

1877 Circular Delaware River

Written by
Elder Philander Hartwell

[“The following preamble and resolution, adopted in 1866, and continued from year to year, was again adopted:

Whereas certain ministers, who have heretofore enjoyed our confidence and fellowship, have been extending tokens of recognition to disorderly factions, who are not recognized by us as orderly Old School Baptists, therefore.

Resolved. That henceforth no one be invited to a seat with us in this association, except corresponding messengers from associations or churches of our faith and order, and such others as may be upon invitation and vote of the association.”

Associations seated this session were: Baltimore, Delaware, Delaware River, Warwick, Chemung, Conference Western NY, Corresponding, Va., Lexington, NY, Maine Conference, Maine Association, Licking Particular, Salisbury, Oconee, Ga., Euharlee, Ga., Yellow River, Ga., Ocmulgee, Ga., Kehukee, NC, Contentna, NC., and Western Correspondence, Mo.

Ministers present this session were: Elders **Giblert Beebe**, A. St. John, I. Hewitt, William L. Benedict, NY., **William J. Purington**, **Silas Durand**, Pa., **Philander Hartwell**, Wilson Housel, A. B. Francis, N.J., **Ephraim Rittenhouse**, Del., T. M. Paulson, **William M. Smoot**, J. N. Badger, Va., **F.A. Chick**, Md., William Quint, Maine, J.S. Woodard, N.C., and William Pollard, **Ontario, Canada**.

Item 13 gives the following interesting historical note: “THE HISTORY OF OUR OWN COUNTY FALSIFIED.

A new work entitled, “Historical Atlas of Mercer County,” in giving a sketch of the Baptist churches, leaves the old church of Hopewell, constituted over 162 years ago (1715) , with its faithful record and ministry, down to the present time, with its pastor and 211 members, **entirely unnoticed for the last 35 years**, and then closes the historical sketch with the false statement that the “First and Second Hopewell Churches were organized into one church some years ago, but have since separated, and culminated in the organization of the “Calvary Baptist Church of Hopewell.” The First and Second Hopewell Churches were **never organized into one church**, and consequently have **never separated**; and we will here state the remarkable circumstance, that **not one person that was ever a member of the First or Second Hopewell Churches is now, nor ever has been, a member of the so-called “Calvary Baptist Church;**” a fact so significant that there is no excuse whatever for the false statement. But it forms for them a link in the claim of the minutes of the “Central Baptist Association of New Jersey,” long desired and sought after by those that oppose the Truth, and have been laboring since 1830 to promulgate their false doctrines and systems, from the pulpits built by our fathers for the publication of the doctrine and precepts of the Gospel of the Son of God, and by His mercy and power are continued unto us to this day.”

CIRCULAR LETTER

The Elders and Messengers composing the Delaware River Old School Baptist Association, in session with the Southampton Church, Bucks County, Pa., May 30th,

31st, and June 1st, 1877, to the several churches whose messengers we are.

Beloved Brethren:- “Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,” who hath abundantly blessed and reserved us through the vicissitudes of another year, the “Centennial Year” of our Independence as a nation. And while we have seen by contrast in bringing together the different parts of our own country and the nations of the earth, the great advancement we have made in mechanism, art and science, the rapid strides we have made to greatness and power, we have also seen, with great fear and awful forebodings, the wickedness of the depraved human heart and our weakness as a nation, when justice, truth and virtue give place to the corrupt passions of ambitious men, whose hearts are fully set to do evil, and whose only god is mammon and unrighteousness. How applicable the language of the prophet Isaiah in the fifty-ninth chapter: “*And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for Truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter.*” And while we have been passing through seasons of great anxiety, mourning the deplorable state of our country, **a more solemn scene arrests our attention. The religious world in vast assemblage joined, send up a united cry to their god, imploring a blessing to convert the world of the ungodly; with prayers and songs they have gathered tens and thousands to their fold, professedly turned them from evil to good. But hath righteousness and peace taken place of evil? No; the world is full of wickedness, murder, wrath, strife, envy, and all manner of evil. Are not many of them thus gathered, manifesting the character written of them? “*Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when ye have made him, he is two fold more the child of hell than yourselves.*”** (Bold characters by SCP.)

