American Presbyterian Church History

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Lesson 1: Francis Makemie, "The Father of American Presbyterianism."

Before we dive into American Presbyterian history, we must note some preliminaries.

I. Establishment and Dissenter Churches

In the time of Colonial America, the Church of England was the Established Church of England and all its colonies. Thus the Church of England was recognized by law as the official church of the nation and was given legal privileges and supported by taxes.

Many Christians, however, for various reasons were not members of the established Church of England but joined "dissenting" groups including the Puritans, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, and Presbyterians. Dissenters were also called nonconformists.

The Presbyterians, for one, dissented from the Church of England's practice of a hierarchical structure, arguing instead for a church government of elders (presbyters).

Dissenters were disestablishmentarian, believing that no church should have official state support and status. (Those later – in the 19th century — who opposed the disestablishment of the Church were called antidisestablishmentarians.)

The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed the dissenters freedom of worship in the British Empire.

II. The Scots-Irish

Many of the early American Presbyterians were Scots-Irish. During the early years of the seventeen century the barren lands of Ulster had been settled by English, and, even more, by Scots. By the middle of the century about 100,000 Lowland Scots had settled in the north of Ireland, five times the number of English settlers.

III. The First Presbytery

Once Scots-Irish Presbyterian "dissenter" was the Francis Makemie (1658-1708) is widely consider the founder of American Presbyterianism.

Born in Ireland, studied in Scotland, he was ordained to ministry in 1681. He came to America in 1683

and establish the Rehoboth Presbyterian Church in Maryland which still exists to this day. He then preached at Snow Hill, MD (a name that would be used for the “Snow Hill Presbytery”) where there is now a Makemie Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Makemie heeded the call of Colonel William Stevens who had sent a letter from Maryland to Ireland asking for a godly minister. Although himself an Anglican, Stevens requested a Presbyterian clergy to come to Maryland, since most settlers in the vicinity were of that persuasion. Just a few miles away, under the laws of Virginia non-conformists, or Presbyterians, were taxed to pay to the established church, and as a result Somerset County, Maryland, had filled up with people of the Presbyterian faith and when Makemie came the time was ripe for the harvest. It is true that Makemie was a master workman, but it is also true that he was here in God's good time to do the work.

Makemie married the daughter of a wealthy colonist and himself grew to have considerable wealth, engaging in trade with the Island of Barbados among other places. He mostly preached in Maryland, but traveled extensively.

Both established and dissenter churches and pastors were in America before Francis Makemie. Indeed, there were even Presbyterian churches and pastors in America before Francis Makemie. However, only by Makemie’s efforts do we find individual churches beginning to meet together in a presbytery.

The first meeting of a presbytery in America was in 1706 when Makemie and 6 other ministers and missionaries met in Philadelphia to consult regarding the best way to advance the Gospel. (Notable at this period is that it was only ministers and not ruling elders at the presbytery.) The seven men were Francis Makemie, John Hampton, George MacNish, Samuel Davies, John Wilson, Jedediah Andres, and Nathaniel Taylor. Most American Presbyterian denominations today can trace their lineage to this meeting.

IV. Arrest and Trial in New York

Following the December meeting of the presbytery, Makemie preached at Woodbridge New Jersey as he and John Hampton made their way to visit Boston. Now having expanded into New Jersey, they were attempting to draw into the presbytery other congregations in the Middle Colonies. They stopped in New York City, where Makemie claimed, they ‘had not the least intention or design of Preaching … but stoptd … purely to pay our respects to the Governour.’ In reality, they had been induced to come by several of Governor Cornbury’s sworn enemies. As soon as they arrived Makemie and Hampton were invited to dine with the Governor. The nature of their conversation is unknown, but immediately after, when permission was asked for Makemie to preach in the Dutch Reformed and French Reformed churches, Cornbury refused.

Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, was the grandson of the Earl of Clarendon and first cousin to Queen Anne, the reigning monarch. As Governor of both New York and New Jersey, he had been assiduous in attempting to foster Anglicanism, to the extent of rejected Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed ministers already settled in parishes, insisting on their replacement by episcopally-ordained clerks. All this he had done on the false premise that the Church of England was the established faith in New York. … Cornbury it was widely reported by different witnesses that he regularly appeared in public dressed in women's clothes.

Having thus been denied access to the pulpits of the Dutch and French churches, Makemie proceeded on Sunday, 19 January 1707, to conduct a service in the home of William Jackson, a native of Scotland who was New York shoemaker, 'in as publick a manner as possible', in deed with the doors open to the street. There were about ten in attendance at the service, during which Makemie baptised an infant. … Makemie and Hampton were later arrested by the sheriff on Cornbury's orders charging them with preaching without a license.

The Warrant he made for arrest read as follows:

> Whereas I am informed that one Mackennan, and one Hampton, two Presbyterian Preachers, who lately came to this City, have taken upon them to Preach in a Private House, without having obtained My Licence for so doing, which is directly contrary to the known Laws of England; and being likewise informed, that they are gone into Long-Island, with Intent there to spread their Pernicious Doctrine and Principles, to the great disturbance of the Church by Law Established, and of the Government of this Province. You are therefore Required and Commanded, to take into your Custody the Bodies of the said Mackennan and Hampton, and them to bring with all convenient speed before me, and Fort-Anne in New-York. And for so doing, this shall be your sufficient Warrant: Given under my Hand, at Fort-Anne this 21st Day of January, 1706, 7. Cornbury

Makemie produced his license from Virginia, based on his early one from Barbados, and Hampton his from Maryland. Hampton then asked Cornbury for a license but was refused. They two men were turned over to the custody of the High Sheriff of New York City, Ebenezer Wilson, and taken to his home, 'as the place of their confinement.' Here they were held until 11 March, a total of forty-six days. They were released but Makemie had to come back for trial. Cornbury may have hoped that Makemie wouldn't come back but would have been "frightened off." Makemie returned and with three lawyers arguing that the 1689 Act of Toleration would completely protect him. The presiding judge found him not guilty. Cornbury's unwise actions played a major part in London's recalling him the following year and replacing him as Governor. This is has been called "A significant milestone in the history of religious toleration in the American Colonies"

The conversation between Lord Cornbury and Francis Makemie is in one book said to be as follows:

Lord Cornbury: How dare you take upon you to Preach in my Government, without my Licence?

Mr Makemie: We have Liberty from an Act of Parliament, made the First Year of the Reign of King William and Queen Mary, which gave us Liberty, with which Law we have complied.

Ld.C. None shall Preach in my Government without my Licence!

F. M. If the Law for Liberty, my Lord, had directed us to any particular persons in Authority for Licence, we would readily have observed the same, but we cannot find any direction in said Act of Parliament, therefore could not take notice thereof.

Ld. C. That Law does not extend to the American Plantations, but only to England.

F. M. My Lord, I humbly conceive, it is not a limited or local Act, and am well assured, it extends to other plantations of the Queen's Dominions, which is evident from Certificates from Courts of Record of Virginia, and Maryland, certifying we have complied with said Law.

Both Certificates were produced and read by Lord Cornbury, who was pleased to say, these Certificates extended not to New-York.

…

F. M We are neither ashamed nor afraid of what we have done; and we have complied, and are ready still to comply with the Act of Parliament, which we hope will protect us at last. And it will be unaccountable to England, to hear, that Jews, who openly blaspheme the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and disown the whole Christian Religion; Quakers who disown the Fundamental Doctrines of the Church of England, and both Sacraments; Lutherans, and all others are tolerated in Your Lordships Government: and only we, who have complied, and are still ready to comply with the Act of Toleration, and are nearest to, and likest the Church of England of any Dissenters, should be hindered, and that only in the Government of New-York, and Jersies. This will appear strange indeed.

Lesson 2: George McNish, "The Father of New York Presbyterianism"

I. Makemie and McNish

If Francis Makemie is the "Father of American Presbyterian" then perhaps George McNish (1660-1722) is the "Father of New York Presbyterianism." So he was called by Willam B. Sprague in the *Annals of the American Pulpit.*

When Francis Makemie went back to the British Isles in search of additional Presbyterian ministers willing to travel to America, one of those he found was George McNish. (the other being John Hampton). The year was 1705.

McNish, like Makamie, went to Maryland where he took a call at Wicimico Presbyterian Church in Salisbury, Maryland. But in 1711, he became the pastor of the Jamaica Presbyterian Church. Long Island, New York. McNish would pastor the church there until his death on March 10, 1722.

II. The First Presbyterian Churches in New York

Though McNish was "the Father of New York Presbyterianism" he was not the first Presbyterian minister there, nor his church the first Presbyterian church in the state.

The earliest "presbyterian" churches in New York were on Long Island and were founded by Puritans, even if later become "Presbyterian."

Southampton	1640
Southold	1640
Hempstead	1643
East Hampton	1648
Newtown	1652
Setauket	1660
Jamaica	1662
Huntington	1665
New York City	1716

The First Presbyterian Church of Jamaica [Queens], where McNish was called, had been organized in 1662. It is is said to be he oldest continuously serving Presbyterian church in the United States. (19 years older than Makamie's Rehoboth Church in Maryland). Notable, Donald Trump attended the Jamaica church in his childhood and was confirmed there in 1959 before the Trump family moved to attending at Marble, on Fifth Avenue, to hear Norman Vincent Peale.

III. The First General Synod

By 1716 there were 17 Presbyterian ministers in the presbytery, and that same year a General Synod was created as the first Presbytery (of Philadelphia) was split into four. (Long Island, New Castle, Philadelphia, and Snow Hill)

Long Island – New York
New Castle – Delaware?
Philadelphia – Pennsylvania
Snow Hill – Maryland

Sprague wrote, “In 1717, the Presbytery of Long Island was formed, chiefly through Mr. McNish's instrumentality; and, as this was the first Presbytery formed in the Province of New York, he may fairly be considered as the father of Presbyterianism in that State.”

Presbytery of Long Island 1717 records: Jamaica, Newtown, Setauket, and Southampton.

IV. Jamaica vs. Cornbury

It is notable that the Jamaica church – like Makamie and Hampton – had their struggles against Governor Lord Cornbury.

When the church and its adjoining minister's house were completed they were given over to the Presbyterian minister by a vote of a town meeting, although there was some understanding that other Protestant denominations were to be permitted to use the church for their services when occasion required. When Lord Cornbury became Governor in 1702 he ordered the English law of uniformity in religion to be enforced throughout the province and ordained that all meeting-houses and parsonages erected out of public moneys, by tax or otherwise, should belong to the Episcopal body, which he declared to be the established church.

Before McNish there was at Jamaica another Presbyterian minister, John Hubbard. He was settled there in 1702. The people there were largely presbyterians and, by taxation of themselves, raised funds to build a church. The Episcopal population was very much confined, at first, to the city of New-York; and the first Episcopal church in the province was erected in that city in 1696.

There is not the least evidence that there was a single member of the Church of England residing in Jamaica at the time the church was built, and this property (a manse and a glebe) was set apart for the support of a minister.

The summer following (the arrival of Lord Cornbury, in 1702,) was remarkable for the uncommon mortality which prevailed in the city of New-York, and makes a grand epoch among our inhabitants distinguished by the ' time of the great sickness.' On this occasion Lord Cornbury had his residence and court at Jamaica, a pleasant village on Long Island, distant about twelve miles from the city. A few Episcopalians crept into the town, and viewed the Presbyterian church with a jealous eye. The town vote, in virtue of which the building had been erected, contained no clause to prevent its being hereafter engrossed by any other sect. The Episcopal party, who knew this, formed a design of seizing the edifice for themselves, which they shortly after carried into execution, by entering the church between the morning and evening service, while the Presbyterian minister and his congregation were in perfect security, unsuspicious of the zeal of their adversaries, and a fraudulent ejectment on a day consecrated to sacred rest.

Great outrage ensued among the people. The original proprietors of the house tore up their seats, and afterwards got the key, and the possession of the church, which were shortly after again taken from them by force and violence. In these controversies the governor abetted the Episcopal zealots, and harassed the others by numberless prosecutions, heavy fines, and long imprisonments, through fear of which many who had been active in the dispute fled out of the province.

When Cornbury retired to Jamaica, Mr. Hubbard, the Presbyterian minister, lived in the best house of the town. His lordship begged the loan of it for the use of his own family, and the clergyman put himself to no small inconvenience to favor the governor's request ; but in return for the generous benefaction, his lordship perfidiously delivered the parsonage-house into the hands of the Episcopal party and encouraged one Cardwell, the sheriff, a mean fellow, who afterward put an end to his own life, to seize upon the glebe, which he surveyed into lots, and farmed for the benefit of the Episcopal party. These tyrannical measures justly inflamed the indignation of the injured sufferers, and that again the more embittered his lordship against them.

During the whole of Mr. McNish's ministry, there was a violent controversy carried on in reference to the place of worship in Jamaica, which, though originally built for the Presbyterian Church, was appropriated, by Lord Cornbury, to the use of the Church of England. McNish was the minister of the congregation, some ten or eleven years, it is supposed that he never preached in the house of worship belonging to it, after his installation, as it was not restored till some time after his death.

The Episcopalians held the possession of it for nineteen or twenty years after, till it was recovered from them, with the parsonage house,

V. A Letter of George McNish

Letter “To The Right Reverend Mr John Stirling principal of the college of Glasgow”

Synod Pensvilvanie Nov. 15 1718

Jamaica on Long Island Nov: 15: 1718

Rt Rd & hond Sr

I am by order of our Synod appointed to write yow a letter of thanks, for the many singular favours your exemplary piety has mov'd yow to do for the interest of God & godliness in these American parts : I am to tell yow S^, our Synod are extreme sensible of the great hand yow have had both in projecting & bringing to beare several excellent things for encouraging the ministry here, beare with the expression, your commendation & praise is truly among the ministers of Christ in our bounds, reflect, Sr, what pleasure it must be to us to see that we are in the thoughts & pious affections of a man of your station & character in the church of God & that at so great a distance yow have heart and goodness as well as ability to be aiding to a few mean instruments seeking to recover poo, lost sheep in this vast wilderness.

It's many times a wonder to my thoughts, how many great & pious men in Brittain can beare with themselves, in living in so narrow a capacity as they do, do they not miss it in expounding or applying the 2d petition of our Lords prayer, men to whom the Lord has given riches learning piety great interest yet want largeness of heart to communicate to the spreading the doctrine of Christianity among men, humanly speaking, I see not what considerable progress Christianity will obtain in these plantations of America, 'till the antient settlements in Brittain & Ireland shall put on a true generous christian spirit & lay themselves out to seek the good of the disperst of these nations in America. May the desireable time come when the Lord shall claim America for his own & blessed be they who have a hand in ministring to so great a work.

I shall conclude with my hearty desires to the Lord of all goodness for favours of his right hand on yow & all yours, in-treating withall, you'll go on to strengthen our interest, & devise liberally for spreading the doctrin of salvation among us. I am
Much honoured
Your very humble ser
Geo: McNish

Discussion Questions

1. Were Makemie and McNish important figures in history? A case could be made for the negative, but a case for the affirmative also could be made.

2. What do you think of raising taxes to build a church?

3. What was the state of the church at the time, asking for help from the Old World?

Lesson 3: Origins of American Presbyterians

"It is admitted, that the early history of the Presbyterian church in the United States, is involved in great obscurity. The reason of this fact is obvious. Presbyterians did not at first emigrate in large bodies, or occupy by themselves extensive districts of country. In New England the early settlers were Congregationalists. The history of that portion of our country is, therefore, in a great measure, the history of that denomination. The same remark, to a certain extent, is applicable to the Dutch in New York, the Quakers in Pennsylvania, the Catholics in Maryland. The case was very different with regard to the presbyterians. They came, as a general rule, as individuals, or in small companies, and settled in the midst of people of other denominations. It was, therefore, in most instances, only gradually that they become sufficiently numerous in any one place form congregations, or to associate in a presbyterial capacity." - Charles Hodge, Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church, 1839, p. 21.

