BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS AS THE KEY TO DENOMINATIONAL EXPANSION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS AS THE KEY TO DENOMINATIONAL EXPANSION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

A. The Subject

1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

Until the eighteenth century was well under way, the Baptists, as a denomination, were an insignificant group of local autonomous churches who were known not for their great contribution to the work of Christ, but rather "were considered religious radicals of the most dangerous type and were frequently looked upon as enemies of all political and social order."[1] From their inception early in the seventeenth century, they were dissenters and separatists. They had no recognizable system of theology, nor did they establish an ecclesiastical foundation for the building of a great church like that of the Lutherans or Calvinists. Their primary aim was not to be negative, but the very environment into which they

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1. Sweet, W.W.: Religion of the American Frontier, The Baptists, p. 3

were brought was one filled with religious autocracy. Baptist beginnings in England were similar to Baptist beginnings in New England. The greatest difference was only in locality. In short they were a vociferous protest to the tyranny of an authoritative church.

Baptist churches were spontaneous in origin, but they soon learned that confederate action in specified areas would result in a positive emphasis for Christ. Baptist associations were the end result of such thinking in the eighteenth century. The fruit of these associations can never be measured, but it is the attempt of this thesis to determine their contributions in certain specified fields of Christian endeavor.

2. The Subject Justified.

It is evident from what has already been said, that a study of these associations might very well produce not only a clearer picture of a great Baptist heritage, but might also be the basis for further study to determine a policy for denominational growth and unity today. Too little work has been done in this field and that which was done is not concerned primarily with giving contributions, but rather relating history. The Baptists are a unique people and their contribution to a practical outworking of New Testament truth in individual lives as well as in the nation as a whole

deserves to be brought to the attention of all Christians. The Association was an instrument for doing the work of God, and it is a testimony to the denominational interpretation of Christian vision and outreach.

3. The Subject Delimited.

It would be impractical and unnecessary to attempt to give a history of every association formed in the eighteenth century, for with few exceptions these associations in varying degrees and with various success attempted to accomplish the same tasks. So for purposes of simplicity and clarity, selected associations will be chosen and a bare outline of their history will be given. The purpose of this thesis is to emphasize contributions, particularly those of a permanent nature. Needless to say, the primary interest of this study is the Baptists of the United States, even though the Baptists of Great Britain have made similar contributions in their own nation.

B. Method of Study

As has been stated above, the primary purpose of this study is to determine the contributions of Baptist Associations to denominational growth. To accomplish this, two primary things must be known: how associations are justified in Baptist polity and

how the historical antecedents of the eighteenth century Baptist church precipitated a fellowship between churches. These two questions will be answered in order after which an historical survey of selected associations will be made to determine actual contributions. These contributions will then be classified arbitrarily into four categories which should indicate the nature of the work of associations in general and portray their contribution to the denomination as a whole.

C. The Chief Sources of Study

It would be helpful to have several selected works or manuscripts from which to work on a paper such as this. However, there is little of this nature in this field. Isaac Backus and Morgan Edwards were two Baptist preachers of the eighteenth century who were historians in their own right and their works will provide the main source materials, along with minutes of the associations that are available in this area. To fill in the total picture, recognized Baptist Histories will be used as well as work done on specific fields relating to the contributions of the associations.

CHAPTER I

THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF BAPTIST CHURCH POLITY

A. Introduction

B. The Autonomous Local Church

C. The Denomination, A Confederation of Churches

D. Summary

THE UNIQUE CHARACTER
OF
BAPTIST CHURCH POLITY

CHAPTER I

A. Introduction

Churches in general have formed a set of principles under which they operate and by which they either grow or disintegrate. These "operational" principles are, in turn, based upon one or more foundation stones that give validity to the existence of the church. Baptist churches are no exception. Through the years, they have established certain policies that have come out of their own experience and labeled them 'Historic Baptist Principles.'[1] Though lists differ in length most of them would contain ten, seven of which bear on the unique character of Baptist church polity. The following seven are taken from the Constitution of the Evangel Baptist Church of Newark, New Jersey:-

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1. Constitution of the Evangel Baptist Church, Newark, New Jersey 1936, p. 1.

1-The preeminence of Christ as our divine Lord and Master.

2-The supreme authority of the Bible and its sufficiency as our only rule of faith and practice.

3-The right of private interpretation and the competency of the individual soul in direct approach to God.

4-The absolute separation of church and state.

5-The complete independence of the local church and its inter-dependence in associated fellowship with other Baptist churches.

6-The solemn obligation of majority rule, guaranteeing equal rights to all and affording special privileges to none.

7-The spiritual unity of all believers for which the Master so earnestly prayed.[2]

These principles by no means affect the definition of a Christian church, such as is given by Philip Jones. He says,

> The church is a company of baptized believers, organized to proclaim Christ's truth, to administer his ordinances, and to perpetuate his ministry.[3]

But they do add a new meaning for the Baptist, for the church's organization becomes a mutual association.[4]

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2. These "principles" are not to be confused with a confession of faith, or a creed. Any or perhaps all might be included in such documents, but these historic principles are tenets upon which Baptist church government is formed.
3. Jones, P.L.: A Restatement of Baptist Principles,p.44
4. loc. cit.

The basis for this interpretation is found in the doctrine of Christ's supreme leadership over His church and its correlative, the individual relationship of the soul to God. This "constitutes the prime factor in their religious life;" this, "more than any other tenet, gives them their distinctive character;.....it is that which affixes to them their label in the ecclesiastical catalogue."[5]

The Lordship of Christ is made operative in two ways, according to Baptist teaching. First, revelation through the written Word. This is special revelation and by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit the believer is able to interpret it privately. Secondly, revelation through the direct communication of God's will to the soul.[6] These two place the Christian in a unique position, for He alone is responsible for His fellowship with God and obedience to God's will.

Thus the setting is established for discussing the unique character of the Baptist church, particularly in relation of the individual to the local congregation and of the local congregation to the denomination.

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5. Ibid., p.38.
6. Ibid., p.39.

B. The Autonomous Local Church

Written into the constitution of most Baptist churches is the principle, "the complete independence of the local church."[7] This doctrine is in accord with the fundamental precepts described above. Dr. Strong says:

> While Christ is sole king, the government of the church, so far as regards the interpretation and execution of His will, is an absolute democracy in which the whole body of members is entrusted with the duty and responsibility of carrying out the laws of Christ as expressed in His Word.[8]

It is the congregation, as a fellowship of united believers that holds the responsibility for the execution of God's will in their midst. They must be autonomous in determining their work for they only are responsible before God.

1. The Rule of the Layman

Actually the church is an organization with no authority save for its own preservation. "It may exclude from its body, but it has no power beyond."[9] The individual must therefore play an important part in the affairs of his church. The responsibility for maintaining pure doctrine and practice is his.[10] Thus the

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7. Constitution of the Evangel Baptist Church, Newark, N.J., p.1.
8. Strong, A.H.: Systematic Theology, p.903.
9. Jones, op. cit., p.45
10. Strong, op. cit., p. 905

elected officials of the church must necessarily represent the responsibility of the individuals and exercise authority in every realm of church life. The following is an example of the duties entrusted to these officers:

Duties of the Diaconate[11]

> They shall, in cooperation with the Pastor, be responsible for the spiritual oversight of the church and shall provide for the conduct of the worship services. They shall prepare the elements of the Lord's supper, but the distribution of the elements shall be reserved to the Deacons. ....They shall have supervision of the administration of the ordinance of baptism and shall examine and recommend to the church for action, all applications for membership, letters of transfer or the dismissal of delinquent members. The Diaconate shall pass upon the nature of any special program to be given by any organization in the church.

The Trustees in like manner are responsible for the custody and administration of the temporal affairs of the church.

It is evident that the position of a minister in such a situation is not one of authority but one of an advisory nature. He is an ex-officio member of every board, but his prime duty is that of pastor and spiritual counselor.

2. The Absence of an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

With such a view of church government and the

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11. Constitution of the Richmond Hill Baptist Church, New York, p.5

ministry, one might agree with Straton when he says:

> Any group of Christians organized into a church that baptizes by immersion and adheres to the general beliefs and practices that have characterized Baptists, has the right to call itself a Baptist church.[12]

It need not apply to any other congregation or association and no other organization can contest their use of the title. Even the selection of a minister need not have the approval of any other authority. This aversion to any system of a hierarchy either in church government or in the ministry dates back to the Baptist's historic beginning. As one writer put it, "They admit of no episcopate, historic, hierarchial or what not, for bishops are meddlers in the private intimacies of the soul with God."[13] And often it was said concerning the evils of a hierarchy, "Priests could be as godless and sensual as the Bishop of St. Praxed's, but only through the minions of the church could men find God."[14] Modern Baptists feel as strongly as earlier Baptists that the church should be a democracy, with Christ as head. "The only authority in a church is Christ. He is supreme, and men owe allegiance to Him alone."[15]

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12. Straton, Hillyer H., Baptist: Their Message and Mission, p.133
13. Poteat, Edwin M.: "Logic or Life", Christian Century, LX (April 28, 1943), 516
14. Straton, op. cit., p.71.
15. Ibid., p.74

C. The Denomination, a Confederation of Churches

Straton says:

> Baptists have been extreme individualists all through their history. At the same time, from the very beginning, they have been wise enough to recognize that an independent church which keeps itself absolutely aloof from other churches of like faith and order is in danger of losing not only its independence but its very existence."[16]

This associational principle, next to independency, is perhaps the most important development in Baptist polity. "The associational principle enabled Baptist churches to maintain the independency of the local church; and at the same time, it provided a means for them to co-operate with sister churches in the larger work of the kingdom."[17] The extent of the cooperatives formed were limited necessarily in early times, not only because of poor modes of travel, but also because groups differed in the various areas due to environmental needs. These associations began as early as 1624 in England, and in the American colonies we find evidences of them in the latter part of the same century.

1-Their Unity as a Brotherhood.

Concerning the Northern Baptist Convention, which was legally incorporated in 1910, Torbet says:

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16. Ibid., p.131
17. McNutt, W.R.: Polity and Practice in Baptist Churches, p.144.

> The new organization, as stated in its declaration of purpose, was to provide a means of giving expression to the opinions of its constituency upon moral, religious and denominational matters, and to promote denominational unity and efficiency in efforts for the evangelization of the world.[18]

The Convention was the culmination of two centuries of co-operative work among Baptist churches and it was an expression of the unity that could be attained by autonomous bodies through confederate action. In actuality the Convention came into existence at the instigation of the Association and so in reality it is only an extension of the associational principle. The individual church is usually unable to do any great work for Christ outside its own area and so it necessarily seeks cooperation between churches of like sentiments for a greater outreach. This unity between churches is not to be underestimated for it has been the means of promoting one of the greatest missionary programs this earth has ever witnessed.

2-Their Independence as Individual Churches.

It has been the tendency in this last quarter century to put more emphasis on the denomination and less on the local congregation. Such a tendency was warned of when associations were first conceived in the

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18. Torbet, Robert G.; A History of the Baptist, p. 454.

seventeenth century. Dr. George E. Horr says:

> Many of the brethren were very jealous of such an organization. They feared that it might trench on the independence of the churches, and come in time to exercise authority after the order of Presbyteries. When the Warren Association was organized, bringing together New England Baptists in a cooperation like that of the Philadelphia Association, it was stipulated that the union was consistent with independency and power of particular churches, because it pretended to be no other than an advisory council, utterly disclaiming superiority, jurisdiction, and coercive right and infallibility.[19]

However, the principles upon which the local church is built will not allow the emphasis toward denominationalism ever to become too strong. It is more than mere theory to say that as "the individual is autonomous in his acceptance of Christ and as a church member is autonomous within the church, the individual church is autonomous within the association and the association is autonomous within the convention."[20] When the Northern Baptist Convention was formed it is interesting to note that Dr. W. C. Bitting, who was to be the corresponding secretary of the new organization, made the following proposal:

> That a committee of fifteen draft a plan of organization which would preserve the independence of the local church and yet provide co-ordination of denominational work. The product was not to be a legislative body.[21]

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19. Horr, G.E.: The Baptist Heritage, p.72
20. Poteat, op. cit., p.516
21. Torbet, op. cit., p.454

Dr. Poteat says, "There is in point no federable unit within the Baptist set up."[22] Dr. Strong says, "No church or council of churches, no association or convention or society can relieve any single church of its direct responsibility to Christ, or assume control of its action." At the same time however, he says, "No church can properly ignore, or disregard the existence or work of other churches around it..... There must be sympathy and mutual furtherance of each other's welfare among churches, as among individual Christians."[23]

D. Summary

The foregoing discussion has not been detailed, for the primary aim of the chapter has been to emphasize certain qualities of Baptist churches that would give a basis for understanding the reason why they are unique and have used the associational method for expansion rather than some other system. In all reality no other way was or is open to them to make a worldwide crusade for Christ unless they would be desirous to abandon their historic principles. Such a step would be an admission that these principles were not based on the authority of The Word.

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22. Poteat, op. cit., p.516
23. Strong, op. cit., p.926

Baptist democracy is based on the doctrine of Christ as the Supreme Lord and Master over His church, and the doctrine of the competency of the soul in direct communication with God. Any move that would violate these tenets would be a move toward denying the foundation of the church. The nature of associations however, provides for the fulfillment of the basic responsibility of the individual and the church without limiting their autonomy. With this in view the reader will be able to better understand the spirit and the work of the associations in the eighteenth century and more clearly determine their contributions.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS

A. Introduction

B. The Contribution of the Separatists of England

C. The Contribution of English Baptists

D. The Contribution of Colonial Religious Groups

E. The Formation of Early Colonial Baptist Churches

F. Summary

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS
OF
BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS

CHAPTER II

A. Introduction

The 'Preacher' was justified in proclaiming, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."[1] The historical antecedents of Baptist associations cannot justifiably claim credit for instituting anything new in ecclesiastical life. However, an emphasis on such an organization, precipitated an awakening of Christian liberty of action that moved the entire realm of religious activity. History portrays the setting, and it is this setting that motivated men of God to exercise spiritual power in behalf of lost souls.

