

## The Abington Association, the Church in the Hop Garden and John Bunyan

In this section I will document the early origins of the English Particular Baptists. I will do this by presenting some brief remarks about two of their oldest Churches, the Church at the Hop Garden and the Church at Hill Cliff. Then I shall move into London and show the existence of the Particular Baptists herein back into the 1400s. Once that is established, it is clear to see the links with the older Dark Ages groups.

The old Baptists didn't use the term missionary. However, they recognized two types of ministers, the *Feeding Minister*, or the Pastor who labored in one gospel church, and the *Begetting Minister*, who was church sent to beget persons into gospel faith, order, worship and works. This distinction runs all through the early writings of those old brethren in the early 1600s. For example, please note:

### The Last Will and Testimony of Obadiah Holmes

23. I believe that although God can bring men to Christ and cause them to believe in Him for life, yet He has appointed an ordinary way to effect that great work of faith which is by means of sending a ministry into the world to publish repentance to the sinner and salvation, and that by Jesus Christ. They that are faithful shall save their own souls and some that hear them.
26. I believe that no man is to rush into the ministry without a special call from God, even as the Gospel ministers had of old. (This) was the call of the Holy Spirit with some talent or talents to declare the counsel of God to poor sinners, declaring the grace of God through Jesus Christ even to those that are yet in the power of Satan, yea, to bring glad tidings by and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
27. I believe that this ministry is to go forth and he that has received grace with a talent or talents, as he has received freely of the Lord so he is freely to give, looking for nothing to gain but the promise of the Lord.
28. I believe that none is to go forth but by commission, and carefully to observe the same according as Christ gave it forth, without adding or diminishing: first, to preach Christ (that is, to make disciples), and then, to baptize them—but not to baptize them before they believe; and, then, to teach them what Christ commanded them, for as the Father had his order in the former dispensation and administration, so has the Son (in former times, the Lord spoke in divers way and manners, but now has He spoken by His Son).

29. I believe that as God prepared a begetting ministry, even so does He also prepare a feeding ministry in the church, who are a people called out of the world by the word and Spirit of the Lord, assembling themselves together in a holy brotherhood, continuing in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, breaking bread and prayer. *Edwin S. Gaustad, Baptist Piety, the last Will and Testimony of Obadiah Holmes, Christian University Press; Grand Rapids: 1978, pages 89-91.*

The Abington Association, John Bunyan and the Ancient Particular Baptist Church, the Church of the Hop Garden

The Church at the Hop Garden, or the old Particular Baptist Church near Abingdon, originated near Longworth. Here is a brief account of its location:

Longworth, where the Church-in-the-Hop-Garden originated, lies equi-distant from the three old Saxon towns of Abingdon, Faringdon, and Wantage, all connected with the story I am about to tell. It is, of course, in the vale of the White Horse, the great monument of Alfred the Great's victory. At Longworth was born the author of Lorna Doone. John Stanley, *The Church in the Hop Garden, A Chatty Account of the Longworth-Coate Baptist Meeting: Berks and Oxfordshire (Ante 1481-1935) and its Ministers*; London, The Kingsgate Press; 1934, page 20.

The Church in the Hop Garden

Longworth, where the Church-in-the-Hop-Garden originated, lies equi-distant from the three old Saxon towns of Abingdon, Farmingdon, and Wantage, all connected with the story I am about to tell. It is, of course, in the Vale of the White horse, the great monument of Alfred the Great's victory.

BEGINNINGS

A CONTINUOUS history is traced from the days of Edward IV. and probably a hundred years before when, as I believe, Wycliff's Poor Preachers took their newly translated Scriptures to read at Long-worth Market Cross. We never shall, I suppose, discover the precise date and circumstances of the origin of this church (I have been searching for thirty years and more), but it is quite reasonable, as I shall show, to believe it to be the outcome of the work and influence of John Wycliff at Oxford. Oxford, the home of great religious movements in England, may therefore be regarded as the *Alma Mater* of this community, and a hundred others besides. James Hinton, M.A., claimed the same origin for New Road Church, Oxford. Walter Wilson, the historian, says (1808) that the oldest Nonconformist church in London "was derived from Wycliff." The Longworth-Coate Church is thus a living link with Wycliff and his helpers at the University, and the present day.

