

Origin Of Freewill Baptists

This denomination appeared for the first time, as organized and distinctive, in the year 1780. The causes leading to the separation from the Baptist Church were two. The first is found in the Arminian tendencies, existing, to a limited extent, among some of the early Baptist churches. It is true that, generally, the early Baptist churches of this country were Calvinistic, yet there were members, and some ministers, who having belonged in England to that division of Baptists called "General," and who have always been moderate Calvinists, and some of them Arminian, brought those views with them and sought to propagate them in the churches in the United States. This would, of course, awaken opposition, and in time cause just such a separation as led to the denomination under consideration.

The second cause is found in the Antinomianism evidently spreading to a considerable extent about his time, and which, in a quarter of a century later, caused the secession of another body, known as Old School Baptists, leaving the great body of Baptists, of whom we have given an account, Calvinists, without falling into Antinomianism on the one hand, or Arminianism on the other.

The founder of this body was

Benjamin Randall. He was an uneducated man, but of sound sense and fervent piety. He was converted at New Castle, N.H., under the preaching of the celebrated George Whitefield, when twenty-two years of age. About four years after his conversion, in 1776, he united with the Calvinistic Baptist Church in Berwick.

Feeling called to preach, license was granted him by the church to "exercise his gift," which he did with remarkable success. He was instrumental in the promotion of an extensive revival of religion in Dover, N. H., the place of his birth, and in many other places. He imbibed Arminian notions, thus dissenting from the body with which he had connected himself. The Baptist church in Berwick met, considered his case, and withdrew the hand of fellowship from him.

There was not a denomination in existence in America to which he and his followers could naturally ally themselves. On the mode and subjects of baptism they were Baptists, but Baptists were Calvinists, while they were Arminians. The year that he was expelled from the Berwick church the church in London and Canterbury, with its minister, and the church in Stratford and minister, protested against Calvinism and stood independent, until they united with Mr. Randall and his little band.

By these ministers Mr. Randall was ordained, in March, 1780, and on June 30th, following, he organized in New Durham, N. H., the
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first Freewill Baptist church.

Like all new sects, terms of reproach were used in describing them. They were called Randalites, General Provisioners, New Lights, and Freewillers, the last of which has clung to them, and which they have accepted, being known now as Freewill Baptists (RAYS OF LIGHT FROM ALL LANDS, pp. 505-507, 1895 edition)

Editor's comments: This article above did not come from a Baptist book, but it contains very much truth as to who the real Baptists are in America. It proves the early American Baptists were Calvinists, not Arminians. Both Freewill Baptists and the Old School Baptists are dissenters from the old line of Baptists.

It is interesting to note that Benjamin Randall was saved under the preaching of a Calvinistic Methodist, and he was excluded from a Calvinistic Baptist church