I. Some in Favor of Presbyterianism in Other Denominations

"… the great majority of Puritans in England were presbyterian, so no inconsiderable proportion of those who came to American, preferred the presbyterian form of church government." - Hodge, p. 31.

"...the master-minds among the early Puritans in this country, by whom their civil and ecclesiastical polity was determined, were principally congregationalists." - Hodge, p. 31.

"of the two thousand presbyterian ministers cast out of the Church of England, by the act of uniformity in 1662, a considerable number, it is said found a refuge in New England." - Hodge, p. 33.

In 1708 the inhabitants of New York city were "Dutch Calvinists, upon the plan of the church of Holland, French refugees on the Geneva model, a few English episcopalians, and a still smaller number of English and Irish presbyterians."

II. Sources of American Presbyterianism

The main source of American Presbyterianism was the Scot-Irish and Scottish Presbyterians.

Other sources included:

1) The Puritans, who established many of the churches on Long Island, especially the central and eastern sections.
2) The Dutch, who had established Dutch Reformed Churches in America from an early date. A few churches that were once Dutch Reformed became Presbyterian. One example is theOld Clove Church was originally Dutch Reformed, and became a Presbyterian Church after Van Bunschoten's death.

3) French Huguenots, who fled persecution in France especially after the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

III. What was the Church-going rate in the Colonies?

"There was general agreement (among historians of American religion) that in the colonial period no more than 10-20 percent of the population actually belonged to a church. Finke and Stark estimate the national religious adherence rate to be 17 percent in 1776 with 3,228 congregations and an estimated 242,100 members." See: Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, The Churching of American, 1776-2005 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

However, other researchers argued for mistakes in the work of Finke and Stark. In an important 1982 *William and Mary Quarterly* article they (Bonomi and Eisenstadt) used a definition of "churched" that includes "member, adherent, parishioner, and auditor," and calculated that in late eighteenth-century America, "56 to 80 percent of the [white] population were churched, with the southern colonies occupying the lower end of the scale and the northern colonies the upper end."

Then, the Library of Congress says "Between 1700 and 1740, an estimated 75 to 80 percent of the population attended churches, which were being built at a headlong pace."

Questions

1. If the church going rate was small in Colonial America, what might have the factors been? (Ruralness, people came to America focused on profit?) Small number of actual members.

2. If the church going rate was large in Colonial America, what might have the factors been? Immigrated for purposes of religion. Large number of attenders without membership.

Also, we must consider that there was quite a bit of change in the colonies between 1700 and 1776. The church-going rate maybe increased(?) over that period as churches were built. Hard to go to church if there is no building! Thought, meeting in houses was certainly an option, there would likely have been a lack of ministers in the early years as well.

Lesson 4: Adopting Act of 1729

I. The need for a Confession.

While the American presbyterian church had first met in a presbytery in 1706 and a synod in 1717, they did not have an official confession of faith until 1729.

Naturally, these Presbyterians had affinity for the Westminster Confession of Faith. There had been a number of Reformed confessions through the centuries (Scots Confession of 1560, Belgic Confession of 1561, Irish Articles of Religion of 1615, etc.) but Westminster Confession was (and still is) the most prominent.

If there was any debate at all, however, it was not among the various confessions, but whether a confession should be needed at all. Can't we just use the Bible? That is the frequent statement of those who oppose confessions. And, they might argue, confessions are "adding to the Bible."

Advocates of Confessionalism, however, argue that this is not the case. Rather than "adding to the Bible," confessions (like creeds) are Subordinate standards; they are of a lower rank, under the authority or control of Bible. Standards do not intend to produce any new truths, but to explain what the church believes the Bible teaches. And while the Bible cannot be revised, confessions can be (and at times past have been) revised.

The need for a confessional standard was because "errors of various kinds, Arminianism, Socinianism [Unitarianism], and Deism, had begun to prevail even in reformed churches." - Hodge, p. 157.

"The chief apprehension was directed, not towards New England but towards Ireland. The synod had already rejected one ministerial applicant from that country, upon suspicion of unsoundness in the faith and doubtful character. A few years later, they rejected another. And again, in a few years, they case out a third, who had gained admittance upon deceptive testimonials of orthodoxy." - Hodge, p. 159.

II. The Conscience

A confession must not infringe on the "liberty of conscience." It must not introduce anything that is not from the Scriptures. I made this contention also in "High, Low, and In Between" a paper I wrote on confessionalism.

WCF 20:2 God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or

worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

Act Preliminary to the Adopting Act.

"Although the synod do not claim or pretend to any authority of imposing our faith upon other men's consciences, but do profess our just dissatisfaction with and abhorrence of such impositions, and do utterly disclaim all legislative power and authority of such impositions, and do utterly disclaim all legislative power and authority in the Church, being willing to receive one another, as Christ has received us to the glory of God, and admit to fellowship in sacred ordinances all such as we have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven; yet we are undoubtedly obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so hand down to our posterity.

And do therefore agree, that all the Ministers of this Synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this Synod, shall declare their agreement in and approbation of the Confession of Faith with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine; and do also adopt the said Confession and Catechisms as the confession of our faith.

And we do also agree, that all the Presbyteries within our bounds shall always take care not to admit any candidate of the ministry into the exercise of the sacred function, but what declares his agreement in opinion with all the essential and necessary articles of said Confession, either by subscribing the said Confession of Faith and Catechisms, or by a verbal declaration of their assent thereto, as such Minister or candidate for the Ministry shall think best. And in case any Minister of this Synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said Confession or Catechisms, he shall at the time of his making said declaration declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod, who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds and to ministerial communion if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship or government. But if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge such Ministers or candidates erroneous in essential and necessary articles of faith, the Synod or Presbytery shall declare them uncapable of Communion with them.

And the Synod do solemnly agree, that none of us will traduce or use any opprobrious terms of those that differ from us in these extra-essential and not necessary points of doctrine, but treat them with the same friendship, kindness and brotherly love, as if they had not differed from us in such Sentiments."--*Minutes*, 1729, p. 94.

III. The Adopting Act.

“The most prominent event during this period of our history [1729-1741] is the passing of the adopting act, by which assent to the Westminster Confession of Faith was required of all members of the synod, and of all candidates for admission to the presbyteries.” - Charles Hodge, p. 150.

Notably, this requirement is for “member of the synod” which is all minister and elders; it is not a requirement for members of a Presbyterian church to adopt or subscribe to the Confession.

In 1724, New Castle Presbytery began requiring its ministerial candidates to affirm the statement, "I do own the Westminster Confession as the Confession of my faith."

“What led to the adoption of this measure [in 1724] is not recorded; and there does not appear to have been any previous order of the presbytery that such subscription should be demanded. From this time, however, it seems to have been the common practice of the presbytery.” - Hodge, p. 151.

A synod-wide requirement to subscribe to the Westminster Standards was first proposed in 1727 by John Thomson of New Castle Presbytery and was supported by Presbyterians with Scotch-Irish and Scottish backgrounds.

“It is obvious that the same reasons which induced the presbytery of Newcastle to adopt this measure themselves, would lead them to wish for the concurrence of the whole church, of which they were a part.” No one will be surprised, therefore, to learn that the overture which led to the adopting act had its origin in this presbytery. - Hodge, p 151.

Charles Hodge’s “Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church” makes a strong case for strict confessionalism; that the church always said and meant that all minsters and elders in their association must agree to the confession. He refutes the “loose subscription” idea that only certain essentials (whatever those might be) from the confession are necessary. However, he noted that the 1729 Synod allowed for “scruples” and did not requirement agreement with two parts of the confession that dealt with political matters related to the church and state. These are called the “excluded chapters.”

IV. Scruples

“And in case any minister of this synod or any candidate for ministry shall have any scruple with respect to any article or articles of said Confession or Catechisms, he shall, at that time of his making the said declaration, declare his sentiments to the presbytery or synod; who shall, notwithstanding admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the synod or presbytery shall judge his scruples or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government. But if the synod or presbytery shall judge such a minister or

candidate erroneous in essential or necessary articles of faith, the synod or presbytery shall declare them uncapable of communion with them." - 1729 Synod.

Definition from Merriam-Webster: scruple (noun) is an ethical consideration or principle that inhibits action; a mental reservation. Scruple (verb) is to show reluctance on grounds of conscience.

V. Excluded Chapters

"All the Ministers of this Synod now present, except one,* that declared himself not prepared, viz., Masters Jedediah Andrews, Thomas Craighead, John Thomson, James Anderson, John Pierson, Samuel Gelston, Joseph Houston, Gilbert Tennent, Adam Boyd, Jonathan Dickinson, John Bradner, Alexander Hutchinson, Thomas Evans, Hugh Stevenson, William Tennent, Hugh Conn, George Gillespie, and John Willson, after proposing all the scruples that any of them had to make against any articles and expressions in the Confession of Faith and Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, have unanimously agreed in the solution of those scruples, and in declaring the said Confession and Catechisms to be the confession of their faith, excepting only some clauses in the twentieth and twenty-third chapters, concerning which clauses the Synod do unanimously declare, that they do not received those articles in any such sense as to suppose the civil magistrate hath a controlling power over Synods with respect to the exercise of their ministerial authority; or power to persecute any for their religion, or in any sense contrary to the Protestant succession to the throne of Great Britain." - 1729 Synod

Chap. 20, sec. 4, of certain offenders it is said] "they may be proceeded against by the censures of the Church, and by the power of the civil magistrate."

Only later in church history (1788), is this section actual modified to remove "and by the power of the civil magistrate."

Chap. 23, sec. 3. "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church; that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. for the better effecting whereof he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God."

This section was entirely rewritten at a later date (1788) by the American Presbyterian church.

"It is to be remember that the synod did not reject the clauses specified in chapters twentieth and

twenty-third, absolutely, but ‘in any such sense’ as taught the subjection of the church to the power of the state; ‘a sense, which for my part,’ says the Rev. Samuel Blair, ‘I believe the reverend composers never intended in them.” - Hodge, p. 192.

So it is not so much that they don’t accept those sections but that they don’t accept a certain interpretation of them.

This is an important quote, because it shows that one could subscribe to the original confession and equally subscribe to the American version without contradicting oneself.

VI. Ambiguity of the act clarified.

The Adopting Act is often seen as a compromise position between those who wanted Strict Subscription and those who wanted ministers to only subscribe to the “essential and necessary doctrines of Christianity.” But the compromise created a document that wasn’t clear.

“Ashbel Green, wholeheartedly in favor of strict subscription, was not happy with the Adopting Act because as he put it: ‘We consider the foregoing Adopting Act as one of the most curious compositions that we ever read. It seems to us to give and take, say and re-say, find and loose, from the beginning to the end.” - Hall, The Practice of Confessional Subscription, p. 100.

“What then is the meaning of this act? Did the synod intend by the words ‘essential and necessary article’ articles essential to Christianity? Or articles, in their estimation, essential to the system of doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession? If the former, they intended that every man, otherwise qualified, who held the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, might be admitted to the ministry in our church. If the latter, they intended that no man who was not a Calvinist, should be thus admitted. Apart from the language of the act itself, there are three sources of proof as to what was the intention of its authors; the history of the act; the subsequent declaration of synod as to their own meaning; and the testimony of contemporary writers.” - Hodge, p. 176-177

Various explanations of the adopting act had to be made in the years after its adoption. Especially notable is the 1736 Synod where the ministers confirmed that they subscribe to the Confession just as fully as the men of 1729 had done. This helps seal the case for the reality of most, if not all, of the ministers being advocates of Strict Subscription.

Lessons 5: The Trial of Samuel Hemphill

Since we last talked about Confessional Subscription and its possible role in keeping error out of the church, I thought it would be valuable to look at a test case. An early heresy trial in American Presbyterian was the case of Samuel Hemphill. And this is a notable trial also for the connection of Benjamin Franklin.

Arrival of Samuel Hemphill

Rev. Samuel Hemphill came to American from Ireland in 1734 to assist Jedidiah Andrews, the only regular Presbyterian minister in the city of Philadelphia.

Approval By Synod (not presbytery?)

Hemphill presented his credentials to the Synod, arriving from the presbytery of Straban in Ireland. He brought with him “ample and satisfactory certificates,” and on September 23 “declared for and adopted the Westminster Confession.” He then was installed as Andrew’s assistant.

Previous Trouble

As nearly as we can tell, Hemphill had had some kind of trouble in Ireland before he was called to America, and after he got into difficulty in Philadelphia, the old issues from Ireland were resurrected and used against him. The fact that the Presbyterians accepted him and then later referred to his difficulties in Europe, Franklin found particularly irritating. It seems that Hemphill and a Reverend Mr. Vance preached sermons on the same text to the same congregation on different Sundays in Burt, Ireland. Vance apparently did not hear Hemphill's sermon, but taking information passed him from the congregation, he declared Hemphill to be preaching heterodoxy and used his influence to bring Hemphill before the Synod. Whatever the cause of the trial-and Franklin had no doubt that it was jealousy and bad faith on Vance's part, the latter continuing to stir up feelings against Hemphill even after he had promised to do what he could to restore Hemphill's reputation-Hemphill, at any rate, seems to have been cleared. And thus it was that he arrived in Philadelphia, but not without some of the traces of the Ireland affair coming with him. Vance wrote to his brother-in-law in Philadelphia, a Mr. Kilpatrick, that "there is a preacher, Hemphill by name, gone over to Pennsylvania, who is a vile heretic, a preacher of morality rather than dogma.

The Ire of Andrews

Franklin thought Hemphill gave ‘‘excellent Discourses’’ and attended his sermons frequently. He preached little about the tenets of Presbyterianism but much about**‘‘**the Practice of Virtue, or what in the religious Stile are called Good Works.’’Andrews and many of the strict orthodox Presbyterians in the congregation disapproved.

Evidently Andrews viewed Hemphill with growing distaste, as the latter preached Sunday after Sunday to the Presbyterian congregation. Andrews said that "free-thinkers, Deists, nothings, getting a scent of him, flocked to him."" Franklin, on the other hand, says that he was "universally applauded."'5 For two sermons preached at New London in the presbytery of New Castle, he was investigated by the regular clergy. "To the grief of some of the members," Hemphill was cleared. Since the records of the presbytery of New Castle for the years from I733 to I758 have been lost for over a century,'6 it is impossible to determine just what happened and why, although in the light of later events one might make a good guess.

Accusations of Heresy

By the spring of I735, Andrews had had enough of Hemphill and articled against him. This meant a trial by the Synod or by a commission appointed by the Synod. Andrews is accused of going from house to house before the trial calling Hemphill a "Deist and Socinian"'and desiring the congregation not to attend him. Socinianism was a religious belief, propagated largely in Europe by Faustus Socinus (1539-I604) in the Racovian Catechism, which attempted to combine the philosophy of natural goodness and rationality of man with respect for and belief in the Scriptures. This led to new exegetical interpretations such as would show the reasonableness of the Bible.

Trial

So there was a trial in April of 1735. Hemphill had promised to deliver up his sermons to the Commission, but then refused to do on two accounts: no man is required to present evidence which is to be used against him, and his judges were definitely prejudiced unfavorably towards him. Possibly, since it later came out that he was cribbing his sermons, Hemp- hill feared the discovery of his plagiarism which in time contributed to his undoing.

