sterner Calvinism, which, combined with the natural Baptist emphasis upon individualism, produced a number of associations strictly, even rigidly, Calvinistic, some of them going to the extent of dualism, as in the doctrine of the Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists.

About the same time, as missionary work became organized into societies, many of these associations opposed, not so much mission work itself, as its organization, through fear of a developing ecclesiasticism. These were variously termed "Old School," "Anti-Mission," "Hard Shell," and "Primitive" Baptists; but gradually the term "Primitive" became the most widely known and adopted. In contradistinction to these, the associations, or churches, which approved of missionary societies, came to be designated Missionary Baptists, though there was no definite denominational organization under that name.

The denominations mentioned, however, do not represent all who hold Baptist views, for during the revival period just referred to, the Disciples of Christ, or Churches of Christ, arose, who in practice are essentially Baptists, although they differ from the other bodies in some interpretations. With them also may be classed the Adventists, the Brethren (Dunker, Plymouth, and River), Mennonites, and certain other bodies. The Armenian and Eastern Orthodox Churches practice baptism by immersion, but do not limit it to those of mature years.

² See Congregational Churches, p. 453.

³ In 1926 the Free Baptist churches are included with those of the Northern Baptist Convention.

It thus appears that a survey of Baptist bodies should include not only those which make the term an integral part of their title, but some which are not ordinarily classed with them. It is also evident that among those who accept the name Baptists there are many differences, some of great importance. Seventh Day Baptists agree with other Baptists bodies except in regard to the Sabbath, but the distinction between Primitive Baptists and Free Will Baptists is much more marked than between Baptists and Disciples. Any presentation of the strength of Baptist denominations must take into account these divergencies.

By far the largest body of Baptists, not only in the United States but in the world, is that popularly known as "Baptist," though frequently referred to, and listed in the census of 1890, as "Regular Baptists." Other Baptist bodies prefix some descriptive adjective, such as "Primitive," "United," "General," "Free Will," etc., but this, which is virtually the parent body, commonly has no such qualification. Its churches, however, are ordinarily spoken of as "Northern," "Southern," and "Colored." This does not imply any divergence in doctrine or ecclesiastical order. All are one in these respects. It is rather a distinction adopted for administrative purposes, and based upon certain local or racial characteristics and conditions, the recognition of which implies no lack of fellowship or unanimity of purpose. Should these distinctions cease to exist, there is nothing whatever to prevent the same unity in matters of administration which now exists in belief, fellowship, and ecclesiastical practice.

STATISTICS

The denominations grouped as Baptists in 1926, 1916, and 1906 are listed in the table below, with the principal statistics as reported for the three periods.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR BAPTIST BODIES, 1926, 1916, AND 1906

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1926								
Total for the group.....	60,192	3,440,922	52,281	\$469,827,795	54,145	\$98,045,096	47,889	4,654,241
Baptists:								
Northern Baptist Convention.....	7,611	1,289,966	7,297	185,370,576	7,380	34,318,486	6,999	1,052,794
Southern Baptist Convention.....	23,374	3,524,378	21,128	173,456,965	22,338	42,904,563	19,882	2,345,630
Negro Baptists.....	22,081	3,196,623	19,833	103,465,759	20,209	19,475,981	18,755	1,121,362
General Six Principle Baptists.....	6	293	6	20,500	5	3,046	5	229
Seventh Day Baptists.....	67	7,264	58	668,200	65	132,068	57	4,033
Free Will Baptists.....	1,024	79,592	765	1,156,743	872	252,613	643	38,199
United American Free Will Baptists (Colored).....	166	13,396	142	308,425	158	67,773	144	5,077
Free Will Baptists (Bullockites).....	2	36	1	1,500	1	100	1	15
General Baptists.....	465	31,501	353	706,325	440	113,825	295	18,797
Separate Baptists.....	65	4,803	43	63,650	41	9,292	37	1,782
Regular Baptists.....	349	23,091	233	647,550	223	55,610	65	4,690
United Baptists.....	221	18,903	139	144,665	147	15,094	30	2,005
Duck River and Kindred Associations of Baptists (Baptist Church of Christ).....	98	7,340	75	51,175	46	5,262	14	795
Primitive Baptists.....	2,267	81,374	1,037	1,730,348	776	166,847	5	181
Colored Primitive Baptists.....	925	43,978	87	171,518	111	39,419	24	2,278
Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists.....	27	304	24	19,350	20	473		
Independent Baptist Church of America.....	13	222	6	12,000	10	2,499	6	146
American Baptist Association.....	1,431	117,858	1,054	1,832,546	1,303	482,045	918	56,228

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR BAPTIST BODIES, 1926, 1916, AND 1906—Contd.

