

*The Journal of
Florida Baptist Heritage
Volume 20, 2018*

**Published by the
FLORIDA BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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Florida Baptist Heritage
Journal of the Florida Baptist Historical Society

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PREFACE

Journal 20th Anniversary: Highlighting Florida Baptist Legacies

In 1999 Dr. Mark A. Rathel, as the first secretary-treasurer of the re-organized Florida Baptist Historical Society, led the society board of directors to approve the publication of an annual *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*. The rationale was to produce a yearly publication that featured well-researched and documented essays on various legacies of Florida Baptist history and significant Florida Baptist personalities.

During the ensuing years the focus of these annual *Journals* evolved. The thematic emphases settled into four general categories: Baptist faith and practice (theology); Baptist personalities; Florida Baptist churches and constituencies; and Florida Baptist cooperating entities. A few annual editions featured a single subject profile of a given person or church. The selection of article topics for each edition was dictated by two overarching concerns. The first and foremost consideration was whether or not sufficient resource material existed that could serve as the basis for an in-depth narrative comprised of 2000 to 3000 words. The second challenge was the enlistment of writers who had the interest in the subject, time to undertake the research and the ability to write an in-depth, yet understandable, narrative. And it should be noted that any enlisted writer who made the commitment to accept the assignment did so knowing the date-certain deadline and that there would be no remuneration for their efforts.

The *Journal's* publication over the last 19 years were conceived, developed and produced under the attentive leadership of Dr. Mark A. Rathel from 1999 to 2001; Dr. Jerry M. Windsor, 2002 to 2016; and Donald S. Hepburn, since 2017. Although these men have had the ultimate responsibility for the editorial standards of articles and the compiled issues, they have been assisted by

several support staff. Jan Cunningham (1999 to 2006) and Penny Baumgardner (2007 to present) served as proof readers and formatted the articles into camera-ready layouts for the third-party publishers. For a time, Melissa Campbell (2000 to 2012) prepared the respective years' index of articles. And certainly, had it not been for the dozens of faithful volunteer writers, none of these *Journals* could have been realized.

The year 2018 serves a milestone in the history of *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*. It marks the 20th anniversary year of continuous publication. As a consequence, it seemed appropriate to recognize that achievement by taking a renewed look at some of the articles featured in the *Journal*. Over these 19 years at least 145 articles have been published. [Following this introduction, a listing index of those articles is provided.] From that pool of 145 were selected 15 articles that are included in this special 20th anniversary issue of the *Journal*. These are but a representative sampling drawn from the four thematic emphases featured in the *Journal*.

Each of these past 19 editions and their respective 145 articles can be found on the Society's website www.FloridaBaptistHistory.org. Select the menu dropdown named "Resources," then select *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*.

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The 2018 Baptist Heritage Award



The Florida Baptist Historical Society is pleased to announce that the 2018 recipient of the Baptist Heritage Award is to be presented posthumously to Dr. Sid Smith.

Dr. Sid Smith, for more than 11 years, led the Florida Baptist Convention in the development of African-American ministries, including an aggressive effort to start primarily African-American congregations. Although since the 1940s, the Convention had been committed to and developed piecemeal outreach and ministries to African-American Baptist congregations, this work was never assigned to an African-American individual. And that work which was done by Anglo leadership was focused primarily upon developing relationships with existing African-American Baptist conventions within Florida.

Sid Smith (b. 1943; d. 2009) was the first director of the Florida Baptist Convention's African-American ministries division from May 1994 until his retirement Oct. 31, 2005. In that role, he served at the convention's highest administrative and decision-making level in directing a unique cultural outreach among state Baptist conventions.

During his tenure, Smith gave leadership to an aggressive program of starting more than 400 predominantly African-American congregations as well as instituting a program department of church development to assist pastoral and lay leadership in African-American churches. "Sid was a scholarly man with a great grasp of the local church," said John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, who selected Smith to fill the newly created position in 1994.

"He was a pioneer in many ways in Baptist life," Sullivan said. Serving as that division's director, Smith "gave us immediate recognition in the African-American community because of his

stature,” Sullivan continued. “He energized church planting in that community. His contribution among African American congregations cannot be overestimated. I’ll miss him as a friend.”

Dr. Smith wrote a well-researched article titled, “A History of African American Baptists in Florida,” which was featured in the year 2000 *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*. It was one of several articles on Florida Baptists’ ethnic and cultural congregations featured in that annual publication. A prolific author of numerous books and articles on the African-American history and experience within Southern Baptist life, Smith lectured at every Southern Baptist seminary and numerous divinity schools.

Smith served more than 40 years in Southern Baptist denominational roles, longer than any other African American leader. He worked in California, Tennessee and Florida but his influence permeates multicultural strategies now in place at the Southern Baptist Convention’s North American Mission Board and Life Way Christian Resources.

Smith began his work among Southern Baptists in 1968 as the South-Central Los Angeles director of Christian social ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (now known as NAMB). In 1979, he began an 11-year tenure with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (now known as Life Way), first as a consultant and then as manager of the black church development section, as well as serving as part-time pastor of several African American congregations in the Nashville area.

A native of Texas, Smith graduated from the University of Corpus Christi with a B.A. and earned the master of religious education degree from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., in 1968 and the doctor of philosophy degree from California Graduate School of Theology in Glendale in 1973.

A Brief History of Florida Baptist Worship Styles

J. David Elder, Jr.

*Worship Pastor,
Anastasia Baptist Church,
St. Augustine, Florida*



On January 7, the first Sunday of 1821, Isom Peacock and Fleming Bates gathered with ten other worshipers in Nassau County near present day Callahan and organized the first Baptist church on Florida soil.¹ Pigeon Creek Baptist Church was typical of other Baptist churches that would follow it. These pioneer congregations had no church buildings, so their members met in private homes, public buildings, theaters, warehouses, or in open fields.² Their worship was plain and simple, as were the members. Preaching was grounded in Calvinistic theology, members were held to a strict code of discipline, the churches were racially integrated, and congregational singing was an important part of the proceedings.³

When these early churches met for worship, their services were marked by diversity, spontaneity, and fervency in both preaching and singing.⁴ There were not yet denominational hymnals, although Baptists had been actively writing hymns and compiling songbooks for many years. London pastor John Rippon had issued in 1787 a *Selection of Hymns* that was very popular among his fellow Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic. This work and various editions of Isaac Watts' hymns and psalms formed the musical canon of Baptist churches North and South at the start of the 19th century.⁵ The performance practice in early Florida Baptist churches was quite different from today's. Songs were sung in unison and without accompaniment. Since many people could not read words or music, the hymns were "lined

out.” The pastor, a deacon, or some other leader would sing or speak a line of the hymn; the congregation would then sing that line. One hymn from Rippon’s collection remains popular to this day—“How Firm a Foundation.”

As the 19th century progressed, Baptists above and below the Mason-Dixon Line developed different cultures, including worship styles. Northern Baptists, with many more large urban churches, favored the refined style of Lowell Mason, who sought to “correct” American church music by bringing it into line with European tastes. This type of music was found in *The Psalmist*, published in Philadelphia in 1843.

The Southern states, however, with their more dispersed populations and agrarian economies, lacked many large cities. Baptists in the South, consequently, had few large, sophisticated churches. The many small Southern Baptist churches rejected the cultured, European-style hymns in vogue in the North. They preferred the folk-style hymns of *The Sacred Harp*. Published in 1844, this shape-note collection had sturdy, four-square, strongly rhythmic folk tunes with simple religious texts.

By 1854, when the Florida Baptist State Convention was organized, there were 65 Baptist churches in the state.⁶ About that time, two important changes occurred in worship style. First, as literacy began to rise, lining-out began to fall by the wayside. Second, as more and more churches acquired buildings and congregations grew, organs began to come into widespread use.⁷ Worshipers of the time continued to sing folk hymns and older English hymns. In the 1860s, two Baptist and two Methodist congregations in Florida met together. Part of their service included the singing of “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks,” probably in its original minor key, not the major key found in modern hymnals.⁸

After the Civil War, the former Confederate States faced a daunting task, trying to rebuild economies, cities, churches, and private lives shattered by four years of hostilities. The late eminent Florida Baptist historian, Dr. Earl Joiner, has *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage, Volume 20, 2018*

J. David Elder, Jr.

written that “the last years in that decade [of the 1870s] were very gloomy.”⁹

But the year 1880 seemed to mark a kind of rebirth in the Florida Baptist State Convention. Perhaps some of that revitalization can be attributed to the emergence of the gospel song in the 1870s. The growth of Sunday Schools and the spread of urban revivals in the North, led by such legendary figures as Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey, gave birth to a lighter style of hymnody marked by dotted rhythms, lively tempos, and stanza with refrain formats. “Late 19th century Southern Baptists wholeheartedly embraced the gospel song, which almost entirely replaced the folk hymn as the basis of their congregational singing.”¹⁰

From the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th, the gospel song reigned supreme in Florida Baptist churches. Around the turn of the century, a new aspect of worship began to appear. Adult choirs were formed and contributed anthems to the musical portion of the service.¹¹ By the 1930s, a small number of “assistant pastors” with music responsibilities could be found throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, and children’s and youth choirs were begun.¹² Still, as late as 1926, an estimated 90 percent of music leadership was amateur and some churches had neither choirs nor instruments.¹³

Another development in Florida Baptist church music in evidence by the 1930s was the rise of instrumental music. In February 1930, First Baptist Church of Gainesville could boast of a “newly organized orchestra composed entirely of University [of Florida] talent.” The ensemble, large by the standards of that day, consisted of a piano, three violins, three clarinets, two saxophones, two cornets, one French horn, one trombone, and one bass horn.¹⁴ More common were smaller orchestras, such as that of the church at Dunedin, which had two violins, two saxophones, two cornets, a cello, and a piano.¹⁵

But not all of the instrumental music heard by Florida

The 1930s saw the rise of instrumental music

Baptists was produced by instruments normally found in a band or orchestra. On Sunday night, March 16, 1930, the congregation at Holly Hill was treated to two numbers on the “musical saw” by Clarence Brandon, a member of Stetson University’s ministerial fraternity.¹⁶ Later that year, the ladies of the Marion Baptist Association WMU heard “several beautiful numbers on mandolin and guitar” at their meeting.¹⁷ Two years later, the conferees at the Hollywood Baptist Assembly were entertained by Bill Allen, harmonica artist.¹⁸

By 1940, Southern Baptist churches exhibited a wide variety of worship styles. Many different Southern Baptist and non-denominational songbooks were in use and there was a general lack of common worship practices.¹⁹ A detailed examination of songbooks advertised in the *Florida Baptist Witness* during the 1930s reveals a bewildering array of choices. Broadman Press and Robert H. Coleman Publishing Company were by far the leading suppliers of the two dozen songbooks offered for sale. Of these, the most widely used was *Songs of Faith*, released in 1933 by the Sunday School Board, the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Convention. Within fourteen months of publication, 630,000 copies were sold. Across the convention, it was used by at least one million Southern Baptists weekly. In Florida, the Baptist Book Store in Jacksonville reported sales of 20,000 in that same period.²⁰

In 1940, the Sunday School Board released *The Broadman Hymnal*, marking a turning point in Southern Baptist church music. This hymnal “had not only the imprint of the denominational publishing house, but also the advantage of having been compiled by the most beloved Southern Baptist musician of the time, B.B. McKinney.”²¹ Undoubtedly scores of Florida Baptists agreed with the conviction of *Florida Baptist Witness* writer George H. Crutcher, who stated that McKinney was “the greatest writer of Gospel songs among Southern Baptists.”²²

The *Broadman Hymnal* was the first one to bring about uniformity of worship style in Southern Baptist churches. With *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage, Volume 20, 2018*

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sales of 7.2 million as of 1996, it became the most widely used hymnal among Southern Baptists. In Florida, *Witness* editor E.D. Solomon contributed to its acceptance by his writing: “In going over the state we have been surprised to see the song books used. Many of them are other than those printed by Baptists. The song books gotten out by the Sunday School Board are the best in the world for a Baptist church and they are just as cheap. Let Baptists use their own song books. They will have better music.”²³ Although its emphasis was on the gospel songs, it also contained selections for choral use as well as more sophisticated church hymns.²⁴

The decade of the 1940s was significant for Florida Baptists. In 1942, the Sunday School Board’s Church Music Department brought out its first study course book, *Let Us Sing*, which was taught at both the DeLand and West Florida Assemblies.²⁵ Many churches and associations began at this time to sponsor their own music training events.

In 1944, the Sunday School Board encouraged each state convention to employ a person to promote church music. Although there were at that time no full-time music directors in any Florida Baptist church, the state was one of the first five to hire such a worker.²⁶ Clifford A. Holcomb was elected secretary of the Brotherhood-Music Department. In 1948 he led in the establishment of Harmony Bay youth Music Camp, and the following year Annual State Music Festivals commenced.²⁷

Another landmark event of the 1940s was the founding of Baptist Bible Institute in 1943. Four years later, a program to train church musicians was instituted with two courses, Gospel Music I and Gospel Music II. By 1949, the Department of Music had been formed as an entity within the school.²⁸

Stetson University also made a major impact on Florida Baptist church music in the 1940s. The Department of Sacred Music was founded in 1946, making Stetson “the first school in the South to inaugurate a four-year course in Sacred Music leading to degree Mus.B.”²⁹

In 1956 the Sunday School Board released the first of

three songbooks to date to be entitled *Baptist Hymnal*. [ed. note: Since the publication of this article in 1999, LifeWay Christian Resources, the current designation for the Southern Baptist Convention's publishing arm previously known as the Baptist Sunday School Board, has put out a fourth *Baptist Hymnal* (2008).] The original *Baptist Hymnal* contained no pieces for choir use. Although it introduced some standard hymns such as "All Creatures of Our God and King," it was comprised mostly of gospel songs. As of 1996, it had sold about 6 million copies.³⁰

During the 1960s, two factors had a major impact on worship in Florida Baptist churches. First, the numerous associational and state festivals in which church choirs participated exposed many Baptists to a wide variety of music styles. Begun in 1949, the first State Music Festival, held at the First Baptist Church of Gainesville, had featured seven Junior and Youth Choirs from four churches.³¹ By 1960, the concept had grown to ten festival sites distributed around the state, with 112 churches participating. That year 272 choirs and eight instrumental groups performed, as well as 36 song leaders and 122 hymn players. Total attendance was 7,322, with 1,666 of that figure representing non-participating listeners.³²

Associational Festivals were even better attended. In January 1963, 43 of the 47 associations in the state held music festivals. At these, 255 churches participated by sending 602 choirs, 207 hymn players, 50 song leaders, and one instrumental group. With 12,808 participants and 5,417 visitors, total attendance at these events was 18,255.³³

The other major factor in the 1960s was the appearance of a new medium of church music—the folk-rock musical, such as *Good News*, *Tell It Like It Is*, and *Hello, World*.³⁴ This "youth music" often had a unison melody with an independent, harmonically contemporary accompaniment borrowed from contemporaneous popular styles. The growing interest in youth choirs and music in Florida is indicated by the appearance in 1962 of annual choral clinics for Intermediates and Young People. At the first clinic, 533 youth registered.³⁵

The 1960s also saw the beginning of annual youth choir tours. The first such tour to be reported in the pages of the *Witness* was taken by the choir of the First Baptist Church of Tallahassee in 1962. By 1964, youth groups from First Baptist Church, Ocala; Central Baptist Church, Miami; and First Baptist Church, Pensacola were also on summer tours.³⁶

With the publication of the second *Baptist Hymnal* in 1975, other sources of congregational music were brought to the attention of the convention at large. To the traditional English hymns, folk hymns, and gospel songs of earlier years, were added to African-American spirituals, choruses, and contemporary Christian music made popular by recording artists.³⁷ The 1991 *Baptist Hymnal* has continued to increase the diversity of congregational song by including much ethnic music, such as the Puerto Rican folk hymn, “Oh, How Good Is Christ the Lord.” But the growing diversity of worship style is not confined to music alone. Florida Baptist churches today have worship experiences that involve not only Bible reading, sermons, music, prayers, and offerings, but also dramatic skits, video presentations, choreography, and visual elements such as banners and paintings.

Today, a particular factor in Florida Baptist churches is the use of accompaniments that go far beyond piano and organ. Whether live or prerecorded, Florida Baptists often sing to the sound of strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion.

On any given Sunday in 1999, almost 2,400 Florida Baptist churches and missions will hold worship services in over 20 languages. A wide variety of music will be heard, from anthems presented by 100-voice choirs with full orchestra to soloists singing to their own guitar accompaniment. Congregations will sing classic church hymns, choruses, gospel hymns, ethnic songs, spirituals, and folk tunes. Gospel quartets and contemporary praise teams will sing old and new favorites. Full-time ministers of music and dedicated laymen and women will lead churches in worship formats that range from the very formal to extremely ecstatic. Some choirs will wear robes and stoles; some preachers will wear shirts and slacks. The eternal

truths from God's Word will be presented by speakers, singers, actors, and video screens.

The surface diversity found among Florida Baptist churches as we stand on the brink of a new millennium is astounding, but essential unity is provided by a common commitment to Jesus Christ. For over 175 years, Florida Baptists have worshiped and witnessed, preached and prayed, and sung songs of praise. May our common goal be that expressed over two centuries ago by Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf:

*Christian hearts, in love united,
Seek alone in Jesus rest;
Has He not your love excited?
Then let love inspire each breast;
Members on our Head depending
Lights reflecting Him, our Sun,
Brethren His commands attending,
We in Him, our Lord, are one.*

ENDNOTES

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- 4 H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 687.
- 5 Harry L. Eskew, "Use and Influence of Hymnals in Southern Baptist Churches up to 1915," *Baptist History and Heritage* 21/3 (1986): 22.
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- 8 Housewright, *Music...in Florida*, 144.
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- 13 Hugh T. McElrath, "The Minister of Music in Southern Baptist Life," *Baptist History and Heritage* 21/3 (1986): 11.
- 14 *Florida Baptist Witness*, February 13, 1930, p. 11.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Florida Baptist Witness*, April 3, 1930, p. 8.
- 17 *Florida Baptist Witness*, July 10, 1930, p. 10.
- 18 *Florida Baptist Witness*, June 3, 1933, p. 10.
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- 20 *Florida Baptist Witness*, August 2, 1934, p. 11; January 23, 1941, p. 11.
- 21 Music, "Baptist Hymnals as Shapers of Worship," 11.
- 22 *Florida Baptist Witness*, June 2, 1932, p. 3.
- 23 *Florida Baptist Witness*, November 28, 1940, p. 6.
- 24 Music, "Baptist Hymnals as Shapers of Worship," 11-12.
- 25 *Florida Baptist Witness*, May 28, 1942, p. 9.
- 26 Martha Flowers Stroup, *Singing the Wondrous Story* (Jacksonville: Florida Baptist Convention Church Music Department, 1993), 3.
- 27 Joiner, *Florida Baptists*, 184-185.
- 28 W. Wiley Richards, *Telling the Story of Jesus: Golden Anniversary of Florida Baptist Theological College, 1943-1993* (Graceville, FL: Hargrave Press, 1993), 39, 91.
- 29 *Florida Baptist Witness*, December 5, 1946, p. 9; July 17, 1947, p. 16.
- 30 Music, "Baptist Hymnals as Shapers of Worship," 12.
- 31 *Florida Baptist Witness*, June 2, 1949, p. 11.
- 32 *Florida Baptist Witness*, March 24, 1960, p. 14.
- 33 *Florida Baptist Witness*, March 14, 1963, p. 11.
- 34 Joiner, *Florida Baptists*, 256.
- 35 *Florida Baptist Witness*, January 3, 1963, p. 14.
- 36 *Florida Baptist Witness*, August 29, 1963, p. 12; June 4, 1964, p. 12; June 18, 1964, p. 8; July 2, 1964, p. 8.
- 37 Music, "Baptist Hymnals as Shapers of Worship," 14.



**“Nothing of Special Interest”
Foreign Missions in the
Florida Baptist Convention,
1854-1904**

Jerry M. Windsor

*Secretary-Treasurer (2002-2016)
Florida Baptist Historical Society*

At the 1860 Florida Baptist State Convention in Monticello, Joseph S. Baker submitted the foreign missions report. Baker was chairman of the Committee on Foreign Missions for the state convention and began his report by saying, “Your Committee report, that since your last session nothing of special interest has occurred within their knowledge in our missionary work.”¹ This view was not uncommon due to the struggle of recent Baptist disagreement over missions and the general poverty of the people.

The Florida Baptist State Convention was organized on November 20, 1854, in the parlor of the ten-room home of Richard Johnson Mays, about twelve miles from Madison. Seventeen delegates from three Baptist associations participated in the organizational meeting. A fourteen point constitution was adopted at that time and some very important principles were established that affect missions even to our day. Certainly items one, four, six, and eight are of special importance.

The word “missions” is not used in the first constitution of Florida Baptists. But an important foundation for missions is presented. Item one establishes the authority of New Testament Scriptures for the whole convention. Item four clearly recognizes the necessity of finances for valid operation. Item six sets the organizational chart for the infant convention and item eight cites financial accountability. Even today New Testament giving, leadership, and accountability are vital signs of a strong state convention.

Antebellum Views (1854-1860)

According to J. Lansing Burrows in his 1852 *American Baptist Register*, there were three Baptist associations in Florida, 73 churches, 2,687 members, and 30 Baptist preachers. Florida had become a state in 1845 and by 1850 the population was 87,445. Before this time some Florida Baptist churches had been members of Alabama or Georgia Baptist associations. They had adopted a commitment to missions that served them well in their new convention.

This missions commitment caused Florida Baptists to realize early the need for a strong financial base for mission service. The 1858 State Convention met in Thomasville, Georgia. It was announced that J. R. Evans was the executor of the estate of S. Evans and interest from the estate had placed a total of seventy dollars in the coffers of the young convention. Thirty-five dollars had been designated for an educational fund and thirty-five dollars had been designated for missions.²

J. H. Wombwell of Greenwood, was the chairman of the Missions Committee that reported to the 1858 Convention. Some excerpts from the written report might show the commitment that was evident among the committee members. "The importance of Christian Missions cannot be too highly esteemed or too largely magnified... It is impossible for any sincere believer in Christ not to feel that he has a part of this great, good, and glorious work to do, and do quickly. There is no room for argument on this question, nor is there need of any."

J. H. Wombwell, T. B. Winn, and C. Smith composed the Missions Committee at the 1858 Convention and brought an important resolution that Florida Baptists resolved, "That we will not cease to work, give and pray, until the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."³

The November 1860 Florida Baptist State Convention met at Monticello and the dark shadow of the Civil War was already present. Even though hostilities were nearly five months away, F. C. Johnson as a member of the appointed convention Foreign Missions Committee realized there was a delicate balance

between sectional politics and missions that could not be ignored. Johnson moved the resolution, “That this convention (though assembled solely for the purpose of promoting the progress of the Redeemers Kingdom on earth) in view of the mighty events which are now transpiring, and which must of necessity affect to an incalculated extent the Christian... and more especially our slaves, deems it proper at once to express their cordial sympathy with, and hearty approbation of those who are determined to maintain the integrity of the Southern States, even by a disruption of all existing political ties ...”⁴ A general commitment to missions was established early as members of the churches had come into contact with associations that had an anti-mission spirit. This seemed to be one of the reasons the Florida churches banded together in their own associations. Some associations in Georgia were anti-missionary and eventually became extinct or founded Primitive Baptist associations of their own.

The threat of anti-missions was a matter of Biblical interpretation. Florida Southern Baptists were very wise in these formative years to keep pointing to the Scriptures for missionary decisions. Another ante-bellum problem was not as easily dealt with.

J. R. Graves (1820-1893) and his followers in the Landmark movement attacked the Southern Baptist Convention on the matter of ecclesiology. Graves felt that the Foreign Mission Board was unnecessary and held undue appointing powers that belonged only to the local church. Graves attended the Florida Baptist State Convention organization sessions and also attended some later convention meetings. He was a persuasive speaker and powerful Tennessee editor. The commitment of early Florida Baptists to foreign missions and denominational cooperation was in spite of the Primitive Baptist and Graves influences.

Civil War and Reconstruction Years (1860-1877)

The Florida Baptist State Convention had four
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associations at the beginning of the Civil War. They were Florida, Alachua, West Florida, and the Santa Fe association which was formed in 1857.⁵ These associations were committed to missions but the coming of the Civil War drained needed leadership, energy, and finances that were necessary for viable foreign mission service.

At the outbreak of the Civil War there were thirty-eight missionaries serving abroad. There were fourteen in China and twenty-four in Africa. The hardships suffered by these servants are heart rending but also example setting. William R. Estep in his book, *Whole Gospel-Whole World*, gives wonderful testimony to the commitment of such people as Matthew T. Yates and Joseph Hardin.⁶

The Union blockade of the South hampered correspondence and support of missionaries abroad. Extreme efforts to sell cotton, use a flag of truce for communication, and the work of a Baltimore Committee were just some of the ways the Foreign Mission Board attempted to keep up its work during the war years. The 1861 Southern Baptist Convention annual reports sixty-six missionaries under appointment but by 1863 there were only 39.⁷ The war time numbers changed often and drastically.

The Florida Baptist State Convention did not meet from 1861-1865. In 1860 the population of Florida was only 144,024, and Baptists did not total over 6,000 citizens. The war devastated the meager leadership and resources of the churches. First Baptist Church of Jacksonville was taken over by the federals on the day of the Battle of Olustee (February 20, 1864) and much damage was done to the building.⁸ Some church buildings closed altogether during the war and much life and finances were expended on the Confederate cause.

After the war the convention met in Madison in 1866, and Lake City in 1867. At the Lake City convention, a committee on foreign missions was appointed and an important home mission statement was made. The observation was put forth that, "The country is in a depressed condition as to energy, finance and

morals.” But a solution was suggested at the 1867 Convention. It was stated that, “One of the most effective instrumentalities in the hands of God for the accomplishment of the work, would be the putting into the field of able, zealous, working men, as missionaries of the Cross.”⁹

In 1868 the Florida Baptist State Convention had a “Missions” report. This same report in 1869 stated the need for more finances but noted, “In the foreign field we find great encouragement in the breaking down of the governmental barriers which formerly prevented the entrance of evangelical light.”¹⁰

The 1870 Convention report on missions raised a very interesting point. “Foreign Missions have also a large claim upon our prayers and support. The field is the world. The gospel is the power of God to the salvation of every one that believes. Can we withhold the bread of life from the perishing millions of our race? God is bringing the nations of the earth close together. Countries once closed to the gospel are now open and calling upon us to send them the Bible and living ministry.”¹¹

The Civil War and reconstruction years saw great hardship in missions but it also brought out the very best in many early mission leaders. James B. Taylor served as head of the Foreign Mission Board for twenty-five years (1846-1871), and set a wonderful example. The lives of Lottie Moon, Henry Allen Tupper, Annie Armstrong, and the Bagbys of Brazil are only representative of the mission fervor of the postwar period.¹²

Missions Promoted (1878-1908)

Two important early factors in this time of mission promotion were the organization of the State Board of Missions and the election of W. N. Chaudoin as corresponding secretary. Both of these events came about in 1880, and both were influential in foreign mission fervor among Southern Baptists in Florida.

The single most important event in the progress of foreign missions in Florida in this period of time was the

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beginning of the Woman's Mission work in 1881. Dr. Chaudoin appointed Mrs. N. A. (Ann B. Hester) Bailey as secretary and she served until her death on September 26, 1886. Although the official Woman's Baptist Missionary Union of Florida starting date was January 12, 1894, the heartbeat of missions can be traced in Florida to the Chaudoin-Bailey connection.