It is not my purpose, of course, to deal with the times and work of Wycliff, except as they show the probability of connection with the Longworth Meeting and identity of doctrines. Wycliff went up to Oxford in his sixteenth

year, and was entered at Queen's College, just founded by Philippa, wife of Edward I., and friend of the Burghers of Calais. He was amongst the first batch of Bursars and probably had the Black Prince for a fellow student. The Queen and her son, John O'Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, were his life-long friends and protectors.

Oxford in those days was a slum compared with the glorious city it now is. Great Tom, whose 101 strokes are the curfew, closing the gates of all the college at five minutes past nine, then hung in its original belfry at Osney Abbey.

S. R. Green gives a graphic picture of the University in those early days, and a beautiful vignette of that sweet boy, Edmund Rice, of Abingdon, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and saint. Just before Wycliff became Master of Balliol, the Archbishop of Armagh sent some of his young priests to Oxford to study Divinity. The young men could not find a Bible in the University, and returned to Ireland. This provoked Wycliff to provide an English Bible for Englishmen. Later, when he was the most popular man and teacher in the University, he gathered a number of graduates around him to assist in the great work of translating and transcribing into English Jerome's *Vulgate*.

There was a great revival in the University which spread throughout the country, until one bitterly, " You can't meet two men, but one will be a Lollard "--for so were they 'Wycliffites' nicknamed.

Wycliff's heart was on fire with love of the Savior, and he gathered a band of young priests filled with the same sacred passion and trained them as preachers. The hall was in the newly- founded new College, but in those days any college would have supplied the hall.

So you have the three works proceeding at the same time translating the Scriptures, multiplying the copies and distributing them by the young Poore Preachers accompanied by reading and preaching. This was done within a couple of hours' walk of Longworth. If Wycliff's influence was felt on the Continent, is it wonderful that it should be felt eight or ten miles from the University? John Milton thought that to Wycliff belongs all the human glory of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. . . .

Among the truths that Wycliff taught his young preachers were these:

The Scriptures are the sole rule of Doctrine, Faith and Practice. They are the final Court of Appeal—the Casesarem Appellunt of the Church. "What is not found in them is not binding on any man's conscience." Very profound was his belief in the Word of God, and that every man should have it in his own tongue—an English Bible for English men.

To Wycliff the Pope was merely and only the Bishop of Rome. He repudiated the Pope's claim to sovereignty over the consciences of men; also to any kind of temporal sovereignty. He contended that Peter never held, nor

claimed to hold, any temporal jurisdiction; therefore, what he never possessed he could not hand down to another.

He held that the New Testament knows only two orders of ministry, Bishops (Pastors) and Deacons, and contended that on occasion a layman might be permitted to consecrate the Eucharist. He taught the common Priesthood of Believers; also that our Lord instituted only two ordinances, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. He denied Baptismal Regeneration.

In HENRY VIII.'s time, the Lollards were lost in the Anabaptists. He repudiated Transubstantiation, contending that the wafer--the Host on the Altar was not turned into the Body and Blood of our Lord by the Prayer of Consecration, but was simply only and always the effectual signs of Him." He preached vehemently against ceremonialism, and denounced the priests as coming between the sinner and his Saviour. "The magical Power of the Altar seemed to invest the Celebrant with a power which bewildered simple minds." On the other hand Wycliffe saw that "every man was the object of God's love and might live in the continual sense of His Presence." He opposed the compulsory payment of tithes, saying "that ministers should be supported by the voluntary gifts of their people," and strenuously opposed the Pope's claim to "Peter's Pence," "First Fruits," "Appropriation of Livings," ect. He denounced the compulsory celibacy of clergy, Confessions, Absolution, Penance, and indulgences. Very earnestly he taught that religion should be inward, not outward exercises only, and preached very vehemently against ceremonialism as the condition of salvation.

Are not these doctrines the teachings that the Baptists of Coate, and all evangelical people, hold to-day? Remember that Wycliff was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, and knew nothing of these things until he found them in the Scriptures he was so diligently studying. . . .

The little assemblies formed in the great Hall of the Manor House, or in the farm kitchen, to hear the reading of the new English Scriptures, were hardened by persecution into little communities, which, as the result of the New Teaching and its implications, developed into independent churches with their own elected ministers, much on the lines of Baptist Churches to-day.

This was a hundred years before Caxton printed his first book, and the only way to publish new ideas and new teaching was for heralds, evangelists, to stand in the marketplace, or perchance in the parish church, and proclaim the New Messagc. So did Paul, and so did the preaching Friars, and so did Wycliff and his Poore Preachers, the only thing he ever borrowed from the Friars. In Apostolic fashion he sent them out, "Two and two," to read and expound the English Scriptures in the neighbouring villages and towns.