DENOMINATION AND CENSUS YEAR	Total number of churches	Number of members	VALUE OF CHURCH EDIFICES		EXPENDITURES DURING YEAR		SUNDAY SCHOOLS	
			Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Amount	Churches reporting	Number of scholars
1916								
Total for the group	57,828	7,153,313	50,716	\$198,364,747	51,797	\$40,027,119	46,168	3,946,886
Baptists:								
Northern Baptist Convention.....	8,148	1,232,135	7,748	94,644,133	7,848	16,082,462	7,517	1,028,952
Southern Baptist Convention.....	23,580	2,708,870	19,268	58,348,373	21,078	15,063,743	17,555	1,665,996
National Baptist Convention.....	21,071	2,938,579	20,117	41,184,920	19,988	8,361,919	19,909	1,181,270
General Six Principle Baptists.....	10	456	10	25,850	6	2,483	6	278
Seventh Day Baptists.....	68	7,980	59	307,600	64	67,095	66	5,005
Free Baptists.....	171	12,570	159	670,720	153	123,363	141	11,642
Free Will Baptists.....	750	54,833	656	517,240	612	75,835	390	22,421
Colored Free Will Baptists.....	169	13,362	164	178,385	168	36,647	87	4,168
Free Will Baptists (Bullockites).....	12	184	6	3,450	3	275	1	12
General Baptists.....	517	33,466	390	421,837	424	64,698	305	18,545
Separate Baptists.....	46	4,254	40	47,565	33	9,468	30	1,711
Regular Baptists.....	401	21,521	189	141,480	143	11,855	50	2,587
United Baptists.....	254	22,097	82	52,147	69	4,837	16	701
Duck River and Kindred Associations of Baptists (Baptist Church of Christ).....	105	6,872	49	40,600	67	2,518	8	399
Primitive Baptists.....	2,142	80,311	1,580	1,601,807	964	96,270	-----	-----
Colored Primitive Baptists.....	336	15,144	164	154,690	170	22,881	87	3,201
Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists.....	48	679	35	23,950	7	170	-----	-----
1906								
Total for the group	54,707	5,662,234	49,329	139,842,656	-----	-----	41,165	2,898,914
Baptists:								
Northern Baptist Convention.....	8,247	1,052,105	7,795	74,620,025	-----	-----	7,346	851,269
Southern Baptist Convention.....	21,075	2,009,471	18,672	34,723,882	-----	-----	14,371	1,014,690
National Baptist Convention.....	18,492	2,261,607	17,890	24,437,272	-----	-----	17,478	924,665
General Six Principle Baptists.....	16	685	13	19,450	-----	-----	9	414
Seventh Day Baptists.....	76	8,381	68	292,250	-----	-----	67	5,117
Free Baptists.....	1,338	81,359	1,092	2,974,130	-----	-----	1,059	65,101
Free Will Baptists.....	608	40,280	554	296,585	-----	-----	263	12,720
Free Will Baptists (Bullockites).....	15	298	8	6,900	-----	-----	1	25
General Baptists.....	518	30,097	380	252,019	-----	-----	230	11,658
Separate Baptists.....	73	5,180	59	66,980	-----	-----	45	1,962
United Baptists.....	190	13,698	75	36,715	-----	-----	21	1,360
Duck River and Kindred Associations of Baptists (Baptist Church of Christ).....	92	6,416	86	44,321	-----	-----	9	402
Primitive Baptists.....	2,878	102,311	1,953	1,674,810	-----	-----	-----	-----
Colored Primitive Baptists in America.....	787	35,076	501	296,539	-----	-----	166	6,224
Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists.....	55	781	32	21,500	-----	-----	-----	-----
United American Free Will Baptists (Colored).....	247	14,489	151	79,278	-----	-----	100	3,307

Certain changes are to be noted. Under the "Negro Baptists," in 1926, are included the former National Baptist Convention, now the National Baptist Convention, U. S. A., and the National Baptist Convention of America; the Lott Carey Missionary Baptists; and the colored Baptist churches that were formerly reported with the Northern Baptist Convention. The Free Baptists of 1916 are now a part of the Northern Convention. A new body has recently completed its organization, under the name Independent Baptist Church of America, and a new denomination has come out of the Southern Baptist Convention, called the American Baptist Association.