Andrews' written accusation given to the Synod had 8 points including:

"his [Hemphill's] saying in that Sermon that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is only a Means to promote a good and pious Life, and afterwards denying any Communion in it, is what I don't agree to."

"In his Sermon on Acts 24:25 there were many Things that I was displeased with. He appeared to me and others as declaiming with great Earnestness against the Doctrine of Christ's Merits and Satisfaction, as a Doctrine that represented God as stern and inexorable, and fit only for Tyrants to impose and Slaves to obey."

"In his Sermon on Acts 10:34, 35, he appeared to me and others as designing to open the Door of the Church wide enough to admit all honest Heathens, as such, into it, upon a supposition that Cornelius was a Heathen when Peter was sent to him."

Verdict
The Commission Synod (without Andrews who had excused himself) brought six changes against Hemphill including that he built upon the laws of nature rather than emphasizing Scripture, that he denied the need for a New Birth for conversion, and that he perverted the Doctrine of Justification.

They concluded in the verdict:
That Mr. Hemphill be suspended from all the parts of his ministerial Office until the next meeting of our Synod, and that it be referred to the Synod to judge, when met, whether the Suspension shall be continued or taken off, or whatever else shall be judged needful to be done, according as things shall then appear: And accordingly we do suspend the said Mr. Samuel Hemphill as above.

Synod then deposed Hemphill. He was unanimously censured and suspended from his ministerial office for doctrines “Unsound and Dangerous, contrary to the sacred Scriptures and our excellent Confession and Catechisms.”

Aftermath
About a month after the trial, the Commission-probably alarmed because of the furor which the affair seems to have stirred up-published the Extract of the Minutes to prevent misinterpretation of the grounds for censure.

Franklin’s Publishing on the Hemphill case.
Benjamin Franklin was twenty-nine years old at the time of the Hemphill trial, but was already well established in Philadelphia with a successful printing business.

Franklin's Observations appeared, attacking the methods of the trial and defending Hemphill, it would seem, not so much on the grounds that he was orthodox as that he was right and reasonable.

Franklin wrote in his Autobiography that he preferred the sermons of Hemphill—although they were discovered after the trial to be not his own—to those of other clergy, and for that reason Franklin did what he could, around the time of the trial and after, to raise a party in Hemphill’s defense.

After the trial Franklin published, “Observations on The Proceedings Against Mr. Hemphill,” (17 July 1735) which he wrote in order to “clear his [Hemphill’s] Character from the false Aspersions which have been cast upon it, and to convince the World how unjustly some Men will act, when they have their own private Ends in View.”

The sermons of Andrews, to Franklin, were "dull, uninteresting, and unedifying, since not a single

moral principle was inculcated or enforced, their aim seeming to be rather to make us Presbyterians than good citizens."

Around the same time it came to came to light that Hemphill was plagiarizing sermons. It became generally known that his sermons was taken from Dr. Clarke and other English deistic clergymen.

And nowhere does Franklin seem to be defending Hemphill's orthodoxy, although he states in the Observations that Hemphill was not orthodox; on the contrary, in "the Defence" he states that the purpose of his writing is to show that Hemphill was not orthodox but right.

Then comes the argument against the dullness of Presbyterian sermons. What if Hemphill did take his sermons from others? Don't ministers compose their sermons from books? The difference between the other clergymen and Hemphill, says Franklin, is that the regular ministers pick the dullest material they can find and Hemphill the liveliest.

Franklin's writings in the Hemphill controversy were among his errors as a young man. He foolishly opposed public opinion. Later, in a letter of 13 December 1757, when giving reasons against satirizing religion, he wrote, ''He that spits against the Wind, spits in his own Face.'' He may well have had in mind his writings defending Hemphill. The Hemphill affair was the first heresy trial in American Presbyterian history.

ON MONDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER
22, 1735, the Synod of the Presbyterian
Church, meeting in Philadelphia, received the following letter:
To the Revd. Members of ye Synod,
By way of Answer to ye Notification which I
received Saturday last, I have only to ob
serve, yt ye Dispute between the Synod and
me being made publick in the World, which
was first begun by the Commission, what I
have at present to offer to the Synod, is contained in an Answr. to the Vindication of the
Revd. Commission now in the Press and will
be speedily published, and yt I despise the
Synod's claim of Authority.
Your humble Servt.
Sam: Hemphill
Monday morning
P.S. I shall think you'll do me a deal of

Honour if you entirely excommunicate me.

Value of Subscription:

1. At least the church is being honest what it believes, even if the offending minister (Hemphill) does lie.

2. The confession doesn't infringe upon a persons liberty to believe whatever they want, it only stops their holding that belief AND being a minister (or elder) in the Presbyterian church which has certain other beliefs.

3. Notably, I read in one place that Hemphill's views would have been more welcome in the Church of England, which had already started to fall into error by this period.

Lessons 6: Log College

During the latter half of the seventeenth and the first part of the eighteenth centuries there was a great movement of colonists from Scotland, England, and the north of Ireland, toward the New World. These immigrants, especially in the Middle Colonies, settled in regions where there were few if any churches, and where, even when there were churches, there was a great scarcity of ministers. There were no schools; much less colleges or seminaries, for the training of young men for the ministry

What should be done? In the discussion of this question in the years following, two parties arose. One was known as the Old Side Party, and it held that only young men from the universities of the Old World or from Harvard and Yale in New England should be accepted as ministers. According to those who held to this view, it would not do to make any attempt to supply the lack with men who had not been thus trained. The standard of education in the Presbyterian Church should by no means be lowered by any substitutions for the training of a full college course. On the other hand, there arose the New Side Party, which held that inasmuch as there were no colleges or seminaries in the Middle Colonies, pastors should establish schools in their parishes for the training of likely young men for the ministry. There was one man who caught the vision of the great possibilities of such a plan, and that man was William Tennent.

The Old Side Party, fearful lest that thew New Side would flood the Church with half-educated ministers, proposed a plan designed to put a check upon the licensure and ordination of Log College students. Provision was made for the appointment of a commission of Synod by whom all candidates for the ministry coming without college diplomas from the Old World or from Harvard or Yale must be examined as to their fitness, and then presented to the presbytery. The New Side Party strenuously opposed the proposition, but they were in the minority. The plan was adopted, and though it was somewhat modified the next year, it was still eminently distasteful to the Log College people. The adoption of that resolution was the cause of the Great Schism which came a few years later

The founder of the Log College was Rev. William Tennent (1673-1746). Born in Scotland and trained at Edinburgh, he came to the colony of Pennsylvania (Latin for Penn's Woods) in 1718, having left Ireland where he was ordained in the Episcopal church. At the Synod of 1718 he "expressed dissatisfaction with his experience in the Episcopal church" and was received as a minister. He signed the Adopting Act in 1729.

In 1727 Tennent opened the "Log College" in Pennsylvania where he trained about 20 men for ministry from its opening until Tennent's death in 1746. The men trained there all would join the "New Side" in the schism. We'll talk about the New Side – Old Side Controversy (1741-1759) in a future lesson.

Until the founding of the Log College all Presbyterian ministers were trained in the Old World —

primarily Scotland or England — or at Harvard of Yale.

Tennent convinced the Presbyterians of the Middle Colonies that they need not and ought not to wait upon Great Britain and New Eng land for their educated ministers.

The name Log College was “scoffingly given” and the building was just 20ft x 20ft and very plain. Located in what is today Warminster, Bucks County, PA. (A fairly central location in the colonies)

Even visited by George Whitfield. I believe it was he who said of the Log College, “It is a log-house, about twenty feet long, and nearly as many broad; and, to me, it seemed to resemble the school of the old prophets.”

William Tennent was the primarily (possibly only?) teacher at the school.

One issue we’ve started to look at that weaves through American Presbyterian history is the question of subscription to the Westminster Confession. Another issue is the training of ministers. Ministers were always in short supply in early America. Presbyterians always had fairly high standards – requiring a degree in divinity at certain schools – making it harder to produce ministers. But this academic requirement also helped keep out those who are not serious or willing to put in the effort in study. Still today Presbyterians will debate whether it is absolutely necessary to have a theological degree to become a pastor. Occasionally perhaps a man might be ordained who has studied under a minister rather than a theological school. Or, to give a specific example, Gordon H. Clark was ordained in 1944 (at the age of 42) in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church despite having no seminary degree; his Ph.D in Philosophy, his decades as a ruling elder, and his prolific theological writings showed that he was every bit as knowledgable (probably more so) than a seminary graduate.

Log College graduates were looked at suspiciously; their education level was doubted because they did not attend a large reputable college. But the obvious benefit of the college was affordability.

The Log College produced a number of notable graduates. (Samuel Blair, Robert Smith, Samuel Stanhope Smith, Gilbert Tennant, William Tennant Jr., Samuel Finley)

The Log College inspired other schools:

Faggs Manor, led by Samuel Blair in Faggs Manor, PA. Names after Sir John Fagg, English politician.
Pequea, led by Robert Smith, also in PA, near Amish Country today.
West Nottingham, led by Samuel Finley, in MD. Still exists today as “West Nottingham Academy”

What an AMERICA idea! Log colleges. Small frontier places. Resourceful.

Also, the Log College led to the founding of the College of New Jersey.

Dr. Alexander writes (Log College, p. 125): " The Log College still existed, but it was manifestly on the decline. The venerable founder became infirm, so that he could not perform his pastoral duties; of course he was no longer capable of paying much attention to the school. In these circumstances, the necessity of another institution, of a higher character, became urgent. . . . Just as the Log College expired the College of New Jersey sprang into existence. The and patrons of the former became the principal supporters trustees of the latter. Thus it may with truth be said, Log College was the germ from which proceeded the flourishing College of New Jersey" (later Princeton).

This leads to the Great Awakening, because a new kind of pastor was be raised up just in time for the massive change that was going to sweep through the church world.

Questions:

1. How many professors does one need to be educated?

2. Is it important not to compromise standards?

3. Is it important to make ministry accessible?

4. What compromise could be made? What about the Synods rule for extra examination of Log College graduates? Is that so out of line, considering both goals (2, 3).

Lesson 7: The First Great Awakening

The setting

Many of the early Puritans and pilgrims arrived in America with a fervent faith and vision for establishing a godly nation. Within a century the ardor had cooled. The children of the original immigrants were more concerned with increasing wealth and comfortable living than furthering the Kingdom of God. The same spiritual malaise could be found throughout the American colonies. The philosophical rationalism of the Enlightenment was spreading its influence among the educated classes; others were preoccupied with the things of this world.

"Many of the early colonists had come to the new world to enjoy religious freedom, but as the land became tamed and prosperous they no longer relied on God for their daily bread. Wealth brought complacency toward God. The churches were now attended largely by people who lacked a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Sadly, many of the ministers themselves did not know Christ and therefore could not lead their flocks to the true Shepherd. Then, suddenly, the Spirit of God awoke as though from an intense slumber and began to touch the population of the colonies. People from all walks of life, from poor farmers to rich merchants, began experiencing renewal and rebirth."

Theodore Frelinghuysen

"When Rev. Theodore Frelinghuysen, a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, came to begin his pastoral world in New Jersey during the 1720's, he was shocked by the deadness of the churches in America. He preached the need for conversion, a profound, life-changing commitment to Christ, not simply perfunctory participation in religious duties. [Frelinghuysen Township, NJ is named after Rev. Frelinghuysen]

Gilbert Tennent

"The earliest manifestation of the American phase of this phenomenon—the beginnings of the First Great Awakening—appear among Presbyterians in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Led by the Tennent family—Reverend William Tennent, a Scots-Irish immigrant and his four sons, all clergymen—the Presbyterians not only initiated religious revivals in those colonies during the 1730s but also established a seminary, the Log College to train clergyman."

It was in his working relationship with Frelinghuysen that Tennent picked up on three major principles of Frelinghuysen's preaching that caught the ire of his Presbyterian contemporaries. The preaching of terrors, showing and proving the horrors of hell and consequences of disbelief. Holding the mirror to the hearer's soul, showing the personal reasons they deserve hell and punishment individually or as a church. And the searching method, removing obstacles and rationalizations that could stifle repentance. Frelinghuysen would be at odds with his Dutch Reformed brethren but would see much of his influence

bleed through the ministry of Tennent and his preaching.

Presbyterian Gilbert Tennent was heavily influenced by Frelinghuysen (who he had trained under) and brought revival to his denomination. Tennent believed the deadness of the churches was in part due to so many pastors having never been converted themselves but just going into ministry as a profession. He gave a sermon *On the Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry.*

George Whitefield

At the same time coming on the scene was the open-air itinerant preacher George Whitefield, having traveled to the United States from Great Britain. Whitefield, as we saw previously, had visited the Log College in his travels.

Seeking to raise funds for an orphanage in Georgia, British and Anglicanevangelist and itinerant preacher George Whitefield arrived in Georgia in 1738 and returned in 1739 for a second visit to the Colonies, making a "triumphant campaign north from Philadelphia to New York, and back to the South." In 1740, he visited New England, and "at every place he visited, the consequences were large and tumultuous." Whitefield's preaching drew audiences so large that he was obliged to preach outdoors. What Whitefield preached was nothing more than what other Calvinists had been proclaiming for centuries—that sinful men and women were totally dependent for salvation on the mercy of a pure, all-powerful God. But Whitefield—and many American preachers who eagerly imitated his style—presented that message in novel ways. Gesturing dramatically, sometimes weeping openly or thundering out threats of hellfire-and-brimstone, they turned the sermon into a gripping theatrical performance. Whitefield covered 5,000 miles in America and preached more than 350 times. A significant percentage of American therefore had seen Whitefield personally. Benjamin Franklin was captivated by Whitefield's sermons and they became friends.

Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan minister preaching in western Massachusetts. He is a notable philosopher and considered one of the greatest minds in Church history. He was the grandson of Puritan minister Solomon Stoddard. And he had 10 sisters each 6 ft tall; hence, it was said of his father Timothy Edwards that the had "sixty feet of daughters."

"In Edwards' fullest narrative, written in November 1736, he noted that on a trip to New York and New Jersey in fall 1735 he had hear of remarkable works of God's Spirit in New Jersey, especially under the Dutch Reformed preacher 'who name I remember as Freelinghousa [Theodore Freylinghuysen] and a Presbyterian evangelist, Gilbert Tennent."

Edwards, like many ministers, preached to a congregation that included many who were unconverted, even admittedly so. Therefore he "regularly preached on the horrors of hell" to arouse them out of their

slumber.

An awakening occurred at his church in Northampton, which he wrote about, suddenly then finding an "international audience." "Edwards "Faithful Narrative" created an immediate stir. It served as an inspiration for revivals in both Scotland and England."

"Religious enthusiasm quickly spread from the Presbyterians of the Middle Colonies to the Congregationalists (Puritans) and Baptists of New England. By the 1740s, the clergyman of these churches were conducting revivals throughout the religion, using the same strategy that had contributed to the success of the Tennents. In emotionally charged sermons, all the more powerful because they were delivered extemporaneously, preachers like Jonathan Edwards evoked vivid terrifying images of the utter corruption of human nature and the terrors awaiting the unrepentant in hell. Hence Edwards's famous description of the sinner as a loathsome spider suspended by a slender thread of a pit of seething brimstone in his best known sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.'"

Later Edward's analyzed the awakening carefully in his book *Religious Affections* writing on the difference between true and false religious experience.

