

A QUERY IN BAPTIST HISTORY

The Philadelphia Association; was it in its
Organization and Early History Strictly
Calvinistic?

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THE PHILADELPHIA ASSOCIATION, WAS
IT IN ITS ORGANIZATION AND EARLY
HISTORY STRICTLY CALVINISTIC?

By
Horton Brewer.

Introduction -

It is a matter of
great gratification to the friends
of historical investigation, to note
such marks of an increased
interest in the fruitful subject
of American Church History.
Evidence of this increased inter-
est may be found in our Theolog-
ical Schools and Universities,
and especially in the Religious
Press. The American Church
History Series, now being issued
by the Christian Literature Pub-
lishing Company, indicates,
it is believed, a new and bright

era. This series is calculated not simply to give each reader a fit and ample knowledge as to the peculiar history of his own Denomination; - a thing generally needed and certainly much to be desired - but it will afford as well a vast amount of information as to the distinctive teachings and history of all the other Denominations; - a thing of the highest value to American Christendom.

This great awakening in the investigation and study of American Church History will bring to light, no doubt, many facts and truths not generally known hitherto. It may also cause men to question some things heretofore fully accepted as Historical verities.

The query now advanced as to the Philadelphia Association has never been raised before, so far as we are aware. It thus becomes quite necessary to be clearly understood at the outset.

Remember the question is not sprung because of any undue sympathy with

General Baptist views, for in the main
point at issue the Particular Baptists
certainly hold the scriptural view. Calvinism
is scriptural if any great system of doctrine
is.

Neither is this inquiry made because of
any doubt as to the Philadelphia Association
being now strictly Calvinistic. The fact is
fully recognized that for more than one hundred
and fifty years, it has been the bulwark of
American orthodoxy, especially on the doctrine
of election. Great indeed have been its services
in our world by and maintaining Baptist
truths. To this Association the credit is mainly
due and pretty generally conceded, for the fact
that American Baptists - are mostly Cal-
vinists. Not a particle of the glory should be
taken from its great and valiant victories.
And if it should be found, after careful
investigation, that in its organization and
early history it was somewhat tainted with
Arminianism, then it should receive the
greater honor. The victory is thus a double
one, for not only did it give the death-blow

to Annularism outside of its own bounds,
but in its midst as well.

In this thesis, the desire is merely to enter
into a careful examination of the
early history of the Philadelphia Asso-
ciation, in the hope of reaching a correct
answer to the question raised.

The facts in the case must of course
decide the matter; otherwise a satisfac-
tory conclusion cannot be reached.

Whatever may be the outcome of this
investigation, or whatever criticism it
may call forth, we are willing to abide
by the result reached, if it is in full
accord with the truth. "The truth, the whole
truth, and nothing but the truth," as far
as it can be ascertained, is the desired
goal.

Chapter I.

Some Changes in Baptist Faith and Order.

Perhaps no unprejudiced person who will
investigate thoroughly, would claim that
Baptists have not changed their doctrine

and practice in many things. Yet it has been confidently asserted by a few that Baptists of today are precisely what they have ever been, and that they have never varied one jot or tittle in doctrine or practice. They would take up the chain of Baptist succession and have it rattle all the way back to Judea and Galilee, and would find in this chain - all the points contended for by Baptists now. This is certainly a most pleasing delusion in which one might well delight to revel; but the facts show (and they should certainly decide in historical - as in other matters) that however pleasing or delightful it may appear, it is only a delusion, resting on no absolutely sure foundation.

It is not necessary to go back to the Waldenses and examine their faith to find doctrines believed and earnestly contended for, which Baptists do not now hold. On the other hand, Baptists now believe and practice some things which they ~~never~~ ^{did not} previously maintained.

Now need we go back to the Anabaptists of Switzerland, Germany, Holland and England to discover points of difference; such may be found nearer home and nearer our own time. It should ever be remembered that we have never had an infallible Church behind us, made powerful by the Decisions, Decrees and Symbols of great Ecumenical Councils, and guarded and guided by an infallible representative of Christ here on earth. Our tenets have been held by "men of like passions" - and prejudices with ourselves, - men such as we see and know today, who made no claim to infallibility, but who held simply that the word of God alone is the standard of authority and our infallible guide. These heroes of faith some times possessed weaknesses with their zeal, and, while earnestly contending for the truth in many things, held to some ill-fated errors. So it may be seen that Baptist belief has varied widely, not only in different ages, but in different churches of the same age.

It varies widely today. When our peculiarities are known, this need not be surprising. Indeed the marvel is, that Baptists have held such a continuity of faith.

Other Denominations which are bound by elaborate Creeds and Symbols, and Church Councils, look with admiring wonder at Baptist orthodoxy, seeing that they have no Council higher than the local Church and no authoritative Creed but the Bible. This could not be, did they not hold so tenaciously to what they believe is clearly set forth in the eternal and infallible word of God. Yet notwithstanding this fact, modifications in faith and practice have taken place in the last two hundred years, and it may be well to examine some of these.