For this reason the motivating forces behind the work of Baptist Associations must be illuminated for a proper analysis and evaluation of that which was accomplished.

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1. Ecclesiastes 1:9

B. The Contribution of the Separatists of England.

The Church of England was established following the Wyclif revolt against ecclesiastical abuses in Great Britain. Strictly speaking, this Church, of whom Henry VIII was the progenitor, was not a reform movement.[1] However, under the reign of Edward VI, steps were taken to revise polity and practice to the extent that some agitators were appeased. The reign of Elizabeth rejected the reactionary movement of Mary's reign and moved forward toward the Reformation ideals of the reformers on the continent. However, the path of this movement was characterized continually by a counter-movement of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and wealthy noblemen resisting any action that would deprive the Church of its governing hold on church polity and finances, and at the same time maintaining an influential hold on the State. The result of the conflict was an organization built on the pattern of the Roman Church, with supreme authority vested in the political realm. In the sixteenth century, this meant the reigning sovereign. Such an organization left no room for non-conformists, and the state-church continued the practice of the former Roman bishops of tolerating none but adherents of the 'true church'.

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1. Cf. W.K. Ferguson and G. Bruin: A Survey of European Civilization, p.500.

The remaining Lollards, the followers of Tyndale, and those influenced by the Lutheran movement, were persecuted and driven into exile. Among them were the many groups who pressed for a complete reformation in England.

It is difficult to construct the chronology of the 'Separatists' in their early years. Historians have often made the comment that dissenters are born with every new idea, and probably the Separatists were no exception. They were there from the beginning. Henry VIII broke with the Papacy in 1533, and completed the most radical swing away from Rome in 1538 when "Matthew's Bible was ordered to be kept in all churches."[1] But in 1540 three reformers, who agitated for a more thorough reformation, were burned at the stake for their preaching. And in 1546, "four gospellers were burnt in London, of whom the celebrated Anne Ashew was one."[2]

The first evidence of congregations of Separatists indicates that they were not known publicly until the middle of the sixteenth century. Bartlet says:

> Already in 1550, Stype (an early English historian) refers to certain 'sectaries' in Essex and Kent

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1. Hunt, William: "The Church of England", Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. IX, 11th ed., p.447
2. Ibid., p.448

> as 'the first that made separation from the Reformed Church of England, having gathered congregations of their own'. Then under Mary's reign (1553-58) secret congregations met under the leadership of Protestant clergy, and when these were lacking, even of laymen."[1]

1. Their Local Autonomy.

Of the groups of 1550 referred to above, Bartlet continues, "These private assemblies of the professors in these hard times (as Stype calls them) were congregational simply by accident."[2] They were scattered groups, small in number, whose primary motive for existence was an opportunity to express, not so much a protest to the enforced channel of religious activity, but a means of worshipping according to conviction. Of those that held similar views, there was no bond of unity for each was a spontaneous eruption of protest and each represented the feeling of a few in one locality. However the idea was not new and as the groups matured and grew, they realized, by their study of the Scriptures, that they had a Biblical basis for their local autonomy. Even fresher to the minds of some were the constitutions, written as early as 1526, of a few Anabaptist churches on the continent who claimed a congregational polity.[3]

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1. Bartlet, J.V.: "Congregationalism".,Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. VI, 11th ed., p. 930
2. loc. cit.
3. loc. cit.

The development of the concept of local autonomy grew according to the pressures exerted by the government. In 1561, there appeared in London a more definite picture of the reaction to ecclesiasticism in the form of 'A Confession of Faith.' Burrage records part of it as follows:

> It advocated 'the polity that our Saviour Jesus Christ hath established, with pastors, superintendes, deacons;' so that 'all true pastors have equal power and authority....and for this cause, that no church ought to pretend any rule or lordship over other' and none ought 'to thrust himself into the government of the church (as by ordination at large), but that it ought to be done by election.'[1]

No doubt this 'Confession of Faith' was presented to Queen Elizabeth with the hope that she would be more tolerant to dissenters. As one author said, "These 'true Christians' asked only to be permitted to live unharried in England, nor be compelled 'to the use or approbation of any remnants of popery and human tradition.'"[2] History reveals that their desire was not realized but the story of dissent did not rest but grew; and along side of it grew the consciousness of the need of autonomy in the local congregation.

Elizabeth died in 1603 and there followed her to the throne James I. Seven years previous,

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1. Burrage, Champlin: The Church-Covenant Idea, p.43.
2. G.G. Atkins and F.L. Fagley, The History of American Congregationalism (Boston, 1942) p.4.

Separatists, who had been forced to flee to Amsterdam, realized that James would succeed the Queen and therefore attempted to present their position before him in order to gain favor for a long desired return to England, when he did gain the throne. Their statement is interesting in relation to the progress of thought concerning congregational autonomy. It is entitled, "The Heads of Differences between Them and the Church of England as They Understood it." Atkins has paraphrased it for modern reading and condensed it as follows:

> Christ the Lord, by his last testament, left clear and sufficient instructions in all necessary things for the guidance and service of his Church to the end of the world, and that every particular church has full interest and power by all ordinances of Christ so given: that every true and visible church is a company of people called and separated from the world by the Word of God, and joined together by voluntary profession of the faith of Christ in the fellowship of the gospel. Only those thus called and separated from the world can be received and retained a member in the Church of Christ, which is his body.
>
> A church so gathered possesses a sovereign power in the control and direction of its own affairs, both temporal and spiritual. It may appoint discreet, faithful, and able men to preach the gospel and the whole truth of God. A fellowship of believers thus joined together in holy communion with Christ and one another have power to choose their pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, and helpers and should not be subjected to any anti-Christian hierarchy. Church officers should be maintained by the free and voluntary offerings of the church. State support is abjured.

> Each particular church possesses the right of discipline over its own members. The church should be governed only by the laws and rules appointed by Christ in his testament. Worship should be in spirit and in truth without liturgies and prayer books. The Lord's day alone is to be observed; all 'monuments of idolatry' are to be abolished; schools and academies should be thoroughly reformed in the interest of true learning and godliness. Finally, all churches and people are bound in religion to only one rule - that which Christ as Lord and King had appointed, and not to any other devised by man whatsoever.[1]

These convictions were not new but were based on the work of the well-known Separatist, Robert Browne, in his classic "Book which Sheweth the Life and Manners of All True Christians", on congregational theory written in 1580-81. In it he said, "Every church member is a spiritual person, with a measure of the Spirit and office of king, priest and prophet, to be exercised directly under the supreme Headship of Christ."[2]

The Separatists were unsuccessful in gaining the patronage of James, for when he became sovereign, he followed his predecessor and enforced the regulations concerning the state-church upon all in the kingdom. By this time, the Dissenters had grown to a disturbing size, and it was necessary to force many Separatists to flee the country by the

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1. Ibid., pp. 5-6
2. Bartlet, op. cit., p. 931.

passing of several acts of conformity. Most of them settled in Holland. Along with those who were already there, these exiles were influenced by the Mennonites and other independent groups. By so doing, congregations took on individualistic patterns. The Pilgrims grew out of this exile, as well as the Baptists. The Puritans maintained their position in England because they softened their claim for local autonomy and stressed reformation of corruption in the existing ecclesiastical picture, rather than a change in polity. Nevertheless, the concept of local autonomy for the individual church was well established by the English Separatists before 1630, and it was this concept that chiefly characterized them.

2. Associations for Spiritual and Political Strength

The associational principle was by no means as early as the principle of local autonomy. Robert Browne, in 1580, was conscious of the need for a unity of fellowship in Separatist congregations, for in his classic he says, "Conference, between sister churches for counsel, is provided for, (in his theory) so that, while autonomous, they do not live as isolated units."[1] Yet the first associations that are recorded

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1. loc. cit.

are the Baxter's Associations (1653-60), which were organized on the pattern of voluntary presbyteries.[1] Not much is known of these groups, but it is supposed that they were primarily interested in a fellowship, not for the purpose of establishing a unified system of theology, but rather for the establishment of some standard on which to ordain a clergy and for determining a basis of action to face political action by the state. Records have been found concerning voluntary associations, especially among ministers, which were established, as Bartlet says, "for fellowship, examining candidates for the ministry, and for determining cooperative enterprises in the locality."[2]

In concluding this note on associations, it is interesting to note that the Congregational Churches, who are descendents of the Pilgrims, have written into the minutes of their National Council the following words, which are, in effect, a claim of historical precedence for their associational principle.

> "...the churches thus constituted (Congregational churches) are in relation of fellowship

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1. Ibid., p. 933
2. Ibid., p. 936

> one with another, under which it is their duty and their privilege to meet for mutual counsel in cases of general interest and common responsibility;....the churches will meet....for the purpose of considering the present crisis in the history of our country and of the kingdom of Christ and the responsibilities which the crisis imposes on us who have inherited the polity and the faith of our Pilgrim fathers."[1]

The crisis mentioned concerned the reconstruction period immediately following the Civil War. It was on the basis of a pattern established in England over two hundred years before that this denomination established a National Council to meet a 'common responsibility'.

In summary, it has been noted that there is adequate evidence of an established pattern among the Separatists, not only for the principle of local autonomy, but also of voluntary associations of autonomous churches, in the period preceding the work of American Baptist associations. Both these principles were not duplicated in eighteenth century America, but they were antecedents to what did occur.

C. The Contribution of English Baptists

The foregoing discussion clearly indicated that the reformation in England was centered, not in

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1. Atkins and Fagley: op. cit., p. 201

the established church, but in the movement of dissent, that demanded a complete break with an authoritative system of religion. As on the continent, the dissenters eventually organized into autonomous groupings, each with individual characteristics. The groupings, having occurred almost an hundred years after Luther's first stand against indulgences, would indicate that the continental reformation must have had some influence on these people. The Anabaptist position, with minor exceptions, was embodied in the Mennonites of Holland. Calvin was also strongly represented there as well as in Scotland. To these two movements Separatist thought owes much, for the main lines of dissent in England followed patterns largely formed by them.

It is generally agreed by Baptist Historians that the rise of the denomination can be traced back to the year 1610, from which time there has been an unbroken line of Baptist churches.[1] This date has been fixed as the culmination of a series of events commencing in 1606. In Gainsborough on Trent was a Congregational church, organized four years previously, which

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1. H.C. Vedder: A Short History of the Baptists (Phil. 1907), P. 201

split, for convenience, into two parts. One group eventually became the Pilgrim church under the leadership of John Robinson, while the other was led by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys. Both groups were forced to leave England during the winter of 1607, and the latter settled in Amsterdam. The influence of the Waterlander Mennonites on Smyth caused him to lead his congregation to reject infant baptism and to accept immersion of believers as the only means of following the Lord's commandment. Difficulties with John Smyth because of his fluctuating theological views caused a split and Helwys, with those who would not follow Smyth separated himself and prepared to return to England in spite of the threat of persecution there.[1] He arrived in London in 1611, and formed the first General Baptist Church. Armitage says,

> Little is known of its history beyond the general statement that the Dutch Baptists of London rallied around Helwys and John Murton, his successor, that it was located in Newgate, and that in 1626 it numbered one hundred and fifty persons.[2]

But the statement by Masson in his Life of Milton indicated that Helwy's group exerted a great historical influence in proportion to its size as follows:

> This obscure Baptist congregation seems to have become the depository for all England of the absolute principle of liberty of conscience expressed

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1. Thomas Armitage: A History of the Baptists, (New York, 1887) p. 454
2. loc. cit.

> in the Amsterdam Confession as distinct from the more stinted principle advocated by the general body of the Independents. Not only did Helwisse's folks differ from the Independents generally on the subject of infant baptism and dipping; they differed also on the power of the magistrate in matters of belief and conscience. It was, in short, from this little dingy meeting-house somewhere in Old London that there flashed out first in England the absolute doctrine of religious liberty.[1]

By 1626, in spite of persecution, not only did the Newgate church show an increase in membership but it also aided in the establishment of ten other General Baptist Churches in England.

One important element of history centered about the interpretation of the atonement. In 1633 John Spilsbury organized a congregation in Wapping, calling itself a Particular Baptist Church.[2] The original group in Amsterdam had adopted an Arminian view of the atonement but back in England the influence of Calvinistic thought stressed a limited atonement. Thus when the split was made, the churches named themselves accordingly: general or particular Baptists.[3]

Just how fast these independent groups grew is hard to determine, for authors vary so greatly, but there is almost common agreement to the following facts:

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1. Cf. loc. cit.
2. Ibid., p. 460
3. loc. cit.

> By 1644, there were forty-seven General Baptist churches, Arminian in theology, evangelistic in purpose, and dedicated to religious liberty, even at the price of severe persecution at the hands of Archbishop Laud in the reign of Charles I.[1]

Of the Particular Baptists, we know at least seven churches by that date.[2]

1 Their Local Autonomy.

Concerning the Baptists of this period, they were pretty much in a situation similar to that of the Independents and Dissenters forty years earlier. Local autonomy was forced upon them largely because they did not adhere to the state church. The aforementioned quotation from Masson's Life of Milton indicates that their striving for religious liberty was closely allied with their desire for an autonomous local church. A magistrate was as much an officer of the church as an officer of the state, and dissenters from the established order suffered the same, if not more severe, punishment as the one who broke the civil law. To the Baptist, therefore, this principle of autonomy was precious. Torbet records that the Particular Baptist churches were very reluctant to have organized fellowship with each other for they feared the loss of their local autonomy and freedom of conscience.[3] Helwys,

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1. Torbet, op. cit., p. 69
2. Daniel Neal, History of the Puritans, (New York, 1844) Vol. II, p. 363
3. Torbet, op. cit., p. 90

the leader of the first Baptist church in England, set forth in his book, A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity, one of the earlier claims for freedom of worship to be published in the English language. In it he says:

> Let the King judge, is it not most equal that men should choose their religion themselves, seeing they only must stand themselves before the judgment seat of God to answer for themselves..... The King is a mortall man and not God, therefore hath no power over y immortall soules of his subjects to make lawes and ordinances for them and to set spirituall Lords over them.[1]

This emphasis on freedom of conscience took form, not so much in a denomination for all that held to the doctrine, but in small local groups where the individual could express and practice his belief as the Holy Spirit led him. The stress on the local church over-ruled any action that would tend to mold them into a unified whole, where individuals or a creed or confession would determine their conduct in respect to their beliefs and spiritual conduct.