Results:
The First Great Awakening or simply "The Great Awakening" was revival of great importance. It was not merely part of Presbyterian history, but of Church history in general. "It had a major impact in reshaping the Congregational church, the Presbyterian church, the Dutch Reformed church, and the German Reformed denomination, and strengthened the small Baptist and Methodist denominations. It had less impact on Anglicans and Quaker."

"Pulling away from ritual and ceremony, the Great Awakening made religion more personal by fostering a sense of spiritual conviction of personal sin and need for redemption, and by encouraging introspection and a commitment to personal morality."

Cries and shrieks

Division in the church

Notable figures:

Theodore Freylinghusen	**- Dutch Reformed**
Gilbert Tennent	**- Presbyterian**
George Whitefield	**- Anglican**
Jonathan Edwards	**- Congregationalist**

Freylinghusen and Edwards preached the terrors of the laws.
Gilbert Tennent preached against Presbyterian ministers.
Whitefield was more positive.
There were many who took up these new methods of preaching.

Effect on Revolution

Lesson 8: New Side – Old Side Controversy

The Old Side – New Side Controversy (1741 – 1758) was the first schism in the American Presbyterian Church. Not to be confused with the later Old School – New School Controversy. And, if hear the term Old Light – New Light, that seems to be referring to the whole Old Side – New Side Controversy including denominations outside of Presbyterianism.

There were other Presbyterians (the Covenanters, starting in 1743) in America, but we are looking at the largest main branch.

The controversy arose in the wake of the First Great Awakening. Or, as one historian calls it, "the pretty good Awakening."

That is, the Great Awakening wasn't all roses and sunshine.

The new revivalist ministers (Edwards, Whitfield, Frelinghuysen, Gilbert Tennent, James Davenport) were indeed bringing to the church many converts, and many of those converts would remain, proving to be true converts.

George Whitefield wrote in his journal, "[Gilbert Tennent] has learned experimentally to dissect the heart of a natural man. Hypocrites must either soon be converted or enraged at his preaching. He is a son of thunder and does not fear the faces of men."

Samuel Davies later wrote in 1757: "About sixteen years ago, in the northern colonies, when all religious concern was much out of fashion, and the generality lay in a dead sleep in sin, having at best but the form of godliness, but nothing of the power; when the country was in peace and prosperity, free from the calamities of war, and epidemical sickness, when, in short, there were no extraordinary calls to repentance; suddenly a deep, general concern about eternal things spread through the country, sinners started out of their slumbers, broke off from their vices, began to cry out. What shall we do to be saved? And made it the great business of their life to prepare for the world to come. Then the gospel seemed almighty, and carried all before it. It pierced the very hearts of men with irresistible power. I have seen thousands at one melted down under it; all eager to hear as for life, and hardly a dry eye to be seen among them. Many have since backsliddedin, and all their religion is come to nothing, or dwindled away into mere formality. But, blessed by God, thousands still remind shining monuments of the power of divine grace in that glorious day."

But there were issues.

Issue 1: Gilbert Tennent calling out ministers as unconverted.
"The Danger of An Unconverted Minister" (March 8, 1740)

He gave this sermon at a church (Nottingham ,MD) that had no pastor, where both pro-revivalist and anti-revivalist minsters were filling in. His sermon nowhere mentions any ministers by name, but the focus clearly was evident, making the anti-revivalists out to be a new generation of Pharisees. He argued that anyone against revivals was unconverted and spiritually dead, and that Christians should leave churches with such ministers for churches with pro-revival ministers.

"They are as good as none, nay, worse than none, upon some Accounts. For take them first and last, and they generally do more Hurt than Good. They strive to keep better out of the Places where they live; nay, when the Life of Piety comes near their Quarters, they rise up in Arms against it, consult, contrive and combine in their Conclaves against it, as a common Enemy, that discovers and condemns their Craft and Hypocrisie."

Tennent was upset, in part, because previous Synods had scolded him for preaching in places without permission.

Issue 2: The Great Awakening Shifted the Standards of the Christian World

Should ministers need have a conversion experience? Do you have be "converted" to be a minister. The New Side was requiring a "conversion experience." But, what if a person was born in the church, raised in the church, never converted, and sought ministry.

How is a church judged?
D.G. Hart (and Iain Murray as well) argues that "revival" was not historically part of the Reformed vocabulary. Before the "revivalism" of the 18th century, the concern of the Reformed thinker was not whether a church was "alive" or "dead," rather "true" or "false." If the marks of a true church (preaching of the true gospel, administration of sacraments, and discipline) were evident, the church was true. In this way, the legitimacy of a church was determined by outward characteristics that could be measured against God's word (you shall know them by their fruits), not by the Spirit's invisible activity in the heart of a believer. This is consistent with our practice in other areas, such as examination for church membership. We cannot know how sincere the emotions of a person are; we know what he believes about God and salvation, and whether his profession is contradicted by gross immorality.

Issue 3: Preaching without Permission
Itinerancy weakened the role of the local pastor. And divided churches.

The Synod of 1741, The Protestation of Rev. Robert Cross, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

He speaks of the ministers being "wounded and grieved in our very hearts, at the dreadful divisions, distractions, and convulsions, which all of a sudden have seized this infant church." And his blame in on the revivalist party: "the awful judgments we now suffer under; we evidently see that our protesting brethren and their adherents are the direct and proper cause thereof, by their unwearied, unscriptural, anti-presbyterial, uncharitable divisive practices, which they have been pursuing with all the diligence they were capable of, with any probability of success, for above these twelve months past especially ; besides too much of the like practices for some years before, though not with such barefaced arrogance and boldness."

He then argues that such ministers should not "be allowed to sit and vote in this Synod."
His reasons include:

"Their making irregular irruptions upon the congregations, to which they have no immediate relation, without order, concurrence, or allowance of the presbyteries, or ministers to which such congregations belong; thereby sowing the seeds of division among the people, and doing what they can to alienate and fill their minds with unjust prejudices against their lawfully called pastors."

"Their principles and practice of rash judging and condemning all who do not fall in with their measures, both ministers and people, as carnal, graceless, and enemies of the work of God, and what not; as appears in Mr. Gilbert Tennent's sermon against unconverted ministers, and his and Mr. Blair's papers of May last, which were read in open Synod; which rash judging has been the constant practice of our protesting brethren and their irregular probationers, for above these twelve months past, in their disorderly itinerations and preaching through our congregations, by which, alas for it! most of our congregations, through weakness and credulity, are so shattered and divided, and shaken in their principles, that few or none of us can say we enjoy the comfort, or have the success among our people, which otherwise we might, and which we enjoyed heretofore."

"Their preaching the terrors of the law in such a manner and dialect as has no precedent in the word of God, but rather appears to be borrowed from a worse dialect; and so industriously working on the passions and affections of weak minds as to cause them to cry out in a hideous manner, and to fall down in convulsion-like fits, to the marring of the profiting both of themselves and others, who are so taken up in seeing and hearing these odd symptoms, that they cannot attend to, or hear what the preacher says, and then after all, boasting of these things as the work of God, which we are persuaded do proceed from an inferior or worse cause."

"Their, or some of them, preaching and maintaining that all true converts are as certain of their gracious state, as a person can be of what he knows by his outward senses; and are able to give a

narrative of the time and manner of their conversion; or else they conclude them to be in a natural or graceless state”

RESPONSE OF THE NEW SIDE

As a result of the Protest, Gilbert Tennent and his New Side friends left the Synod and formed their own.

No formal vote was taken. Confusion reigned, but in the end the New Brunswick men left, creating the first schism in the church’s brief history. - Bryan F. LeBeau, p. 122 of Colonial Presbyterianism.

Rev. Cross made some good points in his Protest, but sounded quite angered. The attempt to have a whole group of men “un-seated” is not a very Presbyterian method. If there are sins, they should be dealt with individually and specifically. The response of the New Siders to simply leave was also not the best conduct.

The Old Side continued as the Synod of Philadelphia.
The New Side was called the Synod of New York.

REUNION IN 1758 (THE PLAN OF UNION)

Gilbert Tennent was soon sorry for his actions, and for years attempted to reconcile the breach.

February 1742, Dickinson received a written retraction from Gilbert Tennent, wherein Tennent admitted that he had mismanaged his affair in the Awakening and that he could not justify the ‘excessive heat of temper’ he had sometimes shown. - p. 123, LeBeau

Gilbert Tennent took a call to a church in Philadelphia and there mostly had contact with Old Side ministers, which improved his view of them. When the Reunion finally occurred in 1758 (after 17 years), Gilbert Tennent was elected moderator.

The Plan of Union in 1758 affirmed the method of revivals, such as the New Side Presbyterians engaged in, was proper. It even ascertained that the Great Awakening was a blessed work of the Holy Spirit. Yet there was a recognition that if the authority of local presbyteries and synods forbade the wandering of evangelists, who came into other fields without even asking permission to do so, that would have to stop.

While there were more Old Side ministers at the start of the controversy, by the end, the New Side dominated 72 to 20. They had grown through their revivalistic practices and Log Colleges. In the merged church a compromise was made that each presbytery would determine if it would inquire into the ministerial candidates religious experience.

Lesson 9: Psalmody and Watt's Hymns

Who's on first, Watt's on second. I Don't Know's on Third.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was an English Congregational minister and hymn writer called the "Godfather of English Hymnody." Included among the approximately 600 hymns he wrote are:

Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun (based on Psalm 72)
O God, Our Help in Ages Past (based on Psalm 90)
Joy to the World (based on Psalm 98)
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
How Sweet and Awful is the Place

Watts led the change in practice by including new poetry for "original songs of Christian experience" to be used in worship. (You can see how this fits in with the changes of the First Great Awakening) The older tradition was based on the poetry of the Bible: the Psalms.

Watts was not the first Protestant to promote the singing of hymns (Luther, etc.); however, his prolific hymn writing helped usher in a new era of English worship as many other poets followed in his path.

His "Hymns and Spiritual Songs" was first published in 1707.
"Divine and Moral Songs for the Use of Children" was first published in 1715.
And his "Psalms of David Imitated" was first published in 1719.

These were not known in America until the 1720s. At first there was little public demand for such works. Two years after publishing Watt's psalms, Benjamin Franklin complained that he still had unsold copies of the book on his shelves.

The earliest reference I found on Newspapers.com is from 1734:
"By the PRINTER hereof may be had. Common Prayer books, the whole Duty of Men, the Pilgrim's Progress by Bunyan, Watts's Hymns, Ruffel's Sermons, Dyche's Spelling-Books, Psalters, and History books, Blank Bonds, Powers of Attorney, Bills of Sale, Bills of Lading, Mortgages for Negroes, and Apprentices Indentures; likewise Primmers, Sealing Wax, Dutch and English Quills, Ink-Powder, red Ink, and other Stationary War. Also Articles of Agreement between Matters of Vessels and Mariners. Poor Richard, an Almanack for the Year 1735."

Then there was massive growth in America particularly during the Great Awakening. As the Old Side preachers were considered "cold," some considered Psalmody to be "dry" for it lacked explicit mention of Jesus and New Testament themes. Other hymnals (Richard Davis, John Mason) shortly followed

Watts.

What was the extent of Psalmody before hymns?
- In America most churches were using Metrical Psalms. Bay Psalm Book (1640) and Hopkins's Whole Book of Psalms (1562). And there were now pianos, organs, or musical accompaniment. Songs were sang "A Cappella" – the manner of the chapel.
- Metrical Pslams were sung in Common Meter (8,6,86), Long Meter (8,8,8,8) and Short Meter (6,6,8,6)
- A great desire for singing all together as a congregation.
- Some used the Psalms plus other Biblical songs:

Old Testament:
1. The Song of Moses (Exod. 15) ("Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord")
2. Spring up, O well! (Num. 21:17-18) ("Israel sang this song")
3. The Mosaic Song of Witness (Deut. 31:19-32:44) ("Write this song and teach it to the people of Israel")
5. The Song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5) (Sang by Deborah and Barak)
6. David's Song of Thanks. (1 Chronicles 16:8-36) (The first 15 verses parallel Psalm 105)
7. The statutes of the Law were sung (Ps. 119:54) ("Your statues have been my songs")
8. The Song of the Vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7)
9. An Eschatological Song (Isa. 26-27) ("In that day this song will be sug in the land of Judah")
10. The Prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet (Hab. 3) ("A prayer of Habbakuk the prophet." Has "selah" like the Psalms. And is noted "To the Chief Musician, With My Stringed Instruments.")

New Testament:
11. Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)
12. The Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:67-79)
13. The Angelic Doxology (Luke 2:14)
14. Simeon's Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:28-32)
15. Charismatic hymnody (1 Cor. 14:15, 26)
16. A Pauline Christological hymn (Col. 1:15-20)
17. The Carmen Christi (Phil. 2:5-11)
18. A New Song (Rev. 5:9-10; 14:3)
19. The Song of Moses and of the Lamb (Rev. 15:3-4)
20. The Hallelujah chorus (Rev. 19:5-7)

- Some argued for freedom, so long as the songs were Christian.
Tertullian (160 – 240 AD) – "each is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the holy Scriptures or one of his own composing."
Martin Luther – "A Mighty Fortress is Our God", etc?)

How were Watt's hymns received in American Presbyterian Churches?
- Cotton Mather (a Puritan) made the earliest efforts to introduce English hymns to America.

- Edwards (a congregationalist, later Presbyterian) used Watts in his church.
- Samuel Davies (a Presbyterian minister) was a “champion of Watts” and wrote his own hymns.
- David Brainerd (1746: “I explained, sang, and endeavored to inculcate upon them Dr. Watts’ Psalsm.” (p. 235)
- In 1802 the General Assembly approved for use by Presbyterian congregations various versions of the Psalms including that of Isaac Watts.

Lesson 10: David Brainerd

I. Brainerd's Spiritual Struggles before and after conversion.

Edwards says of Brainerd:

> "prone to melancholy and dejection of spirit."
> "excelled in experimental religion."(not "experiential")
> "sensible that multitudes had been deceived by emotions."
> "excessive in his labor; not taking due care to proportion his fatigue to his strength."

b. Apr 20 1718 Haddam CT, one of 5 sons and 4 daughters. One brother was a minister, another a missionary who followed after his labors. His mother died when he was 14.

Lived for a time when Rev. Fiske of Haddam who "advised me wholly to abandon young company, and associate myself with grave elderly people; which counsel I followed." (p. 11)

Struggles before conversion:

> "I sometimes envied the birds and the beasts their happiness, because they were not exposed to eternal misery as I evidently saw I was." (p. 12)
> "still I had a secret hope of recommending myself to God by my religious duties." (p. 13)

Conversion: Read pages 24-25.

II. Brainerd at Yale.

Goes off to Yale College in 1739/1740

He had to take a break from college because he studied so much it affected his health.

Feb 1741 a Great Awakening at Yale College

Struggles after conversion, including that he was expelled from Yale over comments he made in private as to the tutor's prayer's having no more grace than a chair, and refusing to make public confession of it, arguing that it was a private sin.

Brainerd continues his studies for ministry under Rev. Mills of Ripton.

"O if ever I get to heaven, it will be because God please, and nothing else; for I never did anything of myself but get away from God! My soul will be astonished at the unsearchable riches of divine grace

when I arrive at the mansions which the blessed Savior is gone before to prepare." - p. 33

"No poor creature stand in need of divine grace more than I, and none abuse it more than I have done, and still do." - p. 34

"Oh the wonderful goodness of God to so vile a sinner." (p. 49)

"God is unspeakably gracious to me continually." (p. 50)

III. Brainerd sent to the Indians, much hardship.

Nov. 19, 1742 – "[At New Haven] Received a letter from Rev. Mr. Pemberton of New-York, desiring me speedily to go down thither and consult in reference to the evangelizing of the Indians in those parts." (p. 51)

"[I] was confused by the noise and tumult of the city [New York City]." (p. 51)

Mr. Brainerd was examined by the correspondents of New-York, New-Jersey, and Pennsylvania, Of the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge.[The existence of para-church agencies is another notable change in church history]

Continued feelings of unworthiness in his calling.

