

The Baptist History Series

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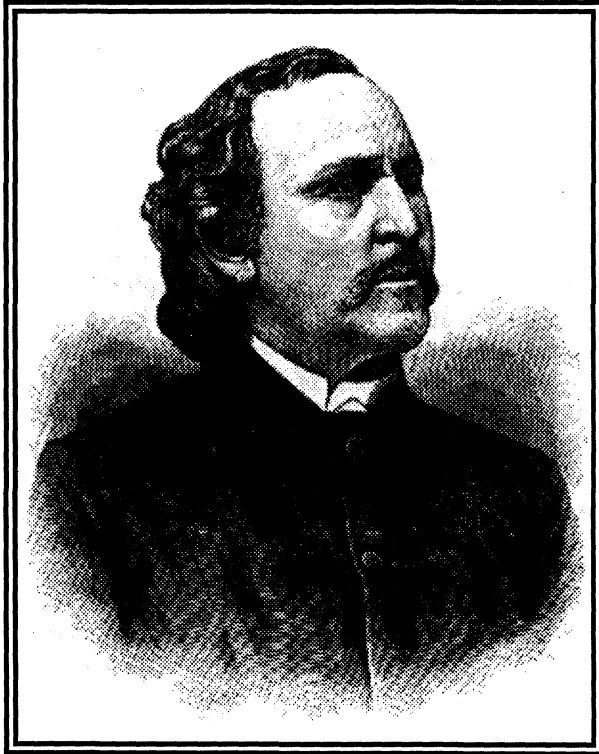
Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association

A. D. Gillette

MINUTES

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION



A. D. GILLETTE
1807-1882

MINUTES

OF THE

PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

FROM

A. D. 1707, TO A. D. 1807;

BEING THE FIRST

ONE HUNDRED YEARS

OF ITS EXISTENCE.

EDITED BY A. D. GILLETTE, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE ELEVENTH BAPTIST CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

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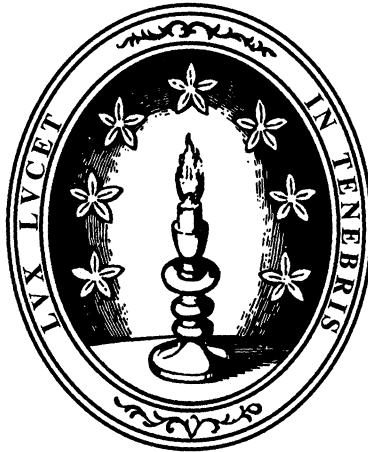
Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth.

-- *Psalm 60:4*

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THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM

lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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NOTICE.

At its 136th Anniversary, in 1843, the Philadelphia Baptist Association appointed a Committee to collect its early Minutes for publication. Efforts were immediately commenced, and have been sedulously followed up, till now, it is believed, we have all that can be procured.

At the meeting of the Association, in 1846, A. D. Gillette, Chairman of the Committee reported, "That through the kindness of Mrs. Harris, daughter of Samuel Jones, D. D.; Thomas Shields, since deceased, and others, we have obtained Minutes of various Sessions entire, as early as 1729. Deficiencies can be generally supplied of antecedent Sessions from the origin of the body, 1707, from a book kept with great care, by order of the Association. In 1777, there are no Minutes, the Association not having met that year, on account of the occupancy of Philadelphia by the British army.

"The Association ordered that the Minutes for the first Century, with Dr. S. Jones' Centennial Sermon, be published, believing that they contain matters of great value to the churches. The Circular Letters, especially, are a fund of rich theology."

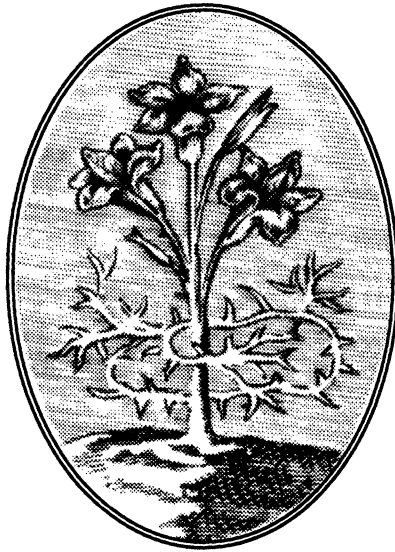
At a meeting of the Committee, H. G. Jones, D. D., was requested to prepare a preface, and A. D. Gillette was appointed Editor, with instructions to preserve, as far as possible, the ancient style of composition, as found in the original Minutes.

HORATIO G. JONES,	} Committee.
HOWARD MALCOM,	
A. D. GILLETTE,	
WILSON JEWELL,	
JOSEPH TAYLOR,	
WM. SHADRACH,	

Philadelphia, May, 1851.

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Sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias

On The Cover: We use the symbol of the “lily among the thorns” from Song of Solomon 2:2 to represent the Baptist History Series. The Latin, *Sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias*, translates, “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

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P r e f a c e .

THE Philadelphia Association originated with churches planted by members from Wales. Attracted by the freedom of religious opinion established by Penn, they purchased and settled large tracts of land as early as 1683. Hence the Welsh names so common in Eastern Pennsylvania, such as Trediffrun, Uchland, Radnor, Merion, &c. Many of the descendants of these most excellent people remain in these parts to this day.

The first Baptist church in Pennsylvania, permanently planted, is believed to be that at Pennepek, a few miles north of the city. One had existed feebly at Coldspring, in Bucks County, for a short period, of which the father of the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Rush is supposed to have been a member. His remains, with a headstone, lie in the burial ground of this church, long since disused. The Welsh tract church, now in Delaware, was next founded. Soon after, churches arose at Middletown, Piscataqua and Cohan-sie, in New Jersey, and then followed the constitution of the Philadelphia Association, embracing the churches given in the following record:—

This Association has maintained, from its origin, a prominent and important standing in the denomination. It

has been favored with the services of many distinguished ministers—men of eminent piety, solid judgment and finished education. Among these are found the names of Morgan Edwards, Abel Morgan, John Gano, Samuel Jones, David Jones, Keach, Griffith, Rogers, Ustic, Holcombe, Staughton, Brantly, and others, who have gloriously fought the good fight.