"He sent them out—two and two, Saying, Go, preach the Gospel."

The sun is rising gloriously over the eastern hills, as two of the Poore Preachers leave Oxford by the western gate. Their habits are long, and russet-coloured. In one hand each carries a staff, and with the other clasps to his breast his precious portion of Scripture—probably copied *with* his own hand.

Their going forth greatly annoys the Archbishop, who complains that these "Unauthorised (by him) itinerant Preachers preach in Churches and Chapels, and public squares, and other prophane places." But his Grace cannot stop them, for the University is with them almost to a man. Wycliff's opposing the Pope pleased the citizens for political reasons, and the clergy knew that he was *fighting* their battle at Rome.

#### OLD RECORDS.

DURING the Commonwealth, when the non-Episcopal churches were settled, formed and re-formed, they naturally set up a Church Book to record their doings, Longworth amongst them. A few churches still retain their old Church Book, as Tewkesbury, *but* the most are lost through the carelessness of their owners, or destroyed by enemies. The men who pulled down their meeting houses, destroyed their books and papers. Often, too, their owners did not realize their value. An old man, of Faringdon, once told his minister, my friend, Rev. H. Smith, that he remembered seeing such a Curious old book, with such curious letters as no one couldn't read, and seemed to be no use on." This was, of course, the precious old Church Book. Sometimes a cantankerous clerk, or deacon, when "dismissed," or leaving in a temper, would refuse to give up the books, and they disappeared. Well, about this time, or earlier, Longworth set up its brand new Church Book. No one has seen this book for over two hundred years. But before it disappeared, some unknown person, at an unknown time, and for an unknown purpose, made extracts from it which have come down to us, and which I have called the The Fragment—it is better known as "The Barkshire Records." This precious volume owned (and probably copied) by a minister of Coate nearly two hundred years ago, was utterly unknown at Coate *until* I Came across It about thirty years ago.

Dr. Whitely thinks that Benjamin Stinton, a predecessor of C. H. Spurgeon, who was collecting materials for a History of the Baptists, and entered, made these extracts by him in his book of materials. However, he died before he wrote the book, and bequeathed the job and the materials to his friend and deacon, Thomas Crosby, who for some reason did not use the Fragment. But when his young friend, Joseph Stennet, the son of his famous friend, Dr. Stennett, came to Coate, he naturally showed him the extracts, and as naturally Stennett made a complete copy of them in a small octavo book, which still bears the inscription on the fly leaf,

Joseph Stennett, 1747

This precious little volume is now in the Library of Regents' Part College and is known as the "Barkshire Records." Stinton's original manuscript of

**“materials” is now lost, but before it disappeared the Rev. George Gould (father of Rev. Dr. Gould and Sir Alfred Pearce Gould) had made a careful copy of it, which is also in the Library of Regents Part College.**

**Young Stennett made his copy four years after he came to Coate.**

**The history of the old Church Book is most baffling. The first extracts are dated 1648, and the last 1708, five years after young Collett became Pastor of Coate. . . .**

**The Association was formed in 1652. The constituent churches were Abingdon (including Longworth), Henley, and Reading. Several churches joined later, including Oxford and Wantage. Abingdon appears to have been the leading church, and probably its famous young minister had suggested the Association. . . .**

**At a Meeting ye 12<sup>th</sup> day of ye 10<sup>th</sup> month, 1656, when the Church at Longworth did first Stand up, as a distinct (separate) Church from ye Abingdon Church. That the members in and near Longworth, together with our Brother Coomes, being still persuaded ‘twill most tend to the glory of God, that we stand up as a distinct Church of Christ, our Brother Coombes being to walk with us so long as himself shall be persuaded that his call from the Lords is to bee amongst us; to bee at present upon Trial, to see how ye Lord will owe his labors amongst us.**

**This being resolved upon by us, we whose names are underwritten, doe in ye Presence of ye Lord give up ourselves to walk together as a Church of Christ. . .**

**John Pendarvis settled down in Abingdon in 1652. Longworth had no pastor and linked up with Abingdon to enjoy the wonderful ministry of the young ministers, but still worshipped in their own place at Longworth, and their own Church Book and Registers, as today, Coate and Buckland are distinct churches, united only in the one ministry. And Pendarvis, who was fond of itinerating, would go out and preach to them (alternately with John Coombes), and administer the Ordinances. In 1656, the young pastor died, and the Longworth Meeting took the opportunity of amicably separating—not a hint of discontent, nor grievance.**