2. Their Associations for Fellowship and Evangelism.

The previous statement would seem to eliminate the forming of associations. Such was not the case, however. Though these early Baptists stressed strongly their local autonomy, "From the beginning

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1. Ibid., p. 67

they were not 'Independents'; they always sought for fellowship between the different churches, and were very successful in arranging for permanent organization."[1] Needless to say, these were not entirely binding on the individual churches.

"As early as 1624, five General Baptist churches took joint action to repudiate the characteristic Mennonite views regarding oaths, magistracy, and military service."[2] There was a political view in mind when this was done, but it began a trend among the General Baptists and before long they became very active in establishing Associations "for central coordination of activities."[3] The Civil Wars (1642-49) between King and Parliament provided the impetus for more formal organizations, for counties were organized into 'associations' for defense purposes and when Cromwell's army was disbanded in 1653, many of the Baptists who were discharged in Ireland, kept their new churches on a high plain of enthusiasm by maintaining contact with each other through the Associational plan. Letters to churches in England, Scotland, and Wales, who were attempting

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1. Whitley, W.T.: History of British Baptists,(London, 1932), p.53
2. Torbet, op. cit., p.72
3. Torbet, Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, (Phil., 1944) p. 16.

a similar type of inter-church communication, a general pattern for associations. The two groups of Baptists, General and Particular, differed insomuch as the latter was very loose, depending mainly on an exchange of correspondence and more or less regular meetings, while on the other hand, the General Baptist associations were of a more centralized character. In 1660, the General Baptists organized a General Assembly of all the associations, which was largely responsible for creating a denominational consciousness among the Baptists.[1] It is interesting to note that Torbet is not slow to show that "their church order, to some degree, was more presbyterian than congregational in character."[2] In contrast, the Particular Baptists were reluctant to organize, fearing the loss of their local autonomy. However, "they were never independent in their attitude toward other churches of similar outlook; they felt the need of closer association, particularly in the metropolitan areas."[3] In 1689 an invitation was extended to

> all churches which sympathized with the confession of 1677, (a Baptist revision of the Westminster

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1. Torbet, History of the Baptists, pp.72-73.
2. Ibid., p. 90
3. loc. cit.

> Confession) which was reprinted for the purpose; and the convention 'owned' it, commending it to outsiders as a fair expression of their views. But no one proposed to erect it into a standard.[1]

The local church and associations indicated their unwillingness to attribute final authority to a confessional statement by forming their own creedal statements, after the convention. At this meeting the General Assembly of Particular Baptists was organized. Its size is indicated by the fact that one hundred and seven churches were represented in its second meeting in 1692.[2]

Both Assemblies until the middle of the eighteenth century were more devoted to consolidation and organization than to evangelism. The struggle for liberty of conscience was still to be completed. Theology was still a major concern. Yet, the basis of their organizations was the desire of propagating the gospel and to this end they began in June, 1717, the London Fund "to assist needy ministers and to educate young men for the ministry".[3] Earlier, the General Baptists established the practice of sending forth paid itinerant evangelists but by 1700 this was discontinued because of a lack of interest.[4] The early zeal of the Particular Baptists also became deadened. Hyper-Calvinism took its toll of Evangelistic

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1. Whitley, op. cit., p. 182
2. Ibid., p. 91
3. Ibid., p. 93
4. Ibid., p. 94

ministers and those pressing for a missionary outreach. It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that these churches felt any awakening to the moving of the Spirit through the Wesleys and Whitefield. However, the influence of these English Associations was felt in America long before this dormant period and their example had a positive influence on similar organizations in the colonies.

3. Their Attempts at Forming a Workable Church Government Not Based on an Ecclesiastical System

One characteristic of the Baptists that was evident in their writings and practices from the earliest days was the rejection of sacramentalism, in the ordinary sense of the word.[1] To them it had meant a confining order upon their spiritual being. The rejection of sacramentalism did not in itself constitute a basis for a congregational form of government. Leaders were still needed to minister to the people. Yet it did put a curb upon the power of the minister in congregational affairs. The first break with the established system, as far as the ministry is concerned, occurred when John Smyth rebaptized himself and then his congregation in 1608.[2] Smyth was an ordained

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1. Torbet, Social History of the Phil. Assn., p. 10
2. Armitage, op. cit., p. 454.

Anglican minister before his separation, but when Helwys assumed the leadership of the small group, he had to be ordained. Nothing is recorded concerning an ordination service for him, but it is assumed that the congregation ordained him themselves. This assumption is made on the basis of the practice amongst Baptists in the following years when a lack of a trained ministry required churches to appoint one from their own number to preach. William Kiffin was an example of such. He was orphaned at nine; became an apprentice to a brewer at thirteen; was converted around the age of sixteen; and began preaching shortly after. Persecution caused him to flee to Holland in 1643. He returned shortly after and in 1653, he helped establish the Devonshire Square Church, of which he became a pastor. He remained at this post for over fifty years.[1] This man is also noted for his championship of the Baptist position in regard to the congregational form of government. Robert Pool, "the sharpest Presbyterian controversialist of that period"[2] asked of the Baptists, "on what Scripture authority they separated from other Reformers and framed new congregations of their own?" Armitage quotes Kiffin's reply as follows:

> Where...as you tell us of a great work of reformation...we entreat you to show us wherein the greatness of it doth consist,for as yet

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1. Ibid., p. 468
2. loc. cit.

> we see no greatness unless it be in the vast expense of money and time. For what great thing is it to change Episcopacy into Presbytery, and A Book of Common Prayer into a Directory, and to exalt men from livings of 100 pounds a year to places of 400 pounds per annum? But where have they yet framed their State Church according to the pattern of Christ and his Apostles?

Pool was not satisfied with the answer and continued to stress his question. To this Kiffin replied:

> The Presbyterians held that the baptism and ordination of Rome were valid, and that she was right in exacting tithes and state-pay, and yet held themselves guiltless of schism in leaving Rome. But when they shall return, as dutiful sons to their mother, we will return to you or hold ourselves bound to show just grounds to the contrary.[1]

This apologetic doesn't give much to work on in regard to showing the development of a distinctive polity, but it is interesting to note that the Baptists strove to follow the New Testament pattern. Certain church offices, such as the pastorate and the diaconate were known to be well established. Congregations generally called their pastors and disposed of undesired ones by dismissing them from the membership of the group.

The elaborate constitutional system that is employed now was the development of a later age. The primary contribution of these early Baptist churches was a stress on a congregational responsibility for the operation of the church and an abhorance of any trend toward Episcopacy.

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1. Ibid., p. 469

In summary, the English Baptists contributed not only the backdrop of history for the American Baptists, but some definite principles along the line of a congregational polity. Autonomy, yet interdependence within the associational principle, laid the pattern for the colonial development of the denomination.

D. The Contribution of Colonial Religious Groups

The colonization of North America was not, by any means, accomplished by religious persecution in England. Yet, some of the largest colonies, especially those in New England and the Middle Atlantic area, were populated by dissenters from the state-church of England. These men and their particular beliefs have molded the character of the United States as we have it today, as well as influencing the development of the Baptist church.

1. The Puritans.

It is not necessary to dwell on the forming of the Massachusetts colony, except to point out that the Puritans united with the Pilgrims from Plymouth, after Dr. Samuel Fuller aided the new group at Salem during a consuming epidemic a year after they arrived.[1]

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1. Weigle, L.A.: American Idealism, Vol. X of The Pageant of America, ed. R.H. Gabriel (New York, 1928) p. 41.

Unlike the Pilgrims, the Puritans were not Separatists. They wished to "purify and reform, not to forsake the Church of England."[1] Weigle has them saying:

> We will not say, as the Separatists were wont to say at their leaving of England, 'Farewell, Babylon! Farewell, Rome!' but we will say 'Farewell, dear England, farewell the Church of God in England and all the Christian friends there!' We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England, though we cannot but separate from the corruptions in it; but we go to practice the positive part of church reformation, and propagate the gospel in America.[2]

The influence of the Pilgrims, helped, in part, to overcome the original tendency among the Puritans toward a hierarchial form of polity, and Congregational Churches were born of this merger.

a. No Religious Freedom

Professor W. W. Sweet, of the University of Chicago, had the following remark to make concerning the Puritans of New England:

> Mass intolerance was one of the principal reasons for the formation of other New England colonies. With the exception of New Haven, all the other New England colonies established after Massachusetts Bay, owe their origin in a greater or less degree to the clash of Religion and politics in the Bay colony.[3]

Mead in a less academic tone says something very similar as follows:

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1. loc. cit.
2. loc. cit.
3. Sweet, W.W.: Religion in Colonial America (N.Y.42),p.89

> Did you think the Pilgrims and the Puritans came to establish religious freedom? Not they. They came to get that freedom for themselves, and with it once clutched in their fists they were determined to hold it against all comers..'All familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, and other enthusiasts shall have free liberty to keep away from us,' wrote one of them.[1]

Such a policy created a situation similar to the one they had left in England and so it is no surprise to note what happened to those who challenged it. Roger Williams was exiled; Anne Hutchinson was banished because of the objectional prayer meetings in her parlor, and many Quakers were first flogged and then cast out.

The Puritan attitude toward the state was similar to the Judean attitude at the time of Josiah. This ideal was a theocracy. Two years after the Puritans arrived at Salem, the General Court of the Massachusetts colony resolved, "that no man shall be admitted to the freedom of this body politic, but such as are members of some of the churches with the limits of the same."[2] This in itself constituted a breach of the freedom of the individual because of religious belief.

b. The Arbitrary Rule of Religious Leaders in Civil Affairs.

"As were the people (hardy-strongminded), so were their ministers", says Bartlet. He goes on to say,

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1. Mead, F.S.: See These Banners Go, (N.Y.,34), p.35
2. Bartlet, op.cit., p. 935

> Of these it is enough to name John Cotton, able both as a divine and as a statesman, potent in England by his expositions and apologies of the New England way, potent in America for his organizing and administrative power.1

Let no one minimize the power of the Puritan clergy in civil affairs. In 1692, the authorities put to death twenty whom they claimed to be witches.[2]

The theocratic concept was championed especially by the ministers of the colony, such as John Cotton and Nathaniel Ward. It was John Cotton, however, who gave to this modern generation the best description of the extent to which the government of Massachusetts was meant to go. In his apologetic to the Puritans of England on "the way of Congregational Churches," he laid down the following principle:

> When a commonwealth hath liberty to mould his own frame, I conceive the Scripture hath given full direction for the right ordering of the same. Democracy I do not conceive that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for church or commonwealth...As for monarchy and aristocracy, they are both of them clearly approved and directed in the Scripture, yet so as (God) referreth the sovereignty to himself and setteth up theocracy in both as the best form of government in the commonwealth as well as in the church.[3]

Mecklin described Massachusetts as a "Bible commonwealth, modeled after the Old Testament theocracy,

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1. loc. cit.
2. Mead, op. cit., p. 35.
3. Quoted by Weigle, op. cit., p.44

with Reverend John Cotton as its high priest."[1] As has been noted above, the franchise was limited to church members in 1631. After Roger Williams stirred up a flurry, it was voted in 1636, "that no church should be approved without the sanction of the magistrates and established churches." After the Antinomian controversy associated with Anne Hutchinson, a law was passed that no town could harbor a person for longer than three weeks without the permission of two of the magistrates or one of the council. A law of 1635 made church attendance compulsory; another in 1638 taxed the citizenship for the support of the minister, whether they were members or not. The culmination of these restrictions was reached in the famous Cambridge Platform of 1638. "The fundamental thesis of this famous document is that the principles of government both in church and state are given in the Word of God...The church-state of Calvin was adapted to the peculiar conditions of Massachusetts Bay....The pressure of contemporary events in England is seen in the adoption of the Westminster Catechism

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1. Mecklin, J.M.: The Story of American Dissent, (New York, 1934), p.68

as the confession of faith and the closer approximation to the Presbyterian polity.[1]

Since the minister was the one who determined the will of God, the clergyman of Massachusetts was the most important man in the community. Mecklin says, "The clergy....was the real bond of the theocracy."[2] They were "a speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent domocracy (the congregations).[3]

It is no wonder therefore that dissenters found no place in the Bay colony. An individual interpretation of Scriptue by a clergyman against a dissenter was all that was needed to secure a banishment. Such treatment forced the Baptists to organize in areas where such shackles would not be present, and further drove them to allow liberties that were not extended to them there.

2. The Quakers.

In the fall of 1682, Penn "sat under an elm at Shackamaxon with the Indians and made the only

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1. Ibid., pp. 68-69
2. Mecklin, op. cit., p. 73.
3. This remark is attributed to Samuel Stone of Hartford by Cotton Mather, Magnolia Christi Americana, (1702) Vol. I, p. 437

treaty never sworn to and never broken."[1] Pennsylvania was not the first land touched by the Quakers in the New World. For at least twenty years the Quakers had suffered Puritan intolerance to the extent of making them the most persecuted religious group known in America. Typical of their treatment in Massachusetts was the case of two of the first to arrive, Mary Fisher and Anne Austin. Mead describes their reception as follows:

> Mary Fisher and Anne Austin came from Barbados in the good ship Swallow, stepped from the deck into the town jail. They were charged only with being Quakers; they were stripped, searched for signs of witchcraft, denied light and air and ink and shipped away when the Swallow weighed anchor. The jailer confiscated their bedding and their Bibles.

