

Philadelphia Baptist Development  
*in Two Centuries and a Quarter*

Historical Address

Philadelphia Baptist Association

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First Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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GAVIN MORTON WALKER, D. D.  
BRYN MAWR, PENNSYLVANIA

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## Philadelphia Baptist Development in Two Centuries and a Quarter

*Introduction.* The purpose of this paper is to trace the development of Philadelphia Baptists in organization and institutions, in beliefs and practices, during 225 years. Is it not the intention to summarize in historic array the great facts and figures of our past, but rather to learn, from all significant happenings, the direction in which we are moving in life and service, and consider briefly some questions raised thereby. A paper of this nature must consist of many things, concisely put.

*Appreciation.* For the cooperation of many friends we express appreciation, notably to Dr. R. E. E. Harkness, of Crozer, and a group of students under his leadership, also to Dr. F. G. Lewis and Miss Burk, of The American Baptist Historical Society.

*A Suggestion.* Because we are not organized to record our history, much valuable material has been lost. For instance, our records tell not of a lottery in a certain church a century ago, but we noticed the advertisement in a file in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The Baptist affiliations of a recent Governor of Pennsylvania, a United States Senator, and a Mayor of Philadelphia may be of interest to future historians, if recorded. It would be well if associational and church clerks were also historians, cooperating with our Historical Society. A scrap-book would be a valuable adjunct to a minute-book.

*Historic Background.* In the midst of victories over the armies of absolutism in church and state, Gustavus Adolphus visioned a colony here, and Swedeland on the Delaware came into being during the reign of his daughter, with the able assistance of Count Oxenstierna. Valiant Hollanders, despite their experiences of ecclesiastical and political oppression, laughed to scorn the naïve gift of America to Spain, by the Roman pope, and planted on these shores the flag of the Dutch Republic. Then William Penn, Quaker statesman, started here a British colony on such forward-looking lines that pioneers and persecuted ones from many lands set sail for the City of Brotherly Love. Mennonites and Moravians, Tunkers and Schwenkfelders, Huguenots and Walloons found refuge in this Commonwealth. Followers of Luther and of Zwingli came in great numbers. The Anglicans soon outnumbered the Friends and assumed the importance of the Church of England in a British Colony, while the Presbyterians of Ireland, resenting Episcopal domination there, became a large and vigorous element of the population here. Many others came, with adventurous spirit, and perchance some, too, who were not mourned in the place of their departure. The background of our early churches was distinctly human, though elect seed for a new planting was present in surprising abundance. Compared with present conditions, the outstanding feature was the absence of ecclesiastical hierarchies and of sacramentarian theories.

The Colonial churches were mostly planted by religious radicals, and during the Colonial period there was not a bishop in America. In this section the Friends organized godly societies and erected meeting-houses in each township.

*Baptist Beginnings.* William Penn encouraged the Baptists, and within two years after the arrival of the Proprietor a church of our faith and order was organized at Cold Spring, Bucks County (1684). This group did not continue a separate existence, partly merging later in Lower Dublin (Pennepek) Church, which was organized in Philadelphia County in 1688. First, Philadelphia, started as a branch of Lower Dublin in 1698. In these early days Baptist groups were springing up in various parts of the Colonies, and Philadelphia, because of its location and its civic importance, rather than its Baptist strength, came to be the focal point for our people. Here our Association, the first in America, was formed 225 years ago, the major portion of the membership coming from New Jersey. For several years general meetings of the group of churches had been held in various places for preaching and administering of the ordinances—practically Association gatherings without the name. The impelling motive for organizing more definitely was to consult about such things as were wanting in the churches and to set them in order. One of the things needed was to prevent unworthy ministers creeping into the churches. The Association was started because the churches needed an Association.

#### DEVELOPMENT IN MEMBERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONS

Including in our area territory within twenty-five miles or so from Philadelphia City Hall, and on the Pennsylvania side only, there were about 1,600 members at the end of a century of Association history. The Association figures are much larger, but the major portion of the membership was across the Delaware. Baptist membership in Philadelphia County would be about 2 per cent. of the population and probably more in the suburban area. Today we are 75 per cent. better than then in proportion to the population. There are about 100,000 Baptists in this section, which includes a population of 2,000,000 in the city and some 650,000 suburban. (If these figures are compared with certain other denominations truth calls for added explanation. Churches which count all those christened as members have 28 per cent. under 13, while we have less than 6 per cent., which means that on their basis we have 122,000. In addition, there are thousands who have been brought up to some extent in the Baptist fold who would be counted members on a christening basis, if we christened.) Of the Baptists in this section over 61,000 are colored, and under 39,000 white (within the city, 55,000 colored and 25,000 white). The most significant membership fact hereabouts is the marvelous growth of colored Baptists. White Baptists have grown splendidly; colored Baptists have grown amazingly.