When Martha Trotter wrote her story of the Florida Baptist Convention WMU (1894-1994), Barbara Curnutt, then Florida WMU Director, wrote the foreword to the book. Miss Curnutt said, "I have been intrigued, humbled, and inspired by those who have gone before us." That elegant observation speaks precisely what one feels when the work of missions unfolds in Florida. Women were the heart and hands of missions when many preachers were still debating anti-missionary sentiments and Landmarkism. The leadership of Mrs. N. A. Bailey (1881-1886), Mrs. L. B. Telford (1887-1893), and Miss Jennie Lucena Spalding (1894-1911), was a guiding light for Florida Baptists and foreign missions.¹³



Mrs. L. B. Telford
1887-1893



**Jennie Lucena
Spalding**
1894-1911

In March 1885 the *Florida Baptist Witness* carried a front page article by Mrs. A. L. Farr entitled, "Is Missions a Necessity in Florida." The address was read before the Ladies Missionary meeting in Orlando and carried a mission challenge that is valid today. "Let me here say that I fear many of us may be content to be mere lookers on in this missionary enterprise that is engaging the hearts of our Christian sisters both North and South. There is too much at stake now, when the eyes not only of the heathen world, but of all Christian people are intently watching the work of Christian women in Florida for one of us to dally by the way."¹⁴

Mrs. Farr went on to say, “We the Christian women of Florida are commissioned fully as much as was Paul commissioned to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, fully as much as was Dr. Judson or Wade to preach the gospel to the Burmese. None are excused. True, we are not here today, personally called to go as missionaries to distant lands, but we can help some one else go in our places, to represent us there and act as our substitutes.”¹⁵

In 1901 there were 484 Southern Baptist Convention churches in Florida with 60,874 members. Twenty-two associations were formed between 1835 and 1907. The 1910 *Encyclopedia Britannica* says that Baptists were the strongest denomination in the state.¹⁶ The new century saw Baptists breaking forth.

Dr. Chaudoin (1880-1901) and his successor L. D. Geiger (1901-1909) called for foreign mission giving and going. The State Board of Missions had missions and education as their guiding priorities from the beginning. Through the foundation of strong ministerial leadership and the enthusiasm of women on mission it was no surprise when Frank J. Fowler of Putnam County became the first Florida native to be appointed a foreign missionary by the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board on July 18, 1904. While serving as pastor in Harriman, Tennessee, Frank and his new bride Daisy Cate committed themselves to foreign service in Argentina and served faithfully there as long as they could.¹⁷

Closing out a view of Florida Baptists and their first fifty years in foreign mission service, it seems appropriate to conclude with another challenge from that era.

“The hour is drawing near when we shall go out to meet our King at the same hour others will go from China, Burma, Japan, and the isles of the sea. There will go too some, doubtless, from our own state, not 200 miles away from us, who are now hungering for the Bread of Life. Their opportunities of hearing that “Sweet story of old” are very limited. Will any of these, whether from abroad or

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*at home, be gathered into our father's house through our instrumentality? Or shall we go with empty hands?"*¹⁸

We began with an 1860 report that there was “nothing of special interest” going on in missions in Florida. Yet fifty years later we close with the challenge, “Shall we go with empty hands?” As we approach our 150th year of celebration as Florida Baptists, we rejoice that there are 151 Florida Baptists serving on the foreign mission field. Now let us recommit ourselves to open hearts, open minds, and open hands to foreign mission service around the world.

ENDNOTES

1. 1860 *Florida Baptist Convention Minutes*—Baker does speak of the potential for foreign missions in China and Africa but complains of the “tardiness with which the current of benevolence bears into the treasury of the Board the pecuniary supplies needed.”
2. In the interest of Biblical finances being of foundational importance to missions, I asked a banker friend to calculate the compound interest on a principle gift of \$2,000 given as an estate item in 1856. She told me the \$2,000 at 3.5 percent would be \$336,621.70 in 2002. Never underestimate the Holy Spirit's guidance to put missionary causes in your will and estate plans.
3. E. W. Warren preached a missionary sermon on November 22 (The Lord's Day), 1858, at the convention. By this time the convention had three associations, 121 churches, 4,052 members, and 46 ministers.
4. The resolution hardly takes into consideration the colored member's feelings which numbered about 50 percent of the convention. As a matter of fact, Florida Association had 1,038 colored members and 1,037 white members.
5. There always has to be a nodding acquaintance with the Suwannee Association formed in 1835. It was the first Baptist association organized in Florida but was taken over by anti-missionary leadership about 1845. In 1847 the association changed its name to the Suwannee River Primitive Baptist Association. (Earl Joiner, *A History of Florida Baptists*, 20).

6. William R. Estep, *Whole Gospel-Whole World*. Broadman and Holman, Nashville, 1994, 93-111.
7. Edith M. Jeter. "Under the Banner of King Jesus: Foreign Missions and the Civil War." *Baptist History and Heritage*, July/ October, 1997, p. 92.
8. Joiner, 48-49.
9. 1867 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, Appendix A. Hereafter referred to as *FBC Annual*.
10. 1869 *FBC Annual*, Appendix B
11. 1870 *FBC Annual*, 7.
12. Annie Armstrong made several visits to Florida to encourage women in their mission work. Armstrong and Bettie Chipley of Pensacola were good friends. Armstrong made an 800 mile, nine-day train trip in 1902 and Florida women flocked to hear her. She challenged Florida Baptist women to mission service, but men were excluded from the meetings. (Martha Pope Trotter, *Faithful Servants. The Story of Florida Woman's Missionary Union. 1894-1994*, 58).
13. Trotter has a well documented detailed history of Southern Baptist women on mission in Florida. She weaves the foreign mission commitment constantly with their state mission presence.
14. Mrs. A. L. Farr, "Is Missions a Necessity in Florida." *Florida Baptist Witness*, March 19, 1885, Vol. 2, No. 10, p. 1.
15. This stirring mission challenge reminds us why many pastors attend WMU meetings. They come away humbled and inspired.
16. Joiner, 99 and 301.
17. Joiner, 100, Trotter, 59 and others report on this happy day for Florida Baptists.
18. Farr, *Florida Baptist Witness*, Vol. 2, No. 10, p. 1.

The Contributions of Southern Baptist Sunday School Curriculum to a Understanding of Baptist Doctrines

L David Cunningham

Director of the Sunday School

Department (1984-2001)

Florida Baptist Convention



Two primary factors probably determine most Baptists concept of Bible doctrines. First is the doctrinal teaching of the pastor that baptized them, that they most admired, or who had the most significant impact upon their lives. The second factor is the Sunday school quarterly. Sunday school quarterlies have been generally admired and appreciated by those who “prepared their lessons,” prior to the Sunday meetings. Sunday school pupils who accepted the quarterlies as a part of the process but rarely studied the content or applied their minds to the process involved still usually formed their doctrinal concepts from lesson presentations and discussions. Either way, the balanced selection of scriptures and finely crafted writings by dedicated Baptist writers have guided Sunday school members in understanding the great doctrinal truths of God’s Word since before the establishment of the Baptist Sunday School Board to today’s Lifeway Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Various Confessions of Faith have been the bedrock of Baptist doctrinal positions over the years, but the majority of Baptist church members rarely saw such documents, much less engaged in their study. The closest thing to a doctrinal understanding by most Baptists was the Church Covenant pasted into the front or back of the hymnal at church.

Doctrinal truths taught through Sunday school lessons have been the most significant factor tying Baptist church members and churches together for over 150 years. For many of these years, one unifying curriculum was taught in most Southern Baptist churches providing a standard of doctrinal understanding regardless of the church attended. Thus, while the quality of teaching varied greatly, the written content was consistent from church to church.

The issue of doctrine has been the focus of Southern Baptists Sunday school curriculum from long before formation of the Sunday School Board. Sunday School materials were readily available before 1850, but most of these early writings were primarily designed for children, focusing on Bible stories, and largely avoided doctrinal issues. At this time Sunday schools were mostly Union schools for children from all denominations meeting together.

These early Sunday schools were promoted by the American Sunday School Union of Philadelphia founded in 1824 by a group of Christian business men. Their focus was on moral, social and character issues and conversion to evangelical religion, with some periodicals devoted to reading and spelling for general education. “As children – and even youth and adults – were converted through Sunday School influence, the denominations became concerned about doctrinal purity and began developing materials to teach the unique theological and doctrinal perspective it espoused.”¹

Baptists first “approved” Sunday School curriculum came from the American Baptist Publication Society also formed in 1824. Through their system of printing, colportage and Sunday School missionaries, the ABPS dominated the distribution of Sunday School curriculum in Baptist churches until about 1910.² There was general satisfaction with the Sunday School materials produced by the ABPS, so when the Southern Baptist Convention was formed “the convention in its first regular session (1846) decided against creating a publishing enterprise.”³ “However, when Kentucky Baptists in 1854 complained of the

undenominational character of the American Sunday School Unions literature, interest was aroused in developing a denominational press.”⁴ When a group of leaders formed “the Southern Sunday School Union in 1858 at Memphis, Tennessee, the convention realized the need for denominational leadership and formed a Sunday School Board in 1863, located at Greenville, South Carolina, called the “Sunday School and Publication Board.” This Board, led by Basil Manly Jr., and John Albert Broadus functioned from 1863-1873, publishing catechisms, teacher’s books, question books and hymnbooks. “Most notably, it began the publication of *Kind Words* (January 1866). But “developing frictions, particularly with the doctrinal and publication interests of James Robinson Graves, and economic problems arising out of the Civil War, made the survival of this board impossible.”⁵

“In 1868 the Sunday School Board was consolidated with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Union and transferred from Greenville, South Carolina, to Memphis, Tennessee. Financial distress and internal friction during reconstruction years, however, led to the merger of the Board in 1873 with the Domestic Mission Board, which continued the publication of Sunday school papers.”⁶

There had been calls for a Southern Baptist publication agency before formation of the Southern Baptist Convention. W.W. Barnes wrote, “It was out of such a need that the first step toward separation came. In May, 1844, Rev. James Davis introduced a resolution in the state convention of Georgia calling for the formation of a Southern Baptist publication society, but it was defeated.”

“The Central Association of Georgia, in its 1846 session issued a call for a convention to meet in Savannah, May 13, 1847, immediately preceding the State Convention. Delegates from Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama met and formed the Southern Baptist Publication Society, May 13, 1847. This Society was located in Charleston, South Carolina, and rendered worth-while service in furnishing a literature for

Southern Baptists until the exigencies of the war ended its career.”⁷

In 1857, Dr. R.B.C. Howell, president of the Southern Baptist Convention introduced a resolution to form a Southern Baptist Sunday School Union. Organized in Americus, Georgia, April, 1858, “...the incipient Union fell into the hands of the Landmark faction, and at once lost the possible support of many Southern Baptists. They were not willing for the Landmarkers to supply the Sunday Schools with literature carrying the peculiar tenets of Landmarkism. However, J.R. Graves, A.C. Dayton, and the other Landmarkers carried on the work of the Union until the war.”⁸

Records of various associational minutes attest to the centrality of doctrine as a concern in Sunday School literature. *Minutes* of the 12th Annual Session of the West Florida Association in 1858 read, “We recommend the adoption of a more Baptististic, a more scriptural literature in our schools.”⁹ And in their 13th Session we read, “So few of our churches have availed themselves of the advantages arising from Baptist Sabbath School literature, and are still using the Union Books, which purposely keep hid our distinctive principles as Baptists.”¹⁰

Florida Baptist Association wrote in 1860, “We would take the liberty to suggest that as the different denominations have their peculiar Sabbath School literature, that our churches have their own Sabbath Schools and use our own Sabbath School literature”¹¹

“Respecting Sunday School literature,” wrote Alachua Baptist Association in 1882, “We would impress upon the minds of the members composing the churches within our bounds the great importance of using such literature, and such only as is purely baptistic. We should feel it our duty to support *Kind Words* and its accompanying quarterlies, and the literature furnished us by the A.B.P. Society, the former being published in behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention.”¹²

In 1891, a new Baptist Sunday School Board was

created with the first meeting conducted on May 26 in the pastor's study of the First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee. James Draper wrote, "Southern Baptists finally had a chance to control their own publications for their own theological benefit."¹³

James Marion Frost, the first corresponding secretary and Bernard W. Spilman, the first field secretary "...developed a distinctive program of Sunday School work suited to Southern Baptist needs and doctrines."¹⁴

One of the founding purposes of the Baptist Sunday School Board was to provide ongoing instruction and doctrinal reinforcement for the churches

"One of the founding purposes of the Baptist Sunday School Board was to provide ongoing instruction and doctrinal reinforcement for the churches."¹⁵ The matter of doctrine in Sunday School lessons was so important that in the first year of this Board, they "commissioned John Broadus to produce a catechism that could be used to teach sound doctrine to children. The founders of the BSSB emphasized doctrinal teaching... in the Sunday Schools" where "priority was given to setting forth doctrinal truth as the foundation of spiritual life."¹⁶ The issue of doctrine has been a bedrock issue for every Sunday School leader at the BSSB since its inception.

Church leaders were faithful to keep the BSSB on target doctrinally. Dr. W.A. Hobson, Chairman of the Florida Sunday School Committee addressed the Fifty-Sixth Annual Session in 1911 saying, "Our distinctive doctrines should be taught in the Sunday-school. As Baptists ... we will not surrender one vital doctrine of the New Testament for convenience, commendation or co-operation."¹⁷

B. W. Spilman initiated a teacher-training course through his first book *Normal Studies For Sunday School Workers*, published in 1902. He wrote, "The Sunday School teacher should know Bible doctrines. Doctrine means teaching."¹⁸

In his 1913 edition he wrote, “Every denomination owes it to itself to teach in the Sunday School the things for which it stands.”¹⁹

Arthur Flake wrote in *Building a Standard Sunday School*, “Standard Requirement: Southern Baptist Sunday School literature shall be used throughout the school. Reasons: Because of its Doctrinal Integrity. Three outstanding facts make this true. First, the editors and lesson writers of the Sunday School Board are staunch Baptists. Second, ...some half dozen careful Bible students read every sentence for the purpose of testing its rightness. Third, all our lesson treatments and periodicals are subjected to the closest scrutiny by individuals and groups both within and without our fellowship.”²⁰

“Until 1908 Southern Baptists had collaborated with the International Lesson Committee in producing some materials, but a doctrinal conflict with this group and an issue with the Baraca and Philathea Union resulted in Southern Baptists producing their own lesson series beginning in 1910. The Union preferred a nondenominational approach and objected to what they felt was an “over-emphasis of dogma and creed.” J.M. Frost wrote, “that Baraca and Philathea were anti-denominational in their aims and effort” noting their materials were “not a fit message for Baptist.”²¹ The SSB produced their own graded lesson series beginning in 1910. Arthur Flake wrote concerning the graded series, “there is afforded opportunity not only for teaching the great fundamental truths... but also the indoctrination of our own people in the great truths which we hold and which we believe to be essential to New Testament Christianity.”²²

Before Southern Baptists adopted the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925, E.Y. Mullins, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary had published *The Axioms of Religion*, as a guide to Southern Baptists in understanding their fundamental doctrines. This interpretation of the Baptist faith served as the compass for leaders at the SSB.

Jealously guarding their cherished doctrinal positions

and emphasizing those distinctives has always been at the core of Sunday School Board literature. This stance adopted by J.M. Frost and other early leaders continues to this day.

One must note, however, that from the very first affiliation with any other Sunday school curriculum provider there has always developed an issue over “alien doctrine,” which eventually resulted in a separation from the outside source.

“The Convention Uniform Series had been published since 1872, nineteen years before the Sunday School Board existed. It started with a group of Sunday School leaders from various denominations working jointly on a lesson series, and the Board began using these lessons as soon as it was operational in 1891,” Draper noted. “While all denominations studied the same Scripture passages and topics at the same time, each denomination selected its own writers for its lessons.”²³ A little over 100 years later, “the Board relinquished its longstanding ties to the Uniform Series” following repeated complaints from Baptists about control and financial arrangements.²⁴

J.M. Frost set the standard for doctrinal foundations in Sunday School Board publications. In a report to the SBC he wrote, “Christian character and life today lack the doctrinal earnestness of Jesus. We need to give emphasis to creedal character and doctrinal conviction as having practical virtue and value in everyday Christian living. A lack of this leaves the present-day Christian subject to every kind of doctrine of whatever fad or fancy, if only it be labeled religious or Christian or church.”²⁵

Sunday School Board and Doctrine in the 20th Century

How could the board manage doctrinal writings that would satisfy Baptists? By 1930 “there was a growing criticism of the board’s operations” The *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, reported, “they took note of certain criticism about the content of its periodicals and declared their support of the great fundamental principles of our denomination.”²⁶ Following this meeting, “under the leadership of editorial secretary Hight C. Moore, a writers conference for writers

The Contributions of Southern Baptist Sunday School Curriculum and editors was instituted at Ridgecrest in August, 1931,” which was “a pioneer effort among denominations.”²⁷ From then on, this “writers school” provided an environment for directing the doctrinal content in Sunday school lessons.

“In July, 1969 ... all employees dealing with doctrinally related materials signed a copy of commitment to abide by *The Baptist Faith and Message*. New employees in this category signed the statement as a condition of employment.

“In January, 1970, the trustees unanimously granted the president authority to add to the staff of the editorial secretary sufficient personnel... to give all manuscripts one more analytical evaluation prior to publication. H. Leo Eddleman, was named “doctrinal reader” for the board, and following his retirement in 1972, the responsibility was renamed, becoming manuscript analyst.”²⁸

One difficulty in teaching doctrine perse through Sunday School curriculum has been the restriction by the board on use of the term “doctrine” in Sunday School materials. So, while doctrine is at the heart of many Sunday School “lessons,” (one might argue most lessons) the term “doctrine” is rarely found. Why? Because program assignment for teaching “doctrine” was assigned to Church Training via study committees in 1955-1956 and the term was “siloed” to that division of the Board. To satisfy the board’s assignment of the word “doctrine,” the term is generally avoided in Sunday School curriculum, while the effect through Bible study content is still functional.

This writer’s calls to employees at Lifeway to ask about purposeful doctrinal content in writing Sunday School lessons were largely channeled to other sources. One editor who did respond wrote, “Over the years, I’ve worked on all the mainline Sunday School curriculum of their time. In each of these products, Baptist doctrine is an undercurrent. Even when the topic is not a specific doctrine, the topic is shaped by Baptist doctrine.” In looking over recent and near future studies, several stand out as particularly strong doctrinal studies.

Analysis of Scripture Passages In Sunday School Lessons

As a basis in examining the doctrinal content of present day Sunday School lessons, the 568 scripture passages in the seventeen doctrinal headings of the 1963 *BF&M* were compared to the content of various Sunday school quarterlies. Scanning the adult curriculum for two years, 266 of these passages were foundational to the lessons. Since the series is written on a six year cycle, it appears every topic of the *BF&M* is likely to be studied, some multiple times, over the lessons cycle.

The “Life and Work” series, now called “Bible Studies for Life,” dedicates large blocks to doctrinal studies. As examples, in 1991 twenty-two weeks were devoted to “God’s Son/Salvation,” and another seven weeks to “The Church.” In 1993, nineteen weeks were given to a study of “Jesus.” In 1994 twelve weeks were dedicated to “the Nature of God,” and in 1995, sixteen weeks were given to “The Son of God.” Similar blocks are carved out each year, some following a Bible book study, others using selected passages to provide a comprehensive coverage. Since “Explore the Bible” series is an in-depth study of all 66 books over an eight-year cycle, doctrine is inclusive.

In 2002 Lifeway redesigned the Preschool/Children’s curriculum concepts into ten areas: God, Jesus, Bible, Creation, Family, Self, Church, Community and World; adding “Salvation and Baptism” for children at the appropriate age. In examining the Preschool/Children’s Sunday School lessons for a two year period, more than 100 scripture passages were included with each subject area taught multiple times. It is clear that the ten subject areas (with a major emphasis on salvation for older children) form the foundations for a deeper understanding of doctrine as children reach their teen years.

Evidence of the strong impact of Sunday School literature on an understanding of Baptist doctrine by “Baptists in the pew” may be observed from the strong backlash against the Sunday School Board anytime the cherished doctrines appear to be violated in print or spirit. As long as “the curriculum deals with the great realities – such as salvation, God, Christ, Sin,

The Contributions of Southern Baptist Sunday School Curriculum Sanctification and Eternity” the writers are on solid ground. But when the subject matter reaches out “to include principles, problems, and conditions related to the Christian Faith and life,” Baptists can have a rather strong difference of opinion.²⁹

This difference of opinion was strongly felt when the “Life and Work” series was first published in 1968. Sunday School Board President James Draper wrote that traditional Convention Uniform series “taught what the Bible said. The Life and Work series emphasized what the Bible meant – and how to apply it to life situations. Bringing up application of biblical principles meant bringing up current events which (since the 1960’s) has been a surefire recipe for conflict. Some Baptists wanted only to know what the Bible says, not what it means.”³⁰

Draper cited another: “in February 1985, *The Baptist Student* published an issue on the role and function of women in Baptist life. Its editorial position drew a storm of protest from Baptists.” Six months later, “*The Baptist Student* took a strong stand against right-wing politics, ...and other issues that resulted in the resignation of the editor,” Draper explained.

“An even more serious lapse appeared in the July 7, 1985 Life and Work Sunday school lesson on *Job*. The lesson taught that the Satan who had a conversation with the Lord in *Job* chapter 2 was not the devil of the New Testament... and challenged the characterization of Job as a patient man of faith,... raised questions about Job’s historical identity, and claimed it was correcting mistaken impressions about *Job* The uproar that followed was probably the most widespread reaction to a Sunday School Board publication since 1964. The *Job* lesson got through the system undetected because new or temporary people were serving in key positions and everybody thought somebody else would take care of it... .” This resulted in “the administration being instructed by the trustees to take the necessary steps to implement a more discriminating policy for the employment of lesson writers for our curriculum materials.”³¹

Following these issues, a series of evaluations were conducted culminating in a “Sunday School task force that
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surveyed thirteen thousand people asking what they needed and how the Board could make its lessons better.” Draper wrote, “Over the next two years we took our three curriculum programs completely apart and reassembled them. We never wavered in our allegiance to biblical inerrancy and traditional Southern Baptist interpretations.”³²

While the Sunday School Board has numerous checks to guarantee doctrinal purity in their Sunday School lessons, this does not mean that they do not have their bias concerning certain doctrines. Dr. Duke McCall tells of a time when the Sunday School Board asked him to write the *Broadman Comments* for a series of Sunday School lessons on the doctrine of the church. He wrote, “I had quarreled with the Sunday School Board people from time to time because only the Landmark view of the church appeared in Sunday School Board literature.” When he turned the offer down – they told him he was “always complaining that we don’t present the alternative to the Landmark view. In the end, McCall accepted the assignment – using faculty of Southern Seminary to contribute to the project, while the Sunday School Board advised him he would have to take the responsibility for the material because it would be very controversial.... We agreed to collaborate to get a different point of view on the church into *Broadman Comments*.”³³ So, while the Sunday School Board is careful in handling doctrinal issues, Baptists have differing viewpoints on some points which creates a tenuous environment from time to time.

Conclusion

Without question Sunday school lessons presented by Lifeway Church Resources (formerly the Baptist Sunday School Board) provide the foundational doctrinal basis for the majority of Baptists.

But do the rank and file Baptists care about doctrine any longer? The *Associated Baptist Press* quoted a Gallup poll saying “large numbers of Americans are biblical illiterates and lack awareness and understanding of their own religious

The Contributions of Southern Baptist Sunday School Curriculum traditions and the central doctrines of their faith. We want the fruits of faith, but less of the obligations,”³⁴

At least two other significant factors determine Baptists understanding of their doctrines. One, is the conviction and passion of Sunday School teachers. If teachers are convinced of its importance – pupils can be encouraged to “study their lessons.” Dr. Doak Campbell wrote, “To know a lesson the teacher must ... understand the teachings or doctrines involved and know the value of a practical application of both facts and teachings to the problems of life.”³⁵

The other factor is the work of the Holy Spirit in understanding the Bible – and its doctrines. “If the Bible is to be the means by which God speaks to the learner, the learner must be taught its content. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to bring persons to conviction and conversion and to help them grow in grace toward the goal of full Christian maturity.”³⁶

In summary, a thorough evaluation of Sunday School curriculum provided by the Sunday School Board/Lifeway throughout its history demonstrates a strong contribution of these studies to Baptists’ understanding of our doctrines.

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Salvation for the 21st Century: A Historical and Practical Perspective

J. David Coggins

*Assistant Professor of Leadership
The Baptist College of Florida*



Introduction

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19 NASB) The doctrine of salvation is the gateway into a new understanding and relationship with God. Paul reminds us in this passage of not only a historical perspective on man’s need for salvation, but also the church’s mandate to continue the ministry of the Lord Jesus, who Himself said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10 NASB)

The doctrine of salvation is the first and foundational of all other practical doctrines to be utilized in the life of the New Testament church. It is the doctrine of salvation, in which man has an opportunity to encounter and a valid relationship with God through Christ that makes the application of every other doctrine possible. To only discuss the doctrine of salvation from a theological/philosophical or any other perspective without asking how it impacts the church’s ability to fulfill God’s mission in the world is valuable, but short sighted if this concern is not addressed.

The doctrine of salvation is the point where the doctrine of God and doctrine of man intersect because it is here that God intervened in the life and destiny of mankind and changed the course of eternity for those who believe. In this brief

article, a short historical perspective will be covered, a modern day perspective on this issue will be overviewed and perhaps most important, the practical implications of this doctrine for the church will be considered.

Historical Perspective: A Rich Heritage

To say that the doctrine of salvation has enjoyed a rich and historical place in the economy of God's dealing with mankind is an understatement, because it is in fact as old as time itself. In fact it is older than time, as Peter reminds in 1 Peter 1:19-21 that "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world and that through Him we are believers in God and have faith and hope in God because of Him (Christ)." God has been in the "business" of redeeming man to Himself from the beginning of time when Adam and Eve transgressed God's righteous standard and found themselves in need of redemption and reconciliation. God has shown Himself to be a God of grace and mercy evidenced fully and completely in the work of Christ to bring salvation to mankind fully and completely.

This rich heritage has crossed the lines that often separate theological persuasions and positions. Whether Calvinist, Arminian, or Catholic, there are some commonalities that unite even where there are issues that divide. In the pages of his *Systematic Theology*, Charles Hodge, as he critiqued the rationalism of Friedrich Schleiermacher, reminded us of this wonderful heritage when he wrote, "to whom Christ is God, St. John assures us, Christ is a Saviour."¹ This is also seen in the conversations that have been held between evangelicals (Baptists in particular) and Catholics. In discussing the question of what is salvation, Baptists and Catholics have at least agreed, not on the nature of salvation, but on the fact that the "history of the notion of salvation has been the history of theology itself and even though a resolution from the Southern Baptist Convention from 1994 notes that Baptists and Catholics have historically differed on the nature of salvation, they have found some agreement over the biblically rooted vision of salvation as past, present and future

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reality.”² For this reason, both groups can affirm that “salvation is God’s larger purpose for creation. It is not just one of God’s many gifts; it is the very ground of creation, the whence and whither of the human race and all else in heaven and on earth.”³

Southern Baptists have historically and consistently affirmed biblical realities that point to man’s need for salvation and God’s activity in salvation.

Salvation is God’s larger purpose for creation

From the 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M)* statement to the 2000 *BF&M*, Southern Baptists have affirmed biblical and

historical truths that historically have provided a strong foundation upon which to apply this doctrine in the ministries of local congregations and mission efforts. These biblical truths include, but are not limited to the following.

First Truth: Man’s Lostness

Perhaps one of the greatest needs that the church has to remember man’s greatest need which is that man is lost apart from Christ. It does not take long for many Christians to remember what it was to be lost.⁴ While this statement is attributed to Darrell Robinson in his study course on the doctrine of salvation, it is an observation that most Christians have observed in the life of the church. This fact is what has historically kept Southern Baptists affirming and defending the need for a thoroughly biblical and applicable doctrine of salvation. In 1925, the *BF&M* affirmed that salvation is an act of God’s grace to bring about the regeneration, sanctification and ultimately the glorification of man. Even though the structure of the document has changed, the content has not changed. Between the 1925 statement, the 1963 statement and the current 2000 statement, the fact that Southern Baptists have affirmed man’s need and God’s activity has been consistent.

That man is lost is a constant position among Baptists and it is a biblical position. Jesus used the term lost (*apollumi*) a number of times. “It has the strong meaning of to *utterly destroy*.