The question raised is why these people received the treatment they did. Dr. Sweet says, "The Baptist and Quakers are rooted in the same soil; both had their rise in a period in English history characterized by economic, political and religious unrest."[2] Both expressed an individualism in religious practice that could not be tolerated by a state church. But the distinctive element of the Society of Friends,

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1. Mead, op. cit., p. 184
2. Sweet, W.W.: Religion of the American Frontier: The Baptists, p. 4

was a refusal to acknowledge any authority whatsoever in their faith. A relationship with God was personal business, said George Fox, and required the services of no church or priest.[1] The guide in religious experience came through the 'Inner Light', obtained, not by preaching, but by meditation and prayer. This was diametrically opposed to the Calvinism of the Puritans who looked for a 'legal yoke' to guide the Elect, and therefore it was not allowed to gain a foothold in the New England colony. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was founded by these people, and because of their beliefs, it became the shelter of the persecuted of Europe.

a. Religious Tolerance

Wertenbaker in his article on the Quakers says,

> The Quakers lay down as a main fundamental in religion that God gives every man a 'light within' or 'manifestation' to inform him of his duty and to enable him to do it. Since God speaks directly to the individual, and not directly through the church, salvation may be attained without the intervention of an ordained priesthood. From these views the advocacy of religious freedom followed as a matter of course. Penn promised that no person in his colony who believed in God should be

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1. Mead, op. cit., p. 181

> molested for his 'persuasion of practice.' The Quaker's could not consistently establish a state church.[1]

The story of George Keith illustrates the principle of tolerance clearly. This Quaker teacher was born in England and was an active Presbyterian minister there before he sailed for America in 1684. He became a Quaker, and rose to such prominence in his preaching that he was considered second only to Penn. Before long, however, his critical background reflected itself in his condemnation of certain Quaker excesses. At one time he said, there are "more damnable heresies and doctrines of devils among the Quakers than among any profession of Protestants." Such outcries caused him to be censored by the Society as a whole, but he dared them to punish him. Some magistrates did try him and he was convicted for disturbing the peace, but before the sentencing they realized their mistake and refused to enforce any penalty. Instead at the next annual meeting, he was disowned by the Society of Friends.[2] This test case became lasting evidence of the sincerity of Penn in drafting the policy of religious freedom in his government.

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1. Wertenbaker: The Founding of American Civilization: The Middle Colonies, pp. 188-89
2. Ibid., pp. 194-95

b. Simplicity of Religious Expression.

The Quaker conception of religion tended to be based upon "the inner or subjective series of reality to the neglect of external cultural forms and observances."[1] Their church was a meeting house and their order of worship was prayer, Scripture reading, and silence, punctuated by exhortations as the 'Spirit led.' They were as distinct in their everyday life as they were in their Sabbath Worship. To show humility, they dressed in simple garb and spoke to each other in the humble forms of 'thee and thou'. There was no room for formalism or sacramentalism.

These characteristics grew on the American Baptists to the extent that they became a balance between Quakerism and Presbyterianism. The Friends of Pennsylvania set the pattern for the religious vitality of the pioneer work of the early eighteenth century in which Baptists played such a large part.

3. The Methodists and Their Missionary Zeal.

In actuality, the Methodists did not antedate the Baptists of America. Their development was parallel and their incentives for growth, the same.

Missionary emphasis started with John Wesley in England, when between 1739 and 1744, he rode up and

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1. Mecklin: op. cit., p. 150

down England as a 'circuit rider' preaching to the common man. Such methods gave Methodism 22,410 souls by 1767.[1] Wesley sent Joseph Pilmoor to America in 1769 to minister to the Methodists already there. When he landed, he had before him the first American 'circuit' extending from New York to Maryland. It was not composed of churches, but just small groups of prayer meetings.[2] In 1773, the first American Methodist Conference was held in Philadelphia, and the ten ministers attended. They represented organized groups from Norfolk on the south to Boston on the north.[3] In 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church came into being, due primarily to those groups of men who rode the 'circuits' preaching Christ to the common man.

This method of evangelism was that used by the Baptist preachers sent out by the Associations in the eighteenth century, and the result was similar to that of the Methodists. It built a church for the kingdom of God.

E. The Formation of Early Baptist Churches.

There is no doubt that Torbet is correct when he says, "The heritage and background of American

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1. Mead, op. cit., p. 219
2. Ibid., p. 223.
3. Ibid., p. 228.

Baptists is chiefly British."[1] As an institution, however, their origin had no formal connection with the English Baptists; "rather they date from the expulsion of Roger Williams from Massachusetts, and from his establishment of the Providence Plantation."[2] It was in 1638 that this first Baptist settlement was organized. Sometime within the next ten years, another church sprung up in Newport under the leadership of Dr. John Clarke.[3] Growth in these churches, and others nearby was largely dependent on the amount of persecution that was taking place in the colony to the north.

In the Middle Atlantic colonies, "churches were built around a core of a few men and women who had been Baptists before emigrating to the New World."[4] Others who joined with them were those who held Baptist beliefs, but who had not identified themselves previously because of a lack of a church.[5] There is no record of the total number of Baptist churches or members in the colonies before 1700, but in New England, ten churches

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 219.
2. Sweet; Religion of the American Frontier, p. 3
3. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 221
4. Torbet: Social History of the Philadelphia Association, p. 15.
5. Loc. cit.

were known to be in existence with a total membership of around three hundred.[1]

1. A Persecuted Minority.

The discussion of Puritan intolerance has indicated the situation out of which the Rhode Island colony arose. Horr indicates that even after overt persecution ended in Massachusetts, "in Boston the Baptist cause was under constant persecution and suspicion. The ruling order was very reluctant to part with any of its privileges."[2] Baptists on the whole were not anxious to reveal their position in the early days, but their position on infant baptism brought them to light and opened the way for persecution.[3]

The closest parallel to the Massachusetts situation is found two generations later in Virginia, where the relation of the Episcopalians to the Baptists was like that of the New England Congregationalists to all who did not accept their rule.[4]

The far south is indebted in part to the persecution of the church in Kittery, Maine, organized in 1682. Because of fines and imprisonments, some of

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1. Ibid., p. 12.
2. Horr, op. cit., p. 70.
3. Torbet, Social History of the Philadelphia Association p. 12.
4. Horr, op. cit., p. 71.

its members emigrated to South Carolina, and organized what is now known as the First Church of Charleston.[1]

Torbet claims the principle of autonomy as the secret of Baptist endurance during persecution. He says, "The persecution might have been more effective had not the Baptists been organized in autonomous groups, which were more difficult to manage than those under a central control."[2] Nevertheless, the birth of the denomination was characterized by a strong determination to die, if need be, for what they believed, and it was this strength that carried them to the forefront of American Protestantism.

2. A Church With No Ecclesiastical Precedent.

The British Isles sent Baptists to the New World in the seventeenth century, for the established church considered England too small to contain dissenters, but "those who came to the colonies were neither numerous nor unduly prominent. For various motives they formed no church of their own immediately, but joined the Anglican or Congregational churches according to the one that held sway in their area."[3] The nature of the first groups organized in the home of Thomas Goold of Boston,

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1. Ibid., p. 67.
2. Torbet: Social History of the Phil. Assn., p. 12.
3. Ibid., p. 11.

in 1665. A merchantman, he gathered a group of his friends for fellowship, but after a short while, the group appointed him pastor, though he had no training and no credentials.[1]

Of the Middle Atlantic Colonies, Torbet has the following to say,

> Since Pennsylvania and New Jersey offered religious liberty, the Philadelphia area provided a nucleus for the most important and influential group of Baptist churches in the colonies by the early eighteenth century.[2]

These churches were built around a core of a few men who were originally Baptists in England, and had gathered around them men and women who held Baptists beliefs.

a. No Parent Organization.

With few exceptions, Baptists did not migrate to America as congregations. Torbet emphasizes the fact that the number of British Baptists in the colonies was very small.[3] In New England all ten of the churches established before 1700, except one, were without Baptist clergymen ordained in England. Roger Williams was a Puritan who had been ordained by the Church of England somewhere around 1628.[4] The one exception was John Miles

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1. Ibid., p. 12.
2. Ibid., p. 15.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Armitage: op. cit., p. 627.

who in 1663, with his congregation from Swansea, Wales, established a church in Rehoboth, Massachusetts.[1]

The lack of a strong denominational organization in England during the seventeenth century was good reason for the lack of a parental organization, in relation to the fledgling churches in America. In the early part of the nineteenth century efforts were made to correspond with British Associations, but for the two previous centuries, Baptists in Britain were struggling as hard to maintain their position, as the churches in America were struggling to establish a foothold. Thus on both sides of the sea, that which was created, came out of the seeds of dissent from an establishment existing in the land in which they organized, and was a reflection of the very tyranny they opposed.

b. No Organized Clergy.

A new organization must draw upon the resources it has at hand. When Roger Williams left the church he organized in Providence, the succeeding pastor was chosen from the group of Elders: Thomas Goold, a merchantman of Boston, was chosen by his congregation to be its pastor, and unless ministers were drawn from

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1. Ibid., p. 679

England, Baptist churches had to do without an educated ministry. This situation lasted well into the early part of the nineteenth century.

The power of ordination, as existing in the church, was a principle established by the Separatists in England.[1] It was this privilege that Baptists invoked, but necessarily no standard could be established. It was not until Associations were organized that some requirements of ordination were established to insure an organized clergy.

c. No Systematized Theology.

An organization that has been built in protest to the established order is not particularly concerned with adopting a complete system of theology. Generally, the points of difference are expressed, whereas points of agreement are not emphasized. Mecklin says:

> The fundamental theological conceptions of the Baptists touching the Bible, the ordinances of the church, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, sin, salvation, the Trinity, heaven and hell, and the final judgement, were practically identical with those of theocracy. Separatism was the basic issue between the Baptists and the theocracy. (Puritanism)[2]

The church at Providence reflected an Arminian system of theology however, while that at Newport was

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1. Ibid., p. 626.
2. Mecklin, op. cit., p. 150.

built on the Calvinism of the Puritans.[1] The problem of different theological systems did not affect the new churches to any great degree in these early years, except in terms of their greater outreach. It was not until the forming of Associations that the problems of theology announced themselves.

3. A Church With An Ideal: Separation of Church and State.

In analyzing Roger Williams' concept of the church and state, Mecklin says:

> For Williams, there were at least three levels of reality, the purely spiritual of the church, the social and civil of the state, and physical. We may call them the psychological, the cultural, and physical. The imperative practical necessity for the separation of church and state is based upon a metaphysical separation of the spiritual from the social and the physical.[2]

Armitage is eloquent in his esteem of the contribution of Williams when he says, "Most sacredly has Rhode Island guarded the hallowed trust committed to her charge, for no man has ever been persecuted in that sovereignty for his religious opinions and practices from its first settlement in 1636."[3] The Quakers had established the

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1. Armitage, op. cit., p. 673.
2. Mecklin: op. cit., pp. 86-7.
3. Armitage: op. cit., p. 649.

doctrine of toleration in the Middle Colonies and the Baptist had benefited by it. They were further aided by the absence of a state church in the area, and thus the principle became interwoven into the secular and religious life of these people. Baptists of Virginia suffered under the hand of the Anglicans, but when the charter of the province of Carolina was granted, including an article granting religious liberty, many moved to that colony.[1]

Baptists can only exist in a state where they are permitted to exercise autonomy in the governing of the local congregation. Therefore, a basic premise to any political situation in which they participate is complete separation of church and state. This is one ideal they have striven for since their inception.

F. Summary.

The previous discussion has set forth an historical survey and an attempt to touch on the forces that eventually called forth that great body of people called Baptists. In broad terms, it is the story of the development of principles concerning man's relationship to his God. Equally it is

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 234.

the story of liberty and democracy in the New World. For the purpose of this study however, it is the background of an organizational principle that, 'in due time', brought Christ to the hidden corners of the new country.

CHAPTER III

THE FORMATION OF BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS

A. Introduction

B. The Need for Associations in the Colonial Period

C. Associations in the Middle Colonies

D. Associations in the Southern Colonies

E. Associations in New England

F. Summary

THE FORMATION
OF
BAPTIST ASSOCIATIONS

CHAPTER III

A. Introduction

The incidents leading up to the formation of Baptist Associations in the eighteenth century having been traced, this chapter will consider the inter-church relations that transformed the local institution into a nationwide denomination. The chapter will be focused on a select number of Associations, their formal organization, historical highlights, and specific contributions to the Baptists as a whole.

B. The Need for Associations in the Colonial Period.

The chief characteristic of the Baptist churches that existed before the organization of Associations was that they were independent in government, thought, and action. This was a necessary characteristic, for as Torbet says:

> The persecution might have been more effective had not the Baptists been organized in autonomous

> groups more difficult to manage than those under a central control.[1]

However, the difficulties involved in such a situation were numerous. Primary among them was a lack of trained, effective leadership. The initial years of a church usually suffered little from such a problem, but the passing of the first leader generally left the flock helpless. The Association did not attempt to solve this problem at once, but its duties did include supplying vacant pulpits when such was requested. Rowe notes that when the demand for supplies became greater than settled ministers could handle, the Associations sent out evangelists for periods of three months or longer to rotate among the vacant churches and to establish Baptist centers in churchless areas.[2]

But the Association served other needs as well. It served as a bond of fellowship and a reminder of a denominational connection. On occasion it stiffened the resistance of the dissenting churches to the established churches. It gave advice to local churches, and upon request settled their disputes. It disciplined ministers, as well as examined the credentials of itinerant preachers. It acted in the

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1. Torbet: A Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, p. 12
2. Rowe, H.C.: The History of Religion in the United States, p. 62

capacity of an ordaining council, and in time set up establishments for the training of ministers. These are essential services required of a total denomination in order to exist. And it is one reason for the rapid growth of the Baptists after the first Association was formed. Let it be remembered that before 1700, New England had only ten churches with a total membership of approximately three hundred. Ninety years later, there were twenty thousand Baptists with over three hundred churches.[1]

C. Associations in the Middle Colonies

1. The Philadelphia Association, 1707

William Henry Allison, in his book on Baptist Councils, has the following to say of Baptist Associations:

> Before the Great Awakening, Baptist Churches outside of New England were scarcely to be found in sufficiently close proximity to one another to raise the question of inter-church relations except in the vicinity of Philadelphia.[2]

a. The Pennepack Church and the Yearly Meeting, 1688.