Baptist development in real estate and financial resources has been very great in 225 years. Handsome church edifices abound, two seminaries occupy valuable properties and enjoy considerable endowment, the Baptist Institute gives reason for just pride, the three Homes and the Orphanage are substantial institutions, the Publication Society buildings are a credit to the denomination. The humble meeting-houses of early days and the meager

incomes have grown to a property valuation of some \$15,000,000 and endowments aggregating several millions more, with yearly budgets of churches and institutions making a substantial total.

Lest we become exalted above measure, however, attention should be drawn to the past twenty-five years. In Philadelphia, south of Market and between the rivers, white Baptists have decreased by over 700 since 1907 (more so if we go further back). North of Market and south of Erie, between the rivers, less than 10,000 white Baptists today represent more than 15,000 at the earlier date—actually 5,500 of a decrease. North of Erie Avenue, despite a large influx of Baptists, has barely gained 2,000. West Philadelphia newer sections have only overcome the decrease in the older sections by about 400. Taking the city as a whole the loss of white Baptists is around 3,800 in the past twenty-five years, while the gain in the suburban area has not been quite that much. In other words, with an increase of about three-quarters of a million in population our white membership has been practically stationary. Colored Baptists have greatly increased.

There are some considerations, however, which should be mentioned: (1) The increase of colored and of foreign-speaking population in some sections has been overwhelming, and the exodus therefrom of the older residents continuous and large. (2) Some denominations, notably the Roman, have increased greatly by immigration; but additions to our ranks thereby have been comparatively insignificant. (3) There is not the wealth and social prestige attached to our churches which attract to certain churches. (4) More highly organized denominations start churches in good geographical locations, finance creditable properties, and put on more attractive programs than is possible with our greater church independence and less authoritative leadership. (5) In the case of mixed marriages the insistence by the great majority of our churches that there shall not be any kind of membership without immersion works to our disadvantage, as others are eager for our members just as they are. (6) Throughout our history there has been a steady stream of accessions to our ranks from other churches, because of baptism, but with the accommodating spirit of the times and lessened biblical loyalty, this stream has become a rivulet. (7) Doubtless some of our people have succumbed to social strategy and pawky picy and joined certain churches, but back of that is a lessening of denominational loyalty. Geographic, social, esthetic, and financial considerations have often taken precedence in the selection of a church home. A large proportion of our losses can thus be accounted for by the contribution of membership to other denominations, and in many cases these Baptists of the Dispersion are occupying important positions. In spite of all this, however, the figures show that we have failed to evaluate as we should modern conditions, improve our denominational machinery, and, worst of all, lacked in spiritual vitality and evangelistic zeal.

#### DENOMINATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since American Baptists first organized, associationally and nationally, in Philadelphia, denominational development could logically take in the growth of American Baptists during the past century from 300,000 to 9,000,000, including an increase from 1916 to 1926 of 1,200,000, and the outreach of service

and achievement to the ends of the earth; but we can only deal with Philadelphia and vicinity and the larger outreach in so far as Philadelphia Baptists are organically related thereto.

In addition to the Philadelphia Association, in our area we have now North Philadelphia and Riverside Associations and part of Central Union. Development has not been along doctrinal lines nor has it always been geographic. In some ways it was planned; in some ways it happened and habituated. Our colored brethren are partly with us, but mostly in organizations of their own. The comprehensive organization of Philadelphia Baptists is the Baptist Union of Philadelphia and Vicinity, which is doing good church and institutional work among white, colored, and foreign-speaking peoples. The Pennsylvania Baptist Convention is the representative institution of our people in the State, and deals with all our Baptist affairs and interests, touching this section vitally as a part of the whole. It is a development from the State Mission Society, begun in this city over a century ago and merged later with the Pennsylvania Baptist Education Society and other denominational interests.

The more one reads the old records the less one feels inclined to write history in terms of dates, for these were but stages of advancement. The Association from the first carried on missionary work in this territory, sent evangelists to remote regions of the Colonies and cooperated with British Baptists in foreign missions; but a wider basis was necessary, and in 1814, in this city, the first national organization of American Baptists came into being, known as the Triennial Convention, for missionary purposes. Since then American Baptist missionaries have gone to the ends of the earth in the name of the Lord Jesus, and hundreds of thousands in many lands have turned to the Saviour, with churches, schools, and hospitals blessing untold multitudes. Philadelphia Baptists have ever been at the heart of this and of all other denominational enterprises, and now contribute liberally and gladly in personnel and money to home needs and world-wide tasks, as an integral part of the Northern Baptist Convention, successor in the north to the Triennial Convention.