"having some estate left for him by his father." (p. 53)

Went to the Indians near the Forks of the Delaware river and Indians at the Susquehanna.

"My spiritual conflicts to-day were unspeakably dreadful heavier than the mountains and over-flowing floods." (p. 56)

Goes to Mr. Dickinson's in Elizabethtown. Mr. Burr in Newark. (Had seen "Bellamy" previously). A real who's who of Presbyterian leaders of the time.
To the Indians at Kaunaumeek, New York between Stockbridge and Albany. 1 year there.

My impression of Brainerd is to understand his depression and desire for holiness because I have had much of the same experience, but at the same time, I'd say to him "get on with it, you have work to do."

Brainerd apologizes to Yale and hopes to be given a degrees; they accept his apology but require him to

study there 12 months more, which he is unable to do given his missionary work.

Frequently “spent the day in fasting and prayer alone.”

“Began to study the Indian tongue with Mr. Sergeant at Stockbridge.”

“How great and pressing are the remains of indwelling corruption. I am now more sensible than ever, that God alone is ‘the author and finisher of our faith,’ i.e. that the whole and every part of sanctification, and every good work, or thought, found in me, is the effect of his power and grace; that ‘without him I can do nothing,’ in the strictest sense, and that, ‘he works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure’ and from no other motive. O how amazing it is that people can talk about men’s power and goodness; when if God did not hold us back every moment, we should be devils incarnate!” (p. 82)

Focus his teaching to the Indians on sin and the Gospel. Wrote prayers in their language and translated some Psalms. Then he taught them the history (of the Old Testament) and of Christ’s life, death and resurrection.

He turned down some offers to pastor churches.

Next went to Indians on the Delaware River in Pennsylvania.

Lodged in Fishkill.

Jonathan Edwards says “In the Life of David Brainerd”: “The next day [May 9, 1744] he went forward on his journey; crossed the Hudson and went to Goshen in the Highlands, and so traveled across the woods from the Hudson to the Delaware, about a hundred miles, through a desolate and hideous country, above New Jersey, where there were very few settlements; in which journey he suffered much fatigue and hardship. He visited some Indians in the way, at a place called Minnisinks, and discoursed with them concerning Christianity. Was considerably melancholy and disconsolate, being alone in a strange wilderness. On Saturday May 12, he came to a settlement of Irish and Dutch people, and proceeded about 12 miles further arrived at Sakhauwotung, an Indian settlement within the Forks of the Delaware.” (p. 92)

Goshen was a settlement began in 1714. Rev. Bradner was there 1721 to his death in 1733. Rev. Silas Leonard was there 1734-1754.

The Forks of the Delaware is the confluence of the Lehigh and Delaware rivers, near Easton PA.

He finds the Indians much scattered, and only stays a couple weeks before going to Newark. Presbytery their ordained him. (New York Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church – New Side)

Then back to the Forks of the Delaware.

“Last year I longed to be prepared for the world of glory, and speedily to depart out of this world; but of late all my concern is for the conversion of the heathen, and for that end I long to live.” (p. 100)

“This morning I was greatly oppressed with guilt and shame from a sense of inward vileness and pollution.” (p. 102)

“Toward night my burden respecting my work among the Indians began to increase much, and was aggravated by hearing sundry things which looked very discouraging, in particular that they intended to meet together the next day for an idolatrous feast and dance.” (p. 102)

“Brother Byram” sent to be his companion in the work with the Indians.

30 miles from anywhere his horses breaks a leg and he decides to put it to down and go by foot.

Reaches the Susquehanna river to a place with twelve Indian houses and preaches there.

Often in ill health, perhaps because of poor diet and much travel.

After 2 years in the wilderness, Brainerd has designs to raise funds to support a colleague to work with him, “as Chris sent out his disciples two and two.” Went to various parts of New Jersey, New York, and New England on this task. Went to Philadelphia to “engage the Governor to use his interest with the Chief of the Six Nations.”(p. 127)

IV. The Conversion of Indians in Brainerd’s hearing.

July 14, 1745 “On this day my interpreter and his wife publicly professed his faith in Christ, being the first hopeful converts among the Indians.”

Read from bottom of p. 139 to 144. On conversion of interpreter.

Goes to Indians in New Jersey who had also heard the preaching of William Tennent.
Read Aug. 6, 1745 p. 146-147. On the work of God in 2 converted among the Indians.

Read Aug 8, p. 148-149 on a general concern among the Indians.

An old Indian, of his own accord, had his rattle destroyed which he had used in their idolatrous dances. (p. 164)

“There are some Indians in these parts who have always refused to hear me preach, and have been enraged against those who have attended on my preaching. But of late they are more bitter than ever; scoffing at christianity, and sometimes asking my hearers, ‘how often they have cried,’ and ‘whether they have now cried enough to do their turn,’ &c. So that they have already trial of cruel mockings.” (p. 166)

“Of a truth the dark corners of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.” (p. 167)

Visited the Delaware King on the Susquehanna.

Met a man zealous for Indian religion, who was almost an outcast among his own people.

“Made some further attempts to instruct and Christianize the Indians on this Island, but all to no purpose. They live so near the white people that they are always in the way of strong liquor, as well as of the ill examples of nominal Christians; which renders it so unspeakably difficult to treat with them about Christianity.” (p. 176)

“While I was preaching to a vast assembly of people abroad, who appeared generally easy and secure, there was one Indian woman, a stranger, who had never heard me preach before, nor ever regarded anything about religion, who, having been now persuaded by some of her friends to come to meeting, though much against her will, was seized with distressing concern for her soul, and soon after expressing a great desire of going home, more than forty miles distant, to call her husband, that he also might be awakened to a concern for his soul.” (p. 178)

The Great Awakening – and its emotional reactions – comes to the Indians through the work of David Brainerd (and others?).

Conversions happened when Brainerd had “the least hope.” “I was ready to look upon myself as a burden to the Society which employed and supported me in this business.” (p. 182)

Results and Effects: READ p. 189-191.

Traveled 3,000 miles.

Unable to find a companion “qualified and disposed to this good work.” (p.192)

Proposes building a school and hiring a schoolmaster.

“I am. At times, almost discouraged from attempting to gain any acquaintance with the Indian languages, they are so very numerous.”(p.193)

“She moreover inquired whether I was not sent to preach to the Indians by some good a great way off. I replied, ‘Yes, by the good people in Scotland.’ She answer, ‘that her heart loved those good people o the evening before, that he could scarce help praying for them all night, her heart would go to God for them.” (p. 211)

“my health is so much impaired, and my spirits so wasted with my labors and solitary manner of living.” (p. 212)

Jan 28, 1745 – “The Indians in these parts have, in times past, run themselves in debt by their excessive drinking.”

Jan 31, 1745 – schoolmaster arrives.

‘conviction of sin and misery’ – a “preparatory work.’ (p. 227)

‘My house being thronged with my people in the evening; I spent the time in religious exercises with them until my nature was almost spent. They are so unwearied in religious exercises, and insatiable in their thirsting after Christian knowledge, that I can sometimes scarcely avoid laboring so as greatly to exhaust my strength and spirit.” (p. 221) [We see here continued efforts leading to exhaustion]

“Numbered the Indians to see how many soul’s God had gathered together here since my coming into these parts; and found there were now about an hundred and thirty persons together, old and young.” p. 234.

1746: “I explained, sang, and endeavored to inculcate upon them Dr. Watts’ Psalms.” (p. 235)

“Toward noon prayed with a dying child, and gave a word of exhortation to the bystanders to prepare for death.’ (p. 243)

The conjurer converted. (p. 249-254)

p. 260 One year’s change.

“Having lain in a cold sweat all night, I coughed up much bloody matter this morning, and I was under great disorder of body, and not a little melancholy.” [the old word for depression] (p. 286)

After Sept 1746 “Hitherto Brainerd had kept a constant diary, giving an account of what passed from day to day, with very little interruption; but henceforth his diary is very much interrupted by his illness.”

“Considered in what sense he took away the sins of the world.” (p. 297) Good Calvinist answer. Sufficient-efficient distinction.

Nov 3, 1746 “took leave of my congregation this day.”

“Though in a very weak and low state, I enjoyed a considerable degree of comfort and sweetness in divine things.”

“Violent griping pains” “extreme and constant for several hours.”

“My brother John arrived at Elizabethtown.” (p. 308)

John later becomes the successor to David in the mission work.

Arrives in Northampton. Then Boston. “Write a number of important letters to friends in remote places.” (p. 317) Then back to Northampton. Visited again by his brother John.

Only in facing death does he no longer have depression, but was “animated and seemed more cheerful.”

“I do not go to heaven to be advanced, but to give honor to God. It is no matter where I shall be stationed in heaven, whether I have a high or low seat there; but to love, and please and glorify God is all.” (p. 331)

Dies on Friday, Oct 9, 1747 at Jonathan Edwards house, where Edward’s daughter Jerusha was taking

care of him. She died only four months later, also from tuberculosis.

Although I don't see it mentioned in the book, it is said that Jerusha was engaged to David Brainerd for about 6 months before his death. But this latter point is debated, as there is no real evidence for it, and it seems to be a later developed story.

Cause of death: Tuberculosis aka consumption (consumed the body, with weight loss, fatigue)

Funeral is attending by 8 neighboring ministers and a "great concourse of people."

A brother, Israel Brainerd, who had studied for ministry at Yale, also died young, in 1748 of "a nervous fever."

Lessons 11. John Witherspoon

Give talk based on “Powerful Presbyterian Policy: John Witherspoon and the Connecting of American Presbyterians.”

Lessons 12. Meeker's Meeting House

After talking about John Witherspoon (1723-1794) last Sunday, we come now chronologically to about my favorite subject in the world. "Meeker's Meeting House." That's what I call it. It never had that name. It was known as the Westtown Meeting House if it was known at all.

And we'll get to that subject in a minute, but first some other notable items as we look at local church history. As we saw, there were Presbyterians on Long Island from an early date.

On a 1780 Map of Thomas Millidge there is a church symbol at Coldenham and another one labeled "Walkill Meeting." I understand that that is the Goodwill church.

So here is a list of some of the early Presbyterian church dates in Orange County. And, basically the Presbyterians were first in these places.

Goshen – 1715
Goodwill – 1729
Bethlehem (Newburgh) – 1729
Florida – 1741
Campbell Hall – 1753
Little Britian (Rock Tavern) – 1765
Monroe – 1783
Calvary (Newburgh) – 1784
Otisville – 1784
Westtown – 1790 (sorta)
Ridgebury – 1792
Thompson Ridge – 1793
Scotchtown – 1795
Amity – 1796
Chester – 1798
Pine Bush – 1799

I saw "sorta" with Westtown, because the Westtown Church as we know it came together in 1805, and the building there is, I believe, the second on the site. It was rebuilt in 1838.

I got into this whole subject when I started research Unionville Church history, particularly the early years. We have a couple historical pamphlets written about the church in 1910 and again in 1953.

There is mentions "missionaries from Amity" as the tradition of how this church got started. I've found

no other reference to that anywhere. (Expect maybe a minister or two from there coming this way to preach on occasion).

Others have noted our church's connection the Westtown Presbyterian Church (and in fact, many of our founding members did come there). So in a sense Westtown in our parent. But that's not the full story.

There was, at one point, many hundreds of people attending the Clove Dutch Reformed (and later Presbyterian) church in Wantage. That is, in some ways tied into our history as well.

BUT, the real parent church of Westtown and Unionville (and even the Clove to a lesser extent) is "Meeker's Meeting House"; aka Westtown Meeting House, just over the border in Wantage.

If you haven't heard of it, almost no one has. It seems to have almost not made a note in the history books. I found out about it only in the notes of a former Minisink historian, Doris Cole, and have spent some time since then tracking down references to it.

There are not many references. Maybe a dozen in the various records of deeds, wills, histories, etc.

The basic story is that it was build on the property of Major Samuel Meeker, who fought in the Revolution for the Sussex militia. Some have thought he built it after the war; or at least after he got wounded in the shoulder with a bullet at the Battle of Minisink (1779). There is a reference to the meeting house's existence in 1780.

But it may go back earlier. Meeker previously (1765) got permission to have a tavern on his property. Maybe the tavern become the meeting house? In the 1770s there are references in the Presbyterian national records of preachers coming out to Wantage to preach. Unless this is referring to an early log church in Beemerville, it is probably at Meekers. And in 1765 land was donated for a parsonage for the church.

The church took the name Westtown, because the area here was West of the Drowned Lands, the black dirt region. For a while they hired the Dutch Reformed minister Elias Van Bunschoten of the Clove church to preach for them. And, at one point they connected with a small group of Presbyterians, divorced from the main body, out of Morris County NJ. But they never seemed to have hired a pastor of their own. The parsonage, if it was used at all, hosted visiting preachers.

There are some references to the church around the year 1800 as being on the road there, outside of Unionville (aka Tucker's store). And mentions of it in land deeds when Samuel Meeker sold the land. He sold the whole farm, except for a plot for the church to continue existence. Even a small cemetery

was started there. But the whole thing fell into disuse in 1803.

Then, in the March of 1803 there were records of of meeting in Unionville and Westtown to start their own churches. The people from these villages had been traveling down to Wantage to church.

This is notable as part of the large scene of church growth of the era. Many churches of the area were built especially 1820-1840s. It fits with that period of peace in the church and unity that Witherspoon helped bring together. The growth, no doubt, is also attributable to immigration and population growth of the time. (internal population growth was a much larger factor)

References to the Meeting House

1765 New Jersey Land Proprietors give lot for Parsonage in Wantage.

At a Council of Proprietors of the Eastern Division of New Jersey held at Perth Amboy September 14th. 1765.

Present: The President; Dr. Lewis Johnston; Mr. Burnet; Lord Stirling; Mr. Stevens; Mr. DeLancey; Mr. Cuyler; Mr. Skinner; Mr. Ogden Trustee of Robt. H. Morris Esqr.; Mr. Rutherfurd; Mr. Barberie Executor of A. Johnston Esqr.

A Petition from the Township of Wantage in Sussex County was Laid before the Board Setting forth that the said Township is at a Great distance from any house of Publick Worship, But thinly Settled and the Inhabitants in General in Low Circumstances, Praying the Proprietors would Grant them a Certain Quantity of Land to be appropriated for a Parsonage Glebe.

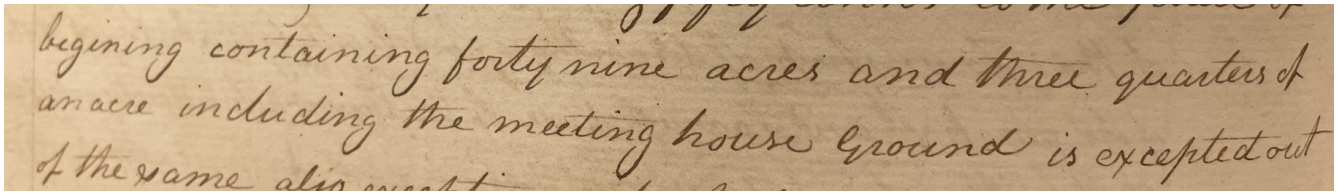
1770s minutes of the Presbytery of New York mention preaching in Wantage.

two Sabbaths in November.