(a) If the Anabaptists are included in the much-sought-for line of succession, it must be admitted that Baptists have not always practised immersion. This point is made by all historians, and conceded by most of our own. (See Lectures by Dr. Whitsett, *Catechists*. *Encyclopedia of Baptists*.) Indeed it may be seriously questioned, judging from a

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comparison of the General Baptist Confession of Faith, put forth in 1611, with the other Creeds then held, whether the Baptists of that period practiced immersion. (See Schaff's Creeds of Christendom, Volumes II and III.)

Certain it is that in the earliest Baptist Confession of Faith known, according to Dr Armitage, (See Armitage's History of the Baptists, page 949) called "The Seven Articles," there is not even an intimation that immersion is the mode of baptism, but today immersion alone is practiced.

(b) The conduct of public worship has undergone many modifications in the last two centuries. These changes have, no doubt, added in many ways "elements of color, variety and richness to our worship, which were all so sadly wanting during the periods which were dominated so largely by the Puritanic forces in the religious world." Time was when a Baptist congregation would not engage in public singing; if a member was moved by the Spirit! he arose and sang whatever the Lord put in his mouth. If no one was thus moved a Baptist assembly in the middle of the eighteenth century was as silent in regard to singing as

the leaders. They argued with good effect, that if it was wrong to pray out of a book, it was likewise wrong to sing out of a book. The controversy about singing was a long and bitter one, and many churches were rent asunder, - and some hopelessly ruined before it was finally settled. The famous Benj. Keach - after a hard struggle, in 1690 introduced singing into his congregation, but his victory was won at the cost of a division in his church, many of the members withdrawing a little later and forming "a new anti-singing church." In 1726 John Comers introduced singing into his church at Newport. So it will be conceded that as to singing in public worship Baptists have changed. (See Comers' Diary, page 55, Mr Broadus' Notes in Homilies for 1892-3, Crosby Volume III, page 267, as well as Primitiv's History.)

(c) Likewise the doctrine in regard to absolute predestination has been considerably modified. This question with us today is practically settled, but it was quite otherwise in the early part of the eighteenth century. Whether Calvinism and Arminianism have both been modified, each reacting on the other so that "between the

latest statements of the two opposing systems, a critical student can discern little more than a difference of emphasis," as Mr. Vedder thinks, or from some other cause, the question has become practically settled. But when the Philadelphia Association was organized in 1707 and for years thereafter the Pennsylvanian Baptists are believed to have been in the majority, and had the issue been decided by a popular vote, Calvinistic Baptists would have suffered defeat.

These are evident clear-cut marks of change in Baptist belief. In truth almost the only things about which they have not changed more or less since they became known as a denomination, are their views on religious liberty, the supreme authority of the Bible and believer's baptism. In 1770 Morgan Edwards claimed that the one distinctive peculiarity of Baptists was believer's baptism, and he made a strong plea for the union of all Baptist sects on this one basis of belief. (See Morgan Edwards' History of Baptists in Pennsylvania.) Perhaps this may be considered by many the one great distinctive and distinguishing peculiarity now, but around this central truth are clustered many doctrines which we hold to be dear as life itself.

Chapter II

Some Characteristics of the General Baptists.

It is not the aim of this chapter to treat at length General Baptist peculiarities, but simply to call attention to some well known marks by which they may be identified where-ever found. As a rule historians, both secular and ecclesiastical, in regard to the early period of American history, speak without discrimination of the General and Particular Baptists, hence it is thought well to mention some characteristics or distinguishing traits of the General Baptists. Of course in most doctrines they were in essential agreement with Calvinistic Baptists, about these it is not necessary to speak.

(a) In the settlement of America the General Baptists were known in some places as "Six-Principle Baptists", because they laid stress on the six principles enumerated in Hebrews 6:1-2, repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, the resurrection and eternal life. "Of these the fourth is the only one peculiar to this body; they lay hands on all after baptism as a token of the impartation of the Spirit." (See H. C. Vedder's Short History of Baptists, page 148.) The Calvin-

istic brethren were called "Five Principle Baptists," because they did not hold to the fourth point in Hebrews. c. 1-2, as absolutely binding, allowing that it might or might not be administered, according to the desire of the candidate or the wish of the church.

(b) Another characteristic was their yearly and quarterly meetings, fashioned no doubt after the order of the Quakers. In fact they were in many ways closely allied to the Quakers. A learned Professor in Church History in one of our most noted Theological Schools, in substance said that wherever you find a Quaker established, if you will look out sharply you will almost surely find a General Baptist in close proximity. This being true, it is highly probable that they derived this custom from their Quaker brethren. But it matters not whence the custom, it distinguishes them from Particular Baptists.

(c) Moreover they emphasized man's free agency more than Calvinists, but it was a point of emphasis only, for in theory, there was essential agreement about man's will and its bondage to sin and Satan as a result of the fall of man. (See Orthodox Confession of Faith, Crosby, Volume III. Appendix 9.)