GENERAL SIX PRINCIPLE BAPTISTS

STATISTICS

Summary for the United States, with urban-rural classification.—A general summary of the statistics for the General Six Principle Baptists for the year 1926 is presented in Table 1, which shows also the distribution of these figures between urban and rural territory.

The membership of this denomination consists of those persons who have been received into the local churches upon profession of faith and baptism by immersion, with confirmation by the laying on of hands.

TABLE 1.—SUMMARY OF STATISTICS FOR CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, 1926: GENERAL SIX PRINCIPLE BAPTISTS

ITEM	Total	In urban territory ¹	In rural territory ¹	PER CENT OF TOTAL ²	
				Urban	Rural
Churches (local organizations).....	6	2	4		
Members	293	161	132	54.9	45.1
Average per church.....	49	81	33		
Membership by sex:					
Male.....	110	57	53	51.8	48.2
Female.....	183	104	79	56.8	43.2
Males per 100 females ³	60.1	54.8			
Membership by age:					
Under 13 years.....					
13 years and over.....	293	161	132	54.9	45.1
Church edifices:					
Number.....	7	2	5		
Value—Churches reporting.....	6	2	4		
Amount reported.....	\$20,500	\$7,500	\$13,000	36.6	63.4
Average per church.....	\$3,417	\$3,750	\$3,250		
Debt—Churches reporting.....	1		1		
Amount reported.....	\$700		\$700		100.0
Churches reporting "no debt" on church edifice.....	4	2	2		
Expenditures during year:					
Churches reporting.....	5	2	3		
Amount reported.....	\$3,046	\$1,831	\$1,215	60.1	39.9
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$2,925	\$1,825	\$1,100	62.4	37.6
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$121	\$6	\$115	5.0	95.0
Average expenditure per church.....	\$609	\$916	\$405		
Sunday schools:					
Churches reporting.....	5	2	3		
Officers and teachers.....	40	19	21		
Scholars.....	229	90	139	39.3	60.7

¹ Urban territory includes all cities and other incorporated places which had 2,500 inhabitants or more in 1920, the date of the last Federal census; rural territory comprises the remainder of the country.

² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

³ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

The data given for 1926 represent six active organizations of General Six Principle Baptists, with 293 members. The classification of membership by sex and by age was reported by all of the six churches, none of which, however, reported any members under 13 years of age. There were no parsonages reported.

Comparative data, 1890-1926.—Table 2 presents, in convenient form for comparison, a summary of the available statistics of this denomination for the censuses of 1926, 1916, 1906, and 1890.

TABLE 2.—COMPARATIVE SUMMARY, 1890 TO 1926: GENERAL SIX PRINCIPLE BAPTISTS

ITEM	1926	1916	1906	1890
Churches (local organizations)	6	10	16	18
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number.....	-4	-6	-2	
Per cent ²				
Members	293	456	685	937
Increase ¹ over preceding census:				
Number.....	-163	-229	-252	
Per cent.....	-35.7	-33.4	-26.9	
Average membership per church.....	49	46	43	52
Church edifices:				
Number.....	7	11	14	14
Value—Churches reporting.....	6	10	13	
Amount reported.....	\$20,500	\$25,850	\$19,450	\$19,500
Average per church.....	\$3,417	\$2,585	\$1,496	
Debt—Churches reporting.....	1			
Amount reported.....	\$700			
Parsonages:				
Value—Churches reporting.....		1	1	
Amount reported.....		\$3,000	\$1,500	
Expenditures during year:				
Churches reporting.....	5	6		
Amount reported.....	\$3,046	\$2,483		
Current expenses and improvements.....	\$2,925	\$2,463		
Benevolences, missions, etc.....	\$121	\$20		
Average expenditure per church.....	\$609	\$414		
Sunday schools:				
Churches reporting.....	5	6	9	
Officers and teachers.....	40	53	94	
Scholars.....	229	276	414	

¹ A minus sign (-) denotes decrease. ² Per cent not shown where base is less than 100.