The romance of missions has no greater chapter than the growth of the Christian church in America during the past two centuries. In this epic the American Baptist Home Mission Societies have had an honored part, and our people have ever been among the steadfast supporters. The denominational development closest to us has been The American Baptist Publication Society. From the earliest times Philadelphia Association was back of the printing of Bibles, catechisms, books, and other literature. Evidently opposition to us was sometimes keen, for in an old minute we read that our principles were attacked and monstrosly represented, and therefore money should be gathered for printing books. It has been done. In our midst we have two great properties of The American Baptist Publication Society and an organization that has been developed to meet growing needs in publications, religious education, social service, and missionary work, with personnel and methods suited to the expanding service. Naturally Philadelphia Baptists have been and are strong for the Publication Society. The Philadelphia Association has made and recorded history, and The American Baptist Historical Society, graciously housed in Crozer Seminary, is seeking to carry out a wise program of conservation,

research, and education for all of us in North America. Many decades ago our Association was seeking to help needy ministers, and in our midst is the palatial Nugent Home for aged ministers and their wives. In recent years the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the Northern Baptist Convention has been carrying on finely a ministry of relief and a pension scheme.

Whatever may have been the case elsewhere, Philadelphia Baptists have always been favored with well-educated leadership. Some of the early ministers were outstanding men in their day. Educational development has been along this line: recommending suitable youths to educational opportunities elsewhere, provision for training by an outstanding minister in his home, raising of funds, education societies, schools. Brown University, Providence, R. I., had its inception here in Philadelphia. Hopewell, Honeywell, and Haddington recall educational ventures. The Classical and Theological Seminary of the Triennial Convention moved to Washington, D. C. Bucknell University is the child of our denomination in Pennsylvania, largely aided from this district. Temple University, founded by Dr. Russell Conwell, pastor of Grace Church, in his Sunday school room, has grown to be one of America's great universities, a Baptist gift to the Commonwealth. Temple School of Theology has trained many of our pastors. Crozer Theological Seminary, a gift of a princely Baptist family, for more than threescore years has been the greatest source of our ministerial supply, and has continued to grow in equipment and endowment, in regular curriculum and advanced courses, throughout the years, with a valuable correspondence school adding to its usefulness. Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, has had phenomenal growth in these few years, alike in numbers and wealth, and is becoming a great factor in our denomination here. No part of the world is so amply provided with facilities for Baptist ministerial training as in Philadelphia; in fact, there is danger of oversupply in this vicinity. It is discouraging to note that white Baptists have two seminaries and colored Baptists none. Our educational development should help the colored churches. A significant feature of the past forty years has been the rise and growth of the Baptist Institute for Christian Workers, in this city, which meets a real need in a fine way. In all our educational work the Education Board of the State Convention is a most helpful factor, and a multitude of students have been helped in preparing for their life-work.

Early in our history efforts were made to help our needy children and elderly people, and the development is visible in the handsome Baptist Home on the Boulevard, the fine German Baptist Home, and the splendid group of buildings comprising the Baptist Orphanage in West Philadelphia. Efforts to have a Baptist Hospital terminated in cooperating in Samaritan Hospital.

Denominational development has found expression in several local organizations. The Sunday-school Superintendents' Association, comprised of all Sunday-school workers, is an active and aggressive force in our denominational life. Our city and sectional Baptist Young People's Unions are alert and capable, promising much for the denomination in the future. Baptist Camp Unami is growing and glowing. Philadelphia Baptist Ministers' Conference, meeting weekly, is an outstanding institution for its length of years and largeness of membership. Social Unions in the city and various districts are performing a useful service. Our denominational women's societies have grown

in organization and effectiveness even more than the work as a whole. It is a far cry from the simple denominational machinery 225 years ago to the complex organization of today. Every Baptist man may be a pope and every Baptist woman an Ecumenical Council, but we have developed considerable denominational cooperation for the greater glory of God.

There is, however, a tendency which we need to plan against. It is possible to be so engrossed in making the necessary contacts and contributions to departmental purposes of the Northern Baptist Convention as to do less than the best for the local situation, and that is not good for the larger body either. Our natural leaders, both men and women, are in an amazing number of denominational offices, as well as facing interdenominational tasks, in addition to local church duties, and vision seems to become blurred and steps confused while various claims are being balanced. The process of Baptist development has inevitably taken away the preeminence of Philadelphia in the greatness of the whole, but it has not taken away the responsibility of Philadelphia Baptists for Philadelphia.

#### DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

We have ever had theological differences. Right at the beginning a group of Welsh Baptists who came to Lower Dublin were suspicious of the orthodoxy of that church, and bought a considerable area of land in the Welsh Tract, whither they went, and have almost come to a state of innocuous desuetude. There was considerable trouble in early days with Universalism, and in recent years we have had a Liberal and Fundamentalist controversy, happily receding. The absence of subscription to credal documents, however, has resulted in our keeping the faith at least as well as those more rigidly bound by confessional subscription.