(d) Some of them also believed in apostasy, or falling from grace, but this heresy was not

generally adopted; indeed in the Orthodox Confession of 1691, they say: "Those who are effectually called according to God's eternal purpose, being purified by faith, do receive such a measure of the Holy unction from the Holy Spirit by which they shall certainly persevere unto eternal life." (See Article 36.) This savors very much of orthodoxy, and shows that some of them at this period did not believe in apostasy.

(E) Perhaps another characteristic was the custom of laying on of hands on all members received. The Orthodox Confession of Faith enjoins this rite as a commandment of Christ. "Prayer with imposition of hands by the bishop or elders on baptized believers as such for the reception of the Holy promised Spirit of Christ, we believe, is a principle of Christ's doctrine, and ought to be practiced and submitted to by every baptized believer in order to receive the promise of the spirit of the Father and Son." Article 32. (See Taylor's General Baptist, Volume I page 182 and 225.) It is true that some of the Particular Baptists practiced this rite; but from what can be gathered it seems quite clear that they did not make it a test of church-fellow

ship. When Welsh Tract settled with Penn-
pek which was then Calvinistic, they found
that Pennpek had grown indifferent on
this subject, but they being largely Armin-
ian, held tenaciously to it. (See Morgan
Edwards, Volume I) All the trouble ~~which~~ ^{that}
John Conner had with his church which
was Calvinistic, was on account of his
preaching on the rite of laying on of hands.
(See Diary of John Conner, page 57, especially
note.) While it is true that laying on of hands
was practiced more generally by the Armin-
ians, yet it will not do to press this point
too far, and claim that nearly all the Baptists
in America at that early period belonged
to this class, - as Mr. Knight seems to have
done in his History of the General Baptists.
(f) The last peculiarity which is to be treated
here, is the doctrine of election and repro-
bation. They hold that "God before the founda-
tion of the world hath predestinated that
all who believe on him shall be saved;
and that all who believe not shall be
damned, - all of which he knew before. And
this is the election and reprobation spoken
of in the Scripture; not that God hath pre-

destinated men to be wicked and so to be damned; but that men being wicked shall be damned. For God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of truth, and would have no man perish." (See Confession of Faith - 1611, Taylor's History of the General Baptists, Volume I, page 38c - and Crosby, Volume I, appendix A.)

Again concerning the extent of the atonement as stated in the Orthodox Confession of Faith, "Christ died for all men, and there is a sufficiency in his death and merits for the sins of the whole world. He hath appointed the Gospel to be preached unto all men and hath sent forth his Spirit to accompany the word in order to beget repentance and faith. So if any perish it is not for want of the means of grace manifested by Christ unto them, but for the non-improvement of the grace of God freely offered to them through Christ in the Gospel."

The Particular Baptists held that the number of the elect, of those persons predestinated to salvation, is "so certain and definite that it cannot be increased or diminished." (See Century Confession of Faith, also Philadelphia Confession of Faith.) Here was the great bone of contention between the General and Particular Baptists. Really this was the cardinal

doctrine on which they divided, without which the other petty distinctions might have been ignored. One was called Particular because holding to particular atonement, the other General because holding to general atonement. The former said, Christ died simply and solely for a few, and that few the elect, predestinated unto salvation from before the foundation of the world; the latter said Christ died for all men, those who believe being predestinated unto salvation - and therefore the elect. (Compare Confession of 1611, 1646 and 1691 with Confession of 1689 - and Philadelphia Confession of 1742) With these statements before us we may the more fitly enter into the question under consideration, for by keeping these peculiarities constantly in mind - a General Baptist may usually be recognized where ever found.

Chapter III.

Powers of the General Baptists in the Early Part of the Eighteenth Century.

(1) Let us briefly notice their power in England, for the English Baptists had great influence in

planting churches in America which was at this time a colony of Great Britain. Mr. Benedict speaks as follows of the General Baptists in England: "This class of Baptists, although much the smallest now, claim priority of their more orthodox brethren, in the organization of their churches and in the diffusion of Baptist sentiment in the country. And it is quite clear that two centuries ago - and for a long time after, they had the largest number of men of education and influence." (See Benedict's History of the Baptists, page 226.) Benedict wrote about 1850; so "two centuries ago" with him, was about 1650; "and for a long time after", perhaps included the remaining part of the seventeenth century, possibly the first of the eighteenth. At least enough may be learned from Mr. Benedict's statement to show that when the first Baptist churches were being formed in the New World, the General - outweighed - the others. Benedict was a Calvinist, which fact enhances the value of his testimony. The other side claim much more than this, but without sufficient proof it seems. (See Thoutgomery's History of the General Baptists.)

(4.) Let us now turn homeward and pay

our respects to their power in America. Here they were the first to organize, in this early period all were weak and few in number which had a tendency no doubt to cause Baptists to unite in the formation of their churches. Providence and Newport furnish examples of this. In 1652, a number of the members of Mr. Williams' church withdrew because of their Arminian sentiment, and organized the first General Baptist church in America. The formation of the General Baptist church at Newport had a similar history.