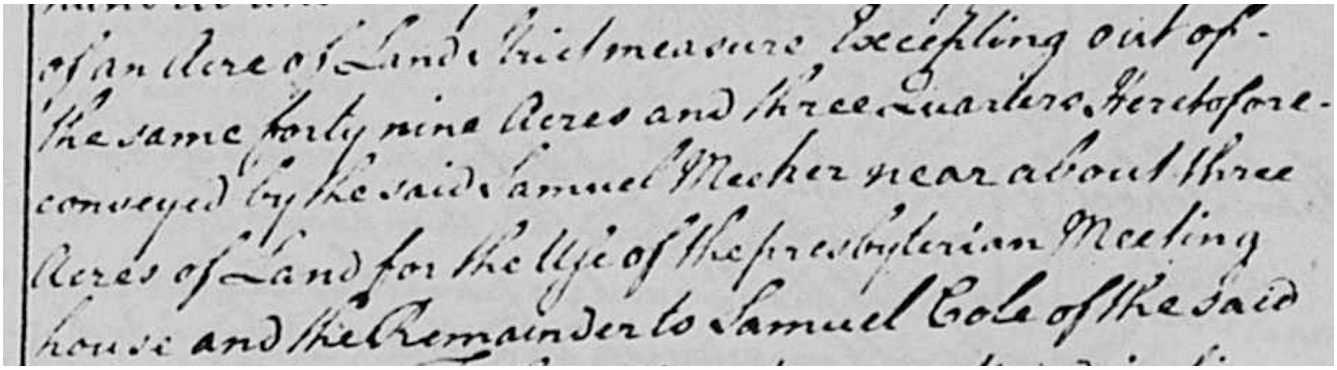
At Hardiston and Wantage, Mr. Brush the first Sabbath in December at Hardiston, and the 2nd Wantage. Mr. Ker the first Sabbath in November at Wantage. Mr. Joline the 1st Sabbath in April at Hardiston.

1780, Oct 1, "Will of Mary Lockwood" is supposed to refer to a "Presbyterian Meeting House on the lands of Samuel Meeker." (According to Wantage historian Lawrence King, and Minisink Historian Doris Cole)

1787 05 08, Deed, land sale from Samuel Meeker to Samuel Cole


begining containing forty nine acres and three quarters of an acre including the meeting house Ground is excepted out of the same

1787 11 222, Mortgage of Samuel Meeker to Nathaniel Meeker

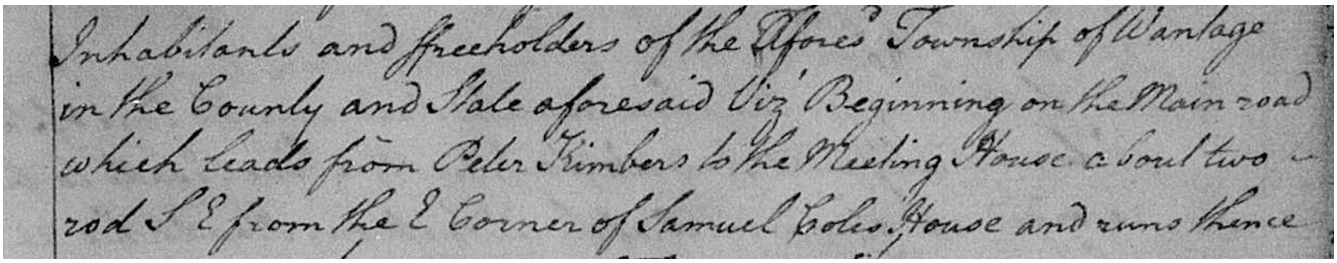

of an Acre of Land that measure Excepting out of
the same forty nine Acres and three Quarters heretofore
conveyed by the said Samuel Mecker near about three
Acres of Land for the use of the presbyterian Meeting
house and the Remainder to Samuel Cole of the said

1789 Presbyterian Church General Assembly minutes: “Vacant: Wantage”

1790 Jan 26 – Presbyterian Society at Westtown joins Presbytery of Morris County

“Historical Sketch – copied from papers with the books of records of the Presbyterian Church of Westtown” which states “Jan. 26, 1790, the people of Westtown in the township of Minisink assembled at the house of Sylvanus Loree, agreeable to the appointment as the law directs and by a plurality of votes chose James Brown, Frenchie Delano, Henry Tooker, Amos Wilcox, John Whitaker, Trustees for the Society in and about Westtown to be known as the Presbyterian Society at Westtown – that is to say, the new Presbytery of Morris County, sig and Sealed, John Hazen, L.S., James Brown, L.S. Acknowledge before County Judge William Thompson, Jan. 27, 1790 and recorded the same day by Thomas Moffat, Clerk.”

1791 March 23, Sussex County road book


Inhabitants and freeholders of the Aforesd Township of Wantage
in the County and State aforesaid Viz Beginning on the Main road
which leads from Peter Kimbers to the Meeting House about two
rod S E from the E Corner of Samuel Coles House and runs thence

1793 Apr 20, Incorporation document for “United Dutch Reformed Congregation of Clove and West Town” in Sussex County records.

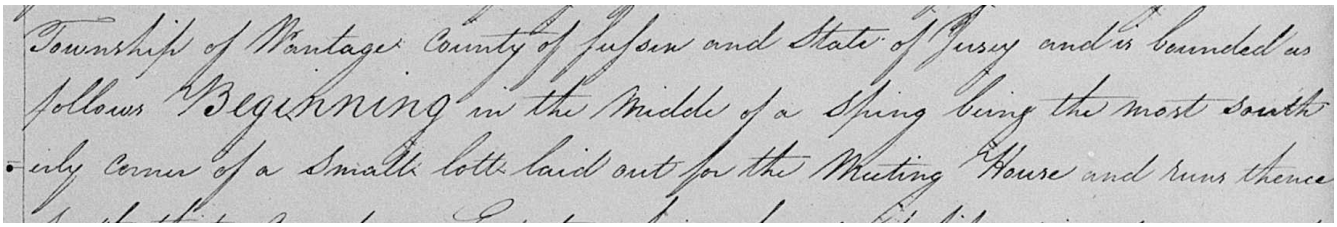
Van Bunschoten preaching:

THE WESTTOWN CHURCH.

A few years after the Rev. Elias Van Bunschooten began preaching at the Clove church the congregation found that they were unable to pay his salary, that had been agreed upon. Accordingly they united with the church at Westtown, in order to divide the expense. The Dutch Reformed Church of Westtown was probably located in the present village of Westtown, in the town of Minisink, Orange county, N. Y. It is about eight miles east of Port Jervis and northeast of the Clove church. The union of the Clove and the Westtown churches commenced in 1791 and ended in September, 1799. But according to the records of the Clove church, Van Bunschooten continued to serve the Westtown church, after the separation and at least until May 4, 1802, when the parsonage jointly owned by the

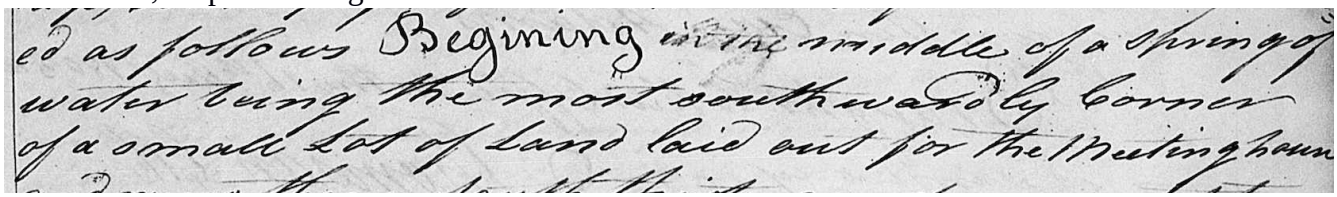
* See Historical Discourse of Reformed Dutch Church of Walpack, by Rev. S. W. Mills, page 30.

1797 03 02 deed Josiah Van Auken to Stephen Strong. (and again similar in 1798 04 09 deed of Stephen Strong to Benjamin Pattengill)


Township of Wantage County of Sussex and State of Jersey and is bounded as follows Beginning in the Middle of a Spring being the most southerly Corner of a Small Lott laid out for the Meeting House and runs thence

1802 Clove and Westtown sell Parsonage lot.

1803 Mar 22, Stephen Strong to Samuel Cole.


ed as follows Beginning in the middle of a Spring of water being the most southwardly corner of a small Lot of Land laid out for the Meeting house

Lesson 13: The Plan of Union of 1801

I. What was the Plan of Union?

An agreement between the Presbyterian Church and the Congregational Church to work together for evangelism, and church planting in the Western frontier. The plan was initially agreed upon between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the Connecticut General Association of Congregational Churches. The Plan was later approved by the Congregational associations in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

Here are the four points of the plan:

Encouraging Presbyterian and Congregationalist Missionaries to work in harmony.

"1st. It is strictly enjoined on all their missionaries to the new settlements, to endeavor, by all proper means, to promote mutual forbearance, and a spirit of accommodation, between those inhabitants of the new settlements who hold the Presbyterian, and those who hold the Congregational, form of Church government.

Allowing Congregational Churches with Presbyterian Ministers

"2d. If, in the new settlements, any church of the Congregational order shall settle a minister of the Presbyterian order, that church may, if they choose, still conduct their discipline according to Congregational principles, settling their difficulties among themselves, or by a council mutually agreed upon for that purpose. But, if any difficulty shall exist, between the minister and the church, or any member of if, it shall be referred to the Presbytery to which the minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; if not, to a council consisting of an equal number of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, agreed upon by both parties.

Allowing Presbyterian Churches with Congregationalist Ministers

"3d. If a Presbyterian church shall settle a minister of Congregational principles, that church may still conduct their discipline according to Presbyterian principles, excepting that if a difficulty arise between him and his church, or any member of it, the cause shall be tried by the Association to which the said minister shall belong, provided both parties agree to it; otherwise by a council, one half Congregationalists and the other Presbyterians, mutually agreed upon by the parties.

How to Cooperate in Mixed Churches.

"4th. If any congregation consist partly of those who hold the Congregational form of discipline, and partly of those who hold the Presbyterian form, we recommend to both parties, that this be no obstruction to their uniting in one church and settling a minister; and that, in this case, the church choose a standing committee, from the communicants of said church, whose business it shall be to call

to account every member of the church who shall conduct himself inconsistently with the laws of Christianity, and to give judgment on such conduct. That if the person condemned by their judgment be a Presbyterian, he shall have liberty to appeal to the Presbytery; if he be a Congregationalist, he shall have liberty to appeal to the body of the male communicants of the church. In the former case, the determination of the Presbytery shall be final, unless the church shall consent to a further appeal to the Synod, or to the General Assembly; and, in the latter case, if the party condemned shall wish for a trial by a mutual council, the cause shall be referred to such a council. And provided the standing committee of any church shall depute one of themselves to attend the Presbytery, he may have the same right to sit and act in the Presbytery as a ruling elder of the Presbyterian church."

So what are some differences between Presbyterian and Congregationalist church polity?
Presbyterians are ruled by the elders and rarely have congregational meetings.
Congregationalists are ruled by somewhat frequent congregational meetings.
Presbyterians have Presbytery meetings where the elders and pastors of the churches approve policy for all of the churches.
Congregationalist associations are similar but make no binding rules upon their members.

II. The Need for the Plan of Union

So, what was the need for the Plan of Union of 1801?
Or strictly speaking, what was the "perceived" need for the Plan of Union.

Presbyterians were facing a real shortage of ministers. At the time of the first General Assembly in 1789, the Presbyterian Church had 419 congregations, but only 111 ministers.

Prior to 1801, Congregationalist and Presbyterians had enjoyed friendly relationships. Occasionally a minister (like Jonathan Edwards) would transfer from one group to the other. These groups shared a common Calvinistic theology but differed in church polity. So they were similar and largely able to work with one another.

As settlers expanded on the American frontier, the churches came to believe that it would advantageous for evangelism if they shared resources, avoided competition, and mutually supported one another.

III. Results

"How did it go?"

One course says, "The Plan of Union was influential in terms of carrying New England cultural values to the Midwest."

It contributed to growth in the number of churches. From 511 in 1801 to 2,965 in 8137.

An issue from the Congregationalist side: As part of the Plan, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church designated the Congregationalist American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) as its recognized missions agency in 1826. By 1831, the majority of board members and missionaries of the ABCFM were Presbyterians. As a result, most of the local churches established by the organization during this period were Presbyterian. Congregationalists essentially "turned over domestic evangelistic efforts to Presbyterians"

An issue from the Presbyterian perspective, more from the Old School Presbyterians is that the Plan of Union allowed in theological errors. Congregationalist ministers were not often held to the same strict standards for ordinations, not disciplined when heretical.

The Presbyterian Church received an influx of pastors and congregations sympathetic to the New England theology that prevailed within the Congregational churches. This ultimately led to the Old School-New School Controversy that divided the Presbyterian Church in 1837. When Old Schoolers gained control of the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1837 (See Auburn Declaration), they revoked the Plan of Union. Congregationalists eventually voided the accord (which continued with the New School Presbyterians) at the Albany Convention of 1852 after becoming more denominationally self-conscious and realizing that Presbyterian gains had been made partially at their expense.

Lesson 14. Old School New School Schism

By schism's rent asunder.

We come to the second major split in American Presbyterian church history. And you might sometimes be tempted to say "can't we all just get along." But sometimes issues are so pronounced that unity is not possible. Error ought not to be tolerated, and yet charity is in order. So it is complicated at times how to deal with these divisions.

We might say there are 3 major divisions in American Presbyterian history. The Old Side – New Side split, the Old School – New School Split which we shall look at today, and then the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy that occurs in the early 20th century. I believe the last of those to have the most continued lasting effects on the church today, but the earlier splits are not without their own effects.

We saw last time that the Presbyterian Church was working with the Congregationalist Churches with a Plan of Union to grow across the country.

New School

An influence from the Congregationalists that came into the Presbyterian world is that called New Haven Theology. It was developed by the followers of Jonathan Edwards. I don't know that Edwards himself would have been a fan of the development. New Haven — think Yale Divinity School — leader Nathaniel William Taylor modified traditional Calvinism (to something much more like Arminianism in that he argued for a lesser view of the sovereignty of God and more for human freedom. Then he also downplayed original sin, and opposed election. Finally, he embraced the revivals of the Second Great Awakening.

Around the same time, there was the Second Great Awakening, with the new revival style of Charles Finney. Finney was a Presbyterian ministry but later joined the Congregationalists where greater diversity in views was allowed. He developed "new measures" including protracted (week-long meetings), and "the anxious bench." He sought measurable results and desires societal change with causes like abolitionism, temperance, and women's rights. His methods were highly controversial. His preaching was more conversational and addressed to common people.

Many of the New School Presbyterians then embraced revivalism of the type of the Second Great Awakening and the theology of New Haven. The New school was more prone to be against slavery. But we must not think of the New School as monolithic; various views were represented.

Its leaders were Samuel Hopkins, Joseph Bellamy, Nathaniel William Taylor, Albert Barnes, Lyman

Beecher, Charles Finney, etc. Schools associated with the New School were Yale Divinity School Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati.

Old School

The Old School held to the traditional views of the church regarding Calvinism and opposed the excess of the professional revivalists. They held that missionary work should be done under the oversight of the Presbyterian Church and not through independent mission organizations. (Fascinating consider Bible Presbyterian history). They believed that the church's ministry is exclusively spiritual and not political and were thus less prone to take a stand on issues like slavery. (Also interested in that today many conservative Presbyterians are more apt to find the need for political involvement)

Its leader were Charles Hodge, Ashbel Green, William B. Sprague, and Samuel Stanhope Smith. Schools associated with the Old School were Princeton Theological Seminary and Andover Theological Seminary.