As has already been noted, the hospitality of the Quakers encouraged dissenters to settle in the area governed by them. Baptists settled as early

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1. John Asplund: The Universal Register of the Baptist Denomination in North America, 1790-1793, p. 90
2. Allison, W.H.: Baptist Councils in America, p. 24.

as 1660 and congregations sprang up from Trenton to Chester. In 1688, the Church at Pennepack was organized incorporating all these small congregations.[1] Again Dr. Allison says:

> The Pennepack Church became a center of evangelistic effort, the result being many baptisms in the surrounding region. These converts continued for some time as members of the Pennepack Church, their spiritual interests being cared for through frequent preaching services in various convenient localities.[2]

No record of the growth of this church is in existence, but we do know that it became the Baptist center of America by 1700. In influence, it maintained that position through the eighteenth century and was responsible, directly or indirectly, for almost every association formed in the hundred years to follow.

Shortly after the organization of the Pennepack Church, it was decided that a yearly meeting would be held of the total membership for fellowship and communion. The first of these meetings took place the same year that the church was organized. Shortly after, the group from Middletown, New Jersey, separated themselves from the mother church and

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 228.
2. Allison: op. cit., p. 24.

organized themselves into another church because of the large number in the local congregation. Those that could continued to attend the yearly meeting. The evangelistic zeal of the mother church caused another church to be formed from the congregation at Piscataqua in 1689. They, too, continued to send members to the yearly meeting. In 1691, the church at Cohansey was organized and ten years later, the church at Welsh Tract. Several congregations still were not organized but had meeting houses of their own such as the group in Philadelphia.

The guiding light of these early Baptists was, no doubt, Elias Keach, son of the well-known London Baptist preacher, Rev. Benjamin Keach. He had come to this country and had preached to the early Baptist congregations on the strength of his father's reputation. But shortly after arriving, he was converted, baptized, and in earnest began to preach the Gospel.[1] His evangelistic zeal caused the forming of the Pennepack Church and those that followed.

b. The Formation of the Philadelphia Association

In 1707, it was decided to organize an

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 228.

Association of the churches that had originated from the Pennepack Church. Cathcart says:

> The Association was designed to differ from the yearly meeting, chiefly in this, that it was to be a body of delegates representing churches, and the yearly meeting had no representative character.[1]

This Association was patterned after the first Associations of the Particular Baptists, established in the middle of the seventeenth centuries in Somerset and Midland Counties of England.[2] Newman, in searching through the available records of the Pennepack Church, says that the original purposes of the Association were "to consult about deficiencies in churches and to set them in order," to protect the churches from unworthy members and ministers, "and to provide for the settlement of grievances between a church member and his church."[3] Actually, the first meetings were for religious exercises only because of a lack of business, but they soon drifted into the consideration of other matters of common interest.

It is generally agreed that it is next to impossible to evaluate the work that this Association accomplished beginning at this early date. Torbet says:

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1. Cathcart, W.H.: Baptist Encyclopedia, p. 916.
2. Torbet: A Social Hist. of the Philadelphia Association, p. 16.
3. Newman, A.H.: A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States, p. 211.

> The nature of Baptist polity has made it difficult to demonstrate conclusively the scope and effectiveness of this Association in many of its interests. The question may be raised as to how germane mere resolutions were even when passed after serious debate, for Baptists have never had a strong central organization which could translate principles into action readily. On the contrary, the complete autonomy of the local church necessarily has made the associational organization but an advisory body and an agency for collective enterprise within its area.[1]

Yet by perusing the Minutes of the Association, attention is drawn to the concrete accomplishments made through dynamic leadership at the local church level and at the associational level.

The Philadelphia Churches were influenced by these events in the eighteenth century that left their impact upon the Baptist History of America. Between the years 1738 and 1740, America was swept with the Great Awakening, occasioned by the preaching of Whitefield. In 1776, the Thirteen Colonies entered into a war to secure political freedom from England. In 1783 peace came and America was released to a large extent from religious tyranny, at which time missionaries went forth in greater number than ever before and laid the groundwork for the great expansion of the denomination during the last fifteen years of the century.

Five congregations sent delegates to the first meeting which was held July 27, 1707, in

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1. Torbet: Op. cit., p. 7

Philadelphia. As the meetings progressed, the powers of the Association were defined, and in 1749 the assembled delegates affirmed "that the Association was not a superior judicature over the churches concerned, and that each church was autonomous".[1] The only power inherant in the organization was the right to exclude defected churches.

To provide itself with a basis for doctrinal agreement, the group adopted in 1742 the London Confession of Particular Baptists of 1689.[2] Thus, the first Association identified itself with Calvinistic theology.

c. Church Extension and Itineration

The Great Awakening was the first test of the Association. The Baptists of Philadelphia, though cool to Whitefield at first, accepted him when they saw the results of his ministry. The large number of converts was a challenge to the Association, for Baptist churches began to grow with little help from Baptist ministers. New churches were organized, many without ministers. In order to guide these new groups in their Christian

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 231
2. Loc. cit.

faith, the established clergy of the Association began an itinerant ministry. Cathcart relates the situation as follows:

> Such a dire need of ministers was felt all over the land that finally the Association appointed a day of fasting and prayer on the part of all churches, for the upraising of more ministers.[1]

Circuit preaching became the mode of the day. It was a general item of business every year at the meeting of the Association to assign churches to the various ministers. In this way the Association also was able to set the pattern for establishing new churches, particularly in reference to the minute organizational problems, such as the election of officers, ordination, and the discipline of members.

d. Ministerial Education.

The demand for ministers led to a concern for preparing young men for the ministry. As early as 1722, reference was made in the minutes toward choosing young men for the ministry. At this early

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1. Cathcart: The Association in Baptist History.

date the following item was proposed:

> That the churches make inquiry among themselves, if they have any young persons hopeful for the ministry, and inclinable for learning; and if they have, to give notice of it to Mr. Abel Morgan before the first of November, that he might recommend such to the Academy on Mr. Hollis, his account.[1]

Mr. Hollis was a wealthy man from England who was willing to encourage the education of prospective Baptist ministers. But the lack of concern on the part of American Baptists allowed the situation to deteriorate to where the larger churches called their pastors from England, and the smaller churches ordained deacons that could preach. With the influx of new churches, however, the leaders of the Association more clearly saw the need for a leadership trained in America. In 1756 it was therefore resolved:

> To raise a sum of money towards the encouragement of a Latin Grammar School for the promotion of learning amongst us, under the care of Brother Isaac Eaton, and the inspection of our brethren Abel Morgan, Isaac Stelle, Abel Griffiths, and Peter Peterson Vanhorn.[2]

Reverend Morgan Edwards was called to take the pastorate of the First Church of Philadelphia

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1. Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, 1722.
2. Ibid., 1756.

in 1760 from a pastorate in England. With this man came a high esteem of the value of an educated ministry, and to him the Baptists owe much for the steps made toward such an end during his life-time. From the Minutes of 1761 comes a recognition of the ideals of Morgan Edwards by the Association:

> Reverend Mr. Morgan Edwards and Isaac Jones, Esq., are appointed librarians to receive in the books that were sometime since sent us by Mr. Thomas Hollis, and lend out the said books to such ministers as stand in need of them.[1]

e. Rhode Island College, 1764.

In 1763 a Mrs. Elizabeth Hobbs died leaving the Philadelphia Association a sum of money, the interest of which was to be used for the education of promising ministerial candidates.[2] About this time, Morgan Edwards proposed that the Association establish a school of higher education. The proposal was favorably received and Mr. James Manning, a graduate of Eaton Academy and of New Jersey College, was appointed to examine a proposed location for the school. Benedict records these words concerning Manning's examination:

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1. Ibid., 1761
2. David Benedict: A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America, Vol. II, p. 453.

> James Manning landed at Newport on his way to Halifax, Nova-Scotia, and made a motion to several gentlemen of the Baptist Denomination, relative to a seminary of polite literature, subject to the government of the Baptists.[1]

Rhode Island was chosen for it was the one state that would be friendly to a school of higher education, largely controlled by the Baptists. The state did issue a charter for the school, and shortly after, the Association sent Edwards to England to obtain funds for its support.[2] In 1764 Manning opened the school in Warren. The next year he was made president. And in 1769 Rhode Island College graduated its first seven men.[3] Charles Thompson, one of these first graduates, had been a recipient of a grant from the interest of the legacy of Mrs. Hobbs.[4]

In 1774 the Association endorsed a plan, inaugurated by the Charleston Association, requesting every Baptist to contribute sixpence annually for three successive years for the support of the college.[5]

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1. Ibid., p. 443.
2. Cathcart: The Association in Baptist History.
3. Isaac Backus: A History of New England, Vol.II,p.348
4. Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, 1767.
5. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 324.

f. Missionary Program

Though definite steps were being taken to obtain a trained leadership in the local churches, the shortage of ministers remained acute. Pulpit supplies were provided by the Association from before 1750, but there were still areas that required ministerial help. The Whitefield revival also drew attention to those areas that were un-evangelized. A request from the Charleston Association in 1753 encourage the Philadelphia organization to send John Gano to the south lands.[1] The Minutes of 1762 record the ordination of David Thomas who was also sent forth to preach in the south, specifically in Virginia. These men, though encouraged by the Association, were in no way supported or responsible to the Association. They were not individual cases though of missionary activity encouraged by the group. From 1755 on, the Association attempted to send delegates to the Charleston churches in South Carolina, and these delegates invariably did evangelistic work along the way.

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1. Townsend, Leach: South Carolina Baptists, p. 23

By 1771 the churches in the Association had grown to such an extent, and extended themselves over such a large region, that "a motion was made in Association, relative to the appointment of an Evangelist."[1] Morgan Edwards was the first commissioned evangelist of the Philadelphia Association, and a collection was taken to defray his expenses.[2] Once this method of sending out men began, it was heartily endorsed by all. "In 1766, a permanent fund started for the purpose of defraying expenses or for providing ministerial aid to those churches who had no regular minister."[3] Chosen men would travel for one year among the outlying churches, filling pulpits, and doing evangelistic work to enlarge the congregations. The Minutes of the next twenty years are filled with items concerning missionary endeavor such as the following:

> David Jones, a missionary, was sent out to the Indians in the west for one winter. The Association made provision for paying some of his expenses.[4]
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> A letter from the Quekuky (Kehukee) Association in North Carolina, thanking us for our care in sending messengers among them; exhibiting the state of their churches, and soliciting the

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1. Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, 1771
2. Loc. cit.
3. Cathcart: The Association in Baptist History.
4. Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, 1772.

continuance of correspondence and missions.[1]

Brother John Gano was sent out as traveling minister, taking place of Morgan Edwards.[2]

A motion was made for raising a fund, the interest of which to be appropriated to the particular and express purpose of preaching the gospel in destitute places, among the back settlements, at the discretion of the Association.[3]

Elders Patten, Clingan, and Vaughan agree to travel for three months in the ensuing year, about Juniata and the West Branch of Susquehanna, to preach the gospel to the destitute.[4]

g. Christian Literature

Another field of endeavor among the churches of the Philadelphia Association was the printing and dissemination of worthwhile literature. Early in their history, the Association established the Circular Letter, written by an appointed minister, and distributed to the member churches to be read to the congregations. These Letters were primarily on doctrine and church conduct, but occasionally one was written to rectify a serious problem within the Association, dealing with any subject. The influence

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1. Ibid., 1773.
2. Loc. cit.
3. Ibid., 1778.
4. Ibid., 1792.

of these letters is not to be minimized, for they were the means of guiding many young congregations away from radical influences, or heretical doctrines. In 1783 James Butterworth was asked to write "An Exhortation to the Religious Education of Children", to combat the worldliness, and spiritual coldness of the young people of that day.[1] This Circular Letter was received with such enthusiasm that it was printed and given wide distribution. One of the points made was on the reading of good books.

The Association encouraged this exhortation by setting up committees to examine worthwhile literature and upon recommendation authorized the printing of such works. In 1771, the Minutes note that a motion was made to print "a book of Mr. Keach on the parables." In 1774, the Customs of the Primitive Churches was published.[2] Catechisms were distributed by the Association for the use of the local churches.[3] When the Bible was to be printed in Philadelphia by "Mr. Aitkins, a printer of this city", the organization whole-heartedly endorsed it, and encouraged members of

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1. Ibid., 1783
2. Ibid., 1774.
3. Ibid., 1779.

the local church to buy it.[1] The Association also enthusiastically endorsed the printing of Morgan Edwards' History of the Baptists in New Jersey.[2] Regarding the printing of a distinctive Baptist hymnal the Minutes have the following to say:

> Our Brothers, Samuel and David Jones, and Burgiss Allison, are appointed a committee to prepare a collection of Psalms and Hymns for the use of the associated churches.[3]

This encouragement of reading among Baptists laid the ground work for much of the emphasis on education for the layman evidence among the Baptists, early in the nineteenth century. It also was the foundation stone for the American Baptist Publication Society formed also early in the next century.

h. Political and Social Action.

From the tone of the Minutes and the writings of Morgan Edwards, the Philadelphia Association allied itself with the revolutionary movement prior to 1776. Morgan Edwards, of all the Baptist ministers, was the only one who remained a Tory throughout the war.[4] Outside of working for complete separation of church

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1. Ibid., 1782.
2. Ibid., 1786.
3. Ibid., 1788.
4. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 244.

and state following the war, the only other political note is in reference to slavery. The Association encouraged the churches to make a stand for the program of "gradual abolition of the Slavery of Africans, and for guarding against their being detained or sent off as slaves, after having obtained their liberty."[1]

i. Formation of Other Associations.

To measure the growth of this Association, is to measure the growth of the Baptists of America. No figure would give a comprehensive picture of the churches formed, the members baptized, or the areas worked. In 1761, the twenty-nine member churches came from the provinces of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.[2] By 1790 the only states involved were Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Other Associations had been formed to organize the fringe churches. Yet Philadelphia, though reduced in size, maintained the position of leadership in the Baptist Denomination, for out of her emanated the pattern of operation not only for extension but for stabilization. It was to this organization that

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1. Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, 1789.
2. Ibid., 1761.

correspondence was established with the English Baptists of London, and it was to this Association that Baptists looked for drawing the denomination into one total whole.