**I will give the minutes of the separation of the Faringdon members of Longworth as recorded in the Fragment, and you will see the difference in the proceedings:**

**At a Meeting of the Churches (note the Plural) of Longworth with several Messengers from the Churches of Abingdon, Wantage and Oxford at Barcout (Buckland) the 27<sup>th</sup> day of ye 9<sup>th</sup> month, 1657, it was agreed unanimously as followeth, that it will most tend to the Glory of God—that those Members in and near Faringdon do stand up as a distinct Church and that our Brother Coombes be a Member with them, to be with them to help on the work of**

**the Lord the First Days in Three, and do stand as a help to ye Church of Longworth, to be with them one First Day in Three.**

**The 11<sup>th</sup> Day of ye 10<sup>th</sup> month 1657, was this Agreement completed and ye Members in and about Faringdon were then solemnly given up to walk as a particular congregation of Jesus Christ—and these are the Names.” Here follow twenty-three names.**

**This followed the usual procedure of forming a new church. First the matter is carefully and prayerfully debated, and settled. Then a meeting (public) is called and neighboring churches are invited to send delegates, especially their ministers, who would certify themselves as to the correctness of all the proceedings, and give their sanction and blessing to the young church. Delegates came from Abingdon, Oxford and Wantage to Buckland, where the Longworth People had a Meeting House (as it has today) and all was done “decently and in order.**

**Nothing of this occurred in the separation of Longworth from Abingdon. Simply a notification of the withdrawal and the appointment of John Coombes as Pastor.**

**John Pendarvis was thus the first Pastor of Longworth, of whom we have knowledge. Longworth had come under his spell, perhaps the Revival had come through him, and at their request, he took them under his wing. . . . pages 1-70.**

**I have given an long account of this old Particular Baptist Church to establish:**

- 1. Many of these old churches had their origins back in the dark ages;**
- 2. They were formed at an early time, but then they would be scattered and almost die out and then be revived and many times were reconstituted with neighboring churches helping, some times alone;**
- 3. They had a set way of multiplying, and it was according to gospel order;**
- 4. The old association, known as the Abingdon Association became constituted during the early 1650s;**
- 5. John Pendarvis was the main minister in that area, and no doubt, responsible for the formation of this Association.**

**Now we come to the *Particular Baptist Records to 1660*, edited by B. R. White of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland:**

**It should be noticed that the early meetings show a considerable concern for the theological basis of association between churches and that emphasis is laid less upon agreement over a wide spectrum of doctrine than upon agreement over the nature and extent of the cooperation that there ought to be between independent churches. This does not, of course, indicate a lack of concern for doctrinal matters, rather, in all probability, it does mean that the Confession of 1644 was generally accepted as providing a common doctrinal basis. After all, Benjamin Cox himself, the leader of the Abingdon Association’s eastern wing, had earlier produced a theological Appendix to**

the 1646 edition of the 1644 Confession. It ought also, at the same time, to be recognized that this association as a whole, in spite of the part played in it by the Fifth Monarchist, John Pendarvis, shows little sign of millenarian excitement though some churches seem to have favored radical political reforms. Page 125.

Now, note the following points:

1. The Abingdon Association was under the influence of the aged minister from London, Benjamin Cox; who signed the First London Confession 1646 and wrote an Appendix. We have this in our Library ready for persons today to read and study.
2. John Pendarvis was murdered while out on a preaching tour. Being a Fifth Monarchist, or Post-Millist, his friends felt like the followers of the state religion had a part in his murder.
3. Stanley, in his *The Church of the Hop Garden* gives an account of the funeral proceedings and even suggests that this why the old church separated into two churches. He points out, as do others, that the Baptists and others, were so upset over Pendarvis' murder that a revolt nearly took place. Cromwell had to send several of his best troops into the area to settle things down and keep law and order. It was after this that the old church became two by a peaceful and mutual consent.
4. Be that as it may, this old Association has its roots in the Lollard days. It did not owe its origin either to John Spilsbury or to the Richard Blount efforts, but it did fellowship those churches and did maintain the same faith and order.