About this time there arose a widespread religious "cold wave" which struck a large part of the Protestant world; it was quite severe in this country, and all Denominations suffered more or less in the fall of religious temperature, the Baptists not excepted. The Calvinistic Baptists suffered more severely than the General who seemed pretty well to have recovered their normal temperature by the beginning of the eighteenth century, and by their warm zeal, fervent spirit and persistent good

works they had about divided power, with the Calvinistic Baptists. But by the time of the great Yearly Meeting of 1729, they had almost doubled in the number of churches, and far more than doubled in point of membership. This was a wonderful growth in twenty-nine years. Much may be gleaned from the Diary of John Cramer, who is by far the most reliable witness for this period of American Baptist history. Cramer was a young man of learning and promise who died in the thirtieth year of his age, but not before he had made himself immortal. When converted he joined the Particular Baptists and became pastor at Newport, but he offended his church by publicly advocating the rite of laying on of hands, and soon afterwards left them to join the General Baptists, who were far more zealous. Indeed the Particular Baptists seemed to be slowly but surely dying out, and had it not been for the great influence of the Whitefield-Edwards Revival a few years later, they might have been known ^{only} in history if known at all.

Let us notice more minutely now, the great strength of the General Baptists in 1729, drawing largely from the diary of John Comber, an original and no doubt the most important document on this subject. Here are the individual churches according to Comber: Providence, Newport, New York, Groton, Dartmouth, New London, South Kingston, one in Providence "under the care of Mr Peter Place", and one in Scituate, Swansey, Warwick and North Kingston each. To make a net gain of 100% in twenty-nine years is no little progress, and shows that they were wide awake. In truth, as has been stated by an eminent and learned Professor in Church History, "The General Baptists were about to take the country", while the Particular Brethren were sitting with folded hands and drooping heads making no conquests and winning no victories for their Master.

During this period the most talented and aggressive Baptist preachers in the

country belonged to the General Baptist ranks. Valentine Wightman was par excellence the Baptist preacher of his day. Then there were Nicholas Eyres, Daniel Wightman, John Clark, Timothy Brooks, Jonathau Sprague, John Mason, etc. This body formed a brilliant array, ^{who} ~~and~~ were loyal and valiant soldiers for the Lord and His Christ. They went about over the country every where, preaching and baptizing, strengthening and organizing churches. If history does not write their names high on the roll of fame, and posterity fails to honor their heroic services, the Lord of the harvest will not forget them when the time comes for rewarding His servants.

Another evidence of their great power was the Yearly Meeting of 1729. Nothing like it had ever been witnessed among the American Colonies. "Tis supposed there were two hundred and fifty communicants and one thousand auditors" - Diary of John Combs - certainly a remarkable gathering for this early period, - and indicated to some extent at least that the General

Baptists in America were by no means asleep. The General Association of Kentucky, representing more than one hundred and sixty thousand communicants, would not call forth perhaps a larger assemblage at its annual meeting. The churches represented at this meeting in 1729 were, out and out Arminian, but they did not include all the Arminian membership in the country. Many churches like the first which were formed, contained a mixed membership, and could hardly be regarded as either Calvinistic or Arminian, without some misgivings.

Let us now draw nearer our goal and examine the religious status in and around the Quaker City. Did Arminian influence extend to this section of the country, or were the Baptists of Pennsylvania all Calvinists?

(a) Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, was founded by Quakers. Pennsylvania itself was named after the great Quaker leader. Perhaps no city or country has ever had a greater Quaker influence.

exerted in it, or was more fully permeated by their teachings. The Quakers were admitted by Arminians on the subject of election and the extent of the atonement of Christ. The dominant influence of Quakers always meant the presence of Arminian sentiment. We might expect to find such sentiment among the Baptists of Pennsylvania, even if none of the Quakers had become Baptists, but before the formation of the Philadelphia Association, George Keith with quite a following, withdrew from the Quakers, and many of these became Baptists most of whom joined the churches in this Association. (See Mr. Edwards' History of the Baptists in Pennsylvania, under the head of Keithian Quakers.)

(b) The Mennonites. There were a great many Mennonites in Pennsylvania during the early years of the Association. They were not in full sympathy with the British Baptists, but had no doubt, considerable influence. They were the followers of Simon Mennon, and held to the Waterland Confession of Faith; as to the extent of the atonement they were Arminian.

(c) The Tunkers, as they were called, had

quite a membership in the early history of Pennsylvania. "It is very hard," says Morgan Edwards, "to give a true account of the principles of these Tinkers, as they have not published any system or creed except what two individuals have put forth which have not been publicly avowed. However, I may assert the following things concerning them from my own knowledge; they are General Baptists in the sense which that phrase bears in Great Britain, etc. (Volume I page 66.)

(d) Emigrants from the different churches in Europe, who incorporated with the churches in this section of the country, formed the fourth Arminian element. But this point is reserved for fuller consideration in the closing chapters as it will not be discussed here. Considering what has been said in this chapter, it will be readily seen that General Baptists were to be found in almost every place where there was Baptist sentiment; and their power in America at the close of the seventeenth century, and the opening of the eighteenth, was neither

small nor insignificant.