It is translated in various places as to be ruined, or rendered useless, to kill or destroy, to be wasted and useless, and to perish."⁵ The fact that man is separated from God by sin and the fellowship God intended was broken is seen in the garden of Eden experience of Adam. Sin separated man from God.⁶ This fact is seen most clearly in Luke 15 in which Jesus describes human lostness in three parables. In all three parables, the full expression of the idea of humanity's lostness is revealed, there is destruction and ruin, worthlessness and waste and rebellion, this leads to the conclusion that lostness manifests itself in both acts and attitudes of life.⁷

Second Truth: God's Act of Grace and Love

In the Scriptures, the word salvation has various meanings. In the New Testament, the verb form of the word is used in regard to rescuing from danger or destruction, of healing from disease or even solving a problem (Phil. 2:12). But the greatest use of the word is in regard to spiritual salvation through Christ (Matt. 19:25; John 3:17). In this sense, salvation is the full redemption of the whole man. This redemption, meaning to buy back something, God did Himself in order to satisfy the demands of His holy, righteous nature, and this He did through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.⁸

The question that is to some extent unanswerable is why? Why would God in His holiness, condescend to man in his sinful, lost condition and bring redemption? Only one word can describe it, grace. The *BF&M* states that "Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which he regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners. It is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. It encourages the use of means in the highest degree."⁹ While this statement is from the 1925 version of the *BF&M*, there is consistency in the three versions. The fact that God extends His grace to His creation in this way is the

expression of His love to mankind revealed in the person and the work of His son, Jesus Christ. Paul states in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (NASB)

When speaking from a historical perspective on the fact of God’s grace revealed in salvation, it is appropriate to affirm that this is God’s eternal purpose, centered in Christ before the world was. God’s purposed His redemptive plan in Christ for humanity before creation took place. This is Paul’s expression of praise in Ephesians 1:3-14, that every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places is given to the redeemed, beginning with the blessing of redemption through His son.

Crucial here is the Baptist perspective that we are completely justified by Christ. This does not come about by the surrender of faith as if it were some work on our part that makes acceptable to God, because faith is not the cause of justification being offered to man, but faith is a response or condition for receiving God’s grace, which is in and of itself completely a gift of God without precondition.¹⁰

Third Truth: Jesus’ Fulfillment of God’s Purpose

God’s condescending to meet man at the point of his need culminated “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5 NASB) Jesus completed the purpose of God for mankind’s redemption when He humbled Himself to our low estate and became the redemptive sacrifice and was Himself the Redeemer. Again, when looking from a historical perspective of salvation, this truth has not only been the foundation of the preaching, teaching and discipleship relative to man’s salvation throughout history, it has been the great rallying cry that all of Christendom has sounded forth with hope, with faith, with praise and with worship. The firm reality is that the church has long believed and taught that Jesus alone is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes

to the Father without coming first and only through Jesus Christ and His finished work on behalf of those who believe. Unfortunately, the heritage of faithful adherence to this foundational truth, handed to multitudes in the believing community, may be in jeopardy as the church charts its course through the new century.

Modern Perspectives: A Tarnished Heritage

The doctrine of salvation identifies the remedy for man's sinful condition and gives hope for man's future that would otherwise be a bleak and hopeless existence. It is the work of Christ on our behalf that brings joy, purpose, meaning and hope to those who have experienced its gracious affect in their lives. For this foundational teaching the church has reason to be thankful for those who have established this heritage for us. But this heritage has become a tarnished treasure in the blight of the modern, politically correct influence taking place in culture and sadly in the church.

The word for the day is religious pluralism, which may just simply be the religious version of being politically correct. As Okholm and Phillips state when quoting Leslie Newbigin,

“Simply put, the specter of historicism has corralled religious claims into the private sphere, isolated from political and social discourse. And Western societies demand that everyone assume this relativistic attitude so that each religion must treat the others as if they also have salvific access to God. Popularly we call this political correctness. Everyone is to have an equal voice, especially the marginalized and disenfranchised. That is why the chief virtue in our society is never having to say you're wrong, letting the other have his or her opinion. Religious beliefs amount to little more than matters of personal taste, on a par with one's preference for ice cream or movies.”¹¹

The perspective of modern culture seems to be that one should to whatever lengths possible to not bring offense. The only

problem with this perspective is that if the gospel does not bring an offense as a precursor to a salvation experience, it may not result in a genuine experience. Paul made every attempt to reach his first century world with the truth of the gospel knowing full well that it would bring an offense. Paul himself made every effort not to be an offense himself (1 Corinthians 8-9), but he knew that the gospel message presented to lost persons would be a stumbling block an offense. This fact did not cause him to soften his message for expediency and pluralism. It did give him reason to be sensitive in how he shared, but what he shared was consistent with the truth of the gospel.

This fact has been lost in a modern, 21st century context. It seems that in this pluralistic and politically correct culture, normative religious claims for the gospel are becoming more and more difficult to maintain. Recent ebbing of inclusivism in theological circles gives evidence of the difficulty of maintaining a historically and biblically consistency with the gospel message of the biblical writers and those who formulated gospel thought for the church's consumption throughout the ages past.

Of course this tarnished heritage is not just seen in the theological pluralism espoused by every voice of "authority" with

**Christ's atonement
gives hope to
Christians in their sin
and in their suffering.**

a television or other platform, it has invaded even evangelicalism to the degree that it has begun to impact the church and the mission effort. Long known for evangelistic zeal, the number of missionaries supported by North American agencies began to decline in the 1990's for the first time since the 1940's.¹²

The current milieu of Christian thought leaves a distressing and impending fearfulness as it relates to the future and the likelihood that the church will be able to maintain its historic position on this most foundational of doctrines as related to God's activity with man. As Mark Dever states, "At stake is

nothing less than the essence of Christianity. Historically understood, Christ's atonement gives hope to Christians in their sin and in their suffering. If we have any assurance of salvation, it is because of Christ's atonement..."¹³

What the certain elements of the church has traded for "acceptance" in a politically correct world and a pluralistic theology is the valued foundational truth of God's judgment on sin and Christ's exclusive gift of Himself for the salvation of mankind. But there is hope, at least for Southern Baptists. Even though reports that are being dispensed about the decline of the Western church and the SBC church are somehow related to this issue, there is hope. At the 2009 Southern Baptist Convention, where the focus was the Great Commission and a possible refocus of efforts toward fulfilling the Great Commission, the recording secretary reported a higher number of younger messengers than has been reported in years past. Young SBC leaders are concerned about not just the future of the SBC, but they are concerned about the historic gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation of lost men, women and children.

Church Perspectives: Where it Matters Most

All the historical perspective and the changing landscape of political correctness and theological pluralism is irrelevant in the discussion if the question is not considered on how the church is impacted. God commissioned the church of the Lord Jesus to be the agent of reconciliation in the world. Local congregations are the greatest missions force in the world. This is the reason that the discussion must always take into consideration what impact these positions, debates, theological treatise, etc will have on the ability of the local church to give a clear and resounding message of hope to the world.

Many church leaders have become convinced that the approach to sharing the gospel should be to avoid an offensive message of an atoning sacrifice for man's lost condition. As Dever states some are convinced that evangelicals have become too "Atonement centered, that some believers talk too much about

Christ's death, which deals with our guilt due to sin, which is in reality the only way to a relationship with God."¹⁴ Of course this belief does become clearly evident in messages that tout the blessings in life that come from a self esteem message rather than a message that confronts a person concerning the reality of their sin. Even in evangelical churches where method often overshadows message, a pragmatic gospel may be heard over the historic message of sin and salvation. This impacts the way that missions is carried out, how church planting is done and how evangelistic efforts are accomplished. The tendency to gather a congregation, then gather converts rather than confront people with the truth of their need for Christ, help them into a saving relationship with Christ, then disciple them, can give a false message of hope. Persons who are part of the congregation may be lulled into the false perception that they are the converted, when in fact they may never have dealt realistically with their need for salvation through Christ. Historic Baptist doctrine related to salvation is that salvation is not through the church but in Christ and Christ alone. Let the church get about the eternal business of proclaiming the glorious message of the gospel.

Conclusion

Salvation for the 21st century is no less and no more than salvation proclaimed in the first century, nothing has changed about man's condition or about God's love and His intention and desire to act on man's behalf through Christ. Man is still in need of salvation. Regardless of how sophisticated we think we have progressed beyond medieval imaginations, man is still in need of salvation, Christ is still saving and the church must continue to stand for, proclaim and promote the saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Biblical truth and historical foundations, not man's sense of justice and fairness must be our guide in meeting the ultimate spiritual needs of the world. This message of hope and the historical perspective of the church must be the guide for the church, even amidst the voices that decry our narrow-mindedness and bigotry, this is our heritage, and this is

our mandate and our mission. Paul says, "...He has committed to us the word of reconciliation," (1 Corinthians 5:19b NASB). This is our heritage; this must be the heritage that is passed to the next generation of church leaders that will lead their churches to be on mission with God in the world to reach them with hope. The words of a wonderful Travis Cottrell anthem of worship expresses beautifully, but simply: "Jesus Saves"

**Hear the heart of heaven beating, "Jesus Saves. Jesus saves."
And the hush of mercy breathing, "Jesus Saves. Jesus saves."
Hear the host of angels sing, "Glory to the Newborn King."
And the sounding joy repeating, "Jesus saves."**

See the humblest hearts adore Him. "Jesus saves. Jesus saves."

**And the wisest bow before Him. "Jesus saves. Jesus saves."
See the sky alive with praise, melting darkness in its place
There is life forevermore, "Jesus saves. Jesus saves."**

**He will live our sorrow sharing, "Jesus saves. Jesus saves."
He will die our burden bearing, "Jesus saves. Jesus saves."
"It is done!" will shout the cross, Christ has paid redemption's cost!
While the empty tomb's declaring, "Jesus saves."**

**Freedom's calling, chains are falling, hope is dawning bright
and true.**

**Day is breaking, night is quaking, God is making all things
new.**

"Jesus saves."

*Oh to grace, how great a debtor! "Jesus saves. Jesus saves."
All the saints who shout together: "I know that Jesus saves."
Rising us so vast and strong lifting up salvation's song,
The redeemed will sing forever, the redeemed will sing forever,
the redeemed will sing forever, "Jesus saves."¹⁵*

ENDNOTES

- 1 Mouw, Richard J. 2008. An open-handed gospel: we have to decide whether we have a stingy God or a generous God. *Christianity Today* 52 (4): 44-47.
- 2 Duffy, Stephen J. 2000. Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic soteriologies: a comparative study. *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (Fall) 434-459.
- 3 *ibid*
- 4 Robinson, Darrell W. 1992. *The Doctrine of Salvation*. Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 8.
- 5 *Ibid*, 13.
- 6 Hobbs, Herschel. 1996. *The Baptist Faith and Message*, revised. Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 49.
- 7 Robinson. 1992, 13.
- 8 Hobbs. 1996, 48-49.
- 9 *Baptist Faith and Message*, 1925
- 10 Duffy. 2000, 439.
- 11 Okholm, Dennis L., Timothy R. Phillips, John Hick, Clark H. Pinnock, Alister E. McGrath, R. Douglas Geivett, and W. Gary Phillips. 1996. *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 9.
- 12 *Ibid*, 11.
- 13 Dever, Mark. 2006. Nothing but the blood: more and more evangelicals believe Christ's atoning death is merely a grotesque creation of the medieval imagination. Really? *Christianity Today* 50 (May) 29.
- 14 Dever. 2006, 29.
- 15 Travis Cottrell, (2008, Brentwood Benson Music) "Jesus Saves."



A Theological View of the Ministry of Deacons

Mark A. Rathel

*Professor of Theology
and Philosophy*

The Baptist College of Florida

Introduction

One of my greatest joys in ministry has been the privilege to serve alongside deacon servants as well as minister to deacon servants. For several years my wife and I served as Certified Deacon and Deacon-Wives Trainers for local churches, associational conferences and conferences for Baptist state conventions. We frequently attended the sessions on Deacons and Deacon Wives at Bible-Preaching Week Conference at Ridgecrest Conference Center. In the context of local church ministry, deacons provided the context for my richest friendships and ministry colleagues.

Most churches and deacons struggle with a singular question. What is the role of deacons? Within Southern Baptist life, two varied proposals vie for the correct answer to the question. On one hand, some understand the role of deacons as a board that governs the physical structures of the church including campus, finances, and personnel matters. Key nineteenth century leaders within early Southern Baptist life affirmed this understanding. For example, R. B. C. Howell, legendary pastor of the First Baptist Church of Nashville, wrote the influential book *The Deaconship*. Howell divided the role of pastors and deacons into two separate spheres.

“By the acts there set forth [Acts 6], as well as by all that appears in every other part of the word of God, it will be fully seen that as the pastor has supervision of all the spiritualities of the church, and is, therefore, overseer or

bishop in that department; so the deacons are overseers of all her temporalities, of which they of right have the full control.”¹

Howell based his understanding of the role of deacons on two presuppositions. First, he adopted the common assumption that Acts 6 narrates the origin of the office of deacon.² Second, Howell emphasized the description of the role of deacons as expressed in the King James translation of Acts 6 – “whom we may appoint over this business.”³ On the other hand, toward the end of the twentieth century, Baptist leaders postulated that the role of deacons was one of ministry rather than a group over the temporal affairs of the church.⁴

What role does theology play in understanding the proper ministry of deacons? Jarhead, leatherneck Marines understand the importance of doctrine more than many Baptists. “In short, it [doctrine] establishes the way we practice our profession. In this manner, doctrine provides the basis for harmonious actions and mutual understanding.”⁵ A biblical theology of deacons provides the basis for harmonious actions and mutual understanding. *A Theological View of the Ministry of Deacons* encompasses the following theological doctrines: the nature of the church, the priesthood of all believers, spiritual gifts, personal theology of the deacon, and the biblical concept of ordination.

The Nature of the Church

A unique understanding of the nature of the church is one of the distinctives of the people of God who identify themselves as Baptist.⁶ The ordinance of baptism is not the defining characteristic of what it means to be a Baptist. Numerous other groups practice believer’s baptism by immersion. In terms of the nature of the church, Baptists affirm with other Christians the three major biblical images of the church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁷ A baptistic understanding of the nature of the church arises because of a combination of unique emphases held by Baptist. The

following outline presents baptistic distinctives regarding the nature of the church. First, the nature of the church is a Christ-centered organism. *The Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M)* contains four expressions of this Christocentric principle of congregationalism. The *BF&M* describes the church as “church of [belonging to] the Lord Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, the church is “governed by His laws.” The Lordship of Christ serves as the operational principle - “each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ.” Moreover, “each member is responsible and accountable to Jesus as Lord.” Second, the *BF&M* characterizes the church as a believers’ church—“a local congregation of baptized believers.” The church is not a believer’s church; the church is a believers’ church. The nature of the church as a believers’ church necessitates a regenerate church membership. Third, the *BF&M* affirms the nature of the church as a covenanted community — “associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel.” Historically, the church covenant functioned as the foundational document for the church rather than the constitution. Fourth, the *BF&M* identifies the church as a spiritual organism. The word “church” translates the New Testament word “ekklesia,” meaning “called out ones.” The church exists by the initiative of God, called out from the world, and commissioned to serve God. The *BF&M* describes the church as people rather than a building, a denomination, or an institution.

The practical consequence of the biblical description of the church expresses radical ramifications for the role of a deacon. Rather than serving the “secular affairs” – a description of the role of deacons according to J. L. Dagg the first Baptist theologian in the South – a deacon functions as a leader in a spiritual organism.

Priesthood of All Believers

The New Testament proclaims the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6, 5:10; 20:6). In addition to explicit biblical texts, the New Testament describes

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the activities of God's people in terms of priestly activity (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16; Rom. 12:1; 15:16). The New Testament teaching focuses upon the priesthood of all believers not the priesthood of individual believers. "Those five priesthood passages in 1 Peter and Revelation address the issue of community more than the idea of unrestrained individualism."⁸

The Preamble to the *BF&M* affirms this communal understanding of the priesthood of all believers. "We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God."⁹ Baptists historically have understood the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to mean that we are priests to each other. The teaching of God's Word functioned as one of the primary duties of priest in the Bible; therefore, the proclamation of God's Word serves as the primary spiritual sacrifice of the community of priests.¹⁰

While recognizing some individuals receive "a call" into vocational Christian ministry, the priesthood of all believers undercuts an unhealthy dichotomy between "clergy" and "laity." The Protestant Reformer Martin Luther correctly understood the radical implications of the priesthood of all believers for the overturning of the Roman Catholic sacramental/sacerdotal system. English expatriate John Smyth established the first Baptist church in Holland in 1609. In 1610, he authored the first Baptist confession of faith in which he included bishops and deacons as ministers of the church.¹¹

The biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers recognizes varied roles for individuals within the people of God while at the same time highlighting the important role all believers have in the context of the ministry of the church and society. A rediscovery of the priesthood of all believers underscores the full ministry of the whole people of God.¹²

Spiritual Gifts

One of the primary descriptions of the church in the New Testament is the Body of Christ. Interestingly, the primary

biblical passages expressing this image (1 Cor. 12-14) also sets forth the role of gifted members within the Body of Christ. Paul summarized the spirituals as he called them in the following manner. First, spiritual gifts are graces from God. The Greek term for spiritual gifts “charisma” means “a gift of grace.” Second, the Spirit gives a grace gift to every believer (1 Cor. 12:7,11). Third, the spiritual gifts function within the Body of Christ to build up the church (1 Cor. 12:7). A spiritual gift is a Spirit endowed grace enablement to serve the Triune God for the edification of the Body of Christ. Lewis Drummond, a former seminary evangelism professor and seminary president, noted the connection between spiritual gifts and ministry. “This list of gifts of the Spirit [the gift list in Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:8-10; and Eph. 4:11) makes it quite evident that they cover much of the work of the ministry. Therefore, they cannot be taken lightly.”¹³ Even the serving gifts, then, focus on ministry.

The biblical teaching regarding spiritual gifts contains sweeping implications for a theological view of deacon ministry. Churches tend to organize deacon ministry around task orientation, either a task structure involving a “board of deacons” or committee structure within the deacon organization or a “ministry task” structure, for example, a deacon family plan. Spiritual giftedness suggests that deacon ministry should involve a ministry task orientation. Since deacons possess spiritual gifts perhaps a “ministry gift” organization of deacon ministry functions as a biblical based model for deacon organization. Phillip the Evangelist and deacon utilized his spiritual gift of evangelism as well as meeting the needs of the Hellenistic widows.

A Deacon’s Personal Theology

Paul in 1 Timothy set forth theology as one of the qualifications for service as a deacon – “holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9 HCSB). Paul used the term “mystery” twenty-one times to describe the content of the gospel. Specifically, Paul utilized the term to describe a truth that

God reveals rather than knowledge discovered by humans. The prepositional phrase “of the faith” does not describe “subjective faith”. The phrase “the faith” occurs in the New Testament as a descriptor of the doctrinal content of the Christian religion. A theological view of the ministry of deacons has as a foundation the personal theology of the deacon servant. While Scripture requires bishops possess the ability to teach as a qualification for the office, qualified deacons are not required to teach doctrine. Deacons, however, must understand the basics of the faith. In addition to the core essential doctrines of “the faith,” I suggest that deacons understand distinctives of the Baptist faith as a prerequisite for service.

The qualification regarding doctrine for deacons necessitates that deacons hold to the divine revelation of the faith with a “clear conscience.” Paul’s correlation between “the faith” and “pure conscience” unites correct theological content with correct behavior.

Ordination of Deacons

Throughout Baptist history, the issue of ordination has created an uneasy feeling. E. C. Dargan, former professor at Southern Seminary, admitted that biblical teachings regarding ordination are meager.¹⁴ The major biblical defense among Baptists regarding ordination has been the biblical language of “laying on of hands” and “appoint.” In the New Testament, the phrase “laying on of hands” occurs eight times, only in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:26 is there a possible reference to ordination. In the passages from Paul’s letters to Timothy, “laying on of hands” has no reference to deacons. The primary biblical passage by which Baptists defend the ordination of deacons is Acts 6: 3 – “men... whom we may appoint to this duty.” The Greek term translated as “appoint” by English translations is the verb “kathistemi” which derives from a root meaning “to stand or set.” Three times the term occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews in association with the installation of priests into office (Heb. 5:1; 7:28; 8:1). The term depicts standing the men in front of the

congregation to install them into office.

Baptist tradition contains two divergent strands concerning the biblical language of “laying on of hands.” On the one hand, a significant tradition viewed “laying on of hands” as an external rite performed for all believers based on Hebrews 6:2 coupled with an understanding that Acts 8:17-18 taught that the “laying on of hands” was conjoined with the ministry of the Spirit. The 1742 *Philadelphia Baptist Confession* contained a separate article “Of Laying on of Hands” in which the association equated “laying on of hands” as an ordinance to be performed as a prerequisite to admission to the Lord’s Supper for the purpose of “farther reception of the Spirit.”¹⁵ On the other hand, perhaps the larger Baptist tradition limited the act of “laying on of hands” to the practice of ordination following the Old Testament pattern of “laying on of hands” symbolizing blessings and prayer.

Alan Culpepper provided a helpful summary of the biblical meaning of ordination in a Baptist context.

*“An adequate theology of ordination derived from the biblical accounts will include at least a Christology, a pneumatology, and an ecclesiology of ordination. Ordination is the recognition and celebration of Christ’s care for his church expressed through the calling and endowment of a minister or deacon with the Spirit. The laying on of hands invokes God’s blessings upon the minister or deacon and is the church’s recognition of God’s call to the person to minister in their midst.”*¹⁶

On the other hand, M. W. Egerton provided a rationale for the practice of ordination for deacons upon the nature of the office rather than specific biblical teachings. Egerton connected ordination to the office of deacon in terms of the character of service performed, the responsibility of the office holder, and the qualifications for the office.¹⁷

Conclusion

The New Testament does not contain a “job description” for deacons. Acts contains two descriptions of deacons

“deaconing” – caring for poor widows and personal evangelism. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul focused on deacons “being” rather than “doing.” Through an examination of a theological view of the ministry of deacons, the following summation attempts to answer the question, “What is the role of deacons?” First, deacons are influential spiritual leaders in a spiritual organism rather than an organization. The emphasis the New Testament devotes to deacons “being” a certain kind of individual means the role of the deacon is one of spiritual example and influence. Second, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers suggests that the role of deacon is one of ministry with and to the full congregation. Deacons serve as fellow-priests to other priests. Deacon service partakes of the nature of a spiritual sacrifice offered to God in the context of worship. Third, every deacon has a spiritual gift – a Spirit endowed grace enablement to serve and build up the Body of Christ. Spiritual gifts may be divided into two broad categories – speaking and serving (1 Pet. 4:11-12). Deacons should serve in the area of their giftedness to maximize their effectiveness to serve the church. Third, a deacons’ personal theology is important because the New Testament unites theology and ethics. Fourth, the practice of ordination does not impart something special to deacons. Through ordination, a church publically recognizes an individual’s call to deacon service, qualifications to serve, as well as providing a prayerful beseeching of God’s blessings upon the servant.

ENDNOTES

1 R. B. C. Howell, *The Deaconship: Its Nature, Qualifications, Relations, and Duties* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1946), 12. The italics are original. Judson Press released this edition of Howell’s work in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the original 1846 publication date. Other nineteenth century Baptist leaders affirming the same understanding include J. L. Dagg, *Manual of Theology Second Part: A Treatise on Church Order* (Charleston, S.C.: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1859), 266; E. C. Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches* (Louisville, KY: Charles T. Dearing, 1905), 96. The first edition of Dargan’s book appeared in 1897.

2 Contemporary Baptist theologians disagree regarding the relationship between Acts 6 and the origin of the office of deacon. Southeastern Baptist Seminary professor John S. Hammett affirms the traditional view that Acts 6 describes the origin of the office of deacon for three reasons: the noun and verb form related to “deacon” occur in Act 6:1-2, the qualifications outlined in Acts 6 correlate with the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3, and if Acts 6 does not describe the origin of deacons, then the New Testament affirms an office with no precedent. John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2005), 192. Southern Seminary professor Gregg Allison disagrees. Allison argues that the noun form of deacon describes the preaching ministry of the apostles (v. 4), Stephen and Phillip engaged in non-typical deacon work by preaching the gospel, and the common understanding Acts 6 as descriptive of the origin of deacons creates a schism between the spiritual ministry of deacons and the physical ministry of deacons. Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church. Foundations of Evangelical Theology*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012), 241-42.

3 The Greek term translated “business” in the KJV has the primary usage “need” and secondary usage as “office.” Modern translations divide over whether “duty” (ESV, NASB, RSV) or “responsibility” (NIV, NLT) functions as the best English translation.

4 Robert Sheffield, *The Ministry of Baptist Deacons* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1993), 16-18.

5 *Warfighting*. U. S. Marine Corps (New York: Cosimo Classics, 1989), Kindle Edition.

6 R. Stanton Norman, *More Than Just a Name: Preserving Our Baptist Identity* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 83.

7 Hammett, 31.

8 Walter B. Shurden, *The Doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1987), 60.

9 *Baptist Faith and Message* 2000.

<http://www.sbc.org/bfm/bfmpreamble.asp>. Accessed 2 June 2013.

10 Malcolm B. Yarnell, III, “The Priesthood of Believers:

Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Royal Priesthood.” *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, eds. Thomas White, Jason Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell, III (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2008), 243.

11 “That the ministers of the church are, not only bishops... but also deacons...” John Smyth, “Short Confession of Faith,” in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 101.

12 Richard Broholm, “The Call to Holy Worldliness: The Unfinished Reformation Agenda,” *Laos: All the People of God*, eds. Fisher Humphreys and Thomas A. Kinchen (New Orleans, LA: Convocation on the Laity, 1984), 60.

13 Lewis A. Drummond, “A Theology of the Laity: Spiritual Gifts,” *Laos: All the People of God*, 49.

14 Dargan, 90-91.

15 Lumpkin, 351.

16 R. Allan Culpepper, “Biblical Basis for Ordination,” *Review and Expositor*, 78, no. 4 (Fall 1981): p. 482.

17 M. W. Egerton, *A Functioning Deacon in a New Testament Church* (Nashville, TN: Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1953), 42.



They Were My Students

Helen E. Falls

Professor of Missions (1945-1982)

*New Orleans Baptist
Theological Seminary*

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee," commanded God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.

At seventy-five years of age Abraham was commanded to travel four hundred miles from his country, his kindred, and his father's house. In that day the only real peace and security a man knew was that afforded by his family circle. Genesis 12:4 simply says, "So Abram went."

Hundreds of years later multitudes of young people have answered the same call from God and have become ministers, educators, musicians, and missionaries. Florida Baptists have supported many of them through the years as they have gone to the far corners of the earth.

During World War I a young minister with his wife and three children responded to a call to leave his pastorate in Texas and move to Kissimmee, Florida, where he became pastor of the Baptist church. The youngest child was a daughter, only four weeks old, when the move was made. The parents were very missionary-minded and even in the difficult days of adjustment the father often left the family to help promote the Seventy-Five Million Campaign "for education and missionary purposes."

As the years passed the little daughter felt a call to missionary service, but when she was ready to be appointed by the Foreign Mission Board the United States was involved in World War II and the door was closed. However, God opened another door which led to State Woman's Missionary Union work and eventually to use her training as a teacher to become a

professor of missions at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. There she was privileged to teach many Floridians who answered the call to serve overseas. In the following narrative are some of those future missionaries:

Miami was the birthplace for **Helen Masters** on November 1, 1922. She was educated at Stetson and then received a nursing degree from Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans. Later she became a certified nurse/midwife from the Maternity Center in New York City.

Helen was appointed a missionary nurse to Nigeria in 1950. She served in several places but for many years at the Baptist Welfare Center which specialized in maternity care and child health. Before her retirement, a new midwifery school was opened in Nigeria, and she taught there.

Because of the constant demand for medical care in Nigeria, she once said that her relaxation was seeing a mother laugh and her hobby was trying to get to bed before anyone could stop her. It was necessary for her to take medical retirement in 1981, but she continued to promote missions as missionary-in-residence for the Florida Baptist Convention urging Baptists to support anything related to missions. She died on August 18, 1984.

Nita McCullough was born in Jasper on July 19, 1922, but she considered Lee to be her hometown. She graduated from Florida State University and received a master of religious education degree from New Orleans Baptist Seminary. Also she earned a specialist in education degree from George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. She was an assistant in the library at the seminary.

Nita taught in Florida for seven years and in the summer was a missionary for the Home Mission Board. She was appointed in 1953 to be a junior high teacher in Abeokuta, Nigeria, where she stayed for nine years. Later she was a faculty member of the Baptist Women's College, a teacher training school, and as an adviser for a Baptist association in the area. She retired in 1988 and died in 1991.