Beloved brethren, the church of the living God, whom we trust we are addressing, is in the world, and surrounded by its temptations and evils; but we have the prayer of our Savior, that we shall be kept from the evil thereof. And it is also written that vengeance shall overtake the wicked; the wrath and indignation of an angry God shall destroy them. The exhortation of the apostle to the church at Colosse, 3:1, is worthy of our attention at this time: “*If ye then be risen **with** Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*” The children of God in their lives, as fallen, degenerate sons of Adam, dead in trespasses and sins, walking in their own strength, and trusting in works that they call “righteous,” which they can do at will and pleasure, to cancel the debt of sin charged against them, pass on in carnal security until God sends an arrow from His quiver, piercing their hearts, and bringing them to a knowledge of themselves, and of God, the sovereign Ruler of the universe; which knowledge enables them to see themselves sinners, condemned, and the wrath of God abiding upon them, and the weight of their guilt sinking them down in everlasting destruction. But as the dark shadows of despair close around them, the light of the Son of Righteousness beams forth, and Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death, appears the atoning sacrifice; they behold the Lamb of God slain for them, and the law that held them firmly bound fulfilled, and arising from under its curse the redeemed soul

with full confidence looks away to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, and prayerfully inquires, "*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*" And when they receive the command, "*Follow thou Me,*" how pleasant to "*seek those things that are above,*" in the company of the saints, and to follow with them in the footsteps of Jesus, and to realize the battle over, the victory won, and to sit down under the banner of Immanuel, His love encircling every fold as it waves over their heads, shielding them from all harm. How delightful to peruse the pages of divine Truth, to dwell upon the love and perfections of God, and to slake their thirst at the fountain, the steams whereof make glad the city of our God, and to feast their longing appetites upon the rich fruits of the Lord's table, ripened and sweetened in the sunshine of the Savior's love, receiving strength thereby to journey on to a more perfect walk in the heavenly way. Then the Savior's yoke is easy, and His burden light and it is their meat and drink to do the will of God.

Beloved brethren, we profess to be risen with Christ; as we have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, are we so walking in Him? Are we rooted in Him, built up and established in the faith, as we have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving? Or are we being spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ? For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and we are complete in Him which is the Head of all principality and power. Are we seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God? Or are our affections set on things on the earth? Do we remember that we are dead, and that ***our life is hid with Christ in God,*** and that when Christ who is our life shall appear, that we shall also appear with Him in glory? Are we mortifying our members that are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry? Do we remember that for these things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, in the which we sometimes walked when we lived in them? But now we are expected to put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications out of our mouth, and to lie not one to another, seeing that we have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after Him that created him; and to put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; and above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Let the peace of God rule in our hearts, let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Dearly beloved, it becomes us in this day of darkness and strife to examine ourselves. Are we abounding in love, or is our love growing cold, and our minds dark and selfish? Are our visits to our pastor as frequent as they should be? Do we speak words of comfort and encouragement to him, and contribute of that fullness that the Lord has bestowed upon us for his support, and those incumbent upon him? Do we hold up his hands by filling our places in the appointments of the church? Do we prefer

Jerusalem above our chief joys, and are we living in and contending for the faith and order of God's house, as delivered to the saints? Do we cut off right hands and pluck out right eyes when they become an offense? Do we speak often one to another of the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, exhorting one another to love and obedience? Are we often with them at the throne of grace, asking for such blessings as the Lord hath in store for His people, remembering that He has said for all these things He would be sought unto? Do we sing with them of the wonders of redeeming love, making melody in our hearts unto God? And is the church with us attractive, and beautiful as a city set upon a hill, that quickened souls should desire it for habitation, and beholding our order, shall be constrained to say, "*Beautiful is Mount Zion for situation, the joy of the whole earth; I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*"? Brethren, if these things be in us and abound, they make us that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

God hath in all ages permitted His servants by faith to look beyond the narrow bounds of earth through the mists of the dark, deep river of death, to see Jesus exalted a Prince and a Savior at God's right hand. It is recorded, "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.*" Hence our Savior, when He had finished the work of redemption, ascended to His Father, the right hand of God, the seat of power, honor and glory, beholding the travail of His soul with full satisfaction, and continues the Advocate and Intercessor of His people.

We will close this letter with the exhortation of the apostle to the Ephesians brethren, recorded in 6:10: "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*"

Philander Hartwell, *Moderator.*

A. B. Francis, *Clerk.*