This chapter was considered expedient because many well informed persons seem to forget that the General Baptists in America ever had any respectable power, or ever did any valuable work. Indeed it was stated by one of the most learned Divines of this age, that there were no General Baptists in America prior to the days of Mr. Randal who in the latter part of the eighteenth century, organized the Free Will Baptist movement. (See Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*.)

This may help to explain the general belief that there were none but Calvinists among the membership of the churches which constituted the Philadelphia Association in 1707.

We are now ready to enter more fully into the discussion, hoping to reach a satisfactory answer to the question raised in this thesis.

Chapter IV

Philadelphia Association Examined
in the Light of the Preceding Chapters

and Other Facts.

After the treatment of Chapters II and III concerning some of the peculiarities of the General Baptists - and their great power, especially - about the beginning of the eighteenth century, we may now more fully and more profitably, as well as with greater satisfaction, enter into a minute examination of the Philadelphia Association in the light of all the facts which have been, and shall be, presented. We frankly admit that after all a perfectly satisfactory conclusion may not be reached. Perhaps the result here will be, as in many questions of a historical character, uncertain - a question of mere probability. This being true, we must accept the highly probable as correct, even though it cannot be proved such beyond question. Whatever may be the conclusion, let us accept it cheerfully and heartily, if it accords with the known data.

The Philadelphia Association being the oldest by many years in America, has an early history of the highest interest

and importance to the Baptist brother-
hood generally. It originated in what
was then "called General or Yearly Meetings".
These meetings were instituted," says
Dr. Samuel Jones, "as early as 1655, and
met alternately in May and September,
at Lower Dublin, Philadelphia, Salem,
Leoharney, Chester and Burlington,
-at which places there were numbers,
though no churches were constituted
except Lower Dublin and Leoharney. +++
+++ But in the year 1707 they seemed to
have taken more properly the form of
an association for then they had delegates
from several churches and attended
to their general concerns. We therefore
date our beginning as an association
from that time though we might
with little impropriety extend it back
some years."

Dr Samuel Jones, one of the most
learned Baptist preachers of his age,
was certainly in a position to know
as to the facts about which he wrote.

He became pastor of Lower Dublin church
in 1763, and for more than half a
century his name may be found in
the Philadelphia Association minutes.
In 1787 he preached the centenary sermon
of the Association, and was in differ-
ent ways identified with many Bap-
tist interests. It will be seen from this
statement of Mr. Jones that the Philadel-
phia Association originated in 1707,
out of a yearly meeting which had
been in existence for nineteen years,
or since 1688. Morgan Edwards makes
substantially the same statement in
his treatise on Baptists in Pennsylvania
Volume I. Note another extract from
Mr. Jones: "They were at this time but a
feeble band, though a band of faithful
brothers, consisting of but five church-
es, viz. Lower Dublin, Piscataway, Mid-
dletown, Cohamsey and Welsh Tract."
Lower Dublin was but another name
for Pennepet, and included at that

time - and for thirty-nine years thereafter, the first church of Philadelphia. Just here it might be well to examine somewhat briefly each church in detail, which entered into the organization of the Philadelphia Association in 1717, for - an association necessarily partakes quite largely of the character of the churches forming it.

(a) Lower Dublin or Pennepack.

This church was founded in January 1688, and had Elias Keach, son of the famous Benjamin Keach of London, as their first pastor. He ministered to them for two years with marked success, baptizing persons into their fellowship at the Falls, Cold Spring, Burlington, Cohansey and Salem.

In its organization it was beyond question Calvinistic, as we may learn from a statement of Morgan Edwards. (Volume I, section on Pennepack.) Mr Keach was succeeded by Mr. John Watts, who came to this country from Lydd, England, in 1686, and became

pastor of Lower Dublin in 1691. (See Leath-
east's Encyclopaedia of Baptists.)

Was John Watts a Calvinist or an Ar-
minian? On this point let us submit
a statement from a letter from Mr.
Keach to Mr. Watts, under the date of
December-20-1693. "I bless God for the light
I have received since I came hither. O
brother, I never saw clearly into the
glorious gospel till I came to London
this last time. Gospel light hath broke
forth here more of late in three or
four years than, I believe, since the
apostasy. Arminianism and Socini-
anism begin to gasp for life. Universal
redemption and falling from grace
are almost heart-sick. Blessed be God
for the clear revelation of his grace in
the ever-lasting covenant. O brother,
I am afraid lest you should be in
the dark about the covenant of grace,
and want light into the eternal compact
between the father and son. Pray, read,
weigh and take in those precious plain

truths in my book." (See Edwards, Volume
F, page 112.)