2. The Redstone Association

The Redstone Association was not one of those large organizations that made great contributions to the denomination in terms of encouraging Baptists in many fields of endeavor. Instead, it was a representative frontier Association that was primarily interested in organization for the purpose of fellowship and evangelism. It epitomized the missionary endeavor of the Philadelphia Association and the ministers who felt their labors were not confined to one congregation.

In the years just preceding the Revolutionary War, John Sutton left an itinerant ministry in Northern New Jersey and settled in the southwestern corner of Pennsylvania to begin evangelistic work. Though not supported by the Philadelphia Association, he was commissioned by them to work in this field. His early converts formed the first Baptist Church in western Pennsylvania, and elected

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him to be their pastor. This church was known for many years as the Great Bethel Church. From this first group, several other churches were formed, and in 1776 these churches formed themselves into the Redstone Association.

A large number of converts was not the characteristic note of this Association. This was frontier country which had yet to be tamed. Typical of the fortunes of men who lived and worked in this area, was that of John Corbly, one of the early Baptist ministers. He was born in Ireland was raised a Roman Catholic and then migrated with his wife to Virginia. Anglican persecution forced him to leave the colony and move to Maryland. After his wife died, he moved westward, where he came under the influence of the Gospel and was converted. Moving to Pennsylvania, he joined John Sutton and assisted in forming the Great Bethel Church. He married again and had six children by this wife. He was an ordained minister by now and preaching to the congregations surrounding the mother church. One Sunday, as he and his family began their trip to the Sunday service, he realized that he had forgotten something. The family waited while he rushed back. When he returned, he found seven Indians had attacked his

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wife and the children and had killed and scalped all but one. Such tragedy was not unusual, but for John Corbly it seemed to be the culmination of everything he had on earth. After a month or so of inactivity, he took up his work again with new power and effectiveness and was largely responsible for the establishment of the fifteen churches that composed the Association in 1793.[1]

The Redstone Association drew largely upon the Philadelphia Association for leadership in such fields as education and missions, yet from the standpoint of evangelism this group was directly or indirectly responsible for the evangelization of the frontier country from Pennsylvania to the northern corner of Kentucky. In 1809 this Association was composed of thirty-three churches, twenty ministers, and thirteen hundred and twenty-three members.[2]

D. Associations in the Southern Colonies

The Philadelphia Association was organized almost fifty years before any other Association in the colonies. Within this fifty years and the years

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1. Benedict, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 598.
2. Ibid, p. 599.

following some of the greatest missionary effort ever witnessed by this country was undertaken. Horr says:

> It is impossible to exaggerate the influence of the Philadelphia Association upon the south. What had been done in a previous generation by New England ministers and small groups of Baptists that had emigrated from England or Ireland was slight compared with the flaming evangel of the men from the Philadelphia Association who both preceded and followed up the powerful appeals of George Whitefield.[1]

1. The Charleston Association in South Carolina

   a. The First Baptist Church in Charleston, 1696.

The only Baptist church founded in the southern colonies in the seventeenth century was at Charleston, South Carolina.[2] In 1682 William Screven left Kittery, Maine, with a number of members of his congregation and established a settlement in South Carolina. Screven did not settle there himself but returned to Kittery to minister to the Baptists that remained to face persecution. Finally, the Puritans drove him out and he rejoined the group in the south and established the first Baptist church in Charleston in 1696.[3] South Carolina was a haven for dissenters. From the years 1670 to 1700 the

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1. Horr, op. cit., p. 72.
2. Ibid., p. 67.
3. Leah Townsend: op. cit., 1670-1805, p. 8

ruling governors were dissenters.[1] As leader until 1706 Screven led the church in the direction of the Particular Baptists by having them adopt the London Confession of Faith. Though this pattern was established in its early years, the church suffered in future years because they deviated from it. Two serious splits were directly caused by the controversy of Calvinism and Arminianism, which left the church in a weak ineffective condition. Whitefield arrived in Charleston shortly after the second division, and conducted the greatest revival of his ministry.[2] It is said that this revival saved the Charleston church from complete disintegration, even though its pastor, Reverend Thomas Simmons, was hostile to the evangelist.[3] In 1744 the Calvinists established themselves in a separate building and conducted services of their own. Pastor Simmons was replaced and for five years the two groups existed primarily on the fruit of the Whitefield revival.

b. Reverend Oliver Hart and the Charleston Association, 1751.

The election of Oliver Hart to the

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1. Ibid., p. 4.
2. Ibid., p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 20.

pastorate in 1749 brought peace to the Baptists. A moderate Calvinist, thoroughly evangelistic, well-educated, and a marvelous administrator, he brought the power of God to rest on Charleston, and out of dissention he made the Baptist Church of Charleston a center of influence for the southern colonies. In 1751, he gathered neighboring churches together to form the Charleston Association. Leah Townsend says:

> Having seen the effects of union through the work of the Philadelphia Association Mr. Hart had delegates from Ashley River and Welsh Neck plan a similar organization.[1]

Like its prototype, the primary duties of the organization were to deal with church discipline and sundry items, appoint supplies for vacant pulpits, and warn of imposters and recommend traveling ministers.[2]

c. Difficulties during the Revolution

The Charleston Church remained the dominant church in the Association until 1775 when England billeted a British Army in the city, using the church buildings as storehouses. Those sympathetic to the rebel cause fled from the city. Included among these

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1. Ibid., p. 111.
2. Ibid., p. 114.

were Oliver Hart and most of the Baptist congregation.[1] The Association did not cease operations, however, for there is a record of a resolution passed in 1775 asking the churches to contribute "to the relief of their brethren in Massachusetts, suffering from restrictions on their religious liberties."[2] Between 1780 and 1782 conditions were such that no meetings could be held, and when they did gather in 1783, they were so weak they could supply no vacant pulpits. Hart did not return, and so the Charleston church remained without a regular pastor for a number of years. In 1791 Richard Furman was elected pastor and immediately took an active interest in the Association. His work generally reflects his enthusiastic spirit which was evidenced in his pastorate and in the work of the Association. This period was characterized by active support of ministerial education and zealous advocacy of missions. The story of work in these two fields in the south actually begins with the forming of inter-church work in Charleston.

d. Missionary Activity.

Townsend says:

> The Charleston Association carried on work in
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1. Ibid., p. 24.
2. Minutes of the Charleston Association 1775, quoted in Townsend, op. cit., p. 115

> missions and ministerial education practically from its beginning. In 1755 the churches were asked to contribute to the support of a missionary in the back country of South Carolina and neighboring provinces. Reverend Oliver Hart secured John Gano, who worked chiefly in North Carolina along the Yatkins to such good effect as to begin the union of Separates and Regulars and to cause several of the North Carolina churches to join the Charleston Association.[1]

Though Hart was the enthusiastic advocate of supporting a missionary, he did not hesitate to widen his own ministry by preaching, ordaining and constituting new churches throughout the state and into Georgia. Much of the missionary emphasis waned during and following the Revolutionary War, but the arrival of Richard Furman brought a renewed vision of the areas open for missionary activity. Itinerant preaching was again established after 1785. Missionaries were sent out after 1792. In 1802, the Charleston Association engaged John Rooker to "preach to the Catawba Indians and to found a school among them."[2] Indian work had always been considered outside the realm of the Charleston Association, but the work begun in 1802 allowed member churches to think in terms beyond their own needy home fields.

e. Ministerial Education

Ministerial education was also a concern

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1. Ibid., p. 117.
2. Ibid., p. 118.

of the Association from the earliest days. Oliver Hart allowed a school to be established in his church as early in 1757, which was intended "to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, vulgar and decimal, and the extraction of roots, and also to keep books, draw up instruments of writing, etc."[1] The Minutes of the Association indicate that the year before delegates of the organization "engaged for their churches to raise one hundred and thirty-three pounds currency" for the purpose of ministerial education.[2] The first candidate for assistance was Evan Pugh, who later became a prominent minister in the Association. The Fund grew to the extent that a separate society was incorporated in 1768 to dispense it. The Religious Society, as it was called, also had the task of collecting a library for the use of the ministers. Because of the ravages of the way, the Society passed into the hands of a general committee of the Association in 1783, where the Fund remained dormant until Furman re-emphasized its need. After 1792 one Sunday a year was set aside in each church to preach on the subject and to take a collection for enlarging its usefulness.[3] Besides supporting

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1. Ibid., p. 22.
2. Minutes of the Charleston Association, 1756, quoted in Townsend, op. cit., p. 118.
3. Townsend, op. cit., p. 119.

their own educational program, the Association solicited funds for the Rhode Island College and contributed generously toward its maintenance.[1]

The work of education was not limited to prospective ministers alone. Through the use of the Circular Letter and the encouragement to read recommended books, the congregations became more conscious of the spiritual work of their churches.

f. Growth of the Association

The statistics of the Association do not indicate any phenomenal growth during its first fifty years of existence. Four churches constituted the organization at its founding. The Minutes record only five churches on 1775.[2] But as in the case of the Philadelphia Association, the number of churches is not a representative figure of the work of the group. The influence of the Charleston Association, through the work of her itinerant ministers, was felt from Georgia to Virginia, and no one knows the number of churches that were organized that never entered the formal organization. That evangelism was a

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 324.
2. Minutes of the Charleston Association, 1775, quoted in Townsend, op. cit., p. 115.

primary concern is shown in the Minutes, especially from 1782 to 1795. Townsend says:

> From 1782 through 1795 the Association set aside a day for humiliation, fasting and prayer for revival in the churches. Spiritual deadness was keenly felt.[1]

No doubt this period of concern reflected itself in the growth of the churches during this time. In 1775 there were five hundred and twenty-nine members in the churches of the Association. In 1793, there were twenty more churches and nineteen hundred and fifty-three members.[2] Most of this growth occurred between the years 1786 and 1792, when the membership doubled itself.[3] The attention to evangelism had its part in making this Association rank next to Philadelphia in its influence on denominational growth.

In summary, the work of this Association did much to provide a basis for the great place that Baptists hold in the religious life of the South today. Townsend says:

> Its early attention to missions and education, its sober success over a long series of years, and the steadying effects of unity and orthodoxy, made of the Charleston Association a powerful object lesson for the unstable and diversified Baptist churches of the back country.[4]

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1. Townsend, op. cit., p. 116.
2. Asplund, op. cit., p. 89
3. Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, 1786.
4. Townsend, op. cit., p. 121.

2. The Sandy Creek Association of North Carolina

a. Perquimans, 1727; Kehukee Creek, 1742; Sandy Creek, 1755.

Individual Baptists were in North Carolina as early as 1695, but it was not until 1727 that the first Baptist church was established. Elder Paul Palmer, a native of Maryland, settled in a place called Perquimans on the Chowan river and there gathered a congregation of General Baptists.[1] About the year 1742 Elder William Sojourner together with several others formed a church on Kehukee Creek in the county of Halifax. Elder Shubael Stearns settled the third company of Baptists on Sandy Creek in the county of Gulford approximately thirteen years later. Shubael Stearns, a product of the Whitefield Revival in New England, united himself with the "revival party of the Congregationalists, called New Lights, in 1745.[2] After six years of fellowship with them, he became convinced that the basic Baptist principles were Scripturally sound. He was baptized in 1751 and later that year was ordained a minister by Elder Palmer of Connecticut. He remained in New England three years longer, and then with several of his family migrated to Berkley County, Virginia.

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1. George W. Purefoy: A History of the Sandy Creek Baptist Association, p. 42.
2. Armitage: op. cit., p. 727.

In this county he worked for about a year along side of the Baptist work already established and then moved with his family to Sandy Creek where he established a church with the sixteen members of his company.[1] Two of these sixteen, Daniel Marshall and Joseph Breed, were ordained men. Of this church David Benedict says:

> In process of time, some of the inhabitants became converts and bowed obedience to the Redeemer's sceptre. There uniting their labour with others, a powerful and extensive work commenced, and Sandy Creek Church soon swelled from sixteen to six hundred and six.[2]

b. Shubael Stearns and the Sandy Creek Association, 1758.

Shortly after the Sandy Creek was organized, Daniel Marshall was sent out to preach in the neighboring area and soon formed a church in Abbots-Creek, about thirty miles away. He then proceeded to Southern Virginia, had a revival, and organized another church. Phenomenal success by Marshall helped make possible the formation of an Association by 1758. Elder Shubael Stearns remained the guiding light of the new churches and held sway over their activities by means of his domineering character.[3] His activity in the Association kept him at Sandy Creek, and therefore that church became the "organized

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1. Purefoy, op. cit., p. 45.
2. Benedict, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 39.
3. Cf. Armitage, op. cit., p. 727.

focal-centre" overseeing the work of the organization.[1]

Daniel Marshall was joined by Joseph Breed and others in an intensive evangelistic ministry that carried them over much of the southland. Benedict writes the following account of this effort:

> From this Zion went forth the word, and great was the company of them who published it. This church, in seventeen years, has spread her branches westward as far as the great river Mississippi; southward as far as Georgia; eastward to the sea and the Chesapeak Bay; and northward to the waters of the Potomack: it, in seventeen years, is become mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother to forty-two churches, from which sprange one hundred and twenty-five ministers, many of which are ordained and support the sacred character as well as any set of clergy in America.[2]

c. The Dispersion, 1771:

Political tyranny in the colony in the years preceding the Revolutionary War disrupted the Association to the extent that meetings were almost discontinued because of the dispersion of Baptists to other areas. Morgan Edwards, an eye-witness, says:

> The cause of this dispersion was the abuse of power which too much prevailed in the province and caused the inhabitants at last to rise up in arms, and fight for their privileges; but being routed (May 16, 1771) they dispaired of seeing better times, and therefore quitted the province. It is said that fifteen hundred families departed since the battle of Almance;

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1. Benedict, op. cit., p. 40.
2. Ibid., p. 42.

> and, to my knowledge, great many more are only waiting to dispose of their plantations in order to follow them.[1]

At the time of the dispersion, the Sandy Creek Association had almost three thousand members. No one knows the lowest point they reached, but in 1793, after a revival of interest, they had only ten churches, eight ministers and eight hundred and sixty members.[2] The contribution of this Association was not in the realm of education or in the establishment of churches. Rather, this organization provided the denomination with a large number of converts, and in the field of evangelism accomplished some of the most remarkable work known to the South.