An outstanding feature in our doctrinal development has been the changing emphases, so gradual as to be scarcely noticeable, but quite marked when we compare the early sermons with the courses of study in our churches now. A couple of centuries ago, more so than now, Christianity was a thing to be metaphysically understood. In the early records we find quite exact statements of detailed theological belief, vigorously expressed, and held to be tests of orthodoxy. Prominence was given to such themes as eternal election, particular redemption, irresistible grace, effectual calling, final perseverance; and it took intellectual acumen to discuss these subjects, as well as to listen with discrimination. Gradually newer topics came in and newer presentations of old themes. We find a study of the Bible in relation to the poor and oppressed. Free-will and predestination went into the background and missions came to the front. Slavery and temperance pressed for consideration. With the changes brought about by industrialization and commercialism the teaching in our churches began to expand, new light being found on the sacred page to guide in the newer day. War and peace are now being discussed as never before. In addition, the growing knowledge of history, science, psychology, ethics, and religion has enlarged and improved the interpretation of the Scriptures. Doctrine has grown rather than changed.

A part of this development has been the practical disuse of catechisms and Confessions of Faith and more definite focusing upon the New Testament.



Objection was at one time registered to incorporating the Apocrypha in the sacred volume and to the printing of explanatory notes beside the sacred text. The Episcopal rector who sought to get the Baptists of Philadelphia to close up and come into his fold was graciously and frankly told to find biblical proof for Episcopal beliefs and practices before Baptists would think of becoming Church of England members. Christ was the only Head of the Church and the Scriptures the rule of faith. To be used in interpreting the Bible, however, catechisms were first imported from England, and later, catechetical and other literature was prepared here. An English Confession of Faith, plus articles concerning the laying on of hands, singing of psalms, and church discipline, became the Philadelphia Confession, and made a great contribution to the clarifying and systematizing of Baptist doctrine in America. Now Confessions of Faith are practically discarded and catechisms seldom used. Further, the Old Testament has been losing importance relatively to the New Testament. The Northern Baptist Convention a few years ago was asked to adopt a creedal statement, but decided that the New Testament is an all-sufficient ground for faith and practice. It is significant that in this decision the Convention followed the B. Y. P. U. pledge.

Our history shows a development in which rigid literalism decreased and spiritual insight grew. The first occasion when this was particularly obvious was in the place of women in the church. At first textual literalism prevailed and women were not suffered to teach; but the barriers gave way when the Spirit showed that in Christ Jesus there was neither male nor female, and that the endowment for service was the call to service. The same process took place in regard to other things. True, some Old Testament saints had slaves, but one who had the mind of the Master could not continue to hold in bondage a brother for whom Christ died. The Sabbath might speak of duty, but the Lord's Day called to love and loyalty. A little wine might be a good thing for the stomach's sake, but drunkenness degraded the temple of the Holy Spirit. There has been a continuous process of the application of the spirit and teachings of the Saviour, the crown and consummation of the Scriptures, to the expanding Christian consciousness, which has gradually made it true that, while the Bible is accepted as the rule of faith, it is more central in our denominational life to speak of it as the means of faith. The letter killeth; the Spirit giveth life.

If one should be asked to go through the records and state the outstanding unifying doctrine among Philadelphia Baptists during these 225 years, the answer would be apparent anywhere and all the time: belief in Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord, Son of God as no other, on whom we depend for salvation, and whose will we seek to be done in all departments of life and to the ends of the earth. We have changed emphasis on some things; we have deepened emphasis on our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### DEVELOPMENTS IN LIFE AND SERVICE

The old meeting-houses were plain and the appointments characterized by simplicity: they were lit by candles, heated by wood stoves, the floors sanded twice a month. Now our churches are quite elaborate. In some cases they are structures of classic architecture, with dim religious light through stained-

glass windows, appointments that are even luxurious, besides having large and varied accommodation for educational and social purposes. In one thing we have retrograded, necessarily so in most cases. Cemeteries seem to add reverence, treasure up memories, give impressiveness to the property, and may be a good asset; but the practice of having cemeteries beside our meeting-houses has ceased.

In Baptist worship there has been considerable development. In early days fixed forms were objected to because they did not give room for individual expression. Any Baptist might take part in his meeting. Hymn-singing was suspected by many because unspiritual persons might take part insincerely. It took about a century in America for congregational singing to become a regular practice among Baptists; but the Welsh element led to its adoption here earlier. A clerk led the singing from a place in front of the pulpit. Psalm- and hymn-books were at first procured in Britain, and later prepared here. Choirs appeared in the gallery, and a little over a century ago an organ was sanctioned in the First Church, without expense to the congregation. The matter of gowns was left to the liberty of the minister, but not often exercised, and gowns for the choir have come in due course in some instances. Gradually ritual has grown in our churches, the more so where the building is of the more appropriate type, and now our churches generally have forms of service which include, in varying degree, all that is acceptable in evangelical churches. (The writer has had for years, during Lord's Day morning worship, a period of silent prayer, when the congregation is asked to make confession, return thanks, offer petition and intercession, and renew their dedication to the Saviour.) More and more the fact of worship is being stressed and its enrichment sought. The danger now is that the values of expression in worship may be missed; none of our meetings are conserving this sufficiently.

Originally there was no regular week-night prayer-meeting in our churches, but special days were set apart for particular purposes, such as fasting and prayer on account of public evils and religious declension, or for thanksgiving. The prayer-meeting owes most to seasons of revival, and it seems to have taken the place of the Covenant Meeting prior to the Lord's Supper.