In 1959 **Nancy Yarbrough** was appointed to Nigeria. She was born in Cocoa, October 18, 1927, and was educated at Stetson University and later studied at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where she met and married **James Yarbrough**, a Georgian.

At first the Yarbroughs taught in a pastors' school and later transferred to Zaria where James produced literature in the Hausa language. Nancy was involved in home and church work but she also worked with a cassette ministry for the blind and taught religion in a local school. They resigned in 1983.

Charles Lawhon was born August 18, 1925 in Avon Park. He was educated at Florida Southern College and Temple Baptist Theological Seminary. **Bettye** was born in Lakeland, February 25, 1929, and studied at Stetson and Florida Southern. Both of them studied at New Orleans Seminary and were appointed in 1960 for general evangelism in the Philippines. They resigned in 1970.

Palatka was the birthplace of **James Foster** on June 21, 1931, but he considered South Carolina his home state. He graduated from Wingate College and Carson-Newman and received his theology degree from New Orleans Seminary. He was pastor of several churches in South Carolina before he and his wife, **Sylvia**, an Oklahoman, were appointed to Ghana in December 1962.

For six years James was administrator of a Baptist pastors' school and later an evangelist and business manager for the Ghana Baptist Mission. From 1973 to 1976 he was pastor of an English-language church in Madrid, Spain, and then transferred to Germany where he was pastor of the International Baptist Church (English language) in Hamburg, Germany, until his retirement in 1995. He also served as pastor of the Berlin church for 10 years.

Donald H. Redmon was born in Panama City, December 2, 1933. He graduated from Mississippi College and received the master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. While in college, he worked at the Mississippi School for the Deaf in

Helen E. Falls

Jackson. Before appointment he served as a teacher and a pastor in Florida. He and his wife, **Jo Nell Eubanks**, a Mississippian, were appointed to Costa Rica in 1963. He was first a church planter and later business manager and treasurer for the Costa Rica Baptist Mission. They retired in 1998.

J. T. (James Thomas)

Owens was born in Chipley, August 2, 1930. He graduated from Stetson University and then served five years in the United States Air Force before studying at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from which he received a Master of Music.



**Drs. Charlotte
and J. T. Owens**

Missionaries to Mexico

Charlotte was born in Orlando on August 13, 1930. She attended Stetson and graduated with both a bachelor's and a master's degree in music from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. They were appointed in 1963 to a music ministry in Mexico.

There are excellent reports of their work in Mexico, teaching, choir ministry, special conferences, music institutes, recitals. In 1978 both Charlotte and J. T. were awarded Doctor of Music degrees from New Orleans Seminary. They resigned in 1979.

Clearwater was the birthplace on February 16, 1922, of **Frank J. Baker**. He earned degrees from Baylor, Southwestern Seminary, and a master's of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. He served in the United States Army and later as pastor of several Texas churches. He was an announcer/producer for radio and television in four different states. He and his wife, **Margaret**, a Texan, were appointed as missionaries to Korea in 1964. He was business/manager teacher at the Korea Christian Academy. He was in Zambia for eight years as church developer and director of Baptist Communications. In 1980 they transferred to South Africa where he served as the mass media coordinator. Both of them have used their musical talent in every assignment.

William Porter “Bill” May was born in Miami, January 24, 1931. He studied briefly in the School of Business at the University of Miami. Then he was drafted into the United States Army and was sent to Germany. Later he graduated from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. He served in several churches before studying at New Orleans where he graduated in 1963. He and his wife, **Marilyn**, were appointed to Ecuador in 1965. They resigned in November 1973.

Plant City was the birthplace for **Robert Burney** on March 17, 1933. Shortly after his birth it was discovered that he had damage to the motor area of his brain resulting in a partial paralysis of his right limbs. He had difficulty making physical adjustments in school but by high school he had made complete adjustment. He graduated from Carson-Newman College and entered New Orleans Seminary in the fall. As part of his field mission assignment he went on an all-day Sunday mission trip and it was there that he met **Edith Bleckley** whom he later married. At seminary Bob worked at several jobs including being a bus boy in the cafeteria. During his Th.D. study he worked under the Home Mission Board as a teacher-missionary at Union Baptist Seminary, a school for National Baptists. That also included working with local Negro Baptist churches.

Edith, a Georgian, graduated from Tift College and also received a Master’s of Education from Mercer University. While working on the Doctor of Religious Education degree, she was assistant director of the laboratory school at the seminary. They were appointed to Nigeria in 1967 and took two small children with them. He was professor of Greek and New Testament at the Nigerian Baptist Seminary until his retirement in 1996. Mrs. Burney also taught and worked with the children as she had done in New Orleans.

Thomas W. Graham was born on September 13, 1935, in Tampa but considered Fort Myers his hometown. He graduated from Stetson University with a degree in business administration. At New Orleans Seminary he received both a bachelor and master’s of church music. He served as minister of

music in several churches. **Dot**, a South Carolinian, also studied childhood education at New Orleans Seminary. A trip to Japan with the seminary quartet during the 1963 New Life Crusade led Tom to his commitment to foreign missions. They were appointed in 1967 to a music ministry in Japan.

Billy F. Cruce was born in Perry on January 22, 1940. He was strongly influenced by his father who had studied at New Orleans Seminary. His sermon on a Sunday night during Billy's first year at Florida State University led to his making his profession of faith. Later he graduated from Howard College (now Samford University). It was through the influence of two missionary couples on furlough that he and **Janice** sought appointment. They were appointed to general evangelism in Uganda in 1969. They resigned in January 1976.

Mr. and Mrs. **C. W. McClelland** served almost thirty years in Africa. He was born in Eaton Park on October 19, 1933, and **Vertie** was born in Deland on September 21, 1937. C. W. graduated from Tennessee Temple University and Vertie studied there. He served in the U.S. Army and as a pastor and teacher in Alabama. Both of them studied at New Orleans Seminary where C. W. earned two degrees. While they were in New Orleans, Vertie was certified as a licensed practical nurse. They were appointed in 1969 for evangelism in Rhodesia. He described their ministry as covering an area 150 miles long and 60 miles wide. In 1979 they transferred to Bophuthatswana where he was a church developer. In 1988 they transferred to South Africa where C. W. was coordinator for Theological Education by Extension. They retired in 1996.

Clyde Roberts was born in Perry on February 19, 1935. He was educated at Florida State University and graduated from New Orleans Seminary in 1965. He had experience as a school teacher and pastor serving a suburban church in New Orleans for six years. He and **Elizabeth** who was born in Broad Branch, August 13, 1934, were appointed in 1970 for general evangelism in Mexico. Elizabeth also graduated from Florida State and studied at New Orleans Seminary. She was a teacher in

several places in Florida and Louisiana. She was appointed to home and church evangelism.

November 17, 1938 was the birth date for **Oliver Harper** in Apalachicola. His wife, **Virginia**, was an Alabamian. Oliver graduated from Samford University and the University of Miami School of Medicine with an M.D. degree. Later in preparation for missionary service he studied at New Orleans Baptist Seminary. He served as chief of the outpatient clinic at the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Savannah, Georgia, and then practiced medicine in Crestview. He was appointed as an internist in 1970 to serve at the Baptist Hospital at Kediri, Indonesia. Virginia homeschooled the children along with another missionary wife. She also was involved in outreach evangelism. They resigned in June 1984.

Both **Raymond and Jewell Gaskins** are Floridians. He born in Alachua on February 25, 1936, and she in Palatka on November 18, 1937. They graduated from Valdosta State College and then from New Orleans Seminary. They were appointed to Benin, West Africa, in 1973 for field evangelism.

Deland was the birthplace of **Roberta Ann Crissey** on July 16, 1946. She graduated from Blue Mountain College and received a master's of religious education degree from New Orleans Seminary in 1970. During her time in New Orleans she was Program Coordinator for St. Mark's Community Center and also taught in the pre-kindergarten at a local Baptist church. Robbie, as she was known, was appointed to Brazil in 1974 to be a promoter of religious education and a camp director. She served in Equatorial Brazil until her resignation in 1981.

Winston W. McNeil was born in Jacksonville on September 13, 1944. He graduated from Carson-Newman College and New Orleans Seminary. In 1977 he was appointed to Colombia for general evangelism.

Ocala was the birthplace for **Keith Lathrop** on December 16, 1941. His wife, **Gail**, was born in Crescent City on November 1, 1943. He was educated at Central Florida Junior College and Berry College and received a master's degree from

Louisiana State University. Gail graduated from Saint John's River Junior College and Florida Southern College. Both of them studied at New Orleans Seminary. Keith taught math at Brevard College in North Carolina and Gail was a high school teacher prior to their appointment to Liberia in 1976. They were appointed as secondary school teachers. They resigned in 1980.

Nancy Palmer was born in Jacksonville on November 26, 1932. She graduated from Hardin-Simmons University and New Orleans Seminary. She taught second grade in Jacksonville and was director of children's work and kindergarten for First Baptist Church in Pompano Beach. In 1960 she went to Papua, New Guinea, to work with the Wycliffe Bible Translators. On a leave of absence from there she renewed a friendship with **Robert Martin** and they were married in 1971. They went to New Guinea in 1974 as short-term workers with Wycliffe. Robert, a North Carolinian, graduated from Carson-Newman College, New Orleans Seminary, and Southeastern Seminary. They were appointed to Liberia in 1978 where he worked in evangelism and she in church and home.

Linda McNabb (Mrs. Donald) Johnson was born in Miami on May 25, 1947. She graduated from Miami-Dade Community College and Florida State University and earned a master's degree in religious education from New Orleans Seminary. She was a BSU summer missionary in Florida and a caseworker with the Florida Division of Children and Family Services. She and her husband, **Donald**, born in New Jersey, were appointed in 1979 to serve in Peru. She worked with the Department of Christian Education and in the Department of Women's Mission Organizations of the Peru Baptist Convention. Since 1986 she and her husband have had the administration of the Baptist Book Store in Peru. Don earned music degrees from Stetson and New Orleans Seminary. He served as a minister of music in Illinois for five years before their appointment. He served as a music promoter.

Coral Gables was the birthplace for **Debra Weber** on October 16, 1952, but she considered Tampa as her hometown.

She graduated from East Tennessee State University and earned a master of church music degree from New Orleans Seminary. Later she earned a D.Min. from New Orleans. She was a summer missionary with the Home Mission Board. She was very interested in journalism as a career and worked as a reporter for two different newspapers for five years. While at the seminary she was the choirmaster at the Chinese Presbyterian Church. She was appointed in 1980 to teach music at Taiwan Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ronald J. Reynolds considered Port St. Lucie as his hometown though he was born in Fort Lauderdale on May 15, 1953. He served in the United States Navy and as a Home Mission Board summer missionary. He also served as a staff member in two Louisiana Baptist churches. **Cynthia DeVane** was born in Vero Beach on July 12, 1955. She married Ron while he was in the Navy and they lived in Japan. Later both of them studied at Louisiana College and New Orleans Seminary. They were appointed in 1982 to Japan for evangelism and church planting. They are now team leaders for new fields in Japan. Ron used his hobby of golf to meet people at Japanese driving ranges as an evangelistic opportunity. He reported that one in ten males in Japan plays golf! Cynthia used her interest in volleyball and karate as her special skill in work and witness.

Christopher W. Wilkinson was born in McIntosh on February 26, 1952. He considered Gainesville his hometown. He graduated from Santa Fe Community College, Stetson University, and earned a master's from New Orleans Seminary. He served as a youth director for two different churches in Florida, as a summer missionary for the Home Mission Board and as a journeyman in Liberia for the Foreign Mission Board. He and his wife, **Gwendle**, a Tennessean, were appointed in 1982 to West Africa.

These thirty-two persons born in Florida were appointed to eighteen different countries, but several served in five additional ones. Counting spouses who were not Floridians, there were forty-four total persons appointed between 1950 and 1982.

W. N. Chaudoin: Pioneer Preacher and President of Florida Baptist Work

Joel R. Breidenbaugh

*Lead Pastor Gospel Centered Church
Apopka, Florida*



Dr. William Newell Chaudoin (1829-1904) served as the President of the Florida Baptist State Convention (1880-1903, excluding 1886-1888) and as the first corresponding secretary and treasurer of the State Board of Missions (1881-1901), a position likened to today's executive secretary. His lengthy tenure helped pave the way for both missiological and educational endeavors for which Florida Baptists have been known. A look at Chaudoin's family background, spiritual journey, ministry, and leadership as the "Father of the Convention" will demonstrate the significant impact he has had on the driving force behind what Florida Baptists do today.

Family Background

Much of what we know of W. N. Chaudoin's life comes from the pen of E. H. Rennolds, Sr., early editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness*. Rennolds writes,

"Dr. Chaudoin is of French descent, and is a great grandson of Francis Chaudoin [1720-1799], a Huguenot, who emigrated from France and settled in Chesterfield county, Va., about the middle of the 18th century. His oldest son, Lewis Chaudoin [1754-1845], was a soldier in the American Revolutionary and afterward a member of the famous Powhatan Church, in the county of that name, and was one of fourteen preachers which that church had sent out prior to 1810. He faithfully preached the gospel in the Old Dominion for nearly 60 years, dying Jan. 4th, 1845. Andrew Broadus, Sr., preached his funeral discourse, and

W. N. Chaudoin: Pioneer Preacher and President of Florida Baptist Work highly eulogized him. John Mims Chaudoin [1785-1856], oldest child of Lewis and his second wife, Katurah Mims, moved to Robertson County, Tennessee, and married Miss Sarah Calthorp there, and he too, preached the Gospel faithfully in Middle Tennessee. Here his sixth child, William N., was born, August 10th, 1829, twenty miles north of Nashville.”¹

Thus, W. N. Chaudoin was at least a third-generation gospel preacher.

Upbringing, Conversion, and Family

Limited to meager resources, John Chaudoin could not provide much formal education for his son William, except for the “Old Field” schools. During these childhood schooldays, William’s classmates, weary of pronouncing his French name, labeled him “Bill Shad.”² Later in life, William estimated that his formal education probably did not exceed two years. His fondness for books and his personal studies, however, enabled him to teach a primary school when he was eighteen.³ Years later, when serving on the Committee of Education of the Florida Baptist State Convention, Chaudoin gave the report, remarking that “he had an opportunity of attending college, did not embrace it, and has had a life time to regret it. Education makes any man more efficient.”⁴

As to his spiritual journey, William N. Chaudoin was converted at age sixteen, in the spring of 1846, under the ministry of William F. Luck and W. D. Baldwin in Davidson County. He was baptized by the former and entered “into the fellowship of New Bethel church. He immediately commenced taking part in prayer meetings, and soon received impressions that he ought to preach. But being naturally timid, and lacking in education, he fought these impressions for two years, and then yielded, preaching his first sermon on April 2, 1848.”⁵ He preached this sermon “in the same house in which he found Christ.”⁶ The following March, New Bethel licensed W. N. Chaudoin to preach the gospel.⁷

On May 6, 1850, he married Miss Caroline Amanda Frensley (1835-1907), “with whom he lived 54 years of unalloyed happiness.”⁸ Though they had no biological children, it appears at least Caroline adopted Robert Roe Chaudoin (1876-1960), William’s first cousin, perhaps sometime after William’s death. The bloodline filled with gospel ministry among the Chaudoin family continued beyond Robert, who married Jane Ann (Johnson) Cockshutt (1875-1947) in 1900. Their only daughter, Annie (1905-1972), attended Stetson University as a Religious Education major, and she married Cecil Crissey (1905-1996) in 1928, who also attended Stetson as a ministry student.⁹

Early Ministry

During his young adult life, W. N. Chaudoin made his living teaching school while laboring as a volunteer missionary. In February 1851, he was ordained by Elders W. S. Baldry, W. D. Baldwin, and William Brumberlow, at the request of Marrowbone church, fifteen miles from Nashville, where he had been serving as a supply preacher. Chaudoin began his first



**William Newell
Chaudoin**

pastorate at the Second Baptist Church of Nashville in 1853. While serving this church and conducting revival meetings, Chaudoin contracted a pulmonary infection and never recovered from it. In the spring of 1854, “he was confirmed an invalid, and his friends thought he would soon pass away with tuberculosis.”¹⁰ Nevertheless, “about 1856 or 1857, [Chaudoin] was appointed Agent for the Bible Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and for a year worked in Middle Tennessee and North Alabama, and then was sent to Georgia and Florida, where he labored another year.”¹¹ His physicians advised him to move south to a warmer climate. Thus, by 1857, Chaudoin and his wife moved from Nashville to Macon, Georgia.

The move to Georgia was also prompted by his election as the first Secretary and Agent of the Georgia Baptist Bible and Colporteur Society. A short time later, Chaudoin began as principal for the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon. In 1858, Chaudoin began serving again as a pastor, this time in southwestern Georgia.¹² Perhaps the greatest artifact from Chaudoin's life—his personal diary—comes from this time period. Covering some four months of his life as a pastor near Albany, the *Diary* tells of his preaching to white Baptists on Sunday mornings and to black Baptists in the afternoons. Chaudoin's personal Bible reading and study, which he attempted to do daily, enhanced his walk with the Lord. When inclement weather or his own sickness prevented him from regular ministry, however, he honestly admits his own failures: "It has rained nearly the whole day, without any intermission. Did not pretend to go to meeting. Another Sabbath is passed and I have not attended the sanctuary. No effort for my Master today."¹³ A few weeks later, he comments, "My wife suggested to me that I was perhaps too wild, or cheerful at times for one of my calling . . . I try to be cheerful, and avoid levity, but perhaps fail in seeing the boundary between the two."¹⁴

After the Civil War broke out in 1861, he traveled to the camps in Virginia and preached to the soldiers. From 1865-1870, Chaudoin accepted several pastorates throughout southwestern Georgia, "where he preached with great acceptability and success."¹⁵ Apparently, sometime around 1870, he began a two-year stint in Georgia as an agent for the Home Mission Board (known then as the Domestic and Indian Mission Board). By 1871, he was promoted to District Secretary for Georgia, Alabama and Florida, a position he held until 1879, when he became a general missionary for Georgia, commissioned by the State Board of the Baptist Convention.¹⁶ Rennolds writes, "While living in Georgia he was a regular correspondent of the Baptist state organ, the *Christian Index*, and often wrote for the Sunday school papers."¹⁷ At this time, Chaudoin came up with his own catchy nickname,

remembering what his schoolmates had called him. Thus, many came to know him affectionately as “Uncle Shad,” and his wife as “Aunt Carrie.”

Florida—“Father of the Convention”

Because of Chaudoin’s ongoing sickness, he had to spend many winters in Florida. Around 1880, “he decided to make his home in this balmy climate, and purchased a small orange grove at LaGrange . . . and the quiet little village has long since come to be regarded as the mecca of Florida Baptists.”¹⁸ LaGrange Church was organized in 1869 in Brevard County and carries the distinction as “the oldest church between New Smyrna Beach and Key West and the oldest Protestant church between St. Augustine and Key West.”¹⁹

The Florida Baptist State Convention of 1880 elected Chaudoin as its president and, at the same time, the newly organized State Board of Missions elected him as its corresponding secretary and treasurer—he accepted the latter the following year. The next twenty-three years saw him serving the convention in some capacity. He is rightly dubbed the “Father of the Convention,” for the convention really became active during his service. Rennolds captures a glimpse into Chaudoin’s commitment to the work in Florida: “There being no available funds to pay his salary, the Home Mission Board, knowing that money given to employ such a man was well invested, generously agreed to pay his salary for the first year, after which the State Board became self-supporting, though the salary paid him was quite small.”²⁰ By the mid-1880s, the State Board was paying Chaudoin \$600 plus traveling expenses.²¹

Indeed, to outline Chaudoin’s work for twenty-three years in Florida “is to write its denominational history [up to that time]. ‘Others have done well, but he excelleth them all.’”²² During Chaudoin’s tenure as president and corresponding secretary-treasurer, several significant aspects stand out.

Preaching

Although Chaudoin is known for his leadership and missionary spirit, his gift for proclaiming God's Word may be his most remarkable trait. *The East Coast Advocate* records that "in spite of his poor health, he did a good deal of evangelistic work along with his other work, and was regarded by many as one of the ablest preachers and one of the most successful evangelists in all that part of the state."²³ Furthermore, a Georgian publication stated: "*Perhaps no one of our ministers has warmer feelings, or a more devout spirit when pleading for his divine Master in the pulpit; in consequence, he is always welcomed; yet he is not, by any means, a man of learning or of extraordinary parts. He has the unction of the Spirit, and gifts, however, which rank him among the very best of our preachers. With no great homiletical skill, with no special knowledge of rhetoric or logic, and not profound in theology, he is, nevertheless, a good preacher, and anybody can listen to him with profit. His evident sincerity, and his warm, genial, earnest and affectionate manner, disarm criticism, and incline every one to give him a favorable hearing. He gets right at the heart, and no man can hear him without being deeply impressed. Although his early opportunities were so limited, he still may be said to hold a better position in the pulpit than multitudes of those who have enjoyed the best advantages. He is a plain, unaffected, humble man, making no high pretensions of any kind; yet there is many a high-born, high-bred and highly-taught ecclesiastic, who, with all his polish and all his distinction, would be greatly promoted by exchanging places with him. Doubtless this is due to divine power bestowed, and to that unction which is from on high.*"²⁴

Jacksonville pastor W. A. Hobson claimed, "If [Chaudoin] was notable for one characteristic as a preacher above another, it was this. He never said a thing which was without its delicious kernel of truth. He never spoke simply for effect. He substantiated every proposition with the best of logic. He was always just. He was always fair. He never temporized. He was always sincere."²⁵

An early Stetson University president Dr. J. F. Forbes concurred, but added that Chaudoin “was a strong and effective preacher, but his greatest and most effective proclamation of Jesus was in his own daily life; from which the very Spirit of Christ exhaled as a perfume continually.”²⁶ Chaudoin obviously excelled as a preacher.

Missions

Second, the origin of the State Board of Missions occurred in 1880. While this board came into existence just before Chaudoin was elected as its head, he took the reins and guided the board into new areas of mission and education. Concerning the former, Chaudoin helped pave the way into expanded mission efforts, both nationally and internationally. Certainly, he did not draw a line between home and foreign missions, considering them as one unit, because it is all the Lord’s work.²⁷

Chaudoin put his money where his mouth was, pledging significant amounts to missions many of his years as Convention President. When each Baptist from his own Santa Fe River Association gave on the average \$1.06 to missions in 1882, Chaudoin pledged \$10.²⁸ The next year he pledged \$50 and his wife pledged \$10!²⁹ Anyone reading through the convention minutes during Chaudoin’s tenure will notice frequent pledges of \$5, \$10, \$25, \$35, and even \$50 by William or Caroline Chaudoin.

One of the key people groups reached during this time was the Cuban population in Key West and Tampa, as well as the island of Cuba itself. While William F. Wood was an early missionary to the Cubans, Chaudoin pushed missions through financial contributions and annual promotions in his report.³⁰ Reporting on the new mission venture in 1885, Chaudoin wrote, “The new work... for the Cubans at Key West, has been successful beyond expectation. ‘The little one has,’ or soon will, ‘become a thousand.’” Noting the twenty-eight baptisms by Elder Wood, Chaudoin adds, “The work at Key West has developed the fact that

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the island of Cuba is now open to us... From what we have learned we can truly say, 'It is the Lord's doings, and wonderful in our eyes.'"³¹ Throughout all of his work, Chaudoin simply stayed true to his missionary calling.

Education

Third, Chaudoin's lack of educational opportunities instilled within him a strong desire to see others have the chance to receive formal training. His pledges to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and DeLand College (which became Stetson University) established his high view of ministerial education. Uncle Shad and Aunt Carrie often pledged between \$5-25 to sustain students at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His heart, however, remained close at home, supporting Stetson. He pledged \$250 in 1886 for an endowment at DeLand College! Subsequent years brought pledges between \$50-125 for the endowment at Stetson.³² Suffice it to say that Chaudoin did as much as he could so that no other ministers would lack educational opportunities.

Financial Giving

Fourth, Chaudoin helped set the tone for financial contributions during an era when much of the South was still recovering from the Civil War. Not only did Chaudoin regularly support missions and education, but he also gave freely and frequently to other needs in the convention. For instance, he pledged \$104 between 1883-1884 to the church building department—designed to help repair churches damaged by strong storms, among other things.³³ From 1880-1885 alone, Chaudoin helped the entire convention move from giving \$100 a year to more than \$1000 annually to foreign missions.³⁴ Moreover, he pledged \$10 to the *Florida Baptist Witness* from 1898-1899.³⁵ Having experienced childlessness during their more than fifty years of marriage, William and Caroline gave \$25 for an orphanage in 1901.³⁶ While others gave more money to Convention causes during Chaudoin's tenure, few sacrificed as much as he and his

wife in supporting the Lord's work.

The Florida Baptist Witness

Fifth, the origin of the state paper—the *Florida Baptist Witness*—happened under Chaudoin's leadership and was actually named by him. Chaudoin credits the paper's origin to two young pastors' efforts in the 1860s—one from Thomasville, Georgia, and the other from Monticello, Florida. Though their efforts never materialized, further work occurred from 1873-1875. Again, this paper, called *The Florida Baptist*, ran short of funding and was, thus, discontinued. Chaudoin's service during the 1870s as the editor of the Florida section of *The Christian Index* (Georgia's Baptist paper) then paved the way for the Baptist state paper which would continue until this day.³⁷ Beginning in 1884, the Convention approved the publication of the paper, which had a four-fold purpose: (1) to increase the ethical tone of Floridians, (2) to promote New Testament principles, (3) to encourage the missionary spirit, and (4) to rouse people in educational matters for their children.³⁸ Chaudoin served several of the early years either as an associate editor or one of the editors—all-the-while leading the Convention as president and heading the State Board of Missions as corresponding secretary-treasurer.

Overall Leadership

Finally, for more than two decades, Chaudoin provided excellent and stable leadership for the Convention. S. M. Provence comments about him: "As a master of assemblies he was distinctly unique. He stood alone. Never dull, never at a loss, with a clear vision and a level head, he could get more work and more religion and more enthusiasm and more fun out of a Baptist Convention than any man I ever saw."³⁹ Similarly, Dr. L. D. Geiger—Chaudoin's successor as corresponding secretary and treasurer—says, "He was great as a leader. He was a born leader ... He was great in loyalty to the truth. I believe he would have gone to the stake for the truth."⁴⁰

Moreover, Chaudoin gave Florida Baptists servant-leadership wherever service was needed. While serving as president and corresponding secretary—including leading the State Board of Missions and working as an editor/assistant editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness*—Chaudoin filled numerous positions on committees and boards, including committees on Credentials (1880), Nominations (1880), Deceased Ministers (1888), and as a trustee of Stetson University (1886-1903).⁴¹ Chaudoin's effective leadership was evident to all, for unable to serve as president from 1886-1888 due to illness, President H. M. King declined reelection in 1889 and nominated Chaudoin once again for that position, the latter being elected by acclamation.⁴²

Furthermore, a great spirit of harmony existed in the Convention during Chaudoin's tenure, largely in part to his own spirit. Historian Edward Joiner wrote:

*“Upon Chaudoin's retirement a significant change in the Convention atmosphere is almost immediately discernible. Whether the shifts in Convention administration reflected the changed atmosphere or were the cause of it is not clear. However, the peace and harmony of the last decades of the 19th century and the beginning years of the 20th century were often interrupted by controversy, strife and economic difficulty.”*⁴³

Having led the Convention as president for twenty-one years, “no one since has served as president so many times. Moreover, a pattern was broken, for no one since has served as president and executive secretary at the same time.”⁴⁴ Clearly, when Chaudoin retired and passed away, Florida Baptists not only lost a dear friend, they lost their leader.