3. The Ketockton Association in Virginia.

a. Ketockton, Mill Creek, Smith's Creek:

Sometime between 1750 and 1755 Elder John Garrard established Baptist work in Berkley County, Virginia. Here Shubael Stearns assisted until his removal to Sandy Creek. Indian trouble caused Garrard to leave in 1755 and re-locate in Loudon County. "His labors in the ministry being blest

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1. Morgan Edwards: Materials Toward a History of the American Baptists, Vol. IV, p. 385.
2. Asplund, op. cit., p. 89.

there", a church was gathered, and when constituted was called the Ketockton Baptist Church.[1] When Berkley County was peaceful again, Garrard returned and formed a church at Mill Creek. An early convert at Ketockton, John Alderson, constituted a third church in Shenandoah County called Smith's Creek Church. These three churches joined the Philadelphia Association for the benefits received from membership in that organization.

b. David Thomas and the Ketockton Association, 1766

In 1762, the Philadelphia Association commissioned David Thomas to preach in the south,[2] and settling in Fauquier County, he soon formed a church. Being of the same persuasion and being established within reasonable distance of each other, these four churches decided to form a separate Association to care for local needs. William Fristoe, a charter member of the Association, has the following to say of its beginning:

> The formation or constitution of Ketockton Association, the four churches, lying remote from Philadelphia, and the inconveniences arrising from an annual attendance, inclined

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1. William Fristoe: A Concise History of the Ketockton Baptist Association, p. 3
2. Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, 1762.

> them to petition to that of Philadelphia for a dismission, in order to form a distinct and separate association in Virginia. Their request was granted, and in August the nineteenth, in the year of our Lord, 1766, these four churches met by letter and messenger, in order to transact business that might be conducive to the interest of religion and glory of God. The number belonging to the four churches at this time was one hundred and forty-two.[1]

The regular meeting of the Association was at the Ketockton meeting house in Loudon County. The men that led these first churches were missionaries, and they remained so in spite of pastoral duties. By 1770 five more churches were added to the Association; three formed by the work of David Thomas and two by Garrard and Alderson. The total membership was now six hundred and twenty-four.[2] By 1785 the Association covered the area from the coast to the Redstone Settlement, back of the Alleghany Mountains, and from Orange County, south of the Rapadan, to Fredericktown, Maryland. Baptist converts were more numerous in Virginia than in any other province, largely due to the work of the itinerant ministers of this Association.[3]

c. Education:

The practice of printinga Circular Letter

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1. Fristoe, op. cit., p. 7
2. Ibid., p. 9
3. Asplund, op. cit., p. 90.

for the enlightenment of church members was established, and every effort was exerted to send capable young men to the College of Rhode Island for ministerial education. In 1788 plans were made to open a Baptist Seminary but were not carried out until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[1] There was general apathy toward education on the part of the layman, however, primarily due to their social attitude and antipathy to the Anglican clergy, under whose intolerance they had suffered.[2] For this reason, Baptist ministers remained on a low educational standard.

This Association broke up into many small Associations before the end of the century, but their period of effective evangelism gave the Baptists a strong place as one of the leading denominations of the State.

4. The Kehukee Association

a. Kehukee Creek, 1742

Around 1742, Elder William Sofourner, "an excellent man and useful minister", came from Virginia with settlers and organized a church on Kehukee Creek in the county of Halifax, North Carolina.[3] Coming under the influence of Elders Paul Palmer and Joseph Parker,who had established churches in the province ten years earlier, the church became Arminian.[4]

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 324.
2. Loc. cit.
3. Purefoy, op. cit., p. 42
4. Edwards, op. cit., p. 372

Encouraged by the preaching of Robert Williams of Pedee, South Carolina, the Baptist work grew to where there were sixteen churches in 1754.

b. John Gano and the Kehukee Association, 1769.

In that year the Philadelphia Association sent John Gano to North Carolina to work as a missionary under the auspices of the Charleston Association and thus he visited the Kehukee churches.[1] A year later, Benjamin Miller and Peter Vanhorn were sent by the Philadelphia Association to visit these churches. These men, with John Gano, were responsible for the Kehukee Churches relinguishing their Arminian doctrines and adopting the London Confession of 1689.[2]

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1. Ibid., p. 373. Edwards describes Gano's visit as follows:
"On his arrival, he sent to the ministers requesting an interview with them which they declined, and appointed a meeting among themselves to consult what to do; Gano hearing of it, went to their meeting, and addressed them in words to this effect: 'I have desired a visit from you, which as a brother and a stranger, I had a right to expect, but as ye have refused, I give up my claim and am come to pay you a visit; with that he ascended into the pulpit and read, for his text, the following words: 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?' This text he managed in such a manner as to make some afraid of him, and others ashamed of their shyness. Many were convinced of errors touching faith and conversion, and submitted to examination."
2. "Minutes of the Kehuky Association" in James Sprunt Historical Monograph No. 5, Intro. by Kemp P. Battle, p. 3

These reformed churches entered into an agreement to form an Association which they did November 6, 1769. Five churches were represented at this initial meeting on the Kehukee Creek, and they represented four counties.[1] The plan of the Association was patterned after the Philadelphia Association, which permitted inter-church action without depriving any church of its autonomy.

c. Work of the Association

There was no slowness in accepting responsibility for at the first meeting one minister, Charles Daniels, was put under censor for his activities,[2] and at the second meeting rules for ordination were established.[3] In 1772, the Association sent a letter to the new governor, Josiah Martin, petitioning for the protection of their religious and civil liberties.[4] It was noted at a following meeting that a favorable reply had been received. By 1773, there were nine churches in the Association, seven ministers and over eleven hundred members. In four years this was an

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1. Ibid., p. 8.
2. Ibid., p. 11
3. Ibid., p. 13
4. Ibid., p. 19

increase of five churches (one went into another Association) and about seven hundred members.[1]

In 1771, an Association fund was established, which went to defray the expenses involved in printing the annual minutes and the circulation of the Circular Letter. Little was done to encourage ministerial education.

d. A Split and Reunion

A split developed in the group just prior to the war over the "strictness of the conversion experience".[2] But in 1786 the two sides reunited and joined in a revival that swept the whole state. In 1790 the Association had sixty-one churches and five thousand and seventeen members.[3]

It is hard to evaluate this organization for in terms of education and evangelism it had many equals. Yet it illustrates in a remarkable way the flexibility of Baptist Associations in not only the way it could easily overcome disunity, but also in the way it could change the emphasis from itself to an emphasis on propagating the Gospel. One further contribution of this Association was the unity it established with the Separate Baptists of the Sandy Creek Association. When

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1. Ibid., p. 22
2. Ibid., p. 32
3. Loc. cit.

it was shown that both groups held similar doctrinal beliefs, and both broups were dedicated to the ministry of the Word, the distinguishing name of "Separate" was eliminated and communication was established between the two groups. Thus in a very real way the growth of the Denomination was encouraged.

E. Associations in New England

Rowe in his History of Religion says:

> In 1707 the Baptists organized a group of churches into the Philadelphia Association, following the example of the English fellow believers. It was nearly fifty years before a similar organization was effected in South Carolina, and sixty years before the experiment was tried in New England, and then only four churches could be induced to join.[1]

It is not surprising that the cradle of the Baptist denomination should be the last area to make use of an instrument for growth and power. They had been too much exposed to a system that tolerated none but members of the established church. These groups were distinguished for the sufferings they bore for their Baptist persuasions. Forming a Baptist Church was "a most heinous and heaven-daring offense" to the Congregationalists, and the perpetrators of such a crime deserved to spend most of their time in courts and prisons.[2] Churches that did survive were jealous

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1. Rowe, op. cit., p. 80
2. Benedict, op. cit., p. 384

of their autonomy and suspicious of any effort put forth to unite them with other congregations. They feared that an Association might encroach upon the independence of their church and come in time to exercise authority after the order of presbyteries. For this reason the first Baptist Association was not formed until 1767.

1. The Warren Association, 1767.

Rhode Island became a Baptist haven before the middle of the seventeenth century because of the banishment of Roger Williams. By heritage, however, Baptists are dissenters, and those who were convinced of the soundness of their beliefs and were not exiled established congregations and formed churches in spite of threats of persecution. Under such conditions the First Baptist Church in Boston was founded as well as the first church in Swansea. Growth was slow as is indicated by the fact that a second church was not formed in Boston until 1747. Nevertheless, their endurance in itself was a message even when they were not allowed to speak. In the years preceding the Revolutionary War, advances were made throughout Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, and Connecticut.

a. Organization

The organization of Rhode Island College

emphasized the need of coordinated action to support the school. Several churches in Connecticut belonged to the Philadelphia Association, and they desired a local organization because of the distance involved in attending meetings in Pennsylvania. Therefore in 1766 the first step was taken to form a fellowship. Backus describes the situation as follows:

> In September, 1766, a number of elders and brethren agreed to send an invitation to their churches, to appoint a meeting the next year, to confer upon these things. And on September 8, 1767, ten churches met by delegation at Warren, with three ministers from the Philadelphia Association, and a letter from thence on the subject.[1]

Six churches were not ready to proceed with an Association (Backus' included), but four went ahead representing the churches of Warren, Haverhill, Bellingham, and the second in Middleborough.[2] The first meeting as an Association was on September 13, 1768, just following the first commencement exercise of the Rhode Island College. From this time the Association was closely allied with this school. Four more churches joined the organization the next year, and by 1771 they had increased to twenty churches and eight hundred and thirty-seven members.[3] In time the Association covered most of the churches in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut.[4]

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1. Isaac Backus: A History of New England, Vol. II,p.408.
2. Loc. Cit.
3. Ibid., p. 409
4. Benedict, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 509.

The Warren organization was patterned after the Philadelphia Association. To insure the autonomy of the local church, the preamble of its charter specifically put limits on the authority of the Association. Speaking of this preamble, Horr says:

> It was stipulated that the union was consistent with the independency and power of particular churches because it pretended to be no other than an advisory council, utterly disclaiming superiority, jurisdiction, and coercive right and infallibility.[1]

More than in any other Association, the spirit of the limitation was observed to its fullest extent. Cooperation, however, was not entirely lacking. The churches had been under persecution for so long, that they used this unifying body as an instrument to gain religious and civil liberties. Delegates were sent to governors, to congress, and to judiciary bodies to appeal for liberty of conscience and freedom of worship. Backus' "Address to the People of New England", rehearsing the pleas for liberty of conscience, was first read before the Association in 1777 and then published and circulated by the individual churches.[2] It was one of the few tracts that received nation wide attention. Backus was the associational delegate to the Massachusetts legislature, pleading for

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1. Horr, op. cit., p. 72.
2. Backus, op. cit., p. 219

abolition of the taxes to support the established clergy the year before writing his tract, and was the chairman of the well-known Committee on Grievances of the Association.[1]

b. Education

The Warren Association contained some of the most educated Baptist ministers in America.[2] One reason for this was the centering of Rhode Island College in New England, and the presence of schools like Harvard College in Massachusetts. The presence of these men was reflected in the interest in education among the Baptists of the Association. Besides the college, lesser schools were found in Wrentham and Swanzey, which were fully supported by the churches.[3] In 1791 the Association established The Baptist Educational Society to dispense associational funds in the interest of ministerial education. Bequests and contributions from the churches quickly made this Society an effective arm of ministry for the Association.

The Second Baptist Church of Boston formed a library for the use of its members in 1749.[4] With this beginning, the gathering of books became a fixed emphasis of the Warren Association. Most of the volumes

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 253.
2. Benedict, op. cit., p. 509.
3. Asplund, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 63.
4. Benedict, op. cit., p. 402

of the Rhode Island College library came from these early collections, and the school was noted for being well-equipped in this department.[1]

c. Evangelism

Evangelism was not a neglected field of interest for this Association, but it did not receive the attention that other groups in the south were giving to it at the same period of time. Missionaries were sent out to the Indians in New York, and itinerant pastors supplied the evangelistic effort for the outlying communities. But the war interfered with any great plans for a greater outreach, and when peace did come, the fringe churches organized new Associations leaving the Warren Association confined to a relatively evangelized area.

From the original Association, eight major groups of churches were dismissed to form Associations of their own by 1790. Nevertheless, the Warren organization remained the most influential Baptist organization in New England; Asplund records forty-one churches in the Association in 1793 and thirty-six hundred and twenty-one members.[2] No one can minimize the contribution the group made toward religious

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1. Asplund, op. cit., p. 63
2. Ibid., p. 89

liberty in the eighteenth century. The greatest contribution to the denomination, however, was the unifying of the Baptist churches in New England. It made a suspicious, hesitant, minority into a militant force that accomplished great ends in education and church organization.

2. The Shaftsbury Association, 1780

a. Organization

Between the years 1766 and 1775 Hezekiah Smith served Massachusetts as an evangelist, spreading the Gospel and establishing churches. His ministry touched particularly the northwestern corner of the province, affecting individuals in neighboring Vermont and New York. Shortly after a church was formed in Shaftsbury, Vermont, which ministered to Baptists in this whole area. Other churches were also established over a period of time so that in 1780 five churches sent delegates to a meeting to organize the Shaftsbury Association. The Constituent churches of this Association were the East and West Churches of Shaftsbury, the Church of Cheshire, the Church of Stillwater, and the Church of White Creek.[1] By 1786 ten churches were added and the total membership was seven hundred and fifteen. These churches came from seventeen counties in the states of New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont,

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1. Stephen Wright: History of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association, p. 17.

with one or two representatives from Canada.[1] The Association had only five ministers in 1786, yet in five years the organization more than doubled itself. The Minutes of the Association indicate that there were eighteen hundred members and nineteen ministers.[2]

b. Evangelism

The secret of the success of this group was the evangelistic zeal of its clergymen. One revival after another swept this area, and it was but a short time before the Association saw the vision of a mission program employing the efforts of these evangelists. In 1789 two men, Stephen Gano and Louis Powers, were commissioned as "traveling ministers" to go to Virginia for missionary effort.[3] Gano and Powers settled north of the Ohio River, now the state of Ohio, and established the first Protestant work in this area.[4] Upper New York State was also evangelized by missionaries from this Association. No record has been made of the extent of this missionary labor, but it was sufficient to be recognized by the Philadelphia Association in the last decade of the century.