Development concerning the communion has been in the introduction of individual cups and of unfermented wine, while close communion has given place to open. For these two centuries and more there has not been the slightest inclination on the part of any of our churches toward belief in any magical change in the elements of the Lord's Supper. In Philadelphia baptisms were on week-days in the Schuylkill, and at the place of the baptistery a two-story brick building was erected for use on such occasions. The old prints show a picturesque spot. Now there are suitable and in many cases ornate baptistries in the meeting-houses, and baptisms are mostly on Sundays. Our churches have never christened children, and have never wanted to; but the idea of dedicating children to the Lord in a suitable ceremony has found favor in many of our churches. In early records we find that it was considered irregular to baptize a person who wished to commune elsewhere, and baptism by one not baptized himself was null and void. Membership only for those baptized has been the rule in our churches, but in recent years the practice of associate membership for Christians not immersed is growing.

The Baptists of Philadelphia were very strict about the laying on of hands on the reception of members, at the setting apart of deacons, elders, and ministers. A minister not ordained by the laying on of hands could not administer baptism and the Supper. One ordained by the laying on of hands for a Ruling Elder must be ordained again by the laying on of hands when called to the Word and doctrine. A man from England, baptized, but without the laying on of hands, was received by the laying on of hands. Later, we read that any person scrupling to submit to the laying on of hands may be admitted to the fellowship of the church without it. This was the beginning of the end of the practice of the laying on of hands, or confirmation, in the churches here. The ceremony of feet-washing is alluded to as a pattern of humility, and there is no objection to those practising it who think it their duty; but we have not found any record of a church carrying out this ceremony. Fasting on special occasions was an early custom; but this has not been perpetuated. There are references in early records to elders anointing the sick with oil; but this custom, too, died out.

The ceremony of marriage as carried out by the Friends is according to old Baptist usage in England, and in 1694, twenty-fifth of fourth month, William Thomas and Elizabeth Phillips married themselves in meeting in Brandywine Church. However, marriage by a minister has been the regular custom. Our churches have ever held the highest ideals of marriage, divorce being happily uncommon among our people. Mixed marriages were discouraged and at one time church censure was visited upon a believer marrying an unbeliever. Now this is left in the realm of private affairs. Within recent years the question of marriage has received greater consideration in our courses of study. Our marriage ceremonies are much like those of other evangelical churches, and so are our funeral services. At funerals more ritual and poetry is used than formerly, in addition to the Scriptures and prayer, while the sermon has largely come to consist of short exposition and appropriate personal remarks.

The observance of times and seasons has grown in our churches. Always we have urged the proper observance of the Lord's Day, with its religious values for the church and for society; it is possible that there was undue strictness in the past, but the tendency now is too liberal for spiritual advancement. Seasons of revival have been mighty factors in the growth of our churches, alike in numbers and spiritual vitality. Educational evangelism, with Young Disciple Classes prior to Easter, and campaigns of personal evangelism have somewhat superseded the earlier methods. Revivals of religion are needed for individuals, churches, and community, and there is value in all methods. Quite late in our history the observance of Christmas and Easter began. There was decided objection to this practice, even within the memory of many today, and in earlier times more so. One of our missionaries to the Indians was distinctly shocked to find that some Indians had been taught the observance of Easter. The entering wedge seems to have been the social features of the Christmas celebration. Gradually, influenced by other churches, and seeing the spiritual values of these seasons, besides understanding human nature better, our churches have increasingly used Christmas and Passion Week, especially Good Friday and Easter Sunday, for spiritual purposes. Our

records show the observance of Thanksgiving even before this became a regular practice; other special times have come in, such as Children's Day, Mothers' Day, Rally Day, and Harvest Home, and the denominational program shows that we are developing a church year of significance and value.

Clericalism has not developed in our churches. The prerogatives of the ministers were at least as great in early times as now. The Board of Particular Baptist Ministers in London was asked to select a pastor for the First Church, and the writers speak of Philadelphia as "a part of that community in the British dominions (whereof you have in some sense the superintendence)." Real estate was devised to the ministers of the Association for the education of young men. It was considered the pastor's prerogative to examine candidates for baptism, and we read of a pastor baptizing a candidate who was later received by the church. Ordination is a frequent theme. Candidates were reported to have a competent share of learning and other prerequisites for the sacred office. It was suggested that a brother exercising his gifts in one church should also preach in sister churches before the question of his ordination should be taken up. Bishops or elders were to be chosen by the common suffrage of the church and set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands by the Eldership of the church. One church called on three brethren to exercise their gifts and three years later set one of them apart for the ministry, two brethren from another church assisting in the ceremony. One candidate going south next day was ordained immediately. Ordinations at Associations were not uncommon. The form of ordination was dignified, the questions asked definite and comprehensive, the laying on of hands impressive. Development in ordination has been along the lines of raising the standard and keeping out the incompetent, both of which are rather difficult in a congregational form of government. We have now a committee in the Baptist Union of Philadelphia and Vicinity helping in this matter. Our State Convention has set a standard for ordination in line with that of the Northern Baptist Convention, and authorized its Executive Secretary to omit from our State Year-Book list the names of ministers irregularly ordained. The training for the ministry tends toward wider ranges of study and greater knowledge of technique.