This was after Mr. Keach had returned to
London, and the latter part of this extract
seems to indicate that he did not regard
Mr. Watts as a Calvinist throughout. He
had some fear lest he (Mr. Watts) "should be
in the dark about the covenant of grace"
and lest he should "want light into
the eternal compact between the father
and son." Expressions like these show us
in what light Mr. Keach regarded Mr. Watts
on the subject of election. Again a cer-
tain John Watts in England was a prom-
inent General Baptist. (See Taylor's
General Baptist, Volume I, page 181, also
Leroby's Baptists, Volume III, page 75.)
Was this John Watts the father of our John Watts?
I can find no satisfactory answer, and
must leave the question also in doubt
as to whether John Watts of America was a
General or Particular Baptist. In 1702 he
died of small pox and his successor was

Mr. Evan Morgan who was among the number that, with George Keith as leader, in 1691 separated from the Quakers. Nothing about his views on election can be found but as he came from the Quakers, who hold tenaciously by to general atonement it is hardly probable that he was a strong Calvinist. It might also be noted that Pennepack received many members from the Keithian Quakers. (See Edwards, Volume I section on Pennepack, also on Keithian Quakers, and note in connection Benedict's History of the Baptists page 200.) This together with another statement from Mr. Edwards, leads to the conclusion that, while Pennepack was Calvinistic "at the beginning and during the administration of Mr. Keach", at the formation of the Philadelphia Association it had many members of Arminian sentiment. This statement of Mr. Edwards will receive careful consideration further on in this chapter.

(b) Middletown.

This church was planted in 1655 - according to Benedict, but in 1690 according to others. Little is known of its early history and there is nothing decisive in the available documents to show that it was either strongly Calvinistic or tinged with Arminianism. In its early history there was a division in the church and in order to heal it the members were advised by counseling brethren to subscribe to Mr. Keach's Confession of Faith, but 26 out of a membership of 60 refused to sign. Now this might signify that they were divided on doctrinal grounds, but we do not know with certainty what reasons the minority had for their refusal. It was well known that Mr. Keach was a strong Calvinist, but it is not stated that this induced the minority to withhold their names. Nothing has been found which shows decisively that Arminian members were in this church and it is highly probable that it had wholly a Calvinistic membership.

(c) Piscataway.

This church was constituted in 1689 by the assistance of Thomas Killingsworth and was the second church in the state of New Jersey. Nothing definite is known as to the faith of this church. The only thing which indicates in the least Arminian sentiment, is the fact that they admitted to their ministry Rev. Henry Lovell, and ordained him as Mr. Drake's assistant. He proved to be an infidel, but he was armed with genuine letters of recommendation from the New England brethren connected with the General Baptists. (See Diary of John Cramer, page 72.) But there is nothing very significant in this, and we admit that there is nothing to show definitely what this church believed in regard to the atonement of Christ.

(d) Cohanzey.

Cohanzey was the fourth church which entered into the organization of the Philadelphia Association in 1707. It was established in 1690. The church records are lost, consequently

it is very hard to learn anything positive as to their early history; but it is probable that this church was pretty strongly Calvinistic at first. This is inferred from a statement in Benedict's History of the Baptists, page 554. Located here was the famous Timothy Brooks, an Arminian Baptist, who with a number of others had emigrated "from Swansea Massachusetts before the church was formed," and had kept for many years a separate society "on account of differences of opinion relative to predestination, singing of Psalms, laying on of hands, etc." (See Benedict's History of the Baptists page 554.) But in 1709 - two years after the formation of the Philadelphia Association, Timothy Brooks became pastor of this church and brought his Arminian members into it. (See Benedict as above.)

(e) Welsh Tract - was the fifth church in point of age. It emigrated as a church militant from Wales, and first settled with Pennepack in 1701. But they did not find things just according to their notions so after two years they removed to Welsh Tract Delaware.

A careful examination of all the evidence in regard to this church leads to the following conclusion. When they came to Pennepack they had an Arminian membership sufficiently strong when joined to a similar element already existing in the church at Pennepack to cause a great turmoil and even divisions which are to be noticed later. So in 1708 they removed to Delaware and settled on a piece of land which they called Welsh Tract, leaving many of their Arminian members behind and taking some of the stronger Calvinists of Pennepack with them; this then was the first church in the Philadelphia Association to adopt a Calvinistic confession of Faith, being induced to do this by Mr. Abel Morgan in 1716. (See Morgan Edwards, Volume I, section on Pennepack) Morgan came to this country from Blaenclydach in South Wales; he was a strong Calvinist and a man of great personal power. Perhaps he was more largely instrumental in winning the victory for Calvinism than any other man in the Association.

(f) The First Church of Philadelphia is the only other to be considered in this

connection; this church really belonged to the Association at the beginning, but was included in Pennepk, not having formally separated from the mother church until 1746. It was strongly Calvinistic at its formation in 1698. John Farmer and his wife, two of the charter members, were Calvinists; likewise were some of the others. But by the additions from the Keithian Quakers who were Arminian, and by the incorporation with those of emigrants from Europe, there arose an Arminian element of some strength. (See Edwards Volume 1.) Moreover there can be but little doubt that this church was more or less influenced by the great number of Quakers who did not become members with them. All of these things are to be considered a little further on in this chapter.

It can be seen readily from this brief examination of the individual churches forming the Philadelphia Association originally, that, while the dominant sentiment was no doubt Calvinistic, there was a considerable Arminian influence in several of the prominent churches.