Conclusion

William Newell Chaudoin's influence in Florida Baptist life was both great and godly. All who met him, or knew of him, confessed his great stature. Though Chaudoin received little formal education, Stetson University conferred on him its very first honorary doctorate of divinity degree in 1893. As another gesture

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of appreciation, Stetson named one of its dormitories Chaudoin Hall in honor of “Uncle Shad” and “Aunt Carrie.”⁴⁵

At the 1901 convention, due to his failing health, Chaudoin announced his retirement as corresponding secretary. The convention immediately elected him as Secretary Emeritus and resolved “that we bow in grateful acknowledgment of the mercy and goodness of God in sparing him so many years for the work he has done among us,” because Chaudoin had “served the Convention for so many years with great self-sacrifice and distinguished ability, and has, by his wonderful personal magnetism, fine generalship and sweet spirit, held the work together so long, sometimes when disaster threatened to destroy it.”⁴⁶

Two writers who knew Chaudoin quite well penned fitting tributes to the man loved by many Florida Baptists. Rennolds, who served several years beside Chaudoin as secretary of the Convention, summarizes,

“The work of the Board grew under his wise management, in its collections, in its missionary operations, and in its hold upon the people, till it became a great power for good in the land, and it is safe to say that no other man, known to us, could have built such a mighty enterprise, within the same time that he did, and it will forever stand as a living monument to his devotion, faith, energy, tact, skill and constructiveness. Not only the State Board, but the Convention itself, with all its auxiliaries, and its varied departments, is what he made it, and but for the evolution of his mighty hand and heart and brain. From one end of the State to the other men and women and children have learned to love him, and have revered and admired him, and been provoked to noble sacrifices and willing efforts to aid in the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom.”⁴⁷

Though the words were written over one hundred years ago, they still ring true.

The editor of the *East Coast Advocate* of Titusville, Florida, the local newspaper of LaGrange, observed that during Chaudoin's era,

*“He was better known, and, without doubt, more universally loved than any other Baptist minister in Florida. He was one of the wisest leaders that any cause ever had, and much of the prosperity that has attended the mission work is due to his able superintendency, seconded by the co-operation of the board of missions that always had absolute confidence in him, and has always stood by him... Viewed from any standpoint, Elder Chaudoin was conceded to be a great man. He was deeply spiritual, full of faith and the Holy Ghost, yet having in the highest degree the courage of his convictions, genial and companionable, wise and conservative, tactful and resourceful, having a big brain which has been highly cultivated by reading and observation, a frail body, but a soul which is bigger, if possible, than the body, a sagacious leader, and effective preacher, a loyal friend, a true man.”*⁴⁸

In closing, let the reader hear the words of Dr. Chaudoin himself and his vision of Baptist work in the Sunshine state:

*“Hundreds of saints will yearly come here to pass from this land of sunshine to the ‘climes of glory,’ but they need the brighter sunshine of the Gospel to cheer them in their last hours. Thousands in the years to come will resort here, cheered by the delusive hopes of the consumptive, but will never return. Christian people must send Christ’s ministers into every place, carrying to these and all others the hope of the Gospel which is not delusive.”*⁴⁹

Florida Baptists have not forgotten this charge nor will we forget the legacy of “Uncle Shad.”

ENDNOTES

1 E. H. Rennolds, Sr., “William Newell Chaudoin,” *Florida Baptist The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Volume 20, 2018

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Witness, 27 January 1904, p. 9. There seems to be some conflicting accounts of his birthplace, sometimes listed as Robertson County and other times as Davidson County. Both border one another, so certainty is nearly impossible. Many of the dates and genealogical information comes from “Chaudoin Family History,” compiled by Dr. John T. Manning.

2 Rennolds, 9.

3 Obituary record in the *East Coast Advocate* (Titusville, Florida), 29 January 1904, p. 4; quoted in Manning, “Chaudoin History.”

4 *Minutes*, Florida Baptist Convention (hereafter, FBC) (1875), 29.

5 *East Coast Advocate*, p. 4; quoted in Manning, “Chaudoin History.”

6 Rennolds, 9.

7 *East Coast Advocate*, p. 4; quoted in Manning, “Chaudoin History.”

8 Rennolds, 9.

9 Crissey served as “a former printer, editor, and pastor, his last pastorate being at Militana Baptist Church in Lantana. He served as pastor of many other Baptist churches in Central Florida. He was a clerk of several Baptist Associations. He was a former second recording secretary for the Florida Baptist State Convention. Crissey served on the administrative staff at Stetson University, where he was a professor from 1943-1948,” Manning, “Chaudoin History.”

10 *East Coast Advocate*, p. 4; quoted in Manning, “Chaudoin History.” Apparently, the ordaining church is also called “Charity Baptist Church” (“W. N. Chaudoin: Pioneer Leader,” *Florida Missions Today*, Spring 2004, p. 4).

11 “W. N. Chaudoin,” in *History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia with Biographical Compendium and Portrait Gallery of Baptist Ministers and Other Georgia Baptists* (Atlanta: Jas. P. Harrison & Co., 1881), 120.

12 *Ibid.*

13 William N. Chaudoin *Diary*, 1858-1859, entry for Dec. 26, 1858. The *Diary* details some of his pastoral duties (almost entirely personal matters) at a church in Dougherty County, Georgia.

14 *Ibid.*, entry for Feb. 21, 1859.

15 Rennolds, 9.

16 “Chaudoin,” in *History of Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, 121. Rennolds, for some reason, omits “Alabama” from this district (Rennolds, 9). Interestingly, the 1872 FBC Annual lists him as the District Secretary “for the States of Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina” (Minutes, FBC, [1872], 16).

17 Rennolds, 9. Chaudoin served as editor of the Florida department of *The Christian Index* (“Chaudoin,” in *History of Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, 121).

18 Rennolds, 9.

19 It appears that LaGrange Church either began or became a community church made up of members from various denominations, such as Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal (see “The Historical LaGrange Church” in Manning, “Chaudoin History;” Mary Lou Culbertson, “Oldest Church between Smyrna and Key West;” quoted in Manning, “Chaudoin History.” See also John Maguire, to H. C. Garwood, 13 August 1959, transcript in the hand of Joel Breidenbaugh, Florida Baptist Historical Society Collections, Ida J. McMillan Library, Baptist College of Florida, Graceville.

20 Rennolds, 9.

21 Minutes, State Board (3 January 1883); quoted in Edward Earl Joiner, *A History of Florida Baptists* (Jacksonville: Convention Press, 1972), 63.

22 Rennolds, 9.

23 *East Coast Advocate*, p. 4; quoted in Manning, “Chaudoin History.”

24 “Chaudoin,” in *History of Baptist Denomination in Georgia*, 120.

25 W. A. Hobson, “Dr. W. N. Chaudoin,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, 1904, p. 3.

26 “Dr. Forbes on Dr. Chaudoin,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, 4 February 1904.

27 Minutes, FBC (1897), 49-50.

28 Minutes, FBC (1882), 30.

29 Minutes, FBC (1883), 38.

30 For information on Wood’s involvement to Cuba, see Jerry Windsor, “Don’t Give Up Cuba,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, 1 April 2004, p. 5. For Chaudoin’s support, see Minutes, FBC (1885), 10; Minutes, FBC (1895), 29; and his annual reports beginning in 1885.

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- 32 Minutes, FBC (1886). See also, Minutes, FBC (1899), 23; Minutes, FBC (1900), 26; and Minutes, FBC (1903), 54.
- 33 Minutes, FBC (1883), 12; Minutes, FBC (1884), 29.
- 34 Minutes, FBC (1885), 43-44.
- 35 Minutes, FBC (1898), 29; Minutes, FBC (1899), 25.
- 36 Minutes, FBC (1901), 23.
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- 39 S. M. Provence, "W. N. Chaudoin," *Florida Baptist Witness*, p. 18 February 1904, 3.
- 40 L. D. Geiger, "Funeral of Dr. Chaudoin," *Florida Baptist Witness*, p. 27 January 1904.
- 41 See Minutes, FBC (1880); Minutes, FBC (1888); and Minutes, FBC (1889).
- 42 Minutes, FBC (1889), 11.
- 43 Joiner, *History of Florida Baptists*, 100.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 99-100.
- 45 H. C. Garwood, "Chaudoin, William N.," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 249.
- 46 Minutes, FBC (1901), 55. Chaudoin's retirement salary was set at \$600 and \$400 for Caroline after his death (*ibid.*, 20).
- 47 Rennolds, 9.
- 48 *East Coast Advocate*, p. 4; quoted in Manning, "Chaudoin History."
- 49 "Fifth Annual Report of the State Board of Missions," Minutes, FBC (1885), 45.



The Preaching of Charles Roy Angell: A Master Collector and Teller of Stories

Jerry E. Oswalt

*Vice President of
Academic Affairs (1991-2005)
The Baptist College of Florida*

Introduction

One of my seminary professors, Dr. James Taylor, sometimes remarked as he led seminars about influential preachers of history, “Isn’t it good to study the lives of these men; to get into their lives and walk around with them.” He was right! And one of the reasons this is a good practice is that some of their spirit rubs off on us as we study their lives and ministries. This reality has occurred to me afresh as I have studied the sermons of C. Roy Angell in research for this article. He was one of the most able communicators of God’s Good News in his time and surely one of the all time greats among Florida Baptist preachers. His pulpit work has been written about in such publications as *Southern Baptist Preaching*, an anthology of sermons collected by H. C. Brown, Jr. and published by Broadman Press in 1959; *With a Bible in Their Hands*, a compilation of Baptist preaching in the South from over the last 300 years by Al Fasol and published by Broadman & Holman Publishers in 1994; and *Southern Baptist Preaching Yesterday*, a collection edited by Charles Allen and Joel Gregory and published by Broadman Press in 1991.

A Biographical Sketch

Charles Roy Angell arrived in this world on October 8, 1889. The location of that arrival was Boone Mill, Virginia. He

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departed this world for heaven on September 11, 1971. Alma Meade of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, became his bride on October 8, 1915, and they became the parents of a son and two daughters.¹ Tragically, in 1940, their son died young when only a month away from graduation from Stetson.²

Angell began his pulpit ministry in 1915 in four rural churches near Elizabeth City, North Carolina. His ensuing pastorates included: Fulton Avenue Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland from 1918 to 1924; First Baptist Church of Charlottesville, Virginia from 1924 to 1927; First Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, Louisiana from 1927 to 1932; First Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas from 1932 to 1936; Central Baptist Church of Miami, Florida from 1936 to 1962.³ One newspaper in 1935 published the news release that he had been called to be the pastor of the Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, but I found no evidence that he accepted that call.⁴

The higher education he acquired began with a B.A. from Richmond College in 1913, which led to a M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1918. In addition, he earned a B. D. from Crozer Seminary that same year. He continued studies at John Hopkins University in 1919 and 1920 and later worked on a Ph.D. at the University of Virginia from 1927-1929. Stetson recognized his work with an honorary D.D. in 1949.⁵

A regular speaker at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly and frequent guest preacher in revivals and conferences, Angell was a denominational statesman of high rank. He was elected a vice president by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1945 and as president of the Florida Baptist State Convention in 1949. Also, he served on the boards of trustees for Stetson University, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Baptist Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana.⁶



C. Roy Angell

The Scope of the Study

This article is based upon my analysis of fifty-four of Roy Angell's sermons published in four books by Broadman from 1953-1962. Their titles and dates of publication are: *Iron Shoes*, 1953; *Baskets of Silver*, 1955; *The Price Tags of Life*, 1959; *God's Gold Mines*, 1962. This article will not contain an exhaustive analysis of these published sermons, but will focus upon some of the strongest impressions made upon me in the course of studying these sermons.

Salient Strength: A Passion for Preaching

One of the most significant aspects of Angell's sermonic skill was his passion for preparing sermons. I realized through my initial perusal of his sermons that the man had a laser-beam sensitivity to picking up ideas and illustrations for sermons in all of life's experiences. His mind must have always been alert for materials for preaching. Only a great love for pulpit work will prompt such an awareness. Following my reading of his sermons, I found a quote from him that confirmed this conclusion. He opined in a personal account of his procedure for sermon preparation the following:

"There are numberless ways to find starters for sermons. Many times I read a good story or an incident, and it immediately suggests to me a thought, a theme, a text, or maybe all three. For instance, I read a one-page article about a diamond cutter, who was working in a display window of a jewelry shop. He was using diamond dust to cut and polish the ugly, uncouth stones that would make them so beautiful that any woman in the world would love them. It brought to mind what Paul said about the sufferings of this day and the glory revealed in us. The beautiful theme of God's using the diamond dust of suffering, self-sacrifice, stewardship, and so forth to shape our lives and make them adorn the gospel was written all over that story.

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“A sermon might get started in my devotional readings by some verse that suddenly blazes up or by some Old Testament story that so deeply interests me that I know the message in it will be helpful to others. Again, in my counsel room or in a visit to the hospital or a sickroom I find some need and the answer to it in God’s Word.”⁷

An analysis of his sermon ideas revealed that approximately forty percent came out of his devotional reading of Scripture. Another thirty-six percent surfaced from his general reading of such items as newspapers, periodicals and books. The remaining twenty-four percent grabbed his mind through remarks and stories told by others, either from a pulpit or another public forum or in conversations in various settings. He loved to listen to other preachers and found frequently ideas for his sermon preparation. Sometimes he would borrow more than an idea or a story. Occasionally, much of the message would be used. But he was always careful to give credit. An example is the sermon entitled, “Who Crucified Christ?” He confessed at the end of the introduction that he was indebted to G. Earl Guinn for the rest of the sermon.⁸

For anyone who has such a homiletically inclined mentality, everything in life ministers to his preaching must relish the assignment. As I observed this quality in C. Roy Angell, I was reminded of an assertion made many years ago by a famous British preacher by the name of John Henry Jowett. He declared to divinity students at Yale Divinity School in 1912, “I have had but one passion, and I have lived for it -- the absorbingly arduous yet glorious work of proclaiming the grace and love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”⁹ Angell’s enthusiasm about preaching reflected the attitude of another famous British preacher, G. Campbell Morgan, who affirmed about the task, “It is the one thing I want to do and cannot help doing. I would do it as recreation if I were not permitted to do it as vocation.”¹⁰ Angell wrote a similar conviction about preaching when he asserted, “I love it. I am thrilled by it. There is nothing I would rather do at five o’clock in the morning than work on a sermon.”¹¹ Any

preacher will be a better preacher when he does what he does out of a love for the Lord and a love for the pulpit ministry. This passion for his work of proclamation assuredly propelled C. Roy Angell to the level of effectiveness he reached.

Salient Strength: Storytelling

However, the consensus of students of his preaching is that his greatest asset was his ability to use stories in his sermons to introduce and illustrate points in sermons. The multifarious nature of his sources for stories duplicated his sources for sermonic themes or ideas. He told of the many origins of his stories in the following account:

“I’ve been asked literally hundreds of time, “Where do you find your illustrations?” My answer is the same, “Everywhere,” for I am always on the alert for a human interest story. Every good story written or told illustrates something. I find them in the periodicals that come to my desk or, as Roy Smith said, “The sidewalks are full of sermons.” The artist with his trained eye sees pictures of beautiful scenes that I miss completely. The woodsman with his trained ears and eyes hears and sees things to which I am deaf and blind. You can train yourself to watch for the sermons that go walking around you in your experiences in ministry. You can train yourself to find them in your personal reading.”¹²

In addition, he told of getting clippings sent to him by friends who knew his love of a good story. He also said that he found good use of histories and biographies of great people to be replete with usable stories.

His most popular story, which has been told and retold by many preachers, came from a sermon entitled “Rizpah.” He credited J. C. Massee with the story and used it to illustrate the atoning work of Christ on the cross. He told the story in the following way:

“My mother was the sweetest woman in the world, but she was very strict about one thing. She wouldn’t let us boys

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play on her snow-white feather beds. She prided herself in having the prettiest, loveliest feather beds in Georgia. I so wanted to get up on top of one of them, dive right straight out into the air, and sink out of sight in the middle of it. I knew that it would be heavenly, but mother firmly refused.

“One day it had been raining. My big brother had ridden his horse out on the farm to see if the drain ditches were open. Mother and I were in the woodshed. She was washing clothes, and I was making mud pies. I got tired of making mud pies, and went into the house. As I walked down the hall and looked into those bedrooms, those big snow-white feather beds just beckoned to me. In a minute I was on the top of one of them. I jumped just as high as I could jump, flattened out and went out of sight with a shoosh! Ohhhhh! It was glorious. For a few minutes I had the time of my life. Then I heard the rustle of skirts, and I looked toward the door, and mother was standing there with her hand ominously behind her. I knew I deserved a whipping.

“Just then the window went up on the other side of the room, and that big, six-foot brother of mine came crawling through. “Wait just a minute, just a minute Mother,” he said. I could see his horse standing outside. He had ridden by the window and taken in the whole situation. That great big frame of his came down over the top of me, and he said, ‘All right Mother. Lay it on. I’ll take it for him this time.’

“I listened, but the switch didn’t fall, and when I peeped out from under his shoulder to see what was going on, I saw on Mother’s face the strangest expression. It was beautiful. There was the trace of a tear; her lips quivered a little, her eyes glistened. She was smiling as she looked at him. She said to him like she had forgotten I was there,

'You big, lovable rascal. Pick him up. Take him out of the window. Don't come this way. If you do I will switch you both.'

*He picked me up and took me out the window, put me on the horse in front of him, and we rode away.'*¹³

He went on to use Masee's application of the story to the atoning work of Christ: Dr. Masee said, "The years rolled on. One day I was where the Heavenly Father told me not to go. I bowed my head for the fall of the rod, which I knew I deserved. Then I felt an arm go around my shoulders. I heard that quiet, gentle voice of Jesus say, 'I'll take it for him Father. I'll take it for him this time.'"¹⁴

Although the above secular story has been far more popular and widely used, the Scriptural story of Rizpah is one of his most poignant biblical illustrations. It is found couched in the twenty-first chapter of second Samuel. The situation that produced the amazing action of Rizpah was a treacherous and vindictive plot of the Gibeonites, who had been unjustly and wickedly treated by King Saul, to have King David give up the seven sons of Saul to be publicly tortured and crucified on the hill of Gibeah. After the deed was done, Rizpah, a concubine of Saul and mother of two of his sons went alone to Gibeah to fight off the wild birds and beasts who would pick the bones of the slain sons of Saul. In the message Angell quoted from the biblical account: "And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for her on the rock . . . And suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." The preacher opined that the time frame indicating her stay on the hill to fight off the scavengers was as much as three to four months. This observation prompted him to make this striking statement: "June, July, August, September she stayed among the decaying bodies of the seven sons and drove the beasts off by night and the birds of the air by day."¹⁵

Angell's application of Rizpah's story is keen as he transitions to the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins. In reply to a question about the reason for Rizpah being on the hill of Gibeah,

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Angell replies, “Because a mother loves. It’s a picture that stirs the human heart. A little mother, sitting among the crosses on the hill of Gibeah, because two of her boys had been crucified there. Just a few miles away and a few days away, if you measure by God’s clocks, another son was hanged by nails on Golgotha, and on Calvary at sunset three other crosses were silhouetted against an evening sky. Ask the one in the center, ‘Why are you here?’ Back comes the answer, ‘Because a Father loves.’”¹⁶

Angell acquired almost as many stories from laymen as from preachers. One of the better ones was told by a radio commentator. That story was used to introduce the theme of a sermon called, “The Cross Pull.” It seems that the commentator had spent some time on a ranch in the company of a cowboy who recently had lost a beautiful stallion, which he had raised from a colt, to a rampaging herd of wild horses. He received permission from the cowboy to tag along with him when he went to retrieve his stallion from the herd. He described the action as he watched the cowboy stealthily approach the herd:

“He did a beautiful piece of stalking until he was close enough for his voice to reach his horse. I saw him stand up, and I saw all those horses suddenly on the alert, their heads up. I knew he was talking to his horse for all he was worth. Then the herd bolted -- all but one. One of them stood still, but he didn’t know what to do. He looked at the other horses and took a step or two; then he looked back at the cowboy, pranced around a little, then looked again. I could feel -- I could almost see the cross pull in that fine stallion... There was the master whom he had loved, and there was the wild herd with which he had run. Which way should he go? I thought for a moment the cowboy had lost, for the horse took half a dozen steps as if to catch up with the herd, galloping away in a cloud of dust. Then he stopped and looked back, and with his head up and neck arched, he trotted to his master... Doctor, I just laid my head down in my hands and prayed, ‘Dear Lord, if ever I am tempted to

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run with the wild crowd in life, O Lord, let me listen to my
Master's voice; let me come back to him."¹⁷

These few examples are representative of how masterfully Angell used stories to illustrate truths. He not only had the homiletically inclined genius to garner them from all of life but also how to fit them aptly into his sermons to arouse and hold the interest of listeners.

To be sure, he had several additional strong attributes in his sermons, including a clear and inviting style with choice use of descriptive word pictures, simple language, and short sentences. But I must move on to briefly discuss some other important issues manifested in his messages.

Some "Shouldas"

I have a personal code of preaching, which has evolved during fifty-one years of study and practice, that guides me in the evaluation of sermons. I strive, however, not to prejudice the preaching of others. I learned long ago not to judge another's sermonizing as weak or ineffective when it doesn't abide by my personal preference. Plenty of preachers who don't practice by my code have been and are more effective than I, including the subject of this article.

That being said, I want to write about a couple of facets of C. Roy Angell's preaching that disagrees with my personal code. Obviously, I believe that he would have been an even more excellent herald of the Word of God had he done a few things differently.

More Exposition of Scripture

I am convinced that his sermons would have been more edifying had he given greater attention to the exposition of Scripture. Rarely do his sermons reveal depth and detail in the explanation of the meaning of Scripture. One of his best sermons in terms of exposition is entitled "Three Tremendous Truths." He takes three statements from the text of Second Timothy 1:11-14 as his main points. They are: "For the which cause I also suffered

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these things;” “I know whom I have believed;” “I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”¹⁸ Indeed, these are tremendous truths taken directly from the text. And, his application of these truths with good story illustrations make for an encouraging and inspiring sermon. However, he reflects an assumption that all his listeners already have a good grasp of the complete meaning of the Greek words translated “believed” and the contextual meaning of “these things” suffered by Paul and the biblical teaching of the meaning of “that day.”

Nevertheless, this is a good exposition of the key verses in his text.

Usually, though, his messages are topical, using a text only as a point of beginning. Consider his sermon entitled “Electives of Life.” The text is the familiar Matthew 11:28-30. The only aspect of the text he references is the mandate given by Jesus, “Learn of me.” He uses that statement to infer that Jesus is our teacher in the school of life, a school in which there are both elective and required courses. Then his main points become topically some of the required courses and some of the elective courses in the “University of Life.”¹⁹

Angell was aware of similar complaints about his preaching and replied to them in the following fashion: “No matter how full of grand truths your sermon is, if it isn’t interesting enough to catch and hold the attention of your listeners, it will not do them any good.”²⁰ Point well taken. But why not have good exposition with adequate stories and other illustrations to hold interest? It doesn’t have to be either one or the other. It should be both. This leads to my next “shoulda.”

Less Stories

Dr. Angell was a master at telling good stories and using them aptly for sermon illustrations and introductions to sermons, but he sometimes was guilty of “over kill” in story usage. He loved to tell good stories so much and he had such a supply of them that he frequently used more than necessary. Look at the sermon “God’s

Gold Mines.” He began that message with a story about an elderly lady who came across some old important looking documents while cleaning out her attic. Wisely, she took them to her banker to evaluate them. They turned out to be worth \$60,000. His point was that just as the lady found “gold” in an unexpected place, God has “gold mines” everywhere for us to happen across.²¹ His main points were some of those “gold mines.” The first point was The Earth. He then used four illustrations for that point. The sequence flowed as follows:

“The first place is beautifully expressed by the Psalmist, ‘The earth is full of thy riches’ (Psalm 104:24). There is a television serial called ‘Wagon Train’ that I often watch, because my father was born in one of those covered wagons in the last century. Twenty miles was about the only distance those wagons could travel in a day. The hardships were innumerable and dangers were ever present. They crawled across our continent like snails. Today we know that in the very mountains they struggled over so laboriously there was hidden everything they needed to cross America in just a few hours.

“Not long ago I stepped into a jet, and we raced the sun to San Francisco. It beat us by only a few hours. I looked down on Death Valley as the stewardess pointed out to us a beautiful, clear, cold water lake in the mountains on the very rim of Death Valley. If it had been discovered by our pioneer fathers, it would have saved literally thousands of people. We do not need to be reminded that in this twentieth century God has put a thousand gold mines in the material world, mines that we, with our half-open minds, have not found.

“A scientist, in a magazine article, said that there would be enough power in a small lump of coal, if it were treated with radiation, to run all the railroads in the British empire for a month. He added that there is enough power in one

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ounce of coal treated with radiation to run the largest steamship in the world across the Atlantic Ocean.

“Another wrote that Monroe, Louisiana, is considered the capital of the Beouf Basin. It was known for years as the “Cotton Bowl” of the South; then someone drilled for oil 2500 feet down. His rig was blown into little pieces, not by oil, but by gas. The gas was set on fire to keep it from injuring people and damaging the cotton. It burned for years before someone realized that it was a gold mine. Pipe lines were strung across the country - - East, West, North, and South; and now thousands of people in Miami cook breakfast with gas from the Beouf Basin. This is just one paltry illustration of the undiscovered wealth that God has hidden beneath the surface of the world.”²²

Any two of the four illustrations would have been more effective than all four.

Conclusion

C. Roy Angell was an effective and influential pulpit speaker, largely because of his passion for building sermons that people would hear gladly. He loved to preach and he loved to gather stories for use in sermons. Also, he obviously enjoyed telling good stories. Therein may have been something detrimental to his preaching, for he had so many stories and found so much delight in telling them that he over used stories.

Although he wasn't a biblical preacher in the finest sense of the word, he assuredly loved Scripture, believed it completely, and used frequently stories from the Bible in his preaching to illustrate truths deduced from a topic or theme. But his penchant for telling stories and his drive to hold the interest of listeners at all cost is why he always will be remembered as a masterful teller of good stories more than a biblical preacher.

ENDNOTES

- 1 James E. Caswell, "Dr. Charles Roy Angell." unpublished paper, p. 2.
- 2 *Florida Baptist Witness*. May 16, 1940, p. 6.
- 3 Al Fasol, ed., *With a Bible in Their Hands*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, Publishers, 1994, 157.
- 4 *Florida Baptist Witness*. November 14, 1935, p. 3.
- 5 H. C. Brown, Jr., ed., *Southern Baptist Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959, 20.
- 6 Caswell, op.cit, 4
- 7 Brown Jr., op. cit., 21-22.
- 8 C. Roy Angell, *Baskets of Silver*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955, 21-28.
- 9 J. H. Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work*. Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1912, 9.
- 10 Jerry Oswalt, "Great Preaching." unpublished article, 2.
- 11 Brown Jr., op. cit., 22.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 13 C. Roy Angell, *Iron Shoes*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1953, 72-74.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 73-74.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 64-66.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 71-72.
- 17 C. Roy Angell, *Baskets of Silver*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955, 39-40.
- 18 C. Roy Angell, *The Price Tags of Life*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959, 59-67.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 21-27.
- 20 Brown, Jr., op. cit., 21.
- 21 C. Roy Angell, *God's Gold Mines*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962, 1-3.
- 22 C. Roy Angell, *Ibid.*

A History of African American Florida Baptists

Sid Smith

*Director, African American
Ministries Division (1994-2005)
Florida Baptist Convention*



In order to understand the present status of African American Southern Baptists in Florida it is helpful to have information about their past. Since denominational existence does not occur in a vacuum, it is necessary to understand the foundations on which the present is built. Therefore, we will focus upon some significant factors contributing to the development of contemporary Florida Baptists in the African American community.

The focus will consist of three periods of African American history in Florida relative to African American Baptists: the period of early African American presence in Florida; the period of nineteenth century African American Southern Baptists in Florida; and, twentieth century African American Southern Baptists in Florida.

The Period of Early African American Presence

Documentation of earliest African American presence in Florida unfortunately is almost nonexistent. Therefore, most information about the subject is lost to history. However, it is possible to identify two phenomena relative to the early African American history of Florida: earliest African American presence in Florida; and, early African American Baptists in Florida.

Earliest African American Presence in Florida

According to history, the first known African American to come to Florida was Estevanico the Black, from Morocco in

Africa, who arrived just fifteen years after Ponce de Leon. In 1528 he arrived at what is now St. Petersburg with the Spanish expedition led by the great explorer Panfilo de Narvaez. After exploring Florida with Narvaez, Estevanico explored Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. He was the first African to explore Florida and much of the southwestern area of what is now the United States.¹

Beginning in 1687, the first African American runaway slaves began appearing in Florida. Because of its proximity to Georgia and South Carolina, Florida became an option for slaves determined to be free in the New World. Encouraged by the comparative leniency of the Spanish who ruled Florida at the time and the social implications of the efforts of the Catholic church to convert them, African American slaves found life in the territory an attractive alternative to British oppression.