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1. Ibid., p. 15
2. Ibid., p. 29
3. Ibid., p. 23
4. Horr: op. cit., p. 73

c. Other Activities

The funds of the Association were spent primarily in supporting itinerant ministers and assisting the building of churches for poorer congregations.[1] There seems to be no indication of a stress on education or the support of Baptist schools, in the Minutes, but this is not strange for the ministers of the Association were largely uneducated.

In 1789 the practice of writing an annual Circular Letter was begun.[2] This Letter was a means of assisting the young churches to grow and to settle questions concerning church polity as well as theology. The Association showed interest in recommending good books for the reading of its members, for in 1791 a committee was chosen to study selected works for distribution. The primary concern of this committee was to examine a new edition of the Bible that was to be printed in Philadelphia,[3] but after the publication of this new edition the committee continued functioning.

The growth of this Association is similar to that of Sandy Creek in North Carolina twenty years before. In twenty years this group gained forty-one churches and had a total membership of four thousand, one hundred and

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1. Wright, op. cit., p. 72
2. Ibid., p. 23
3. Ibid., p. 29

twenty-seven members.[1] This means that the Association doubled its size about every five years from its formation. This, in itself, is a major contribution to the denomination as a whole, for it meant that Baptist churches were spread throughout Vermont, western Massachusetts, and upper New York. Yet, the outreach of the Association went beyond associational lines through the missionaries it commissioned and sent out. The Miami Association of Ohio is one group of many that grew out of the work of the Shaftsbury Association.

F. Summary

The eight Associations dealt with in this Chapter are only representative of the many that were formed in the eighteenth century. John Asplund registered forty Associations representing one thousand, twenty-four churches in 1793.[2] The history of these organizations is the story of the development and extension of a people. Their work was characterized by a sense of mission, and a desire for expression. Of their labors Backus says:

> By these means, mutual acquaintance and communion has been begotten and promoted; the weak and oppressed have been relieved; errors in doctrine and practice have been exposed and warnings

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1. Ibid., p. 37
2. Asplund, op. cit., p. 87

> against them have been published; destitute flocks have been occasionally supplied; many have been animated and encouraged in preaching the gospel through the land, and in our new plantations in the wilderness.[1]

He doesn't include everything that these Associations accomplished or attempted to do, but without a doubt though writing in the formative years of the Associations, he has a clear view of their meaning in the eighteenth century.

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1. Backus, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 413

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. Summary

B. Conclusion

Chapter IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. Summary

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the Baptist Associations of the eighteenth century were the keystone upon which the Denomination in the United States grew. To establish such a premise specific questions had to be answered, such as "how does Baptist polity permit the establishment of an Association of churches?" and "what elements in the development of Baptist churches led to a sense of need for inter-church activity?"

The first chapter discussed the principles upon which Baptist polity was founded. These basic principles are the foundation stones of the denomination and are the assurance that the local church will retain its complete autonomy with authority vested only in its own officers. Though local autonomy is assured, there is also a sense of responsibility to fellowship with churches of like belief and practice. This is incorporated in an associational principle which does not deprive the local church of authority, but creates a means of greater outreach that actually strengthens

the position of the individual congregation. The delicate balance between local autonomy and corporate action is unique, and is the primary reason for the effectiveness of the denomination.

The Associations were built upon historical precedents that reached back to the first decades of the seventeenth century. Chapter two begins with the contributions of the early dissenters and the techniques they used to attain their desired goals. Both principles of autonomy and coordination were used, not to attain the same end as the Baptists, but to meet the needs of their day. English Baptists used the instruments of the Dissenters and through them established the basis for a great spiritual movement. Yet they too centered their interests in the local situation and were ineffective in a greater outreach.

The colonial period also provided incentives for dissention. The Puritans of New England clearly indicated their desire for religious liberty, but liberty only for themselves. Baptists suffered and learned a lesson they never forgot concerning tolerance. The Quakers of Pennsylvania provided an haven and emphasized that same lesson of tolerance. From the Methodists a pattern for advance was procured, which made possible the extension of the denomination in

areas where they could worship freely.

The first Baptist church in America was constituted by a group of settlers, led by Roger Williams, at Providence, Rhode Island. Several years later, John Clarke organized a congregation at Newport. These two churches were spontaneous movements which were evidenced by the lack of a coordinating pattern. The clergy were primarily untrained laymen. A system of theology was unheard of, although most of the leaders were well-versed in the Scriptures. Because of its persecution though, the church had an ideal which was freedom to worship according to conscience.

Chapter three dealt specifically with a select group of Associations and their contributions to the denomination as a whole. The Philadelphia Association grew out of the Yearly Meeting of the Pennepack church of southern New Jersey. It was the first organization of its kind in America and set the pattern for all succeeding Associations. This organization of Baptists was responsible for the beginning of a non-sectarian college; it provided ministerial leadership for new congregations; it established a basis for evangelism and missions; and it actively concerned itself with the spiritual growth of its laymen through the publication of the Circular Letter

and the recommending of outstanding religious literature.

The Redstone Association was typical of the frontier organization whose primary concern was in the area of evangelism and the establishment of churches.

The Charleston Association of South Carolina was a counter-part of the Philadelphia Association in the southern colonies. Its contributions also reached into the realms of evangelism, ministerial education, church extension, and missions.

The Sandy Creek, the Ketockton, and the Kehukee Associations established in North Carolina and Virginia provided the bulk of the membership of the denomination by means of their enthusiastic evangelistic efforts. Their primary characteristic by the eighteenth century was phenomenal growth and the establishment of many churches.

The New England Associations faced problems different from those faced in the rest of the colonies. Because of persecution, the Warren Association, which was the first in New England, was not formed until sixty years after the Philadelphia Association. Their primary emphasis during the eighteenth century centered in their militant efforts for legislative action on the principle of freedom of religion, and their concern for ministerial education. The Shaftsbury Association provided a

balance by stressing evangelism and missions in New England. Their results in terms of converts and churches established parallels the results of the Associations of North Carolina and Virginia.

B. Conclusion

1. Evangelism and Missions

The distinguishing line between missionary activity and evangelism in the eighteenth century cannot be determined from the records in existence. The words were used inter-changeably to indicate the work of anyone who was sent out primarily to preach to the unsaved. Evangelism was first done by local ministers who took leave of their churches for periods of time and preached in the unevangelized areas. Rowe says:

> When the demands became greater than could be met by temporary absences of settled ministers, Associations assumed the responsibility and sent out evangelists for periods of three months or longer.[1]

John Gano, Morgan Edwards, David Thomas, and Peter Vanhorn are only a few of the famous names that assumed this responsibility for periods of time. They traveled throughout the colonies, from the Canadian border to Georgia and from the ocean to the

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1. Rowe: op. cit., p. 62

Mississippi river, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and establishing congregations so that the work might spread still further. Torbet says, "The very existence of the denomination was dependent upon the maintenance of the missionary spirit"[1] and Edwin Small, speaking of the Baptist churches in Maine says:

> ...The growth of our denomination in this state was the result of an intense missionary spirit, and an untiring missionary activity.[2]

Few figures are given indicating the exact growth of the denomination in the eighteenth century, but it is known that before the Revolutionary War, there were approximately ten thousand Baptists. By the close of the century there were over one hundred thousand Baptists.[3]

2. The Formation of Churches

It was the custom of an itinerant minister, or evangelist, to constitute a church as soon as he had gained enough converts. Often the minister would remain for a period of time as the pastor, but as soon as the church was well established, he left for another field. In this way the effectiveness of a ministry was not measured so much by the number of converts, but by the

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1. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 264
2. Edwin Small: A Centennial Review of the Bowdoinham Association, p. 31.
3. Torbet: History of the Baptists, p. 264

number of churches organized. Because a ministry was difficult to obtain in newly evangelized fields, the Association became the agency of instruction and the source of supply for an occasional visit from an ordained minister.

The evangelists of the Philadelphia Association extended their labors so far that the Association was not able to fulfill its obligations to these new churches. The result was the formation of local Associations to meet the needs of the smaller area. To gain strength, the Association encouraged the formation of new churches. This encouragement lifted the total of fifteen churches in 1700 to one thousand twenty-four in 1793.[1]

As an example of the slowness of growth in areas outside the realm of an Association, New England gained only eleven churches in a period of forty years. However, from 1768, the year the Warren Association was formed, to 1790, New England gained two hundred and seventeen churches.[2] This is not an unusual case for in every area where an Association was not formed after the establishment of several churches, the same situation prevailed.

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1. Asplund, op. cit., p. 90
2. Horr, op. cit., p. 72

3. Christian Education

Of education among the Baptists in the eighteenth century, Torbet says:

> Traditionally Baptists have not been ardent advocates of higher education. This may be explained by the fact that their emphasis has been upon simplicity of worship and the leading of the Spirit in preaching...Any education beyond the elementary level has been motivated by a desire to train youth for the ministry. For this reason the Baptists were participants in the academy movement that began in the Colonies in the eighteenth century. It was an effort to establish secondary schools to prepare young men for a theological seminary training.[1]

Elementary schools were established as early as 1700, but the first school endorsed by an Association was the Latin Grammar School established by Isaac Eaton in 1756. The Philadelphia Association established the Rhode Island College in 1763, which proved to be the source of inspiration for several Baptist schools and seminaries established after the turn of the century. The unique feature of Rhode Island College was that it made provision in its charter for a non-sectarian school. A controlling number of the board of directors were Baptists, but it also contained representatives from at least three other denominations. Students were not limited in regard to their faith, and the school attempted to prepare men for

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1. Torbet: A Social History of the Philadelphia Association, p. 65

various realms of life besides the ministry. This was a contribution, not only to the denomination, but to the nation as well.

A successful attempt was made by the Philadelphia Association to influence the minds of Baptists by means of good literature. The Circular Letter was an instrument established by this Association, but employed by almost every other like organization in the Thirteen Colonies. Other materials were printed under the sponsorship of the Philadelphia Association that was felt to be necessary for the growth of church members. Among these materials was a catechism used by many ministers. Occasionally a book was recommended for reading and upon rare occasions the Association would distribute works that were considered necessary reading. In the last decade of the century, a hymnal was published that was distinctively Baptist.

Unfortunately, many Baptists could not benefit by this dissemination of literature because they were illiterate. It was well into the next century that Baptists laid any emphasis upon the necessity of educating these people.

It was the Associations that provided the basis for the extraordinary growth of the Baptist Denomination in the eighteenth century. In terms of

making these people a unified witness to the power of God, much work had yet to be done. But in this century the core was built and it remained for a future generation to re-employ the instrumentality of the Associations to bring together the corners of Baptist work spread throughout the nation.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Minutes of the

Elkhorn Baptist Association, Kentucky, 1789

The Baptist Association held at Boones Creek the 30th day of October 1789.

Sermon at 2 oclock by Bro John Tanner. "My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." (Isai. 46:10)

Proceeded to read letters from the churches. A Letter was read from the Salem association and their delegates William Taylor, Joshua Carman, Josiah Dodge, and Thomas Polk were received accordingly. A Letter was read from the Ketockton association which gave a very favorable account of the progress of religion in that quarter. Also a letter was read from the Separate Baptist association South of Kentucky which was ordered to lie on the table.

Bro. James Garrard chose moderator and Bro. Richd Young Clerk.

The association adjourned till tomorrow 9 oclock Saturday Octo 31st, 1789.

The association met according to adjournment after divine worship proceeded to business.

The Committee appointed to revise the rules of the association presented a number of articles which were read approved of and ordered to be recorded.

A plan for receiving accusations against a Sister Church which stands referred, dismissed. Query referred respecting washing of feet.

Resolved that it is the opinion of the association that it is a Christian duty to be practiced at discretion.

Query which stands deferred respecting laying of hands on new baptized persons withdrawn.

Query whether the office of Elder distinct from that of a minister be a gospel institution or not referred to the next Association.

The Letter from the separate association South of Kentucky taken up and debated and a committee appointed to write an answer; Brethren Sutton, Tanner, Lewis, Craig and Price were appointed accordingly.

Resolved that Brethren Dudley, Cave and Stoe be appointed a committee to write to the Ketockton Association.

Resolved that brethren Geo Smith, Edwd Payne and Richd Young be appointed a committee to write to the Salem Association.

The association adjourned till Monday 9 oclock.

Signed Jas Garrard Mdr Richd Young c

Monday Nov 2, 1789

The Association met according to adjournment. A Letter produced by the Committee appointed to write to the Separate Baptist Association South of Kentucky was read and approved of.

A Letter produced by the committee appointed to write to the Salem association was read and approved of.

A Letter produced by the committee appointed to write to the Ketockton association was read and approved of.

Resolved that brethren Gano, Dudley Tanner, Edwd Payne, and Lewis be appointed a committee to write to the Philadelphia association.

A Circular letter prepared by the committee appointed for that purpose was read and referred to a Committee to be appointed to revise and report to the next association and that brethren Gano, Garrard, Tanner, Dudley and L Craig were appointed accordingly.

Query from Marble creek. Whether a woman slave that left a husband in the old Country and marry again here

to a man that has a wife twenty miles from him who also refuses to keep said man as a husband ought her marrying in such circumstance to be a bar to her membership? Ans Debarred from Membership...

A request from Limestone to have an annual association which was agreed to and that also there be a yearly meeting for preaching and communion.

Resolved that the next association be held at Townfork the fourth friday in August next and that a yearly meeting be held at Marble Creek Beginning the first friday in June and to continue Saturday and Sunday.

Agreed that we adopt a circular letter from the Philadelphia association on the subject of Faith.

Resolved that bro Gano preach the Introductory sermon at the next association in case of failure bro. Jno Price.

The association adjourned till the next association.

Richd Young Ck Signed James Garrard Mor.

Footnote
Recorded in Sweet; Religion on the American Frontier, The Baptists, pp. 433-437.