The early Minutes show that the churches had an order of Ruling Elders. The Association was sometimes listed as being composed of elders, ministers, and messengers. In one church a deacon was appointed a Ruling Elder and another man elected as deacon in his place, while in another church a Ruling Elder was also a deacon. Somewhere along the line, and rather early, this office dropped out from our churches.

We read in the 1746 Minutes that the silence, with subjection, enjoined on all women in the church of God is such a silence as excludes all women whomsoever from all degrees of teaching, ruling, governing, dictating, and leading in the church. Still, women might speak on uniting with the church, give testimony in cases of discipline and vote. Now there is right of way for women, without restriction. Yet women pastors have been few. At one time the women of the First Church were incensed because they were ignored in the business meetings, and, when their rights were recognized, hardly used them. The case of women pastors may be like that.

In earlier times membership in our churches was hedged about with greater requirements and probably limited more to a particular type of religious experience, while church discipline was more exercised and for a greater number of things. Early Minute-books are distressingly full of church trials and censures for neglect of the church, heresy, profanity, drunkenness, immorality, covetousness, worldly practices. Orthodoxy of doctrine was not always allied with orthodoxy of living. In discipline today we are too indifferent; but even at that there has been progress in manners and morals as far as gross sin is concerned. Even recent theological discussions and ecclesiastical differences have not been as acrimonious as earlier ones. The application of one pioneer membership principle would be an upsetting experience today, for the Association then resolved that a church should not receive a candidate if he lived nearer to another Baptist church.

In the business arrangements of our churches there has been distinct advance. Pew-rents have gone, and so have lotteries. Church suppers are usually primarily social and money so raised is a small part of our budgets. The every-member canvass and the weekly offering, duplex-envelope system, have put the churches on a better financial basis. The unified denominational budget may need elasticity for human interest and special need, but it has led to better proportions in giving, fewer and better accredited appeals. The teaching of the stewardship of all of life has improved the finances of the churches even as it has revived spiritual life.

Our churches are basically democratic, but we do not always act that way. In the churches all the members, pastors included, have the same voting rights; and in our Associations and Conventions democracy is but slightly qualified by exceptions arising out of historic conditions. Arrangements for Haddington School were that each Association in Pennsylvania was to appoint a trustee. Bucknell was supported because it was to be under the control of the denomination. At one time common consent was considered necessary in electing or deposing officers. On the other hand, finances figured in the Triennial Convention, where delegates were not to exceed one for every \$100 contributed annually to the general fund. At one time the settled minister and senior deacon of each church formed the trustees of the Association. At another it was the Moderator's privilege to nominate his successor. Our Executive Secretary is not elected as the other officers. It was specifically set forth in some churches that a certain proportion of the trustees should not be members of the church. The seminaries are vital, and yet the denomination cannot elect a trustee or a professor, have any say about the theology or the curriculum. The old seminary was said to be out of touch with the thought of the people, but the new seminary was organized on similar lines. If we were removed from democracy before, we are twice removed now. Alongside the literature put out by our denomination we have private journals with our name. To meet conditions we sometimes need to extend executive authority, and it is possible that we might improve things sometimes by the restoration of democracy.

The development of the local church along social and educational lines has been one of the greatest features of these 225 years. This is immediately visible in the church properties, where the part for the services of worship frequently

constitutes the lesser portion. We have our kitchens and dining-rooms, club-rooms and recreational halls, assembly and classrooms. Social activities of many kinds take place in the church parlors, private homes, and out-of-doors. The B. Y. P. U. is an inspiring factor, and church and denominational interests are also nurtured in men's groups, women's organizations, boys' and girls' clubs, etc. Time fails to tell of Ladies' Aids, Ushers' Associations, Women's Mission Circles, World Wide Guilds, Ambassadors, Boy and Girl Scouts, Heralds, Jewels, etc. Then there are assemblies and camps, daily vacation schools, week-day religious schools. An old-time Baptist would surely be amazed at the multiplicity of our organizations and activities. Notice-boards, calendars, advertisements, distribution of literature by mail and hand, use of the radio, etc., betoken the church in the new day.