An impression prevails that Presbyterians of the Old School, do not believe in revivals of old religion, but this is erroneous. The differences between them and the New School are not as to the fact of revivals, but as to the evidences of their genuineness. - Lewis Cheeseman, Differences Between Old and New School Presbyterians (Rochester, N.Y., 1848, p. 150)

The Split

For several General Assemblies, there were more New School Presbyterian delegates than Old School Presbyterian delegates. But once the Old School'ers had more votes they abrogated the 1801 Plan of Union with the Congregationalists. They then voted to expel synod of the Western Reserve that were formed on the basis of the Plan of Union, and refused to recognize them at the 1837 synod. Those who sympathized with the excluded synods joined them forming the New School Presbyterian church.

Why did churches join the New School?
Some of the reasons included greater theological flexibility, the success of the new revivalism, the impact of voluntary mission societies, and to be involved with social reform and activism.

The Results
At the time of the split the schools were roughly of the same size. The Old School, however, continued to grow at a faster rate.

This 1837 event left two separate organizations, the Old School Presbyterians, and the New School Presbyterians. Generally speaking, the Old School was attractive to the more recent Scotch Irish

element, while the New School appealed to more established Yankees (who by agreement became Presbyterians instead of Congregationalists when they left New England).

My own opinion is that to a certain degree the New Schooler's led to Liberalism/Modernism and the Old Schooler's led to Fundamentalism.

The Reunion(s)

Eventually, the Schools reunited.

But first there was the Civil War. And that divided the New School and Old School each on North-South divide. So for a time there were 4 churches – the New School (North), the New School (South), the Old School (North), and the Old School (South).

When these groups reunited after the war, the division was healed between the schools, but not between the states. So there results in 1864 a Southern Presbyterian Church (of New and Old School together) and in 1869 a Northern Presbyterian Church (of New and Old School together).

Unionville was New School. (joined in 1838) 1854 Certificate of Incorporation references being a New School Presbyterian Church. We were without a pastor but for the supply preaching of Rev. Kanouse.
Westtown was Old School
2nd Westtown was New School. It closed and the people came here.
In 1871 this lecture room was built and dedicated in celebration of the reunion.

One possible evidence of Unionville actually acting more "New School" was the involvement here of many in a Temperance Society, including Rev. H.F. Wadsworth. However, the church argued against letting the temperance society using the church building for meeting, saying that this is not a political entity.

Lesson 15. Princeton and the Hodges

With Harvard and Yale falling from the faith, Princeton became a major center of Biblical ministerial training.

1701 Increase Mather thought Harvard was too liberal and in the same year Yale was founded.
In 1722 there was the great "Yale Apostasy" when the faculty joined the Anglican church.

By 1800 Harvard had moved entirely away from its congregationalist roots. In 1805 Harvard hired Henry Ware, a Unitarian, as a professor. This led Calvinists to abandon Harvard entirely and found Andover Theological Seminary.

The Log College men were instrumental in establishing Princeton College. Until Princeton Seminary was created in 1812, ministers attended Princeton College.

Presidents:

Jonathan Dickinson	1747
Aaron Burr Sr.	1748-1757
Jonathan Edwards	1758
Jacob Green	1758-1759
Samuel Davies	1759-1761
Samuel Finley	1761-1766
John Blair	1767-1768
John Witherspoon	1768-1794
Samuel S. Smith	1795-1812
Ashbel Green	1812-1822
Philip Lindsley	1822-1823
James Carnahan	1823-1854
John Maclaean Jr.	1854-1868
James McCosh	1868-1888
Francis L. Patton	1888-1902
Woodrow Wilson	1902-1910

Notable Princeton Seminary professors:
Archibald Alexander
Samuel Miller
Charles Hodge – wrote a Systematic Theology. "Greatest American Theologian"
A. A. Hodge
B. B. Warfield

J. Gresham Machen

In the first one hundred years of the seminary (1812–1912), it had graduated nearly 6,000 ministers, 1,000 more than any other seminary in America.

The idea of the seminary is that they “taught nothing new.”

Top American Theologians:
1600s: Cotton Mather (or father Increase)
1700s: Jonathan Edwards
1800s: Charles Hodge
1900s: MANY: Berkhof, Machen, Hoeksema, Clark, Sproul, Schaeffer, MacArthur
2000s: TBD

Princeton Seminary was for many years, the leader of the Old School Presbyterians. However, it gave way to neo-orthodoxy in the 1930s-1950s, and Westminster Theological Seminary (and others) were created in its wake. Faith Theological Seminary, Biblical Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Covenant Theological Seminary.

Three Unionville Pastors were Princeton Graduates:

Joseph Weisley (at Unionville 1905-1906)

J. Edward Hamilton
1935? Newspaper article “Rev Robson Reviews Work in Presbytery”
“Perhaps particular mention should be made of the Unionville church. Mr. J Edward Hamilton of Monroe has been serving there as student pastor while pursuing his theological studies at Princeton Seminary. When he began his work there in May, 1934, the church was in a very run-down condition. In fact there had been no regular church services there for some time. The situation was a challenge to Mr. Hamilton which he accepted with enthusiasm. He spent much time in pastoral work and in sermon preparation with the result that in a very short time he built up a fine congregation which has been growing in attendance and interest ever since. There was quite a large accession to the membership of the church at the Easter service this year.”

G. Raymond Campbell
1937 graduated from Princeton and was ordained by Hudson Presbyterian in this church.

These Princeton pastors at Unionville might display an “Old School” connection for this church.

Notes on Unionville – Westtown Connections:

From A History of the Presbytery of Hudson, 1681-1888, by Rev. Henry A. Harlow, 1888, p. 155-7
UNIONVILLE.—On 21 July 1846, Mr. Augustus Seward was licensed, and after supplying this church and Westtown, Second, for some months, he was on 23 Feb. 1847, ordained and installed pastor of these united congregations. On 26 Sept. 1849, this relation was severed.

New York Daily Herald, Aug 4, 1850: "Rev. N. E. Pierson, of Sparta, N.Y., has accepted a call from the Presbyterian churches of Unionville and Westtown, Orange county, N.Y., and has entered upon his labors."

Recollection of J. Harvery Hanford (pre 1918)
Rev. Seward + Pierson preached both in Westtown + U Ville, but the now Pres Church at Westtown is not [underlined] the one in which they preached, but ti was what is now the M E Church. Rev. Pierson lived part of the time in Westtown, + part of the time in U Ville.

J. Harvey Hanford records "In 1871 the Lecture Room was build as a memorial of the union of the Old and New School Pres denominations, and a good part of the woodwork doors, windows, etc. Were a part of the (Westtown) old School Presbyterian Church which was then being remodeled."

In 1960 we found it necessary to form a Yoke Parrish with the Westtown Congregation under the ministry of Rev. Anthony Reif, who was followed by Rev. William Hartmann. In 1980 the two church chose to sever the yoke.

May 21, 1967. A joint Congregational meeting. The Pulpit Committee presented Rev. William Hartman as a candidate to fill the Pulpits of the Unionville and Westtown Churches. The terms of the Call are $5800, plus $600 car allowance, plus $600 utilities, plus the total pension payment, plus manse. The vote to Call the Rev. William Hartmann was unanimous.

March 6, 1980. The Session and Trustees of Westtown have both indicated that their strong wish at this point is to pursue the possibility of Westtown calling its own pastor exclusively. They want Unionville to understand that this does not signify any negative feelings toward Unionville. Several officers expressed, and all concurred, a concern for Unionville's future.

April 2, 1980. The resignation of Rev. Hartmann from the Unionville and Westtown Presbyterian Churches was accepted.

May 1, 1980. The Westtown Congregation took a straw vote of 58-6 on May 4, 1980 to look in the feasibility of breaking the yoke.

Lesson 16. Briggs Trial

The trial of Charles Augustus Briggs.

Key Details of the Briggs Trial

•Causes: In his 1891 inaugural address, "The Authority of Holy Scripture," upon his appointment to a professorship at Union Theological Seminary (in NYC), Charles Augustus Briggs, challenged traditional doctrines, calling inerrancy a "ghost" used to frighten children. He questioned traditional authorship of biblical books, such as whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

•Charges: He faced eight charges of heresy in 1891, including claims that reason and the church were sources of authority alongside Scripture.

•Trial Outcomes: The New York Presbytery acquitted Briggs in 1891 on a vote of 94 to 39 and again in 1893 on a vote 167 to 115.. A majority of its members sympathized with his liberal, modern approach to biblical criticism and did not view his teachings as violating the essential doctrines of the Presbyterian Church

• But the Presbyterian General Assembly overturned this, suspending him from the ministry in 1893.

•Aftermath: Following his conviction, Union Theological Seminary separated from the Presbyterian Church to retain him, and Briggs later became an Episcopal priest in 1899. The case significantly deepened the divide between conservative and liberal theological factions in America and served as a precursor to the 20th-century Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy.

Stephen Nichols:

Well, to set the stage, we need to start at Princeton. And we need to start with an article that was written by A.A. Hodge, who was the son of Charles Hodge, and B.B. Warfield; and the article was entitled, "Inspiration." In it, Hodge and Warfield set forth the view of "verbal plenary inspiration." That is to say, that *all* of the Bible—that's the plenary part—the *entire* Bible is inspired, and the *very words* of the Bible are inspired. And it follows from verbal plenary inspiration that since the Bible is God's word, it's true. Which is to say that following from verbal plenary inspiration, we have the doctrine of inerrancy. So, this is where we start.
That same year, Charles Briggs wrote a response, and in his response he rejected the idea that inspiration is verbal. He had no problem with the plenary part, he just didn't like the verbal part. It's not the words that are inspired, it’s just the thoughts. Well a decade later, Charles Augustus Briggs was inaugurated in his chair at Union Theological Seminary in New York. And he gave his inaugural lecture under the title, "The Authority of Holy Scripture."

Briggs was trained in Germany; he was trained in the ways of higher criticism. And in this lecture he extols the virtues of higher criticism. He shows how "Higher criticism," in fact this is a quote from the lecture, "Higher criticism has rendered an inestimable service to this generation and to generations to come." He went on then to talk about inspiration and inerrancy.

> He says in the lecture, "But on what authority do these theologians…" (And he's referring by the way to the Princetonians—to Warfield, to Hodge), "...by what authority do these theologians drive men from the Bible? This theory of inerrancy? The Bible itself nowhere makes a claim to inerrancy. The creeds of the church nowhere sanction it."
>
> I think he sensed that he was on a role, and so Briggs crescendoed with this statement: "Inerrancy is a ghost of modern evangelicalism to frighten children." Now I'm not quite sure how inerrancy frightens children, but that was Briggs' claim. And when he made that claim he was then brought upon charges before his Presbytery, and it made its way to the General Assembly. And the General Assembly first of all refused to endorse his appointment. And then two years later in 1893 it defrocked Briggs.
>
> What we have here though is the breach and the dam. Even though he was defrocked, even though he was initially not endorsed in his chair, Union Seminary just turned around and found an independent funding stream and installed him in that chair. And then we know what happened in the next couple decades, because in the next couple decades liberalism made its way clearly onto the stage. And when we move into the 1930's we find J. Gresham Machen finds himself in a trial in the same denomination, but the outcome is the reverse—he get's defrocked because of holding to orthodox views.
>
> So Charles Augustus Briggs, in the Briggs case, is a very important moment in the American church. A very important moment in the history of the Presbyterian Church, and a very important moment that shows a twist in the way that we think about Scripture. A twist in the way that we understand it as the authoritative, inspired, inerrant, Word.
>
> So, that's why the Briggs case matters.

This is notable because it reflects a time (1891) when the trial against an ordained man could still take place against those with theological errors; whereas in the decades ahead error became tolerated and even the orthodox persecuted and defrocked when they called out error.

In my opinion, more trials against error should have occurred.

What did Unionville think? [J. Harvey Hanford votes against Charles Briggs]

Tri-States Union 11 June 1891 06. "Revs. R. B. Clark and John Service who represented the Presbytery of Hudson in the General Assembly at Detroit voted to Sustain Dr. Briggs, or rather voted against the report that was adopted. Messrs. Howell and Hanford voted against Dr. Briggs—Middletown Times."

Lesson 17: Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy (Part I)

I. Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Began in Kentucky when, because of the difficulty of finding ministers, they started ordaining men without the educational background required by the rest of the Presbyterian church. Allowance was made also for not agreeing with the Westminster Confession. So in 1810 the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was formed when churches in Kentucky were expelled from the PCUSA.

In 1814 they adopted a revised confession of faith that denied limited atonement and unconditional election.

In time, the denomination tended towards Arminianism. (Though they say they hold a “middle way” between Calvinism and Arminianism, emphasizing free will but maintaining perseverance of the saints.)

In 1899 they were the first Presbyterian church to ordain a woman minister.

Today, they are more conservative than the PCUSA, but so is everyone else.

II. 1903 Confessional Changes

In 1903, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (PCUSA) adopted significant revisions to the Westminster Confession of Faith, primarily adding two chapters ("Of the Holy Spirit" and "Of the Love of God, and Missions"), a "Declaratory Statement" regarding election and infant salvation, and altering language to remove the pope as Antichrist. These changes were intended to soften the Confession's Calvinism, particularly to facilitate union with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

The changes – a weakening of the Calvinist system of theology – were led by modernism Henry Van Dyke, a support of Charles Briggs in 1893.

After making revision to the Westminster Confession in 1903 the PCUSA proposed reunification with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. In 1906 a majority in the General Assembly voted in favor of the union. Most Cumberland Churches rejoined the PCUSA, though some continued as the Cumberland Presbyterian Church,

The arrival of 1000 (mostly liberal) Cumberland Presbyterian minister further weakened the church’s historically Calvinist position.

III. 1908 Federal Council of Churches

Several Presbyterians played a leading role in founding the Federal Council of Churches in 1908. With money from J. D. Rockefeller they promoted the Social Gospel (the church focusing on social and economic issues rather than spiritual).

IV. 1910 Five Fundamentals

In 1909 there was heated debate in the New York Presbytery about whether or not to ordain three men who refused to assent to the virgin birth of Jesus. The General Assembly dismissed the complaint against them.

However, at the same time, a “Doctrinal Deliverance of 1910” was passed declaring five doctrines as essential to the Christian faith: inerrancy, the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the reality of Christ’s miracles.

A fundamentalist might cheer for this, but at the same time recognize that such a pronouncement weakens the promotion of all other positions of the Westminster Confession. Are they not essential?

Then, in 1910-1915, Lyman Steward, a wealthy Presbyterian layman and founding of Union Oil sponsored a series of pamphlets entitled “The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth.” From these pamphlet’s the term “Fundamentalist” was born. The theology of the pamphlets was decidedly against modernism, but otherwise contained a mixture of other errors as it promoted 64 authors from several denominations.

V. 1924 Auburn Affirmation

Written by Auburn Theological Seminary professor Robert Hasting Nichols and Henry Sloane Coffin of Union Seminary, the Auburn Affirmation opposed requiring the five fundamentals as a standard of orthodoxy. It gained the signatures of many pastors in its support. It referring to the five fundamentals as “particular theories” and argued for much greater liberty in beliefs.

Isaac and Rebecca Swift (spelled “Rebekah” on the stained glass window)

Isaac Swift (March 4, 1801 – Nov 23, 1890) was born in Falmouth Massachusetts and died in Unionville New York. “Professor” Swift had conducted a high school (Unionville Academy) in Unionville.