The earliest free African American settlement in North America was Fort Mose, established two miles north of St. Augustine in 1738. This settlement contained approximately 100 African Americans who occupied the fort, farmed the fields, and assisted in the successful defense of the city of St. Augustine against the British, before the fort was destroyed in 1740. For twelve years the fort was not used until it was rebuilt in 1752. During this period the African Americans lived with the Spanish in St. Augustine as free people. In 1763, when the British captured Florida, the African Americans of Fort Mose abandoned the fort and relocated to Cuba along with the Spanish to begin life anew.

**Florida became an
option for slaves
determined to be free
in the New World**

The earliest history of Florida reveals three strands of African American presence: the African American explorer; the free African American who had escaped from slavery in Georgia and South Carolina; and the free African American settlement north of St. Augustine which existed 1738-1763 as Fort Mose.

These are the roots out of which early African American religion in the state grew.

Early African American Baptists in Florida

While the earliest African Americans to embrace Christianity in Florida were runaway slaves attracted to Catholicism, in all probability the first Baptists in the territory were African American. African American Baptists had been around since 1639 in Providence, Rhode Island. There had been African American Baptist churches since 1756 at Lunenburg, Virginia; 1773 at Silver Bluff, South Carolina; and 1778 at Augusta, Georgia. It was a matter of time before African American Baptists arrived in Florida. According to Florida Baptist historian Dr. Edward Earl Joiner, “No one knows for certain exactly when the first Baptists set foot on Florida soil, but it appears possible, even probable, that some of the first Baptists were Southern slaves who had escaped to promised freedom under the second and last period of Spanish rule (1738-1821).”² Based on the scholarship of Joiner, it is possible to conclude that the African American Baptists were probably the first Baptists in the state. Certainly they were among the first. So, African American Baptist roots go back to the earliest Baptist presence in Florida.

Very little is known about these earliest African American Baptists of Florida, since their story is almost totally lost to history. However, we do know that they held meetings in St. Augustine in 1784.³ They were runaway slaves from Georgia or South Carolina attracted to Florida by promised freedom from the Spanish. Their names and dates are unknown. Their work was undocumented. However, their presence laid the groundwork for the foundation of African American work in the state.

Nineteenth Century Florida African American Southern Baptists

This section will be characterized by listing significant facts about Florida Baptists and the African American community

in the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century was a period of significant African American presence among Florida Baptists. The greatest percentage of African American presence in the history of the Florida Baptist State Convention occurred during the nineteenth century. Some significant facts are:

- *The first established Baptist church in Florida was integrated.* The Pigeon Creek Baptist Church, organized in 1821, was the first Baptist church in the state, and had at least one African American member, Peter Lopers.⁴ Lopers joined the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church in Nassau County near what is now Callahan on July 22, 1822.⁵

- *African Americans comprised forty-six percent of the membership of the Alachua Association when it was organized in 1847.* In the twelve churches there were 230 African Americans out of the total of 500 members.⁶

- *African Americans were part of the first Sunday School in the state.* When G. G. Tripp organized the first Sunday School at Key West Baptist Church in 1844, African Americans were part of the membership.⁷

- *African Americans were the most faithful members of the first Sunday School in Florida.* When H. D. Doolittle reorganized the Sunday School at Key West Baptist Church in 1845, he observed better discipline and faithfulness among the African Americans than among the whites.⁸

- *The first African American preacher of record in Florida is Austin Smith.* In 1843 Smith was licensed to preach by the Key West Baptist Church under the pastorate of Charles C. Lewis. During the period when the church was without a pastor, he served as interim preacher for the African Americans and conducted prayer meetings each week.⁹

- *Most Florida Baptist churches were “integrated” during the nineteenth century.* Joiner states, “Integration in the churches, moreover, was the rule rather than the exception. Negroes held membership in most Baptist churches in all areas, often outnumbering white members.”¹⁰

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- The church where the Florida Baptist State Convention was organized had African American members.* Although the Convention organizational meeting was held in the home of R. J. Mays, the nearby Concord Baptist Church had African American members.¹¹

- African American presence in nineteenth century Florida Baptist churches was treated with social ambivalence.* Although the churches practiced inclusive membership, that did not mean that they practiced equality regarding the African American members. Joiner reminds, “In some churches they were treated just as were other members, and the quality of their contribution to the life of the church was not only recognized, but praised. Concern was often expressed for their welfare. Nonetheless they were generally relegated to a status in the church which could not be described as equal, despite the fact that in many Florida Baptist churches Negroes were in the majority.”¹²

- Although included in the membership of the churches, African Americans were usually under white control.* In meetings of African Americans, the minutes of the West Florida Baptist Association in 1854 reveal, African Americans were permitted to hold separate conferences and business meetings, pertaining only to their own business, “always under the supervision of the white brethren, one of whom should act as moderator.”¹³

- After the Civil War there was an exodus of African Americans from Florida Baptist churches.* Because of the unwillingness of white Florida Baptists to grant freedom and equality to the African American community, African Americans found alternatives to membership in Florida Baptist churches after emancipation, most frequently reflected by the establishing of African American Baptist churches in the state.¹⁴

- After the Civil War, there was a movement to form African American associations in Florida.* In 1880 there were four African American associations: Bethlehem No. 1, Bethlehem No. 2, Jerusalem, and Nazarene. By 1884 there were eight African American associations in the Florida Baptist State Convention.¹⁵

- As late as 1883, African Americans were a majority in the Florida*

Baptist State Convention. In that year, the Florida Baptist Convention Annual reported a membership of 16,857 African Americans compared to only 9,190 whites. This means that at the time the Florida Baptist State Convention was almost two-thirds African American.¹⁶

•*The Florida Baptist State Convention helped support the movement of organizing the first African American Baptist convention in the state*. Joiner states, “The Florida Baptists helped (1) by establishing friendly relationships with the ‘Colored Baptist Convention of Florida’ (as it was then designated), (2) by providing some help in the construction of Negro Baptist churches, (3) by holding institutes for Negro ministers and deacons, (4) by sharing use of buildings with them, and (5) by encouraging support for Negro schools.”¹⁷

Conclusion

The nineteenth century was a period of significant African American Southern Baptist presence in Florida. African Americans were present among the earliest efforts to start churches in the state. The evangelistic efforts among African Americans were so effective that African Americans outnumbered whites in the Florida Baptist Convention by almost two-to-one at one time.

Although the churches of the Convention were normally multiracial, the evidence compels the conclusion that this “integration” was not healthy. Social ambivalence about the status and rights of African Americans reveals that the churches were captured by the pathological values and practices of the nineteenth century South.

The great tragedy is that the white brethren were not ready for the demands of equality and brotherhood for the African American community. Their recalcitrant resistance forced the African Americans to leave in order to experience the full implications of freedom within the church. By 1900 there were no African American congregations remaining in the Florida Baptist State Convention.

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Twentieth Century Florida African American Southern Baptist Work

For more than a half century Southern Baptist ministry with the African American community was characterized largely by a “Baptist Plessy vs. Ferguson.” This “separate but equal” approach was facilitated by two major dynamics that significantly impacted the church community.

The first factor was the dominant trend of racial segregation in American culture in the South. The Jim Crow system in society heavily influenced the churches in the region and yielded a segregationistic mindset for most congregations. The segregationist mindset yielded the practice of an informal community agreement that assumed that the African American community was the domain of the African American denominations and the white community was the domain of Southern Baptists in the South.

The second factor was the organizing and ascendancy of the National Baptist conventions. In 1895 the National Baptist Convention of America was organized. In 1915 the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. was founded. These African American national denominations provided an alternative to the Southern Baptist Convention, which was not ready for racial equality. These two major African American denominations attracted the overwhelming majority of African American Baptist churches to their membership.

Although dim, the light had not gone out on Florida Baptist ministry in the African American community. Florida Baptists responded to the ministry challenge in the African American community through various approaches described in the following periods: the Inclusiveness Period; the Cooperative Ministries Period; the Church Extension Period; and the African American Ministries Period.

Inclusiveness Period 1900-2000

The practice of inclusive ministry among Florida Baptists never ended. Although almost all African American

members had participated in the post-Civil War exodus and found membership in a National Baptist convention by 1900, some Florida Baptist churches retained some African American members. For example, it is reported that First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, has always had African Americans in their membership. Other churches across the state report that they have enjoyed African American presence among their members for years.

While some Florida Baptists chose to minister to the African American community by welcoming them to their church, this form of inclusiveness was the exception rather than the rule. Most Florida Baptists displayed little interest in reaching the African American community for Christ.

In the late 1960s, another form of inclusiveness began to emerge in the Florida Baptist State Convention. It was the inclusiveness manifested by predominantly African American churches joining the State Convention. In 1968 Rev. Joseph C. Coats led Glendale Baptist Church, Miami, to affiliate with the Miami Baptist Association, which was a move that made the church the first predominantly African American congregation to become a member of the Florida Baptist State Convention in the twentieth century. By 1994 there were seventy-two predominantly African American FBC churches. Today there are almost 400 churches in the African American community affiliated with the Florida Baptist State Convention.

So, in summary, some Florida Baptists never abandoned the concept of including the African American community in the focus of their ministry. This was accomplished by inclusive congregationalizing and by openness to receiving predominantly African American congregations into the Convention. These two phases of inclusiveness covered the entirety of the century.

Cooperative Ministries Period 1965-1989

In addition to inclusion of the African American community in their own ministry, Florida Baptists, under heavy

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influence of the Home Mission Board, adopted the strategy of working with and through the National Baptists to reach the African American community in the state. This strategy involved working with the General Baptist State Convention of Florida and the Progressive Missionary and Educational Baptist State Convention of Florida, under the able leadership of Florida Baptist Convention staff assigned to spearhead cooperative ministries.

The first Florida Baptist Convention staffer elected to lead this phase of the work was Dr. Julius Avery who served as Director of Cooperative Ministries With National Baptists 1965-1973. He provided significant leadership in the field of communications between Southern Baptists and National Baptists. He initiated the concept of associational joint committees in Florida which resulted in improved leadership training opportunities for African American churches. Dr. Avery was known as “a friend of National Baptists.”

Dr. Avery was succeeded in 1974 by Dr. Murray McCullough as Director of Cooperative Ministries With National Baptists. Serving until 1979, McCullough was known as an effective pulpiteer among African American churches, frequently becoming the first white to be invited to preach in their pulpits. He led First Baptist Church, Sarasota, to sponsor the first African American mission in the twentieth century among Florida Baptists. McCullough was well respected and honored by African American Baptists across the state for his efforts at racial reconciliation and for continuation of cooperative training events with African Americans.

After retirement for medical reasons, McCullough was succeeded by Dr. Larry Elliott in 1979. Elliott was known for his warm personal relationship style with the African American church leaders and is cited in African American church literature with deep appreciation. He served when the concept was changed to African American church relations from cooperative ministries with National Baptists. During his tenure, which ended in 1989, the focus was on: fraternal relations with the two National Baptist

state conventions; a church leadership training conference for African American Baptists at Lake Yale, with several hundred in attendance; a scholarship program for African American students; regional Vacation Bible School clinics; missions skills workshops; church development conferences; evangelism seminars; publication of a newsletter named “Koinonia Co-op News”; conducting New Work Probes; and supervising a staff of four regional directors of African American church relations. A distinctive of this era was the decision to focus the work of this program on starting churches in the African American community.

Church Extension Period 1989-1994

In 1989 a strategy was initiated by the Missions Division of the Florida Baptist Convention to shift the thrust of the African American ministry to church starting in the African American community. This work was assigned to the Church Extension Department of the convention and the African American Church Relations Program was phased out.

The new strategy involved the church extension consultants spearheading the effort to start churches in the African American community. This was a new direction for Southern Baptists, but there was some readiness in Florida for the approach. From 1989-1994, forty-three predominantly African American churches were started.

The major direction of this period was the adoption of the unitary conventional approach as the strategy for Black ministry. Inclusiveness was to be the order of the day. There would be one program and African Americans would be included like everyone else.

This period was also characterized by the inclusion of African Americans on state boards, committees, and as speakers at some state conferences. Revs. Joseph Coats and Elroy Barber served on the State Board of Missions. Dr. V. L. Roy Liburd served on the Florida Baptist Family Ministries Board. Rev. Cleo Albury, Jr., served on the Pembroke Foundation Nominating Committee,

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and Dr. R. Eugene Burly was selected for the Committee on Order of Business.

Some associations in the state convention made great progress in electing African Americans to top offices. Drs. Joseph C. Coats, V. L. Roy Liburd, Lewis C. Lampley, Revs. Elroy Barber and Joshua Garvin were elected moderator of their associations. Mrs. Floria Gibbs was elected WMU Director of the Miami Baptist Association.

Some predominantly African American churches were leaders in the state convention in baptisms by 1994. Bible Baptist Church, Miami, was led by pastor Rev. Cleo Albury to post the twentieth highest baptismal total in the state. Rev. Joshua Garvin led New Life Baptist Church, Carol City, to the sixth highest baptismal ratio in Florida that year.

During this period, African American churches in the Florida Baptist State Convention organized the African American Southern Baptist Fellowship of Florida. The new group endeavored to promote fellowship among African American congregations and to encourage participation in the mainstream of SBC life. An expanded program was inaugurated under the administration of president, Dr. Elroy Barber.

The new direction of the unitary conventional approach met with limited success. While some predominantly African American churches embraced it enthusiastically, others were slow to become significantly involved. While training programs were open to African Americans on the same basis as to others, many African American pastors reported that there were still cultural bridges that needed to be crossed before most of their churches would be significantly involved. A major conclusion could be reached about the unitary conventional approach: while a few African Americans could be reached through this single approach, it would take a dual approach to reach most Florida Baptist African American churches.

A major lesson from the limited effectiveness of the unitary conventional strategy for African American work is that, at this time in history, the evidence reveals that the most effective

strategy for reaching the African American community is the cultural specialty approach. Eschewing resegregation, this approach is the model which has been demonstrated effective in other pioneering state conventions such as California and Texas and at SBC national agencies such as the Baptist Sunday School Board and the Home Mission Board. It relies upon African American Southern Baptist leadership for strategizing to meet the needs of the African American constituency or community.

It ushered in the era of African American professional program leaders for Southern Baptist programs involving the African American community.

African American Ministries Period 1994-2000

In 1994 the Florida Baptist Convention under the leadership of Dr. John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer, instituted the African American Ministries Program. This program was the most advanced strategy to reach the African American community in Southern Baptist history.

The mission statement of the African American Ministries Office reflected the commitment of the state convention to minister to the African American community seriously. The office's mission was defined as "to provide leadership for the design and implementation of the Florida Baptist Convention's strategy for ministering in, with, through, and to the African American community."

The following characteristics governed the program:

- The African American Ministries Office was structured at division level.* For the first time in Southern Baptist history, a state convention structured its African American program ministry as a division with all rights, privileges, responsibilities, budget, and accountability appertaining thereto. This move was incontrovertible evidence that the Florida Baptist Convention was serious about healthy ministry in the African American community.

- An experienced African American Southern Baptist leader was employed to lead the program.* In 1994 Dr. Sid Smith, a veteran of

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twenty years of Southern Baptist denominational service, was called as Director of the African American Ministries Office. Smith had served as a home missionary for the Home Mission Board and as Manager of the Black Church Development Section at the Baptist Sunday School Board, as well as a pastor, minister of education, and owner of the first African American church consulting firm.

The prolific author of twelve pioneering books on African American Southern Baptist church studies, he brought relevant qualitative experience to the position. Recognized by the Baptist Sunday School Board as “The Father of the GOSS” (Growth Oriented Sunday School concept), he also brought a background of pioneering in practical resource development for African American churches and Southern Baptist denominational servants engaged in ministry in the multiracial context.

- *A relevant philosophy of ministry was developed.* The African American Ministries Division Office developed a philosophy of ministry which identified its programmatic involvement through two major thrusts: conventional program assistance and cultural specialty leadership. In this approach, the African American Ministries Office assists the state convention program organizations with their assignments through their involvement in the African American community. The office also leads in the planning, organizing, and conducting of African American cultural specialty training events designed to bridge cultural/racial dissonance and encourage participation in conventional programming.

- *The priorities of the African American Ministries Division Office were well defined.* The four priorities were: church starting, church development, evangelism training, and diversity appreciation strategies.

- *Two departments were organized.* Eventually the African American Ministries Division was able to organize the African American Church Planting Department, Rev. Eugene Bryant, director, and the African American Church Development Department, Rev. Milton Boyd, director. This was the first time a

state convention had organized both departments for African American work.

•*An experienced staff was employed.* A staff of veterans of the Florida Southern Baptist African American experience was employed as regional directors of African American Ministries. The fulltime staff consisted of: Dr. Lewis Lampley, Western Regional Director; Dr. V. L. Roy Liburd, Mid-Florida Regional Director; Rev. Clifford Marity, South Florida Regional Director; and, Dr. Joshua Smith, Northeastern Regional Director.

Part-time contract workers served as local directors of African American Ministries for the specific assignment of church starting through institutes and coordination of covenant cluster church training programs. The following have served as local directors in Florida: Rev. Kendall Anderson, Jacksonville; Rev. Ricky Armstrong, Miami; Dr. Elroy Barber, Hollywood; Rev. Woodrow Benton, Miami; Rev. Darrell Britt, Quincy; Rev. Harrison Freeman, Ft. Pierce; Rev. Richard Fuller, Crestview; Rev. Arthur Groomes, Panama City; Rev. Danny Harris, Miami; Rev. Tyrone Herndon, Winter Springs; Dr. Walter H. Johnson, Jacksonville; Rev. Joseph Jones, Tallahassee; Rev. Barrett Lamm, Quincy; Rev. Maxie Miller, Plant City; Rev. Robert Moss, Miami; Rev. Willie J. Nelson, Opa Locka; Rev. Keith Scott, Palm Harbor; Rev. Quenton Smith, Satellite Beach; Rev. Lester Ward, Miami; Rev. Glenn H. Webster, Winter Haven; Rev. Paul Williams, Sarasota.

•*African American Ministries was made the state convention emphasis for 1996.* The African American Ministries Division programs were made high priorities for the year and served to introduce a massive church starting program in the African American community.

•*A multifaceted church starting strategy was implemented.* The African American Ministries Division designed and implemented four strategies for starting churches in the African American community: the church starting institute; an associational church starting program; a congregational church starting program; and, a staff-based church starting program. The goal was to start at least

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100 churches per year.

- *A church development seminar training program was launched.*

African American-oriented church development seminars were conducted across the state utilizing clusters of African American churches who covenanted to participate in training sessions in Sunday School, discipleship training, church community ministries, family ministries, women's ministry, church music, prayer ministry, and evangelism.

- *An African American-oriented communications medium was established.* The African American Division established *The African American Chronicle*, a periodic newsletter focusing on African American Southern Baptist affairs as a channel of cultural communication for the African American community to supplement denominational publications.

- *Church starting accelerated.* From 1989 through 1993, Florida Baptists averaged starting seven churches per year in predominantly African American communities. Since the establishing of the African American Ministries Division in 1994, the convention has averaged starting more than fifty churches per year in those communities.

In 1995, the African American Ministries Division set a goal of leading Florida Baptists to start 500 churches in the African American community by December 31, 2000. To date, the churches of the state convention have been responsible for starting almost 300 churches. Under leadership from the African American Church Planting Department, the God-sized challenge remains before Florida Baptists.

- *Church development training multiplied.* The African American Ministries Division does its assignment of leadership training through the African American Church Development Department. Primarily through culturally customized seminars, consultations, and conferences, the department trains leaders in Florida Baptist programming and encourages participation in state convention events.

It is estimated that from 1989 through 1993, African American Southern Baptist participation in Florida Baptist

leadership training events was sparse at best, averaging only about thirty per year for a total of approximately 150 for the period. Since 1995, under the leadership of the African American Ministries Division, an average of more than 1,500 leaders per year have been trained in Florida Baptist predominantly African American churches for a total of more than 9,000 trained during the period.

The African American Church Development Department leads the Southern Baptist Convention in leadership training among African Americans. In 1998-1999, 3,025 leaders were trained. In 1997 Florida Baptists trained more African American church leaders than the other SBC state conventions combined. The training provided by the African American Church Development Department since 1995 represents the equivalent of training offered for more than 1,500 Christian Growth Study Plan diplomas.

- Evangelism training assistance increased.* While the Evangelism Division carries the assignment for evangelism, the African American Ministries Division assists with training in predominantly African American churches.

The proliferation of new churches, special worker training, and evangelism training seminars has resulted in a baptismal ratio of one-to-eighteen in Florida Baptist African American churches. Consequently, it is projected that more than 4,000 persons are baptized in predominantly African American churches in the convention per year. Since 1994 it is projected that more than 8,000 persons have been baptized in predominantly African American FBC churches. The goal is to have a total of more than 10,000 baptisms by the end of 2000.

- Diversity appreciation leadership was provided.* The African American Ministries Division provides leadership for the convention's diversity appreciation focuses. In a culturally pluralistic state, the adequately equipped convention will have a strategy to equip the churches for the reality of the multicultural ministry context.

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diversity by conducting cultural sensitivity seminars. Annual focuses have included: “Issues in Multicultural Sensitivity for State Convention Staff”; “Understanding, Identifying, and Dismantling Inadvertent Institutional Racism In Denominational Structures”; “Understanding the Hispanic Culture”; “Understanding the African American Culture.”

Florida Baptists are among the leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention in in-service-training for diversity appreciation.

•*Associational cooperative programming was initiated.* The African American Ministries Division has initiated joint planning and program implementation with associations in the state. The division participates with associations through joint church starting in African American communities, African American church development conferencing, and serving as liaison consultants with African American churches. Some associations have established the position of associational director of African American ministries, with assistance from the division. The division has established twenty-one associational/regional cluster planning groups to assist in need assessment in African American churches for church development training purposes.

As a result of the impact of the African American Ministries Division, associations have experienced unprecedented growth in the number of churches started in the African American community, as well as a dramatic escalation of African American associational involvement.

•*Accredited seminary education was provided.* The African American Ministries Division has initiated through New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary the Pastoral Ministry Certificate in African American Church Studies. Students may earn the certificate through The African American Ministries Church Training Institute by successfully completing an accredited course in: Old Testament, New Testament, Evangelism, Christian Ethics, Church History, Church Planting, Sunday School Growth, and Preaching.

This is the first time a state convention has established such a program with a Southern Baptist seminary. Since its inception, more than 100 students per year have been trained.

- Culturally customized resources were produced.* The African American Ministries Division has been involved in the generation of culturally specific resources for Florida Baptists. The division has produced pioneering books, videos, articles, and newsletters. The books produced by the Division are used by colleges, seminaries, and state/national convention training conferences across America. Consequently, Florida leads the nation in the production of contextualized training resources for African American churches.

- A strategy planning committee was organized.* The African American Ministries Division has organized the African American Ministries Strategy Planning Committee. The committee consists of leading African American pastors, laypersons, and directors of missions who meet annually to provide input to the division and other FBC program departments on needs and wants in African American churches relative to training conferences. Seminars, conferences, and consultations are conducted based on their preferences.

This grassroots approach to planning has resulted in unprecedented participation in training programs by African American churches.

- An arson fund was administered.* The African American Ministries Division administers the Florida Baptist Convention's arson fund. This fund was established in 1996 as a response to the rash of burnings of African American churches. Several Florida churches have been assisted in the rebuilding of their house of worship as a result of the fund.

- Projects were shared with the Florida African American Fellowship.* The Florida African American Southern Baptist Fellowship is an organization of churches which predates the creation of the African American Ministries Division. The Fellowship exists to promote fellowship among African American churches and to encourage their full participation in the Florida

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Baptist Convention. Dr. Winston Rudolph, pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church, Pompano Beach, serves as president.

The African American Ministries Division participates in joint projects with the Fellowship. The Florida African American Southern Baptist Fellowship leads the nation through visionary leadership and involvement in the Southern Baptist African American Fellowship.

Dr. Elroy Barber, former president of the Florida African American Southern Baptist Fellowship, serves as second vice president of the Southern Baptist African American Fellowship.

•*National recognitions were earned.* The African American Ministries Division's impact has been recognized nationally in the area of church starting. The Home Mission Board awarded the 1996-1997 Church Starter of the Year Award to Dr. Elroy Barber, pastor of Westside International Baptist Church, Hollywood. The North American Mission Board awarded the 1998 On Mission Church Starter of the Year Award to Rev. Mark Coats, pastor of Grace of God, Miami.

•*National leadership was provided.* The African American Ministries Division has achieved leadership status in the Southern Baptist Convention relative to African American affairs. The division provided leadership in the founding of the Black Southern Baptist Denominational Servants Network, the first national fellowship of African American Southern Baptist denominational employees.

•The African American Ministries Division is represented in national planning and training sessions at the North American Mission Board and LifeWay Christian Resources.

•State program leaders from other states are mentored by the division.

Contributions of Florida Baptists

Florida Baptists have been pioneers among Southern Baptists in working with the African American community. The following significant contributions have been bequeathed to the

racial progress of the Convention.

- Florida Baptists pioneered in improving religious education in the African American community by demonstrating that the principles of Southern Baptist Sunday School administration, so effective in white congregations, also are viable for African American churches. When Glendale Baptist Church, Miami, proved this point by growing the largest Sunday School in the African American community, it was only the prelude to the proliferation of a new movement in African American churches nationwide—the Growth Oriented Sunday School, a “Blackenized” cultural adaptation of the Southern Baptist Sunday School program pioneered by Florida Baptists.

- Florida Baptists pioneered among Southern Baptists in the intentional starting of churches in the African American community. For decades the concept of Southern Baptists starting churches in African American communities was controversial due to the threat to denominational relations with African American Baptist denominations fearful of proselytizing efforts. Florida Baptists led the way among Southern Baptist state conventions in concentrating their strategy for African American ministry in church starting. Although seriously questioned at the time, this strategy has become the primary philosophy among Southern Baptists today. It was the forerunner of the modern African American church starting movement.

- Florida Baptists pioneered in the employment of African American denominational staff among Southern Baptists. While not the first to employ a African American to serve on the state staff, the convention was the first to invest so much in multiple African American state staffers. When the regional directors of African American work were brought aboard, a model was set for other states in the Southern Baptist Convention. (Reverends William Campbell, Larry Hunt, Bernard Blount, John Giles, and George Sadler served as regional directors during the 1970s and 1980s.) The point was made that if a state convention was serious about ministering to the African American community, that seriousness must be manifested in staffing involving skilled

persons from the community.

- Florida Baptists pioneered in prioritizing the African American program of work among Southern Baptists. The Florida Baptist Convention was the only state convention to structure the African American program focus at division level. Most other state conventions that have African American-focused programs structure them at consultant level or, in some cases, at associate level, while a few have structured them at department level. However, the Florida Baptist Convention has structured the African American Ministries Program at division level. This paradigm sends the strongest positive message to the African American community about their acceptance by the state convention. As more state conventions prioritize ministry in the African American community, it is predicted that this will be the model of the future.

- Florida Baptists pioneered among state conventions in the “Deep South” by electing an African American to serve as president. In 1998 Florida Baptists made history by unanimously electing Dr. Elroy Barber, an African American, to serve as president of the Florida Baptist State Convention. Although thirteen other African Americans had served as president of their state convention, this marked the first time a “Deep South” Southern Baptist state convention had elected an African American president.

Although Dr. Barber is a proud man of color, there appears to be consensus that he was not elected because of his race but because of his outstanding qualifications. At Westside International Baptist Church, Hollywood, where he served as pastors, Barber had distinguished himself as a strong leader in Kingdom work by developing a strong record.

The administration of President Barber was a highlight for the Florida Baptist State Convention. During his presidency, Cooperative Program giving was at an all time high. Baptisms by Florida Baptist churches were at record levels. The increased ownership factor by minorities was reflected by unprecedented participation in Florida Baptist training events, especially by

African Americans proud to have one of their own as president. Other Baptist state conventions in Florida responded with unprecedented desires for cooperation as their trust level of the Florida Baptist Convention has escalated as a result of encountering a president of color.¹⁸

Conclusion

The creation of the African American Ministries Division has paid tremendous dividends to Florida Baptists and the Kingdom of God. The convention has discovered an effective way to accelerate its ministries of church starting, church development, and evangelism in the African American community. God is at work in the convention through the Division.