A Baptist of Colonial days coming to one of our churches now would be liable to say, "You have two churches in one meeting-house and two services, one after the other—the Methodist with class-meetings and the Baptist without." At first there was only one organization and service, with catechetical classes for children from time to time. Then the Sunday school came, not without indifference and some opposition. The pastor of the First Church agreed to a Sunday school, saying that blossoms were sweet and beautiful even if they produced no fruit. The object was to instruct children in the first principles of an English education, and endeavor with a divine blessing to impress on their young and tender minds the important truths of the gospel. The new movement was pushed heartily and continuously by our churches, until the few teachers and children have become a mighty host, graded by age-groups from the youngest to the oldest, with curricula steadily brought to better content and method, many activities of pleasure and profit, besides extra-session contacts in Cradle Roll and Home Department. The church school has the advantages of a much larger expressional activity by more people, selected teaching according to age-groups, with less social restraint, while the church service has greater richness of devotional impression and the teaching of Christian truth by one specially trained for that purpose. The next step in the forward movement should be a closer merging of the values of church service and school.

By contrast to the complexity and problems of our churches, their trials and triumphs, we would quote from last year's Minutes of the Delaware River Old School Baptist Association. In our area the Association reports one church with 18 members, and the corresponding letter says that the preaching at the Association was good and comforting.

#### INTERDENOMINATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There does not seem to be any reason historically for considering Baptists specially sectarian, though the frank presentation of the question of baptism and the insistence on close communion was resented by non-Baptists. Even if a tombstone says of a certain lady, "So far was she from Quakerism that she desired to have baptism," the general tenor of our history shows a tolerant and patient spirit not always equaled. When smitten by the Presbyterians the early Baptists turned the other cheek. The reply to the Church of England clergyman shows a willingness to give up anything for the sake of truth,

but not to merge into sectarianism in the interests of unity. Certain Friends united with the Baptists and became known as Quaker Baptists, retaining their Quaker mode of speech, dress, and general principles. The First Church for a considerable period worshiped in what was originally the Quaker Baptist edifice, union having taken place. Brandywine Church was originally a Quaker Meeting. The Association met in a Lutheran Church 170 years ago. One of our outstanding leaders made a fine collection of materials for a Baptist history hereabouts, and devoted a section to the Mennonites and Dunkards. It is a pity that we lost that vision. Before our Foreign Mission Society was formed Baptist ministers joined with some other denominations in support of a foreign missionary enterprise. The American and Foreign Bible Society was organized in the First Church. Baptists have ever cooperated in circulation of the Bible, good citizenship, social service, evangelistic effort. The interdenominational Sunday School Associations, Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., Sabbath Association, and kindred organizations have always had hearty Baptist support. We are part and parcel of the Philadelphia Federation of Churches. In the local church we are quite interdenominational in fellowship and service. Non-Baptists are trustees, teachers in our church schools, singers in our choirs, officers and workers in many of our organizations. Even those who are defending the faith rejoice in overleaping denominational barriers to work with those who have not kept the faith in the matter of baptism.

On the other hand, it is evident that two lines of cleavage persist. Our cooperation has been reasonably hearty and continuous in organizations which are distinctly evangelical, but we do not fit in where either sacerdotalism or rationalism are seeking their ends. This is natural. Those who do not believe in the resurrection of the Saviour cannot unite in Easter services and those who seek salvation by sacraments cannot join in evangelistic services. To try to cooperate in matters of religion with those who have anything but unqualified admiration for the Lord Jesus is to cut the nerve of endeavor, and to go along with those who believe that they alone are authorized by the Almighty is to deny the Christian faith. We are so far away from submission to the Roman pope that we are not even interested. Take the matter of church government. In 1831 the Roman Bishop of Philadelphia put his ecclesiastical ban on St. Mary's Church because they desired to have trustees, and since then the members of that large sect in our area, with few exceptions, have not dared to seek self-government. Take the matter of High Churchism. Because we are real High Churchmen we will not have high clericalism.

Keeping these reservations in mind, and remembering our long record of cooperation with kindred bodies, let us face the situation in our area. We have seen how our people have moved out of certain areas in such numbers that churches have been crippled and not a few closed. The same is true of other denominations. In these circumstances the Protestant churches should get together more than is now the case, and see that a strong and helpful evangelical church is within reasonable reach of all the people. What we have done in the way of comity on home and foreign mission fields points the way to better cooperation for the kingdom of God here.

Comity, however, is not promoted by congenial confusion. One's own church is able to discharge its share of the God-given task according to the

loyalty of its membership. Therefore let us do our part. With all our disadvantages, there are some things which have been proven of unusual value in our principles and polity, and these we must add to the kingdom of God in the largest possible service in the finest Christian spirit.

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The development of our churches in relation to questions of civic righteousness and moral progress has been evident. In pioneer days the drinking of liquor seems to have been taken as a matter of course. The First Church for a considerable time had its services in a brew-house. However, conscience began to stir, and ministers and members soon began to be disciplined for excessive drinking. As far back as 1788 the Association concurred with brethren of other denominations in discountenancing the use of distilled liquors in families and in neighborhoods except when used as medicine. A century ago the Association gave the opinion that all our members were called upon by the Word and Providence of God to abandon the sale and use of ardent spirits. Temperance education was given and steps taken to help the State free itself from the power of the liquor traffic. For generations Baptists have been in the vanguard of temperance and manufacturing liquor would have been a bankrupt business these many decades if it had depended upon our folks.