In every period of its existence the Association has firmly maintained the soundest form of Scripture doctrine; nor could any church have been admitted, at any period, which denied or concealed any of the doctrines of grace. The New Testament has always been its only rule of faith and practice, as with all Baptists. To let the world know how we understand the teachings of the Holy Ghost in these inspired books, the Association published, in 1742, its Confession of faith and discipline. This is in substance the same as that of the ancient Baptists in Poland and Bohemia; and of the Mennonites in Holland, and the early English and Welsh churches. This confession was published by ministers and brethren, representing about forty churches, met in London, in 1689. It was printed for the Philadelphia Association by Benjamin Franklin, and numerous editions have since been issued. Throughout the United States it is generally considered as the standard of orthodoxy among Baptists. It differs but slightly from the Westminster confession of faith published by “the Assembly of Divines.”

By the formation of new churches, this Association extended over Virginia and New York, embracing a distance of about 400 miles, and including, on the North, the

church at Amenia, Dutchess Co., N. Y., and Horseneck in Greenwich, Connecticut, on the East; and on the South, Ketcokton in Virginia. The multiplication of churches caused the formation of the Ketcokton, Baltimore, Salisbury and Delaware Associations, on the South; the Shaftesbury, Warren, Warwick, and New York Associations, on the North; the New Jersey, on the East; and Redstone and Monongahela, on the West. These have since been frequently divided, as the churches became too numerous to meet in one place.

The Philadelphia Association, from the first, has engaged earnestly in efforts for the proper education of its ministers and the spread of the gospel in the world. Rhode Island College, now Brown University, received its patronage and contributions from its origin, as the subsequent minutes show. It will be seen also that, from the first, it has been an effective missionary body. Hundreds of churches have been gathered by the able and self-denying men, sent out at its expense to regions where no religious privileges had before been enjoyed. The Aborigines were not overlooked in this labor of love. Among other efforts, the Rev. David Jones, before the American Revolution, made a missionary excursion, at his own expense, to the Indians of what was then the "Far West."

This was among the first, if not the very first, ecclesiastical body in America, it is believed, which took a stand on the subject of temperance. The following is copied from the Minutes of 1788:—"This Association, taking into consideration the ruinous effects of the great abuse of distilled liquors throughout this country, take this opportunity of

expressing our hearty concurrence with our brethren of several other religious denominations, in discountenancing them in future, and earnestly entreat our brethren and friends to use all their influence, to that end, both in their own families and neighbourhood, except when used as a medicine.”

This was the first Baptist Association formed in the United States. From its earliest history it has been forward in the work of Domestic Missions. The pastors were requested, and the churches urged, to be liberal in aiding them to visit destitute churches and settlements. Morgan Edwards, in 1771, and John Gano, afterwards, were appointed “EVANGELISTS,” and sent into remote regions, especially South, to preach the gospel, and counsel the feeble churches, and instruct the scattered disciples of Christ. The design of founding Rhode Island College originated in this body. P. P. Vanhorn, Stephen Ustic, and Charles Thompson, were students in this institution; as were also William Rogers and Burges Allison, Doctors of Divinity.

As early as 1722, “it was proposed for the churches to 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.”

“1776. Concluded to raise a sum of money among our churches for the encouragement of a Latin grammar school, Mr. Isaac Eaton to be master thereof.”

“1764. Agreed to inform the churches to which we respectively belong, that, inasmuch as a charter is obtained in Rhode Island government, toward erecting a Baptist college, the churches should be liberal in contributing towards carrying the same into execution.”

“1776. Agreed to recommend warmly to our churches the interests of the college, for which a subscription is opened all over the Continent: this college hath been set on foot upwards of a year, and has now in it three promising youths, under the tuition of President Manning.”

The publication of useful books, for general circulation, was suggested, in 1749, by the following:—

“Concluded, that every church belonging to this Association should consider that our principles are attacked anew, and monstrosly represented; therefore, in order to our vindicating and justifying the same, money may be gathered in every congregation, in readiness against the next Association; and we hope timely notice shall be given both of the number of the books to be printed, and what the charge shall be to print them.”

The reader of these minutes will see that the Divine blessing has rested on this band of disciples. At its commencement there were but about five hundred souls enrolled on its register. Now the denomination embraces nearly a million of communicants. At first, five churches constituted the body: now there are sixty-four, though a host of churches have been dismissed to form other Associations, and our geographical limits are scarcely more than the hundredth part of the first boundary.

With the growth of the body, evangelical efforts have correspondingly increased, till the world has become its field, and large sums are annually raised to send out missionaries, translate and distribute the Holy Scriptures, educate ministers, multiply books and tracts, and extend all other divinely appointed means of grace.

H. G. JONES.

“A HISTORY of the Baptists should be understood in its objects and aims; and cleared, in the beginning, of misapprehension and perversion. It is not the history of a nationality, a race, an organization, but of people, *traced by their vital principles and gospel practices*. The unity to be exhibited and demonstrated was not brought about by force, by coercion of pains and penalties, by repressive and punitive Acts of Conformity; but by the recognition and adoption of a common authoritative and completely divine standard... the WORD OF GOD.”

Dr. J. L. M. Curry (1825-1903)

President of Howard College,

Professor of English & Philosophy at Richmond College,

Trustee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and

United States Ambassador to Spain

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