Just here it will be in order to submit
a statement from Mr Edwards, the historian
of his day, which fully justifies the conclu-
sion previously stated. Let the reader keep
constantly in mind, the important fact
that he is the highest authority on this
subject; his is the oldest document, & ed
behind the document, is a man of
acknowledged ability and integrity.
Speaking of the church at Pennepuk, he
relates the following: "This for some time
continued their Zion with lengthened
cords, till the brethren in remote parts set
about forming themselves into distinct
churches, which began in 1699. By these
detachments, it was reduced to narrow
bounds, but continued among the church-
es as a mother in the midst of many
daughters. At their settlement and during
the administration of Mr Keach, they were
the same as they are now with respect to
faith and order, but when their numbers
increased and emigrants from different
churches in Europe incorporated with
them, divisions began to take place about
various things, such as absolute predes-
tination, laying on of hands, distributing
the elements, singing Psalms, & even th

day Sabbath, etc., which threw the body ecclesiastic into a fever." (See Edwards, Volume I, section on Pennepk.)

This is indeed a statement of the highest importance and when closely examined it will throw light on some points before obscure or at least uncertain.

(1) We learn that Pennepk was the leader among the churches forming the Philadelphia Association, and even after other churches had been organized, it had great influence for it "continued among them as a mother in the midst of many laughters."

(2) We learn that there was a period in which harmony as to "faith and order" prevailed, followed by a period of disastrous strife and divisions. "At their settlement and during the ministrations of Mr Keach, they were the same as they are now with respect to faith and order, etc." Mr Edwards wrote about 1770 when Pennepk and the entire Association was avowedly Calvinistic as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith amply proves. But Mr Keach, it will be remembered, returned to England in 1692, and it was not until (3) Laying on of hands was the next cause

after his return that a change of sentiment
seemed to take place, which caused such
terrific disorder and dissenision.

3. Let us now examine the occasions
of this disunion of belief.

(a) Absolute predestination.

It may be judged with some degree
of assurance that this was the great bone
of contention, because it was placed at
the head of the list by Mr. Edwards. Now
this strife about "absolute predestination"
was in Cenejuh and her daughters among
whom was the first church of Philadelphia.
It was no small affair either, for it
threw "the body ecclesiastic into a fever";
evidently there was an Arminian element
here which was quite strong, otherwise it
could not have made such disruption.

Let us remember also that Mr. Edwards
was a vigorous Calvinist and surely
would not have exaggerated or made
such a declaration. It is like Peds. baptist
testimony as to immersion being the
original mode of baptism, if it were
not true, why would such testimony
be given?

(b) Laying on of hands was the next cause

of strife. In Chapter II on the characteristics of General Baptists, it was clearly pointed out that this rite was regarded as one of the highest importance and made by many a test of fellowship, but there is nothing to show that the Particular Baptists ever regarded it as highly. There were numbers here no doubt who demanded that each candidate for membership should have this rite administered, but others claimed that it should not be made a test of church fellowship; hence the contention and division among them.

The fact that absolute predestination and laying on of hands were occasions of strife, shows the presence of Arminian church members; if this be true, our question is answered in the negative, the Philadelphia Association was not in its organization strictly Calvinistic.

(c) Seventh day Sabbath was another cause of trouble. Mr. Edwards, speaking of Seventh-day Baptists, says: "The character of General and Particular divide them in this Province, few as they are. They originated from the Keithian Baptists in 1700, as has been observed before, who were general in their sentiments touching the redemption of Christ" (See Volume I, page 65.)

(d) Singing Psalms is the last that we shall notice as a cause of discord. This alone would give us very little light, but when taken in connection with the others, it gives additional weight to the view that we have advanced. It is well known that the General Baptists were more bitterly opposed to singing in public worship than the Calvinistic Baptists. This was due no doubt to the close proximity of the latter to the Quakers.

From the above considerations the conclusion is reached that there was in the Philadelphia Association at its organization and during its early history, a considerable Arminian heresy which it took years to eradicate.

But some one may ask - did not Mr. Edwards say in the introduction of his treatise on "The Baptists in Pennsylvania", Volume I, that "they are independent with respect to church government, and Calvinistic with respect to doctrine; and this last I may add, so universally that the distinction of General and Particular have no place among them". (See Volume I, page 6.) This does seem on first

observation to controvert the above conclusion, for Mr. Edwards is the most unpartisan witness examined, and it is largely due to his testimony that the conclusion was reached. A witness divided against himself cannot stand. But it must be remembered that this statement is in the introduction to his treatise of the British Baptists in Pennsylvania, and had reference to the condition of belief at the time of his writing which was in the year 1770, sixty-three years after the formation of the Philadelphia Association. It is freely admitted that it was then and had been for more than thirty years out and out Calvinistic, so that at the time of his writing no one could question the position of the Association. This remark of Mr. Edwards does not in the least interfere with the conclusion we have expressed.

It is desired in concluding this thesis to present the fact that if the Association was strictly Calvinistic at the beginning and during its early years of existence, there are some difficulties which can hardly be removed or overcome; while on the other hand, if we grant

the presence of a considerable element of Arminians, all these difficulties vanish away.