The question of slavery probably did not touch our churches much in the pioneer days, but opinion must have been crystallizing, for in 1789 the Association declared high approbation of the various societies formed for the gradual abolition of the slavery of the Africans. When the abolition movement was meeting with such bitter opposition in Philadelphia it was evidently gaining among the Baptists, for some tried to side-step. Dr. W. W. Keen and Dr. D. Spencer affirm that the North Philadelphia Association was formed by those who did not want the slavery question discussed, the object being diplomatically expressed as to avoid contention on subjects not calculated to improve spirituality and to increase the love of the members. However, a crisis was not to be averted, and pastors of Southern sympathies went south while pastors of Northern sympathies came north as the Civil War broke out. That ended any tendency to be diplomatic. Our churches came out strongly for the preservation of the Union and slavery was characterized as a national sin.

Religious freedom has been one of the characteristics of Baptists. In Colonial days one of our pastors was the moving cause in securing such alteration in the marriage laws as enabled dissenting ministers to perform the marriage ceremony. The Association sent money to the persecuted Baptists of New England, and petitioned the king in favor of religious liberty, aiding in the sending of an agent to England to further this cause. When the Continental Congress met in 1774 a deputation of Baptists and others went to Carpenters' Hall and met members of the Congress, presenting a plea for religious liberty along with civil freedom. Elder Manning's presentation of the Baptist point of view was a long-remembered feature of this historic occasion. The plea was lost, but triumphed in the First Amendment to the Constitution. It was a Baptist magistrate, John Holmes, who refused to join his fellow magistrate, a Quaker, in action against the Keithian Quakers. When Roman



Catholics came to Philadelphia, and the Governor brought before the Council the matter of allowing or disallowing Roman worship, we read that it was Baptists and others who insisted that the Roman Catholics were entitled to religious liberty, and the Council refrained from interference. Baptists do not stand for religious tolerance but for religious liberty.

Baptists have ever had an intimate sense of loyalty to the United States because the basis of this government is in accordance with our principles, and here we have been better treated, and have grown more, than in lands across the sea. The question of war has been looked upon from this standpoint. The year before the War of Independence one of our pastors wrote a recantation of his support of Britain, and sided with the Colonies, thus making it unanimous so far as Baptists were concerned. Many of our people joined the ranks and some were officers, including several chaplains, two from this district. Times were hard and money scarce, and Continental currency was of doubtful value, but nevertheless Philadelphia Baptist Association turned over its moneys to the Continental fund. No wonder, when the British were in possession of Philadelphia, the Association could not meet here. The pastor of Great Valley Church was a chaplain in the Patriot Army, and the British troops under General Howe plundered the church. Reference is made in our records to the ravages and desolations by British troops and base traitors, which terminology is significant. Yet there were disquieting aspects. It was said that religion declined and iniquity triumphed. One church letter affirms that there was more inquiry after the strength of our army, the state of our nation, and the movement of our enemy than what we shall do to be saved. We read that since the Lord seems to be contending with our guilty land by sword and epidemical diseases, there is a call to learn lessons of righteousness. Days of fasting, humiliation, and prayer were set; at the throne of grace revival of religion was sought. There was a sense of the hand of God in the War of Independence, for in 1779 the record says: "If you consider the steps whereby Divine Providence interposed in our favor during the present contest with Great Britain, you must see and know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will." When the Association, meeting at sunrise, returned thanks for the triumph at Yorktown, the fact is noted that victory was gained with so little effusion of blood, Chaplain Jones felt called on to publish a book in defense of war from a Christian standpoint. Answering a query concerning a non-communing pacifist, the war part of the question was not mentioned. When the Pennsylvania Peace Society was formed, eleven out of twenty-six officers were members of the First Church. In the Civil, Spanish, and World Wars our people strongly supported the Government, believing that the safety of the Union and the freeing of the slaves, the liberation of Cuba, making the world safe for democracy, and the war to end war justified resort to arms. There has been an uneasy feeling, however, in all our history that war needed to be justified, and since the World War the question has come up for more earnest consideration, with our people becoming more opposed to war. It is significant that our last Children's Day program was an indictment of war and a plea for peace.

Just as industrialism and commercialism have presented more problems, they have been increasingly considered in our churches, and the present depression has caused Christian people to think furiously of the principles of the Lord Jesus in relation to making a living and making a life. The social service program of our denomination and the resolutions adopted at the recent Northern Baptist Convention indicate development of thought and action toward a more Christian social order.

Our fathers followed the Christ into the future and wrought gloriously for him, for his church, for America and the world. We have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. We have the same divine grace and believe in the unceasing divine purpose. Let us unitedly renew our consecration to Christ and his church for the lives he wishes us to live and the work he calls us to do. "We pledge allegiance to our Baptist churches, to the principles for which they stand, to the fellowship which they afford, to the work which they are called to do, and to the Saviour under whom they live and serve."