Rebecca Lewis Dimmick Swift (October 13, 1801 – June 10, 1888) was born in Barnstable County Massachusetts and died in Unionville, New York.

They had a son, William Henry Swift, who became a Presbyterian minister. (Studied at Amherst and Union Theological Seminary). May 7, 1884 he was installed as pastor of Honesdale Presbyterian Church. (Honesdale, PA)

Another son, Isaac Swift, also was a minister. He pastored First Church in East Syracuse, New York.

Both sons were signers of the Auburn Affirmation (May 5, 1924).

Where did theological Modernism come from?

- Darwinism
- Higher Criticism
- Scientism
- Social Gospel

In sum, “unbelief.” None of it came from the Scriptures.

Lesson 18: Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy (Part II)

Note: Some of the issues that are associated with Liberal churches today (like women's ordination and advocacy for so-called LGBT rights) were not involved in the Modernism of the early 20th century.

I. General Assemblies

1910 GA
- "Five Fundamentals" were adopted. (Inerrancy, Virgin Birth, Substitutionary Atonement, Bodily Resurrection, Miracles of Christ)

1923 GA
– By a vote of 439 to 359 the Assembly condemned Harry Emerson Fosdicks's controversial 1922 sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?"
- Five Fundamentals reaffirmed.

1925 GA
- established a special commission to study the causes of unrest.

1927 GA
- repudiated the earlier doctrinal statements declaring it was wrong to "single out particular doctrines as 'essential' and binding upon all ministers"
- 1925 Committee report demanded an end to "all slander and misrepresentation" (effectively silencing conservative critics) and prioritized "evangelical unity".
- From 1925 onward, the "denominational machinery" was firmly in the hands of moderates and liberals. No conservative moderator was elected from then on.

III. Modernist shift at Princeton
1929 Reorganization of Princeton Seminary. The seminary board was reorganized to include liberal members. The seminary had been governed by a Board of Directors which oversaw academic and theological matters and a separate Board of Trustees which managed finances and property. By organizing these into a single board, the conservatives were left out.

IV. J. Gresham Machen, IBPFM, WTS
1923 J. Gresham Machen published "Christianity and Liberalism" arguing that modernism is a separate religion and that modernists should leave the church.

1929 Westminster Theological Seminary founded by Princeton professors Machen, Oswald T. Allis, Robert Dick Wilson, Cornelius Van Til, and John Murrary. Princeton graduates Ned Stonehouse, Paul

Wolley, and Allan MacRae also joined.

1932 “Re-thinking Missions” endorsement by Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning author and missionary Pearl Buck, was a Social Gospel document arguing that missionary should focus on humanitarian work rather than teaching Christian doctrine and working towards conversions. While Buck resigned, the missionary board refused to denounce her modernist theology, which lead to Machen establishing the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Mission formed in 1933.

(Incidentally, In early 2025, the PCUSA notified nearly all its remaining foreign missionaries of layoffs due to a massive drop in giving and missionary force.)

With modernists in control at the 1934, it was ordered that men leave the independent mission board. Machen and others refused to resigned, so they were tried for insubordination and defrocked in 1936. At his trial Machen was effectively prevented from speaking as the judicial commission ruled his primary argument (that the mandate ordering resignation from the independent board was illegal) out of order.

Similar “trials” occurred for H. McAllister Griffiths (editor of the Presbyterian Guardian), J. Oliver Buswell (President of Wheaton College), Carl McIntire (pastor in New Jersey), Harold Laird (pastor in Delaware), Paul Wolley, Merril T. MacPherson, Edwin Rian, and Charles Woodbridge.

So they did not leave of their own accord, but were kicked out of the PCUSA.

Cornelius Van Til critized the leaders in the PCUSA who pushed out Machen. Those leaders, he notes, care little for the doctrinal standards of the church, but are keen to push their authority in the structure of the church. He writes, "It may certainly be regarded as ridiculous and a deeply sad phenomenon that someone, who did not even consider it necesary that one believes in the substitutionary atonement of Christ in order to be a lawful minister in the Presbyterian church, should not all of a sudden be seized by a fit of zeal for 'pure' church polity." (p. 44)

VIII. Presbyterian Church of America. OPC and BPC

1936 PCoA, 1937 BPC, 1938 OPC. Yet, these denominations remained small. The vast majority of conservatives in the PCUSA were took a moderate position, not leaving the denominations. Often this was the case because they would lose pension money if they left.

IX. PCUS – Southern

While the PCUSA (the Northern Church) was divided in the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, the PCUS (Southern) remained largely conservative for a few decades longer.

Lesson 19: 1940s-1950s – War, Neo-orthodoxy, Evangelicalism, Billy Graham

I want to mention something I forgot to say last week. It's pretty funny. J. Gresham Machen, the leader of the conservative presbyterians in the 1920s and 1930s had the nickname "Das." And he willingly accepted it. And, after spent a year in Germany, he would have understood the joke. See, in German "a little girl" is "Das Madchen" pronounced the same as "Machen." So in calling him "Das", one of the three German words for "the" they would have jokingly been calling him a little girl. Well, Machen died suddenly in 1937 and that was a shock to many, but the church continued on.

For my money, the major movement in theology, even affecting the Presbyterian Church, in the 1940s was that of Karl Barth and Neo-Orthodoxy. Barth was a Swiss Theologian, definitely opposed to Hitler. He had been trained by Modernists, but rejected much of their views. Yet, he didn't embrace Fundamentalism either. He produced a new type of theology that was, frankly, confusing, confused, and inconsistent. He would say a lot of things that sounded profound, but were really a mess. For example, he'd the Bible is not the Word of God but "becomes the Word of God." And like the Modernists, Barth rejected historical facts like a literal Adam and six-day creation. And he held to a view of universal atonement, even more than Arminianism.

Barth's theology was called Neo-Orthodox by some, but more accurately called "The New Modernism" by Cornelius Van Til.

But somehow Barth's theology become of great interest to many.

Before World War II many American Presbyterians leaned toward a "Liberal" theology that was highly optimistic about human progress. The horrors of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb shattered that optimism. The 19th-century "Social Gospel" suggested that humans could build the Kingdom of God on earth through education and social reform. The World Wars proved that humans were more sinful and destructive than liberals had admitted. So the Fundamentalist were proven correct. Yet, the unbelieving people couldn't embrace such faith in the Scriptures, looking down on the Fundamentalists. So Barth's "traditional language" about "sin" and "grace" was embraced. Neo-orthodoxy was primarily a movement of former modernists who had become disillusioned with the optimism of liberal theology.

But were Barth's teachings on sin and grace orthodox?
Whether Barth's teachings were "orthodox" . To Modernists, he sounded like a radical return to the Reformation (hence "Neo-orthodoxy"). To Traditionalists, he was a wolf in sheep's clothing. He didn't believe in the literal fall of Adam, and he thought of sin as "nothingness" rather than a broken law.

Karl Barth's view of sin fundamentally differed from the Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) in its source, its definition, and its historical reality. While the WSC treats sin as a legal violation of God's law rooted in a historical event, Barth treated sin as an "impossible possibility" that can only be understood through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Conservatives in the 1940s felt this was dangerous because it made sin feel more like a philosophical mistake or a "shadow" rather than a moral crime against a Holy Judge. They feared that if sin is "nothingness" and already defeated at the cross for everyone, people wouldn't feel the urgent need for personal repentance.

Well, Barth's student Emil Bruner got hired at Princeton, and Barthianism also came to Calvin Seminary and many others. McCormick Theology Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, and even eventually at Fuller Theological Seminary.

The Conservative Presbyterians avoided Barthianism at Westminster Theological Seminary and Faith Theological Seminary. By this time also, Fundamentalists of every stripe (Baptist, Pentecostal, Restorationist, etc) had developed their own schools, no longer sending students to the big university or historic seminaries.

Critics, particularly from the Old School Presbyterian tradition (like Cornelius Van Til), argued that Barth created a "theological labyrinth" that obscured the plain meaning of Scripture.

A "New Language": Barth's *Church Dogmatics* is over 9,000 pages long and uses highly technical, dialectical philosophy. Critics argue that if you need a PhD to understand how the Bible "becomes" the Word of God, it violates the Protestant doctrine of the **perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture**.

To a simple reader, the Bible says sin is a choice that leads to judgment. Barth's description of sin as "nothingness" or an "impossible possibility" can feel like philosophical gymnastics that soften the Bible's straightforward warnings.

Barth's theology had an impact on ecumenicism. It contributed to attempt (though failed) for a merger between the PCUS (Southern), PCUSA, and UPCNA in 1954.

1956 was the first Women pastor ordained in the PCUSA.

1958 the PCUSA and UPCNA did merge.

Barth's theology has faded some today, but is still active in some places (like Princeton which has a Center for Barth Studies). [True seminaries study the Bible] In recent years it was confirmed through

the discovery of love letters, that he had a long affair with his live-in secretary even while he wife was alive. It was a “three person marriage.” Such gymnastics in his life match his theology.

Well, another important movement in the 1940s and 1950s on the other side of the aisle, more or less, is Evangelicalism and Billy Graham. Some call this “neo-evangelicalism” and like the neo-orthodoxy of Barth sought to find a position between Fundamentalism and Modernsim. It was much closer to Fundamentalism, but wasn’t always embraced by the Fundamentalists. Leaders included Billy Graham, Carl F. H. Henry, and Harold J Ockenga. The voice of the movement as Christianity Today.

Neo-evangelicalism emerged in the mid-20th century as a movement seeking to move away from the perceived anti-intellectualism and social isolation of fundamentalism while maintaining core orthodox doctrines. They wanted an “infiltration” of culture and denominations rather than a separation. By the 1960s, the "neo" prefix was largely dropped as the movement successfully replaced old fundamentalism as the dominant expression of conservative Protestantism in America.

He rose to prominence around 1950 with radio, television, and print covering his work.
"Billy Graham Rule" (never being alone with a woman other than his wife)

Lesson 20: 1960s, 1970s, and Southern Presbyterians

Liberal Developments

North:

UPCUSA Confession of 1967: The United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA - the "Northern" church) adopted the "Confession of 1967," which was heavily influenced by neo-orthodoxy. This document focused on social reconciliation but was criticized by conservatives for moving away from traditional biblical authority and the Westminster Standards.

The "Book of Confessions": In 1967, the UPCUSA adopted a new Book of Confessions, which added several new confessions to their constitution, a move seen by some as reducing the authority of the Westminster Confession.

South:
Biblical Inerrancy: By the early 1970s, many leaders and seminary professors openly denied the inerrancy of Scripture. In 1972, the PCUS General Assembly officially rejected the idea that the Bible is without error.

Confessional Integrity: The church increasingly marginalized the Westminster Standards, with some proponents viewing them as "amorphous" or historically outdated.

Conservative movements:

1942-1987 Southern Presbyterian Journal, then Presbyterian Journal (became WOLRD Magazine)

1958 founding of Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship. Bill Hill.

Founding of Reformed Theological Seminary (1963-1966): Due to concerns over "theological drift" and liberalism in PCUS seminaries, conservatives established Reformed Theological Institute (later Reformed Theological Seminary) in Jackson, MS, in 1963, with classes beginning in 1966.

Concerned Presbyterians (1965): Led by Ruling Elder Kenneth Keyes, this organization was founded to represent theological and ethical concerns of conservative laity in the PCUS.

Presbyterian Churchmen United (1969):Founded by Donald B. Patterson, this group was organized to rally ministers and sessions dedicated to maintaining traditional theology against the rising liberal

influence within the PCUS.

1976 Harold Lindsell’s Battle for the Bible

Divide in the South (PCUS and PCA)

1971 — The Breaking Point: Conservative leaders from four key organizations met in Atlanta and voted 25–1 to begin planning for a new denomination, declaring the liberal drift in the PCUS "intolerable".

•1973 — Founding of the PCA: On December 4, delegates from 260 churches gathered at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, AL, to form the National Presbyterian Church (renamed PCA in 1974).

•1975 — The Kenyon Case: In the northern church (UPCUSA), the judicial commission overturned the ordination of Walter Kenyon because he refused to participate in the installation of women ministers. This triggered an exodus of conservative ministers, including R.C. Sproul, who subsequently joined the PCA.

1979 — Mandatory Women Elders: The UPCUSA ruled that all congregations must elect both men and women to the office of ruling elder. This mandate led to the departure of roughly 40 churches, including the influential Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) was formally establish in **1981** following meetings in St. Louis, Missouri. It was formed by pastors and elders from the "northern" United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA) and the "southern" Presbyterian Church in the US (PCUS) who were concerned about increasing theological liberalism and institutional resistance to change within their mainline denominations.

Former PCUSA that exist today:
BPC (1937)
OPC (1936)
Part of the PCA (1937)
EPC (1981)
ECO (2012)

1980s-2020 – recent history. BPC ecumenical relations.

We come now to the end of our series on American Presbyterian History. And we are up to the recent times, which is everything since 1982, because that was the year I was born.

What has happened in the Presbyterian church these last 43 years?

Decline:
Probably, the biggest story, though it is not pleasant, is the falling church membership and attendance nationally. This has affected every denominations, but the liberals have been affected more than the conservative. It turns out that if you don't preach the Gospel, fewer people find anything of substance at church. So the "tickling of ears" only works for a short time; candy only gives you energy for a half hour, but real food propels you for the whole day.

The PCUSA, for example, had peak membership of 4.25 million members. Today it is down to 1 million. But not all of those were losses out of church entirely, for many left for other churches, whether Presbyterian (EPC) or other traditions entirely.

Liberal Churches "progressing" downward.
1922 Women first ordained as deacons.
1930 Women first ordained as elders.
1956 Women first ordained as pastors.
1970 PCUA gave $10,000 to the Angela Davis Defense Fund. (She was associated with Communist Party and Black Panthers). (There was much pushback in the denomination)
1980s PCUSA supported leftist counterrevolutionaries in Nicaragua.
In 1994 a progressive group in the PCUSA called "Voices of Sophia" was formed to support feminist theology (whatever that is). This was in the wake of a controversy in 1993 at the "Re-imagining" Conference where "Sophia" (the Greek for wisdom) was invoked, as a female view of God.
In 2011 PCUSA voted to allow openly gay clergy.
In 2015 PCUSA redefined marriage (as if that were possible) to be between "two people."

Conservative Actions
1975 NAPARC was formed.
1982 Joining and Receiving of PCA and RPCES
1984 Ligionier Ministry (which had been founded in 1971) was moved to Orlando Florida.
2000s Tim Keller worked to grow PCA churches in cities.
RTS expansion.
Growth of Reformed theology in Africa, and American's training them.

Other Events:
Federal Vision Controversy (2000s) – Trouble over the doctrine of Justification that affected the PCA and OPC. "Justification by Faith Alone" was challenged by men who wanted to add further stipulations to salvation. Some today like John Piper continue these types of erroneous theology called for "final sanctification" by works, though salvation is initiated by faith. Most of the FV people have been

pushed out of conservative Presbyterian churches.

Battle over “Side B Christianity” (2019-2023)
- Some conservative Presbyterians were pulled into error in thinking that only acts (and not desires) were sinful. This continues to plague the PCA, though they have officially banned from ministry men who identify as “gay but celibate.”

In the Bible Presbyterian Church, a notable event in the mid 2000s, was establishing a fraternal relationship with the Orthodox Presbyterian church, which caused a few BP churches to leave and create the Faith Presbytery.
Also, Western Reformed Seminary and PMU in the early 1980s.

What does the future hold?
- Debates over “Christian Nationalism”