Now, we continue in White's *Records*, over to page 131 where we take up:

"an ensuing epistle which was subscribed by the messengers to the churches of Henly, Kenseworth and Eversholt and afterwards by the churches of Abington and Reading:

To the church of Christ of which our brethren John Spilsbury and William Kiffen are members and to the rest of the churches in and near London, agreeing with the said church in principles and constitutions and accordingly holding communion with the same, the churches of Abington, Reading, Henlie, Kensworth and Eversholt send greeting:

Faithful and beloved brethren:

The Lord our God having made us to lay to heart how the churches of Christ in the apostles' days held a firm communion each with other and how necessary it was for us to endeavor to do the same, as it becomes particular assemblies which make up but one Mount Sion, Is. 4:5. 4:5, that we might endeavor to keep each other pure and to clear the profession of the Gospel from scandal and to manifest our love to all the saints, and thereby to manifest ourselves to be true churches of Christ, and that we may show

ourselves sensible of the need that we have, or may have, one of another, and that the whole or God, wherein all the churches are concerned, might be the better carried on by a combination of counsels, prayers and endeavors. Through the assistance of the same God (after many conferences and seeking to the Lord) we solemnly entered into such an association each with other as this enclosed copy of our Agreement does manifest. And we have agreed to the confirmation of some conclusions of which we also send you an enclosed copy. These things we thus present unto you, not only because we desire to conceal nothing of this nature from you, but also that we may manifest both our due esteem of you and also our desire to partake of the benefit of the gifts which God has given you for the counsel and advice and brotherly assistance; and for the increase and furtherance of love and amitie and good correspondence between us, not doubting but that you will receive this our declaration with the right hand and so construe the same as the Spirit of love shall direct you.

Subscribed in the name and by the appointment of the churches last above mentioned, by us ect.

Postscript, it is our earnest request to the church above named, that this our declaration and the enclosed papers may be communicated to the rest of the churches above signified.

Those enclosed papers were: the copy of our agreement and of the conclusions confirmed at this meeting and the last. Page 131.

Several points about this epistle:

1. The Abington Association sent this to the one church of Spilsbury and Kiffen. Several other Epistles are so named and addressed, see for example Obadiah's Holmes Letter, after the Congregationalists nearly beat him to death at Boston near 1651. It is John Clark's *III News from New England*.
2. However, this old church at Wapping became two churches in 1638. Their closeness continued even up to this Associational meeting in April of 1653.
3. The entire association and those in and near London they addressed were one in principles and constitutions with the old Church walking with Kiffen and Spilsbury. There is no doubt that Kiffen was a strict communion and strict membership Baptist from 1639 to his death. He affirms such in his great book on Communion published about 1680.
4. In addition, Spilsbury's church, and the other churches in and about London were of the same in principles and constitutions.
5. This means they were all strict communion and closed membership churches just like William Kiffen and John Spilsbury.
6. This Epistle from the Abington Association destroys forever the idea that Kiffen and Spilsbury were different kinds of Baptists.

7. I repeat, these old churches were of the same principles and constitutions.

I hope someday the Spilsbury bashing will end.

Let us remember this before we go on, the most rigid and strict Baptists of those days, sought recognition and approval from BOTH John Spilsbury and William Kiffen. These two men, and their union together into one constitution and fellowship with the oneness of their principles, was well known among those old Particular Baptists.

Also remember, the Abington Association sent this letter after the supposed separation between Spilsbury and Kiffen over pulpit affiliation and mixed church membership.

I believe I have demonstrated the ancient origin and long existence of this *Old Church at the Hop Garden* and have showed its oneness with the other churches near by and their oneness with the churches in London. These all were one with John Spilsbury and William Kiffen.

The minutes of the old Abington Association are a study of the order and principles of Old Landmarkism (but not modern or neo Landmarkism).

Before passing from this old association, let me note the following points which will further show and document their union with the London Particular Baptists in general, and John Spilsbury in particular:

The church at Watford is known from one external source: in 1669 John Crawley taught in that town in his own house and John Coleman was also a Baptist teacher, O. P. II.883. James Stuart, op. Cit., 9ff., quotes church records to indicate that the Baptists there in the 1650s grew from 'a branch of a church in London meeting at a place called Coal Harbour, Mr. John Spilsbury being pastor.' Among local preachers were Richard Coleman, George Eve, John Crawley and John Reeve. The church was maintained, with help from London preachers, for a number of years but during the years of persecution, while one group tended to keep their links with London, many others joined the Hemel Hempstead congregation. B. R. White, Particular Baptist Records, p. 214.

#### The Abington Association and John Bunyan

From its very beginning the ministers and churches that formed this association were strict communionists and closed membership. By that, I mean they practiced in church ordinances and they gathered their churches only of baptized believers.