In conclusion, Florida Baptists have made history in their approach to ministry in the African American community. Based upon the mountain of insights gained from the historic contributions of the denominational pioneers from the Florida Baptist Convention who worked with the African American community, the state convention has evolved into the leader among Southern Baptists committed to healthy multiracial ministry.¹⁹

ENDNOTES

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8 *Ibid.*

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Florida Baptist Hispanic Heritage 1950s to 1988

*Milton S. Leach, Jr.
Catalytic missionary, (1954-1982)
Southern Baptist North
American Mission Board*

Early Beginning

The first Hispanic work in South Florida began in 1940 when the Home Mission Board started a good will center in Key West. It was directed by Miss Mary A. Taylor. Following a revival conducted by Abdiel Silva of Tampa, several Hispanic persons were baptized at the First Baptist Church. In 1947 Ismael Negrin became the first pastor of the Hispanic congregation with financial support of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. He served there for about fourteen years.

In 1948 the Home Mission Board constructed a building on Watson Street for the Hispanic church. The church continued to meet there until September 5, 1953, when they moved to a new building on White Street. Services were held in English and Spanish for many years. Pastors at White Street Baptist Church have been Ismael Negrin, S. A. Candal, Gary Carpentar, J. C. Lewis, Luis Manuel, Lopez Munoz, Alberto Joaquin, Eliseo Rodriguez, Alberto Saenz, Gus Sanchez, Israel Garcia, and Rafael Melian. The church property continues to be owned by the Home Mission Board.

Early in the 1940s, the Home Mission Board began efforts to reach the Hispanics of Ybor City, a section of the city of Tampa. The Ybor City population was made up largely of Cubans and Italians who were involved in the cigar industry. Through the years unsettled political conditions in Cuba had resulted in an exodus of refugees to Tampa and Key West. The Hispanic church in Ybor City began approximately in 1945 with Abdiel Silva, Sr. as

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pastor. As in the case of the Key West Hispanic mission work, the Home Mission Board conducted a good will center at the same location. Beside the good will center the Board, constructed an attractive Latin style church building.

At one point R. B. Armstrong led this work. Following the pastorate of Abdiel Silva, the Home Mission Board sent a non-Spanish speaking pastor to Ybor City. The result was a departure of a major number of members who formed the Latin American Baptist Church, an independent congregation. Latin American Baptist Church reaffiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in 1980 under the leadership of pastor David Leyva. It is now, by far, the largest Hispanic Baptist church in the Tampa Bay Baptist Association. The Ybor City Hispanic Church was pastored in later years by Frank Ramirez and Alexander Pasetti. In 1968 the church disbanded.

Work has been carried on for many years in Immokalee where large numbers of migrants gather each year to produce the crops. The state mission board furnished a parsonage for the missionary and the Home Mission Board supplied the workers.

The Hispanic work in Miami began in Miami in 1948 as a department of Central Baptist Church. Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Aguayo were enlisted to head the department. In 1950 Aguayo was ordained in the church and named the first pastor. In 1952 Aguayo resigned and Jose M. Fleites was called as pastor. During the first ten years, the congregation met in the chapel of Central Baptist Church.

Miami Baptist Association

In 1954 the Home Mission Board sent Milton S. Leach to Miami to assist the association in the development of Hispanic work. The only Hispanic Baptist congregation in Miami were the Spanish department of Central Baptist Church and the Spanish mission of Stanton Memorial Baptist Church. South Miami Baptist Church maintained preaching stations for the migrants in Princeton, Florida City, and Goulds.

Reinaldo Carvajal and Antonia Maria De Los Reyes were the first volunteers who offered to help start new work in Miami. They were members of the Spanish department that was meeting in the chapel of Central Baptist Church.

The Director of Missions was Dr. J. T. Gillespie. It was estimated that there were 60,000 Spanish-speaking people in Miami.

The first official report of Spanish mission work was in the Miami Baptist Associational Annual of 1954. The report indicated that there had been forty-nine additions by baptism and eighteen other additions: total additions were sixty-seven. Total offerings \$8,149, gifts to missions were \$249

Milton Leach, the director of Spanish missions reported having preached 319 sermons during the first year.

By 1955 there were a total of seven missions functioning in Miami Baptist Association but five of them did not have pastors. Leach and the two volunteers conducted services and taught Sunday School at each of the seven missions. Services were conducted and food and clothing distributed weekly in approximately fifteen migrant camps among the 5,000 migrants who came that year.

In 1956 it was estimated that there were 70,000 to 80,000 Spanish-speaking people in Miami of which 248 were members of the Baptist Hispanic congregations. One tenth of the people in Miami were Spanish speaking. The seven Spanish missions reported a total of 100 additions during the year with a total of 248 members. Total gifts for all purposes amounted to \$15,000 with \$360 being given for mission causes. This was the year that the first Spanish encampment was held. A group of fifty-two people of all ages traveled to Key West where Rev. and Mrs. Negrin had prepared space in the mission Center buildings for the first encampment. The Brotherhood of South Miami Baptist Church built a small building for the migrants of the Princeton area. Services were started at First Baptist Church of Miami Beach where some 40,000 Cuban tourists spent their vacation each year.

In 1957 two new missions were organized making a total of nine. Five mission couples and two single part-time workers were employed. Offerings amounted to nearly \$24,000 with \$1,200 going to mission causes. The second encampment was held at Key West with an enrollment of ninety-three and the group reported ten professions of faith and eighteen rededications. Nine Vacation Bible Schools were held with a total enrollment of 609 children. The first simultaneous revival campaign was held this year. The Spanish-speaking people pledged \$5,670 to the Baptist Hospital project but on the day that the hospital was dedicated a group of Spanish speaking people from the missions went to participate but were turned away by the guard at the gate.

In 1958 Riverside Baptist Church began a mission making a total of ten Spanish-speaking congregations. “The Forward Program of Church Finance” was translated and used in each of the Spanish missions. Spanish conferences were held in connection with all associational meetings. A full time worker,

**In 1958 Riverside
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congregations.**

Mike Cassidy, was sent by the Home Mission Board to work with migrants. The Spanish pastors who worked with the migrants reported 105 professions of faith. There were a total of 387 professions of faith. Nine hundred and fifty people were reported enrolled in the Sunday Schools with an average attendance of nearly 800. One hundred fifty campers were enrolled in Spanish family camp with thirty-five professions of faith and eight rededications.

The Spanish radio program, “La Hora Bautista” began on station WMIE and continued for the next seven years. It was picked up by a station in Bonaire, off of the coast of Venezuela, and was beamed into Venezuela, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other Spanish-speaking countries. New Sunday Schools were started at Emmanuel, Northside, and Sunset Heights churches.

In 1959 the Spanish chapels participated in the statewide Sunday School Clinic and Enlargement Campaign. Workers came from Cuba and Texas to participate in this campaign. Sixteen Spanish Sunday schools were participating in monthly associational activities. Training Union work was growing and 192 people attended the Spanish “M Night” program. Six evangelists came from Cuba for simultaneous revivals in ten Hispanic chapels. They reported 199 decisions. The first Spanish Pastors and Workers Institute was conducted at the new associational campgrounds at Florida City with twenty-two pastors enrolled. The Baptist bookstore in Miami began selling Spanish books, Bibles, and gospel recordings. First Central Spanish Mission became a constituted church with 268 enrolled in Sunday School. They moved to the former Westminster Presbyterian Church, a building which was purchased jointly by the Home Mission Board, Miami Association, and the State Mission Board at a cost of \$72,000.

Revolution in Cuba, Refugees in Miami

January 1, 1959, was destined to bring a dramatic change to all Baptist work in South Florida. Fidel Castro and Communism took over the Caribbean nation and Fulgencio Batista, president of Cuba, went into exile. Refugees began to flee Cuba by the thousands. Most made Miami their exile home. Among the refugees were many Baptists and some of them were pastors. Most of these were assigned to pastorless congregations in Miami.

In January of 1959 about a dozen men came to the Baptist office in Miami and introduced themselves as Cuban refugees. They had just arrived in a small boat and needed help. They had no food, no money, no place to stay, no jobs, and spoke no English.

Milton Leach made some calls to pastors and made arrangements for the care of the men. Each day more refugees appeared until an average of 125 refugees were coming daily for assistance from the Baptist office. In 1959 the Home Mission

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Board contributed \$10,000 to the work. Food and clothing was distributed from the basement of Primera Iglesia Bautista Central, Miami, and resettlement arrangements were made in the offices of the Spanish department of the association on the second floor. Cuban refugee pastors and laymen from the Spanish missions came every day to help with the distribution of food and clothing.

The Spanish population in Miami was increasing at the rate of 1,000 per month while the Spanish enrollment in the public schools had increased from 3,500 in 1956 to 21,000. Many churches were employing Spanish-speaking pastors to develop Spanish departments. The association promoted a Spanish Sunday School Enlargement Campaign and Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Barry were brought from the Florida Baptist Convention for this purpose. Rev. J. Ray Dobbins was guest speaker for the Spanish "Action Night" program, which was attended by 114 Spanish Sunday School teachers and workers.

The "M Night" program was attended by 214 people. Mrs. Marjorie Caudill, wife of Dr. Herbert Caudill, director of Baptist work in Cuba, directed a Spanish Music School, which was attended by seventy-seven people. All of the Spanish congregations reported having systematically contributed to the Cooperative Program. When the associational "Schools of Missions" were conducted, Spanish-speaking workers were brought from Mexico, Texas, Cuba, and other parts of Florida to direct the Spanish schools. Two hundred and ninety two people were enrolled in mission studies.

The Latin American Center of Key West was constituted and named White Street Baptist Church on September 25. This was the second Spanish Baptist church to be constituted in the State of Florida. The Spanish extension of Stetson University was organized with seventeen students enrolled. Three full time workers were employed for work with the migrants in the Princeton and Homestead areas. Spanish departments were opened in Sunset Heights, West Hialeah, and Shenandoah. Northeast, Flagami, and Flagler Street churches were conducting

some work.

Miami had come to be called “The Gateway to Latin America.” In October 1960, the city built a monument with an eternal flame to perpetuate the friendly relationship that existed and that they hoped would continue. On October 26, 1960, “The Torch of Friendship” was dedicated in Bayfront Park. The mayor, Robert King High, was a member of the Flagler Street Baptist Church. He invited Rabbi Irving Lehrman of Temple Emanuel, Rev. John Sweeney, pastor of Gesu Catholic Church and Milton Leach representing the Evangelical churches to pray for God’s blessings on this relationship.

Children in Cuba were being taken away from parents and sent to rural schools in Cuba or to Russia for Communist indoctrination. At age fifteen the boys were sent to military camps. The Catholic Church organized what they called “Operation Peter Pan,” a government approved plan where planes flew to Cuba each week bringing loads of children back to the United States. Catholics, Baptists, and other Evangelical denominations sponsored many of the children and cared for them. Some children arrived with notes pinned to their clothes giving the name of the child and the name of the parents, asking that someone would care for their children until the parents could escape Communist Cuba. From 1960 to 1962, 14,000 children were able to escape.

Cuban refugee pastors, their wives, and laymen from the Spanish missions came to the Baptist center every day to help with the distribution of food and clothing. They also interviewed those who were willing to be sponsored by Baptist churches and to be resettled to other parts of the United States.

With the arrival of thousands of Cuban Refugees in Miami, Hispanics began moving to West Palm Beach. First Baptist Church started a Spanish Mission. Rev. Torres was the first pastor. Some of the early pastors of the mission were Reinaldo Padron and Dr. Jose M. Sanchez. On September 20, 1987, the mission was constituted as a church. Rev. Cecilio Farinas was the pastor.

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In 1961 the Spanish-speaking population in Miami increased from 100,000 to 190,000. There were approximately 70,000 refugees in Miami who had fled from communist domination. First Baptist Church and Flagler Street established new Spanish departments. Preaching services were being conducted also at First Baptist Church of Opa Locka and First Baptist Church of Miami Beach. Earlington Heights agreed to open a Spanish department as soon as workers were available. Property was purchased by the Home Mission Board for the Northside Spanish Mission and for Jerusalem Spanish Mission involving an investment of more than \$70,000.

During the Billy Graham Evangelistic Campaign, Milton Leach and Nona Platillero translated the messages through a system of earphones, and more than seventy people from the Spanish section made decisions. Dr. Graham held a special service at the Bayfront Park Bandshell for the Spanish-speaking people. More than 4,000 were present with 131 making decisions.

Weekly Spanish radio programs were conducted in Miami, Homestead, and Key West. Twelve of the seventeen Spanish chapels were functioning now as departments of Anglo churches. All associational activities were either conducted simultaneously in Spanish and English or the Spanish-speaking people participated in the English activities through simultaneous translations. By 1961 there were seventeen Hispanic chapels of which twelve were departments in Anglo churches.

In 1962 eleven English-speaking laymen from four different states conducted layman's revivals. The Training Union "M Night" program was attended by 518 people and 204 attended the Sunday School "Action Night" program. The Woman's Missionary Union of the Florida Baptist Convention contributed \$500 to be used as scholarship money for Spanish-speaking students. Charles Peterson, director of the department of Stewardship of the Florida Baptist Convention had many of the stewardship materials translated and made available. Nearly all of the churches in the association were now participating in some

way in Spanish mission work and refugee relief. The refugee center ministered to 1,175 people from fourteen Latin American countries who represented ten different religious faiths.

A group of five refugee men came in a small open boat and arrived somewhere in the Keys. As they walked North toward the mainland they stopped several times to ask where they could get help. They were told, "If you can find the Baptists they will help you."

For more than a year, mission work has been carried on with Mexican and Puerto Rican migrants and Cuban refugees in the Belle Glade area. A layman, Mr. Reinaldo Padron and his wife Reina from Miami have been conducting that work which is sponsored by First Baptist Church of Belle Glade where Rev. Luther Key is pastor. The Gulf Stream and Palm Lake Associations employed Rev. Francisco Plantillero and his wife Nona to work with the Spanish-speaking people of that area. Plans were made to start work next season in the Sarasota area where Rev. John Whitt served as district missionary.

In 1962 four new Spanish-speaking pastors were employed. A number of pastors having fled from Cuba came to work with us. Spanish departments were organized in Coral Baptist Church and in Earlington Heights. Some work as being done on a regular basis at Flagami, Northeast, Bird Road, and Coral Villa, in addition to the chapels where full time work was being conducted. Northside and Jerusalem missions became constituted churches this year making a total of four constituted Spanish speaking churches in the association.

The refugee relief and resettlement center was moved to a building provided by Dr. John Halderman and the Allapattah Baptist Church. Milton Leach had directed the relief and resettlement program since its beginning in 1959 but was no longer able to direct the increasing load of refugee work along with his other duties. The Home Mission Board employed Rev. Robert Fricke, a former missionary to Cuba, to direct the refugee relief and resettlement work. He soon developed a program,

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which was serving 1,000 families (about 4,000 individuals) per month. During the first eight months of his service, seventy family units, or about 235 refugees, were resettled to other states under the watchcare of Southern Baptist churches. The Home Mission Board appealed to the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention to provide food and funds. Georgia alone gave 50,000 pounds of food and about \$22,000 in cash offerings.

In 1963 new work was started by Miami Shores Baptist Church and a Spanish-speaking pastor was employed by Northeast. Central Baptist Church began sponsoring Spanish work at Key Largo and a new mission was started in the facilities of the Spanish Refugee Center. There was now one mission, seventeen Spanish departments and four organized churches or a total of twenty-two Spanish congregations in the association. Both a family camp and a youth camp were conducted this year with a total of sixty-one decisions. A scholarship fund made it possible to send four students to Baptist schools. The Baptist bookstores in Miami and Tampa were selling Spanish books and literature. A program of training for Spanish-speaking pastors and lay workers was conducted regularly in Miami as an extension of Stetson University. Robert Fricke directed this school.

For seven years (1956–1963) a Spanish encampment was conducted annually in the South Florida area. As a result of this camp, several young people have made decisions to prepare themselves for full time religious service. Many others have accepted the Lord as their Savior. New Spanish work was started at Central Baptist Church and Melrose Heights. Perrine Baptist Church moved to its new building and made the original church property available for a much needed migrant center. The Cuban refugee program provided food and clothing to approximately 5,000 people. Eighty families with 960 members were resettled. Approximately 2,000 refugees were being aided monthly by the Center. The Home Mission Board invested \$27,000 in this work and promised more than \$36,000 for future needs. From 1961 through 1963, 154,000 Cuban refugees came to Miami. More than 600 refugees have been resettled through the Baptist Spanish

Center. More than 500 families are receiving aid at all times from the Baptist Center. Exiled Cuban Baptist pastors were available, but where could they serve? New churches and missions were needed but where could they meet? One of the biggest problems in starting new missions was in finding meeting places. No money was available to purchase or rent property.

Lloyd Corder, Director of Spanish work for the Home Mission Board, came to visit. He told about an Anglo church in San Isidro, Texas, a small town on the border of Texas and Mexico, that had invited the Mexicans to use their building and have Spanish services when the Anglos were not using it. J. Ray Dobbins, director of missions, Miami Baptist Association, approached Milton Leach with an idea. "Why not put the exile pastors to work as associate pastors of English-speaking churches? They could serve as pastors of Hispanic departments until the Hispanics were fully integrated into the Anglo churches." "After all," he reasoned, "all the Cubans would be speaking English within ten years or perhaps Castro would fall and most Cubans would return to their homeland." Churches began offering their facilities for Spanish departments and it proved to be the best thing that had happened to Spanish work. If Spanish missions could be started in Anglo church buildings, that seemed to be a good way to start. These were referred to as Spanish Departments. Miss Ruby Miller and Miss Lucille Kerrigan were expelled from Communist Cuba and upon arriving in Miami were added to the staff of the Spanish Center.

On September 5, ten pastors of Anglo American churches met with Rev. Ed Taylor of the Home Mission Board, and with Milton Leach and J. Ray Dobbins of the association, to make plans to start a number of new missions in the thirty-seven migrant camps located in South Dade County. Approximately 10,000 migrants were in the area at the time.

In 1963 Iglesia Bautista Central was meeting in its own building with more than 200 members in Sunday School.

In 1964 there were 130,000 Cuban exiles in Miami, 55,000 permanent Cuban residents, 40,000 Puerto Ricans, and

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approximately 9,000 other Spanish-speaking people, making a total of 234,000 Latin Americans in Dade County. In the Miami Association there were twenty-three Spanish chapels in addition to eight Anglo American churches that had Spanish Sunday schools and a dozen preaching stations in the migrant camps. The Baptist Spanish Center was giving emergency aid to 300 to 500 people monthly and had resettled approximately 1,175 Cuban refugees in twenty-five states.

The association was contributing approximately \$5,000 a year to general Spanish mission work. Other churches were contributing another \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually and the Home Mission Board provided \$75,000 to \$100,000.

Spanish literature was needed for the growing work in Miami and other parts of Florida. Loyd Corder and Milton Leach met with Dr. W. L. Howse, Director of the Education Division of the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tennessee, to discuss the need for Spanish literature. A meeting was set for the following year with representatives from several departments and it was agreed that a monthly bulletin, "El Pastor Bautista" and adult Training Union quarterlies in Spanish would be provided for use in Spanish-speaking missions and churches. Plans for additional literature were made with new material to be added each year.

By 1964 the Hispanic population in Dade County stood at approximately 234,000. There were 130,000 Cuban exiles, 55,000 permanent Cuban residents, 40,000 Puerto Ricans and approximately 9,000 other Hispanics composing about twenty-three percent of the total population. The number of Hispanic Baptist missions and churches stood at twenty-five. Cuban exile pastors were pastoring most of them.

In the latter part of 1964, Milton Leach was transferred to Puerto Rico by the Home Mission Board to give direction to Baptist Mission work there. For about a year, Robert Fricke served as interim missionary-director of Hispanic missions for the Miami Baptist Association. At the close of the year, Fricke and his wife, Ann, were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board

to serve as missionaries to Mexico.

One Era Closes and Another Begins

On September 1, 1965, Hubert Hurt, who had served with his wife, Eva, for four years in Cuba and five in Panama, was reassigned by the Home Mission Board to Miami. Hurt became Florida Baptist's first state language missions director. At the time Hurt began his ministry there were four Hispanic congregations outside of the Miami Baptist Association; two in Tampa, one in West Palm Beach, and one in Immokalee.

In 1972 Richard Bryant, the director of missions in Miami Association, selected Harry Holland, a former military chaplain, to coordinate the Hispanic ministries. Holland's ministry there was short lived for he died of a brain tumor in 1973. Ramon Martinez came with his wife, Rosa, from a church in Fresno, California, and succeeded Holland. Martinez served in the position two years.

John Pistone came in 1976 and continued in that position until 1982. He was followed by Reinaldo Carvajal.

The Ethnic Branch of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in Miami was started in 1978. The first director of the training program was James Benson followed by Julio S. Diaz. Diaz was succeeded by Raul Vazquez.

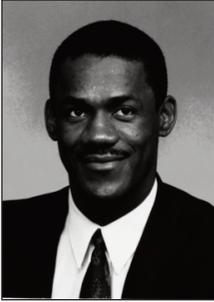
In May 1981 Hurt was elected to serve as director of the Language Department of the Florida Baptist Convention. He assumed his duties on June 15, 1981.

Hispanic congregations numbered 108 in 1988. Congregations were located not only in Miami, Tampa, Immokalee, and Key West as was true in 1964, but in Jacksonville, Orlando, West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood, Pompano Beach, Indiantown, Lakeland, Gainesville, Deltona, Bowling Green, Wauchula, Naples, Fort Myers, Sarasota, and in other cities and towns. The United States Census Bureau reported 1,250,000 Hispanics in Florida in 1985, in contrast with 60,000, mostly in Miami in 1954, and 782,371 in the state in 1980.

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ENDNOTE:

This report was prepared from histories previously written by Milton Leach and Hubert Hurt, with some information from the *Florida Baptist Witness*, *Miami Baptist Progress*, minutes of Miami Baptist Association, *The Miami Herald*, *Home Mission Magazine*, monthly reports made by Milton Leach to the Miami Baptist Association, *The Baptist History and Heritage*, July 1983, No. 3, and from the Fort Lauderdale *Sun Sentinel*.



A History of Haitian Southern Baptist Churches in Florida

Lurick Balzora
Interim Dean,
SBSHS Pathway Community;
Dean of Central Campus,
Broward County

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to examine the history of Haitian Southern Baptist churches in Florida. These churches were some of the first to join their respective Southern Baptist associations in Florida. They exemplify a larger number of congregations who humbly did the Lord's work at a crucial time in history. To comprehend their story, one must examine the way that Haitians viewed themselves and the way they planned, funded, and worked to solve problems of acculturation within the larger community.

There is not enough space to discuss all of the churches and individuals who, during the formative decades of the 1970s and 1980s, helped launch the large and thriving church movement among Haitians in Florida. However, to understand the process by which Haitian and American Southern Baptists cooperated, one must mention certain non-Haitian servants who did much to help Haitians at the local and state levels. These include men such as Hubert Hurt, James Goodson, Milton Leach, Ramon Martinez, John Pistone, Reinaldo Carvajal, and Joe Courson.

Some Characteristics of Haitian Southern Baptist Congregations in Florida

A prime consideration is the Haitian understanding of the words "mission" and "church."

Haitian Southern Baptists share with their American counterparts a similar definition of the word “church.” They believe in both a universal church and a local church. However, Haitian congregations often consider themselves as churches; while the state convention and associations label them as missions. Dependent Haitian congregations often carry both the names “eglise” (church) in French and “mission” in English. Unless otherwise noted in this document the word “congregation” will also be used wherever the French term “eglise” might be applicable in the Haitian understanding.

The Question of Identity

During the late 1970s, Haitians in America proceeded in two cultural directions: Haitian and American. Also, they were forced to choose between three languages: Creole, French, and English. Haitian congregations had the burden of meeting the needs of an older generation still attached to the culture of Haiti, while meeting the challenge of new generations who were quickly becoming acculturated in the ways of America.

The problem of identity for Haitian-Americans intensified from 1979 to 1984. Negative stereotypes prevailed in South Florida. Near the end of the 1970s, some Floridians generated unfounded rumors that Haitians carried tuberculosis. They claimed that Haitians carried and spread disease throughout Florida.¹

Members of south Florida’s political elite, including Democratic party members, elected officials, and some Cubans, believed that the boat people were a disruptive force, destroying the community, and draining public resources. They appealed to their local members of Congress, who apparently pressured the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) into a response. The INS thereafter began to expand a far greater effort in controlling the flow of Haitians than was expended on nearly any other group of illegal immigrants. The campaign included imprisonment of new arrivals, the denial of work permits to those who were allowed out of jail, the wholesale rejection of Haitian claims for political

asylum, and since 1981, the permanent deployment of United States Coast Guard cutter in Haitian waters to intercept potential refugees.²

In defense of their actions, United States government officials often cite the distinction between political and economic refugees. Haitian boat people were branded economic refugees. However, in 1980, despite statements made by many Cuban refugees that they came to the United States for economic reasons, the United States government sought to grant wholesale political asylum to them.

Language and Haitian Americans

In the climate of prejudice and hostility toward Haitians, young Haitians found few incentives for retaining their Haitian language and culture. Many took great measures to cover up their Haitian background. The abandonment of their native language served as a cause of great misunderstanding and alienation between young Haitians and their parents.

Haitian Southern Baptist churches often found themselves in the middle of that conflict. Generally, when Haitian parents faced cultural problems with their children, the attitudes of children toward their churches were set based on which side the church took. Most of the time Haitian leaders, threatened by American culture, sided with the parents.

Education and Training

In 1977 the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary established an ethnic branch in Miami with the collaboration of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and the Miami Baptist Association. In 1979 Julio S. Diaz assumed direction of the school. In 1980 he enlisted the aid of Renaud Balzora to reach out to the Haitian community for prospective students and to teach them in Creole and French.³

In December 17, 1983, the seminary Ethnic branch gave Associate degrees to several Haitian graduates.⁴ Those who graduated in the fields of Pastoral Ministry were: Jean Alfreide, *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage, Volume 20, 2018*

Hector Clerveaux, Pierre Delinois, Joachim Jean Baptist, Ernst Moise, Imales Previlon, and Yvon Previlon. Those who graduated in the field of Religious Education were Nathalie Balzora and Rose M. Moise. They were the first graduates from a seminary in the United States to be trained entirely in French.⁵

Of 170 Southern Baptist Haitian ministers in Florida who were actively pastoring churches by 1990, two had doctorates, five had master degrees, thirteen had bachelor degrees, and twenty-six had associate degrees. Of these forty-six, most could not pursue a higher level of education due to having secular jobs in addition to church work. While many could not gain further education for themselves, they worked hard to provide it for their children.

In 1990 bivocational pastors headed 148 of 170 Haitian Southern Baptist congregations. Of the twenty-two who were not bivocational pastors, four were retired from secular work and nine worked inconsistently at odd jobs. That left only nine full time

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pastors. Yearly pastoral incomes for the full-time pastors ranged from \$7,000 to \$26,000.⁶ Many pastors relied on their wives to supplement their meager incomes. Much of the combined incomes of pastors and their wives was used to help their congregations with leases and church transportation.

Giving and “Moisson” in the Haitian Church

The “moisson,” a uniquely Haitian event, is similar to the Old Testament idea of the harvest feast (“moisson” means harvest). Once a year in Haiti, celebrants bring offerings of money and livestock. In the United States, worshipers bring money. The moisson is used to raise funds for use in the normal operation of their programs and buildings.

Ideally, churches should operate on tithes and offerings. The Biblical concept of the tithe requires members to faithfully

give to the church. However, very few Haitians tithe consistently over time.⁷ The moisson provides a way to recover the funds needed to meet the annual expenses of the church. The moisson offering can have a profound effect in the financial status of the church. In a single moisson, a church may collect more than it did all year.