A brief survey of the situation amply shows the truthfulness of this assertion.

1. In the formation of many churches of this early period, Arminian and Particular Baptists united. If there were no members of Arminian sentiment here, it was quite different from what it was elsewhere; this can hardly be believed, knowing that many of the churches were made up largely of the same people.

2. Another point of difficulty is in regard to the adoption of the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. This Confession of Faith according to Morgan Edwards and others was adopted in the year 1742. True Mr Sewall S. Cutting says in his Historical Vindications, that the Confession of Faith was adopted prior to the year 1742, and adduces in proof of this assertion a statement in the minutes, or supposed minutes rather, of the Association for the year 1724. This statement has been examined with considerable care and the conclusion reached is that the so-called minutes were either made out from

memory or from some general statement given in some of the church records; for according to Mr. Benedict, the minutes were not printed till a few years prior to 1745. So we cannot let the statement made in this book of the minutes of the Association 1707-1817, and compiled by a committee appointed in 1843, the one hundred and thirty-sixth anniversary of the Association, outweigh the plain statement of Mr. Edwards to the contrary. (See volume I, page 5.) Dr. A. D. Gillette, the chairman of the committee appointed for the purpose of compilation, stated to the Association in its annual meeting in 1846, "that through the kindness of Mrs. Harris, daughter of Samuel Jones, D. D., Thomas Shields, and others, we have obtained minutes of various sessions entire, as early as 1729." (See Minutes of the Philadelphia Association 1707-1807, introduction.) So it is plain that we cannot rely with the utmost confidence on the statement in the minutes of 1724, and these minutes so-called only imply that the Confession of Faith had already been adopted. In the year 1724, a query concerning the fourth commandment, whether changed, altered,

ed or diminished. We refer to the Confession
of Faith set forth by the elders and brethren
met in London 1659, and owned by us,
Chapter 22, sections 7-8." (See Minutes of Phil-
adelphia Association 1707-1807.) If you did not
know that the committee had no minutes
prior to 1729, this would seem rather for-
midable even against the plain assertions
of Morgan Edwards, who says: "The faith and
order of these people may be seen in the
Confession, Catechism and treatise of
discipline which they adopted in their Asso-
ciation held at Philadelphia in the year
1742." Mr. John Hart who was present when it
was adopted makes a similar statement.
These witnesses together with the minutes
of 1742 present conclusive evidence that
the commonly received year is the one
in which the Confession of Faith was adopt-
ed. If it was not adopted until the afore-
said year, a very interesting question arises.
Why was it not adopted sooner? If the Associ-
ation was strictly Calvinistic from the
beginning, what good reason can be given
for this delay? None it seems. But if
there was a considerable number of the
members of the different churches who

were General Baptists in sentiment, then the delay is easily accounted for. The Association could not have adopted such a confession without discussion and perhaps utter ruin. No one can claim that the Association was in ignorance of the confession of 1689, known as the Century Confession, which was adopted, with the addition of two articles, in 1742.)

¹⁷⁰⁷ The Welsh Tract church early in its history 1714, adopted this confession. (See Edwards, Volume I, page 20.) Many of the members of this church for two years resided at Pennek and Philadelphia, and these were the leading churches in the Association in this early period.

But it may be asked how can you account for this sudden change of sentiment and bold stand for Calvinism in 1742, if there were so many Arminian members prior to that time? Easily enough. It was due very largely to the influence of George Whitefield. He came to America in 1739, and soon set the entire continent on fire by his eloquent and wonderful preaching. He was an ardent Calvinist, and visited far and wide, and was a living example to show that a Calvinist

ist ~~might~~ have religion as well as other people. The Philadelphia Association caught his spirit, and a flame with his zeal set about to work for their Master as never before.

The influence of George Whitefield directly and indirectly together, it is fully believed, saved the country from the complete domination of Arminianism among the Baptists, and the adoption of the Confession of Faith in 1742 was largely due to his influence. It seems rather singular to attribute our preponderance of Calvinism to a Methodist, yet it is no doubt rightly attributed.

On the supposition that there were Arminian members in the churches the adoption of the Confession of Faith as late as 1742, can be easily accounted for, otherwise the difficulty is almost insuperable.

3. Lastly, on the supposition that there were no Arminian members in the different churches, the statement of Morgan Edwards presents a difficulty insurmountable. He plainly says that there was great commotion about "absolute predestination, etc., +++ which threw the body ecclesiastic into a fever." If there were no Arminians, this language

can hardly have any meaning; if there were, this difficulty vanishes.

In the great commotions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which empires and nations changed their creeds both politically and religiously, and kings and kingdoms lost their influence over the masses of the people; and on the ruins of dead empires arose mighty republics; and the great natural freedom of man was emphasized by the voice and pen of many brave and true men - in this sublime struggle for political and religious liberty, it was but natural that Calvinism and Arminianism should meet in mortal combat. This they did in the Philadelphia Association; but error retreated before the power of truth, and the Association became the greatest champion and defender of orthodoxy in the American Republic.

Very truly

Wesley T. Drumer

Dec. 21. 1894.

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