State tables.—Tables 3 and 4 present the statistics for the General Six Principle Baptists by States. Table 3 gives for each State the number and membership of the churches classified according to their location in urban or rural territory and the total membership classified by sex. Table 4 gives the number and membership of the churches for the three censuses from 1906 to 1926, together with the data for Sunday schools for 1926.

TABLE 3.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES IN URBAN AND RURAL TERRITORY, AND TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX, BY STATES, 1926: GENERAL SIX PRINCIPLE BAPTISTS

GEOGRAPHIC DIVISION AND STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			TOTAL MEMBERSHIP BY SEX		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	Males per 100 females ⁽¹⁾
United States	6	2	4	293	161	132	110	183	60.1
New England:									
Rhode Island.....	5	2	3	267	161	106	98	169	58.0
Middle Atlantic:									
Pennsylvania.....	1		1	26		26	12	14	

¹ Ratio not shown where number of females is less than 100.

TABLE 4.—NUMBER AND MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCHES, 1906 TO 1926, AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS, 1926, BY STATES: GENERAL SIX PRINCIPLE BAPTISTS

STATE	NUMBER OF CHURCHES			NUMBER OF MEMBERS			SUNDAY SCHOOLS		
	1926	1916	1906	1926	1916	1906	Churches reporting	Officers and teachers	Scholars
United States.....	6	10	16	293	456	685	5	40	229
Rhode Island.....	5	9	12	267	421	618	4	32	192
Pennsylvania.....	1	1	4	26	35	67	1	8	37

HISTORY, DOCTRINE, AND ORGANIZATION ¹

DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY

In the records of the early Baptist churches in England there are numerous references to a discussion on the qualifications for church fellowship, especially in regard to the "laying on of hands," included in the list of foundation "principles of the doctrine of Christ," given in Hebrews vi, 1, 2. The General (Arminian) Baptists considered it essential, and included it in the ceremony of admission to the church, immediately after baptism. Many of the Particular (Calvinistic) Baptists did not so consider it.

With the organization of Baptist churches in America, the same question came up and agitated the church at Providence, R. I., with the result that a number of members in 1653 organized what was known as the Old, or General Six Principle Baptist Church, the six principles being those mentioned in the above passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. The General Six Principle Baptists claim that they are the original church, founded by Roger Williams. Other churches were organized on the same basis, and in time conferences were formed in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Conference has only a few churches remaining, the strength of the denomination being now in the Rhode Island Conference. These conferences are members of an international body entitled "The International Old Baptist Union," which is represented by an international council, consisting of a bishop of the union, an international secretary, a treasurer, and representatives elected by the churches in the different countries. This council has authority to act in all "matters relating to the world-wide union or extension" but the churches in each country or State manage their own internal affairs without interference from the international council or from the churches of any other country or State.

DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION

In doctrine these churches are in sympathy with the Arminian rather than the Calvinistic Baptists. Their distinctive feature is still the laying on of hands when members are received into the church, not, however, as a mere form, but as a sign of the reception of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

¹ This statement, which is substantially the same as that published in Part II of the Report on Religious Bodies, 1916, has been revised by Rev. Thomas H. Squire, D. D., presiding bishop of the International Old Baptist Union, and approved by him in its present form.

The general ecclesiastical organisation corresponds to that of other Baptist bodies. The individual church is independent in its management, electing its own officers and delegates. The conferences, composed of delegates from the local churches, are especially for purposes of fellowship, but when a question has been submitted to a conference, or to its executive committee in the interval between the meetings of the conference, its decision is regarded as final. The present two conferences, those of Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, interchange delegates or messengers for mutual counsel. Ordination to the ministry is dependent on approval of a majority of a council comprising the ordained ministers of a conference, not less than two ordained ministers officiating.

WORK

There is no organized home missionary work. Whatever home mission work is done is by each individual church acting independently. There is a foreign missionary society, and some contributions are reported for work in Canada, China, and among the Maoris in New Zealand. There is also a book and tract society, for the purpose of disseminating the literature issued by the International Union.