John Bunyan was the opposite. We know he practiced open communion and walked with an open membership church. Now, please note B. R. White's remarks:

**The Bedford church reported that one of their members, John Taylor, had been suspended for attempted suicide. This helps to prove that the church was not the one known as Bunyan Meeting. In any case these associations were 'closed-membership' Calvinistic Baptists and so neither Bunyan Meeting or any other which tolerated infant baptism would be welcome to join. In any event no such case as John Taylor's figures at that period on Bunyan Meeting's records. Ibid,.**

Speaking of another church then, White continues:

**It is clear that this church must have practiced 'closed membership' to be considered 'orderly walking' by Benjamin Coxe and his friends. Ibid., page 214.**

The reason there has been so much confusion about these old Particular Baptists is because there often existed Particular Baptist Churches in the same town or area, one was mixed membership and the other was closed membership. In these churches also there seems to have been a going back and forth of some of the members. Moreover, to add more problems, often times men or women of the same names would be found in different places and in different churches.

However, this one thing is certain, the closed communion and closed membership Particular Baptist Churches gathered around the *First London Confession of Faith* and measured themselves by the walk, principles and constitution of the one church of John Spilsbury and William Kiffen. This is very important, as I shall later tie this all together dealing with the origin of the London Particular Baptist Churches.

#### **Whitsittism Would Make John Spilsbury and John Bunyan Agree on Communion and Mixed Church Membership**

For now, let me observe that John Bunyan practiced open communion and mixed church membership. He and his church were not among these old Baptists. Get this point very well; the Whitsittes claim John Spilsbury held these views. John Bunyan, *not John Spilsbury* practiced open communion and mixed church membership.

**The rejection of John Bunyan and his open communion and mixed membership church in the old Abington Association and its measuring itself by William Kiffen and John Spilsbury and all the other churches of London of the same constitution, order and principles as that church, prove, beyond doubt that both Kiffen and Spilsbury and their one church were strict communion and closed membership.**

Therefore, Whitsittism is again weighed in the balances and found wanting.

**William Kiffen, John Spilsbury, Benjamin Cox and the London  
and Abington Churches were One**

These old churches were all strict communion and closed membership churches, that is, they were made up of baptized believers only. Bunyan, Tombs (who will be considered under the Midland Association), Jessey and Powell, were all open membership and open communion Baptists. They stood outside of these old churches. Whitsittism would make Spilsbury into the very same type of Baptists as these open membership and open communion Baptists.

**The Old Particular Baptist Associations**

Before passing on, it may be well to show some of the ancient ways of those old Particular Baptists and their Associations.

B. R. White's studies and his publication of the *Particular Baptist Records 1650-1660* are a must study for any serious student of Particular Baptist history during those times. By a careful study of those records from their original sources, we note the following:

1. The old associations met often at one of the churches. The officers in the hosting church served as the leaders of the association.
2. The minutes were copied by the clerk of the hosting church and preserved as a part of the official church records.
3. There was much inner communion among the churches, that is, inner church workings, but I have not found any instances of their taking the Lord's Supper, at any of the meetings or of the practice of an inner Lord's Supper. I have found no document, nor statement, nor sermon from that time period dealing with an inner Lord's Supper between the churches,
4. The churches had no standing officers, such as modern associations or conventions have, but they did have strong aggressive out reach efforts. Many of them had begetting ministers, or church messengers, some even, in the case of the Somerset Association, had an apostle, Thomas Collier.
5. These men functioned outside of the pastoral office of a particular church and served at large to preach, baptize and constituted new churches. They were often called evangelists, apostles, or church messengers. They were also known as begetting ministers in distinction from the feeding minister or pastor. They believed strongly in a God called and church sent ministry. Please go to my work *A Vindication of the Old Paths*, and therein study well the documented statements on the old Particular Baptists and church sending.
6. These old associations were not executive associations in any way, for those old Brethren rightly believed in the old Baptist concept that the power was in the people. The saints in a gospel church called out one from themselves and ordained him as their shepherd.
7. As to Associational officers as such, the mostly didn't have any. Thomas Collier seems to have been the only exception to this rule. He wanted the Somerset association to chose him, ordain him at large, and send him forth. This they did. His case seems to have been a very rare one and was not the practices of the churches of that time. However, in all but this the Somerset

**Association was one with the London Association. I will show this when we deal with the Somerset Association.**

**Now, we move into Northern England.**