The moisson may last a few days or an entire week. Area Haitian churches meet together for services that may last for several hours. In the United States, some congregations incorporate this with the Thanksgiving holidays. The moisson parallels the old fashion revival meetings in the United States. The difference lies in the emphasis on giving.⁸

The Start and Expansion of Haitian Southern Baptist Churches in Florida

1973–The Field of Ministry in Florida

In 1973 Miami had approximately 210,000 Hispanics.⁹ Haitians, however, had not yet begun to come to South Florida in great numbers. The few Haitians in the area came primarily from northern states such as New York. Most were predominately Catholic. The Catholic Church had a great influence among Haitians because many priests spoke French and because of the official status of the Roman Catholic Church in Haiti.¹⁰

1974–Emmanuel Haitian Baptist Church, Miami

Armand Augereau started Emmanuel Haitian Baptist Church with a group of eight people in the early 1970s. In August 1974, the group joined the Miami Baptist Association. They were the first Haitian congregation on record at the association.¹¹ Their timely appearance in Dade County kept many from falling into the hands of various sects which were prospering in the community. In 1983 Wilner Maxy became the pastor of the congregation. The church continued to thrive under his leadership.

In 1988 the church took steps to buy an old furniture warehouse and showroom. Through the church's phenomenal fund raising efforts and with support from various agencies from the convention, they purchased and transformed the 60,000 square-foot structure into a sanctuary that seats 600 in polished wooden pews. The building is more than enough to accommodate their congregation, Sunday school, day care, health clinic, and elementary school.¹²

1975–Bethany Haitian Baptist Church, Miami

In 1967 Paul Lasseur worked tirelessly in the Bahamas to minister to the Haitians who lived there. However, he realized that some were moving from the Bahamas to Miami and that there were no Haitian Baptist churches to accommodate them. In his travels between 1967 and 1970, he began planting the seeds for future ministry in Miami. In 1971 he started a small group with the help of Raoul F. Pierre.

Pastor Lasseur started several prayer cells and Bible studies at the homes of Silverus Francois, Cadet Mesinor, and Sadrac Jonassaint. Once the groups began to grow, they moved to a storefront property and later to an Adventist church. In 1975 the church moved to a building on 54th Street in Miami. Soon afterward, they joined the Miami Baptist Association. In the years following this, Pastor Lasseur led the church in several successful missionary ventures in the Bahamas, Haiti, and south Florida.¹³

1976–Haitian Baptist Mission, Pompano (First Haitian Baptist Church of Pompano)

In 1975 Jacques and Raymonde Dumornay moved from New York to South Florida. Jacques Dumornay worked at American Express as an accountant. They attended First Baptist Church of Pompano Beach. While there, they met with other Haitians at First Baptist and discussed starting services for the Haitian community.

By 1976 they grew from six to 18. On May 16, 1976, they named themselves First Haitian Mission of Pompano. First Baptist provided them with a house where they met for Sunday School and worship. By 1979 the congregation had grown tremendously and they called Renaud Balzora to pastor the mission.

From 1978 to 1981, 70,000 Haitians entered Florida. Many came to the mission for help. Jacques and Raymonde Dumornay led the mission to conduct English classes, food and clothing distribution, kindergarten, day care, immigration assistance, sewing classes, and temporary housing for homeless Haitians.¹⁴

1980–Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church, Miami

In July 1980, Pastor Balzora left Haitian Mission in Pompano to start Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church of Miami. He met with thirty-eight people on their first Sunday at the home of Berthulia and Gerson Vincent in Miami. By the second Sunday, the group grew to fifty-seven people. The home became too small to accommodate such a large crowd. That week, Pastor Balzora found a church willing to lease a space to them.¹⁵

The first service attracted eighty people. Mrs. Carmel Dubois was instrumental to the rapid growth of the church. She tirelessly called and visited people. She and Nathalie Balzora led a Saturday morning prayer and fasting service. Mrs. Dubois attended all meetings, except some Sunday mornings. On Sunday mornings, while the church met inside, she walked around the neighborhood, talking to Haitian pedestrians and invited them to church.

1980–The Southern Baptist Refugee Resettlement Program, Miami

In July 1980, the Miami Baptist Association together with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board established a refugee center at Highland Park Baptist Church in Miami. They elected Milton Leach to oversee the entire program. They elected

Luz Garcia, a teacher at the New Orleans Baptist Ethnic Extension, to direct the Spanish program and Renaud Balzora to direct the Haitian program. The refugee center provided a wide range of services to the community during the early 1980s, at the height of the influx of refugees from Cuba and Haiti.

In October 1980, at the annual association meeting, the refugee center officially took the name of the Southern Baptist Refugee Resettlement Program in Miami. In April 1981, Milton Leach left the center to direct the Southern Baptist National Immigration and Refugee Ministry. By that same time, the need for the Spanish program began to lessen and Luz Garcia left the center. Renaud Balzora remained to direct the center for Haitians. While need among Cubans lessened at the center, the need among Haitians increased between the years of 1980 to 1983.¹⁶

Between the months of October 1980 to October 1981, the center distributed 590 French Bibles. They held ninety-two Bible studies with 2,250 Haitians in attendance. The center held forty devotions with 1,145 Haitians in attendance. The center helped 409 Haitians with job interviews, provided classes in English for 2,220, and gave out 1,600 hot meals and food provisions for 9,740 Haitians.¹⁷

1979–1985 A Growing Need for Haitian Church Camps

On Labor Day 1979, Haitian Mission of Pompano held their church camp at Camp Perry Christian Camp. Rev. Deralus Balzora traveled from Haiti to speak at the camp. After Pastor Renaud Balzora left the mission in 1980, he led Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church to hold their church camp at Coral Pine Christian Camp.

These camps helped leaders overcome some of the difficult challenges that existed between older and younger Haitians. Young Haitian Americans posed a challenge to older Haitians in terms of church culture, language, and theology. A different set of values between the two age groups developed. Many older Haitian church members valued cultural and religious beliefs that control individualism. In many Haitian homes and

churches, rules were strict and respect for authority was paramount. They valued marriage, especially for young women, as the only acceptable course to independence and adulthood. They valued the French and Creole languages. They also valued conservative dress codes. For example, women were not allowed to wear slacks and were directed to cover their heads in church.

The new Haitian American culture valued the English language, spontaneity, singleness, dating, and independence after high school or at eighteen years of age. These conflicting values negatively affected the way churches ministered to their younger members.

The church camps provided an environment free of these normative tensions and a new way to minister to young Haitians. The camps allowed pastors and youth leaders to focus on the gospel and to reexamine their cultures, languages, and theologies under that light.

In 1982 Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church met at Lake Placid Christian Camp. From 1983 to 1985, they met at Gold Coast Christian Camp. The camps grew in popularity and other churches sent their leaders and young people to attend them.¹⁸

1985—A Statewide Haitian Missionary Worker

In 1982 the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board honored Renaud Balzora as the Language Pastor of the Year. He was selected from all the international pastors in the eastern United States.¹⁹ By then the number of total Southern Baptist Haitian churches in the state of Florida had increased to eighteen. Between 1982 to 1985, Hubert Hurt, the Director of Language Missions in the Florida Baptist Convention, sought to enlist Pastor Balzora to help with the Haitian work statewide.²⁰

In 1985 Renaud Balzora left Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church to work as the Haitian Catalytic Missionary for the State of Florida. He took as his first task finding smaller Haitian Baptist congregations struggling to survive by

themselves. He worked with several such churches in West and Central Florida, along with the more established Haitian churches in Florida.

1989–The Haitian Baptist Youth Federation

Keeping in mind the success and usefulness of prior retreats for young Haitians, Pastor Balzora worked together with several key people to establish a statewide camp for Haitian young people. He worked closely with his wife, Nathalie; convention personnel such as Hubert Hurt and Ramon Martinez; Haitian pastors such as Usler Auguste and his family; and several college students, including his sons. The camps provided leadership opportunities for young Haitians to help their peers and younger children in the Haitian community.

After each retreat, the camp leaders led youth crusades in Dade and Broward counties. French, Creole, and English were used at these events. In 1988 the crusades attracted 2,000 for eight nights in Broward with more than 3,000 at the final evening. There were twenty-one professions of faith and 1,500 rededications made at the crusades.²¹ By 1990 nearly 2,000 young people were involved in organizing youth rallies, camps, and crusades.²²

In 1989 the college students who helped lead the camps formally named themselves, the Haitian Youth Federation. They elected Israel François as president. Some of those who served with the youth federation have gone to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS). Israel François was ordained in 1997 and attended the seminary. Gary Toussaint, a counselor for the children camp, served four years with the United States Marine Corps and then attended the seminary.

Marie Claire Beauville, a treasurer for the federation, made frequent short-term mission trips to Haiti. She graduated from NOBTS in 1996 with a Master's degree. Kenny Felix, the second president of the group, continued to attend the seminary after receiving his Master's degree. He was ordained in July 2000.

These are just a few examples of many young Haitian Americans whose lives were affected positively by the camps in the latter part of the 1980s. Many Haitian Americans grew up with these events and accepted God's call to ministry there. Overall, the camps served to provide a place for young Haitians to understand their identities and to discover their potential for ministry in God.

A Brief History of Individual Haitian Congregations in Florida

The following is a brief history of some Haitian Southern Baptist congregations. This is not a comprehensive list, but is representative of the many noteworthy congregations whose histories tell the Haitian story. The churches are listed according to their regional associations in Florida and the Baptist associations are registered alphabetically.

Big Lake Baptist Association

Belle Glade First Haitian Mission

Morales St. Hilaire started the mission in December 1993 with the support of Roland St. Marc, pastor of Emmaus Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale. The church ministered mostly to migrant workers. The mission began at the home of Nazius Jean. Soon afterward, First Baptist Church of Belle Glade elected to sponsor them. Within four years they bought a small building.²³

Black Creek Baptist Association

First Haitian Mission of Green Cove Springs

In 1981 Jean S. Siliac started the mission in his home. In 1982 the congregation joined the Black Creek Baptist Association. Later the Florida Baptist Convention and the association helped them purchase a building.²⁴

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Florida Keys Baptist Association

Key West First Haitian Mission

In 1994 Jean Alfreide, pastor of Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church of Homestead, sent Aleus Joseph to a mission in the Florida Keys. They share a building with a Spanish congregation.²⁵

Greater Orlando Baptist Association

Apopka Haitian Church and Fairvilla Haitian Baptist Church

Clement Jeantilus started Apopka Haitian Baptist Church in 1985. Antoine V. Fils-Aime became the pastor. After realizing that most of the church members commuted from Orlando, he met with Alcides Guajardo, Orlando's Language Missions Director and with Renaud Balzora, the Florida Baptist Haitian Consultant and developed a plan to move the church to Orlando.

In 1986 the congregation moved to Orlando and renamed the church, Fairvilla Haitian Baptist Church in Orlando. They constituted in 1991 and changed the name to First Haitian Baptist Church of Orlando. They had left a group in Apopka, their previous location. This small group grew and was constituted as a church in 1992.²⁶

Gulf Stream Baptist Association

Bethany Haitian Baptist Church, Fort Lauderdale

On July 1980, Sauveur Marcelin started the church with the sponsorship of Bethany Haitian Baptist Church in Miami. In 1984 the mission ordained Usher Auguste to serve as pastor of the church. In 1987 they constituted as a church.²⁷ Through remarkable leadership, sacrifices made by church members, and help from the state convention and their local association, they brought a large parcel of land in Fort Lauderdale. They cleared the land and within three years built one of the most beautiful Haitian churches in Florida.²⁸

A History of Haitian Southern Baptist Churches in Florida
Bethel Evangelical Baptist Church, Fort Lauderdale

In 1979 a small cell from Haitian Baptist Mission of Pompano began meeting on Sunday evenings. In 1980 with the increasing need for more Haitian congregations in the area, the cell became a mission and began to meet at the First Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale.²⁹ In 1981 Paul Honore became the pastor of Bethel Evangelical Baptist. In 1984 Bethel moved from First Baptist to a single room at a storefront property. That same year, they incorporated as a church. In 1987 they purchased their own building. In 1992 they constituted as a church.³⁰

Emmanuel Haitian Baptist Church, Fort Lauderdale

Roland St. Marc started the church in a house in 1982. It grew quickly and in 1987 a complex was built near downtown Fort Lauderdale. In 1993 Emmanuel Cesar became their pastor. Through his leadership the church has grown and established several cells throughout the county.

Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church, Dania

Maurice Louissaint started the church in March 1981. A tireless evangelist, Louissaint rigorously walked the Dania area looking for Haitian prospects. Twenty-eight people came to the first service, which was held at the home of Tael Agenor. On May 5, 1981, they moved to Dania Heights Baptist Church.³¹ In 1983 they moved to a storefront property. In December 1985, they began to meet at a former Kentucky Fried Chicken store, which they later purchased. The mission constituted as a church in 1992.

Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church, Pompano

In 1981 Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church of Miami moved to Highland Park Baptist Church. Renaud Balzora, the pastor, and Pierre Yvon Delinois, the assistant pastor, began to pray about starting a new congregation in Broward County.³² Pastor Delinois spearheaded a group, which met at the home of Frantz and Roseline Fequiere in Sunrise, Florida. In February 1982, the mission moved to South West First Baptist Church in Fort

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Lauderdale. In October 1982, the church moved to a storefront property in Pompano Beach, Florida.³³ In 1984 they became a mission of the Gulf Stream Association. In 1986 they constituted as a church.³⁴

Pembroke Road Haitian Baptist Church, Miramar

Henri-Claude Moise started the church as a mission of Pembroke Road Baptist Church in 1987. They began under the close supervision and planning of Milton Leach, Language Education Director in the Gulf Stream Baptist Association.³⁵ The mission constituted as a church in 1996 and Pembroke Roads Baptist Church gave them the rights to a property adjacent to them.

Indian River Baptist Association

First Haitian Baptist Church of Fort Pierce

In 1984 the Haitian Baptist Mission of Pompano sent Edner H. Montpoint, along with an evangelistic team to start this work. Pastor Montpoint engaged in a rigorous evangelistic campaign. At the same time, he also started the Haitian Baptist Mission of Vero Beach. He remained with them until he moved to Orlando to start the Maranatha Haitian Baptist Church of Orlando.³⁶

Jacksonville Baptist Association

Haitian Baptist Church of Jacksonville

In 1991 Renaud and Nathalie Balzora, in conference with Dr. Bill Coffman, the Director of Language Missions, Florida Baptist Convention, made plans for a Haitian mission in the area. They began at the home of Joseph and Gloria Charleus. Later, they met at the Primera Iglesia Bautista in Jacksonville. In March 1992, the mission called Samuel Pierre from Canada to serve as their pastor. He remained for a few months, but felt compelled to return to Canada. After this, Pierre and Marie Prinvil arose as the natural leaders of the group. With more Haitians entering the area, church membership increased and the church

A History of Haitian Southern Baptist Churches in Florida
bought their own building.³⁷

Manatee Southern Baptist Association

First Haitian Mission of Palmetto

When Luc Francois came to the congregation, they were in a state of decline. In the years of 1992-95, the number of members fluctuated between thirty-five to forty-five. Pastor Francois provided much needed direction to the mission. His leadership has taken them to a place of steady growth. They now have over 170 members and average seventy-six in worship services.³⁸

Miami Baptist Association

Bethel Haitian Baptist Church, Miami

The church began in 1979 under the leadership of Franck Francois, along with the help of Luc Dominique. In 1980 Pastor Francois moved to Delray Beach, Florida to start another mission. In 1983 St. Louis Felix from Guadeloupe became their pastor. He led them to purchase their own property in the community. Through his vision and hard work, the church became one of the most influential churches in the Haitian community.³⁹

Ebenezer Baptist Church, Miami

In 1979 Clement S. Jeantilus started the church with the help of Luc Dominique. They started with great zeal in evangelism. The church has thrived throughout the years because they remained focused on the importance of prayer and evangelism. Although they started out in a storefront property, they now own their own building in Miami.⁴⁰

Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church, Homestead

Jean Alfreide started the church in 1982 with the guidance of Renaud Balzora. The church began as a mission of Haitian Evangelical Baptist Church of Miami. They sent Pastor Alfreide to Homestead with a small delegation from the church.

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After first meeting in a public library, the worshipers moved to a storefront property. The church overcame many obstacles and outlasted the other two Haitian congregations that they found there.⁴¹ In 1990 they acquired a church building. Although Hurricane Andrew caused a great deal of damage to the building in 1992, the congregation drew closer together because of it. They labored to renovate the building into a beautiful complex.⁴²

Palm Lake Baptist Association

Bethel Evangelical Baptist Church, Delray Beach

In 1980 Franck Francois started the church at his home. In 1981 they met at an elementary school. Soon afterward, they rented a church building. By the end of the year, they bought the building. They have renovated it periodically to accommodate their constant increase in membership and worship attendance.⁴³

Southwest Florida Baptist Association

First Haitian Baptist Mission, Sarasota

Edouard Boyer started the mission in November 1991 with a large commissioning ceremony at First Baptist Church of Sarasota. Two hundred and ten Haitians attended. Many came from other areas. As the only Haitian church in the area, they serve the community by providing a food closet, help with immigration and translation work.⁴⁴

Tampa Bay Baptist Association

Ebenezer Haitian Baptist Church, Tampa

In April 1986, Jean A. Lubin started this church with the support of Bethel Baptist Church in Miami, after a survey was done of the area by Renaud Balzora, Antoine Fils-Aime and St. Louis Felix. Hubert Hurt found a house that would serve as a parsonage and sanctuary. Pastor Lubin experienced several difficulties at the beginning of this work in Tampa. There were only 100 Haitians estimated to be in Tampa. Yet, he remained patient. He faithfully conducted services every Sunday with just

his family in attendance. In time, God blessed the work as more Haitians moved to Tampa.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Southern Baptists have often challenged churches to keep a vision for starting new congregations and to concentrate on the spiritual. These are mandates in which Haitian churches have excelled. The past 35 years have shown that Haitians are masters of starting churches with an emphasis on the spiritual. They have started new congregations with little bureaucracy and with prayer and fasting at their foundation. Most Haitian congregations began, existed, and consistently insisted upon weekly late-night prayer meetings and Saturdays of fasting.

Haitian Southern Baptists have worked as missionaries to America for three decades. Many Christian believers braved the dangerous seas on leaky vessels piled upon mounds of flesh or in cramped compartments. Certainly, some came for personal gain, but many believers came by faith. They came with their “chants d’esperance” (a Haitian hymn book) in one hand and their Bible on the other. Once here, they evangelized, started churches, and involved themselves in Southern Baptist agencies. Ultimately they, along with other ethnic groups, have changed life permanently for all Floridians.

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Pastors and Masters: Black Baptist Preachers in the South Prior to Emancipation

Roger C. Richards

*Associate Professor of History
and Christian Studies
The Baptist College of Florida
Curator, Florida Baptist Archives*



Quite a number of years ago, I attended Hampton University Ministers' Conference, a time of exceptional preaching and music conducted annually at that historically black institution of higher education. While I cannot recall whether the comment was made by Dr. Samuel Proctor or by one of the other preachers, I vividly recall one of them making the comment that if you really wanted to understand black preaching, you first needed to understand Southern Baptist preaching. The words acknowledge the combined history that black Southern Baptists had with their white counterparts prior to the Civil War.

In this article, we will briefly examine black worship among Southern Baptists, and the development of the black church in the United States, looking primarily at the southern states. While the identities of a majority of the black Baptist preachers have been lost to history, there are a couple of notable figures that will be discussed briefly in this article as a part of that discussion.

Black Worship Among Southern Baptists

Even prior to the beginning of the denomination, Baptists in the South expressed a desire to introduce blacks to Christianity. The earliest black Baptist church has generally been acknowledged as the Silver Bluff church, formed in Aiken, South Carolina, sometime between 1773 and 1775,¹ but some research indicates that the first may have actually been the church

organized on the plantation of William Byrd III in Mecklenburg County, Virginia.² However, black Baptist churches were relatively few in number prior to the Civil War. As a result, during this same time there were many black members in white churches, with the earliest references being 1787. When the Old Waterlick Church was organized in Virginia, two of the nineteen charter members were “Negro Joseph and Negro Jenny.” That number had increased to four the following month.³

As early as 1780, black membership made up approximately ten percent of Baptists, but had doubled to twenty percent by 1790.⁴ Growth was most rapid in the South, with 97 percent of all black Baptists residing in the South by 1790.⁵ With most of the black Baptists living in the South, and few black Baptist churches for them to attend, these members were a part of the white Baptist churches in the South.⁶

It was common practice for blacks and whites to worship together. In the June 1845 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, a report from the Committee on the Instruction of the Colored Population noted that most churches had begun conducting “one sermon for Colored each Sunday. Oral Sabbath Schools were being held in many places with happy effect.” Also, black deacons were appointed to oversee their own.⁷

After the numbers of black congregants grew, the need arose for more space in which to worship. Since most Baptist churches were in rural settings and consisted of one-room meeting houses, blacks would have soon crowded out the white members. Only three options would have presented themselves: either hold a separate service for black members in the same meeting house, construct a separate building in which the black worshippers could meet, or construct a new building for the white congregation and give the old edifice to the black membership. In 1813, the Enon Baptist Church of Christ (now the First Baptist Church of Huntsville, Alabama) decided to appoint “Brethren Watkins, Pruet and Hullums to superintend the building of a shed for the Black people and form a plan.”⁸ While this church was

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willing to make accommodation for a place for the black members to meet, records gave no indication of who was to conduct the services for them. It is possible that it was to be led by a black preacher, as this was prior to the tightening of many of the slave laws forbidding blacks to worship without a white to oversee the meeting. While the dates by which these laws were enacted varied from state to state, many of them had been enacted by 1848.⁹

The Baptist church at Springhill, Marengo County, began having a separate service for blacks in 1846. In their June conference, it was “considered expedient and proper that the sermon to the Black’s [sic] be delivered within a short time after the morning service.”¹⁰ Not every church followed this practice, however. Several churches had blacks join the white service but sit in a separate place. Many sat in the back of the church; some churches even had a separate balcony for blacks. In fact, it was not uncommon to find a church with three distinct sections: the white men sat in one area, white women sat in another, and blacks sat in still another.¹¹ During the Civil War, the Antioch Baptist Church in Lafayette, Alabama, voted to “reserve five benches across the front for the use of the black people and the Deacons to attend to it and see that they are properly seated.”¹²

Some black churches had white pastors, such as the First Colored Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia. Robert Ryland served as pastor of this congregation for twenty-five years beginning in 1841. During that time he baptized over 3,800 people into its membership. Also, occasionally a white church would seek out a black preacher on the grounds that they simply wanted the best pulpiteers available. In 1860, the Annual Report of the Southern Baptist Convention listed several churches that were led by black pastors.¹³

Black Preaching Among Southern Baptists

Since black and white members attended church together, it presented questions with which other organizations did not have to deal. For instance, at the Providence Church in

Boone's Creek Association in Kentucky, the question was raised in May 1802, as to whether black members "shall preach without the approbation of the church." In July of that year, the answer was given, "We are of the opinion that the church has no right to approbate a slave as a preacher without the consent of their owner."¹⁴ It is not clear whether the owner of the slave in question was a member of the church. Regardless, if a slave owner was not inclined to permit a slave to preach, he simply would not be permitted.

Early in the 19th century, black Baptists worshipped in white dominated Baptist churches. Prior to the Civil War, black Baptists made up over half the membership of Southern Baptist churches.¹⁵ As the numbers of black worshippers grew, it was not long before conferences developed for the administration of black members. These served as administrative councils, primarily for the reception and exclusion of black members. These conferences also dealt with matters of church discipline among the black brethren.

This in itself is an important development because, while it would have been overseen by a white member, it allowed the black members to develop their own skills in church polity and administration. Placing black ministers and deacons in charge of these conferences allowed leaders to emerge within the black churches, just as they had developed leaders within the black communities outside of their religious practice. These emerging leaders now had a place to demonstrate their skills. In fact, as Christine Heyrman points out in *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, these leadership positions allowed black men who served as preachers, deacons, and exhorters, to hold posts that were even forbidden to white women.¹⁶ While a few women preached and served as deacons in Southern Baptist churches, the fact that this was available to black men and not white women was largely true. In fact, Randy Sparks points out in *A Companion to the American South*, black women also played important roles in black churches, areas Heyrman fails to note.¹⁷ The development of the Conference for Negroes would have had a natural attraction

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to blacks. This is possibly one of the reasons the Baptist church appealed to slaves.¹⁸

One item that came before the church at Springhill was a request from some of the black members for permission to preach. Credentials would have been necessary for this. While no formal education was required, much attention was given to moral character of the applicants. In December 1853, the motion was made by one member to postpone the request until a later date. Two other members were requested to inquire into the Christian character and influence of the candidates. The subject was discussed again in June 1854, but no action was ever taken. Either the candidates were not suitable to the conference, or the white members simply did not approve of black preachers.¹⁹

Black Southern Baptists Preachers

Black preachers became a very important part of the emerging Baptist churches, as some were entirely black, but these mostly existed in the larger cities. Sometimes these independent black churches were under the pastoral care of a white minister, but some were led by black ministers. One such person was Reverend Andrew Bryan who served as pastor of the First African Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia, for twenty-four years until his death in 1812.²⁰ Rev. Bryan was not always well received by the white community. During one period of intense persecution, he and his brother were severely beaten and the church was forbidden to meet. Jonathan Bryan, his owner, was able to get him released from jail, thus enabling the church to resume meeting. It was reported that a turning point occurred when the white patrols, eavesdropping on a black church meeting in a barn, heard Andrew and his brother, Samson, praying earnestly for their white oppressors.²¹

In 1828, the Alabama Association actually became a slave owner. Caesar McLemore, a slave, was recognized as a preacher with great ability. The association wished to employ him as a preacher to preach and work among blacks. State laws would not permit this, so the association purchased him and a committee

was formed to supervise his work and ministry. McLemore served as a missionary of the association. According to associational minutes, his preaching was well-received by both blacks and whites.²²

Even so, most states soon passed laws forbidding them to meet except under the supervision of a white member. In 1848, Georgia's slave codes prohibited a person of color from preaching or exhorting without a written license. The requirements to obtain such a license involved:

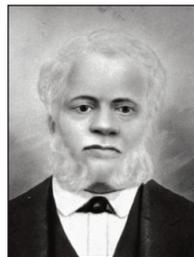
“a written certificate from three ordained ministers of the gospel of their own order, in which certificate shall be set forth the good moral character of the applicant, his pious deportment, and his ability to teach the gospel; having a due respect to the character of those persons to whom he is to be licensed to preach, said ministers to be members of the conference, presbytery, synod, or association to which the churches belong in which said colored preachers may be licensed to preach, and also the written permission of the justices of the inferior court of the county, and in counties in which the county town is incorporated, in addition thereto the permission of the mayor, or chief officer, or commissioners of such incorporation; such license not to be for a longer term than six months, and to be revocable at any time by the person granting it.”²³

In Florida, Austin Smith, the state's first black Baptist preacher, was licensed to preach by the Key West Baptist Church in 1843.²⁴ Charles C. Lewis was the pastor of the church at that time. During the period when that church was without a pastor, Reverend Smith served as the interim pastor of the black congregation and conducted prayer meetings each week.²⁵

A significant black Florida preacher, James Page (1808-1883), was born in Virginia to a slave who was owned by John H. Parkhill. Little is known of Page's early life, other than the fact that his father was a free man who was drowned going ashore at Liberia as part of the colonization movement. He

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married a woman named Elizabeth some time prior to 1828. His owner had migrated to Florida and settled in Leon County south of Tallahassee. John Parkhill had obtained land there and developed a plantation called Bel Air. Parkhill was an elder in the Presbyterian church, but at that time this church did not allow black members. After Page became a Christian, he joined a Baptist church which encouraged the call he felt to the ministry. Their congregational organization allowed Page to start a preaching ministry at Bel Air and in 1850, led the slave community there to organize one of the earliest known black Baptist churches in Florida, Bethlehem Baptist Church at Bel Air Plantation. He was ordained in 1851 with a letter of recommendation from James E. Broome, Governor-elect of Florida and a founding member of Tallahassee Baptist Church. He was the second black minister ordained in Florida.²⁶



James Page

Page's work was influential in the area around Tallahassee. He would later be instrumental in the establishment and development of the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church.²⁷ Page travelled to many of the black churches in the Tallahassee area each month, as many of the slaves were not allowed to leave the plantations to attend church. Page did not have such a restriction. He was considered to be a highly trustworthy individual. When Parkhill died in 1854, Page was named as the "protector," business manager, and confidant of Parkhill's widow. He held this position until his death in 1883. Reverend Page was allowed to travel freely in response to the requests for his ministerial duties and became highly regarded by everyone, and widely known among the black churches. His popularity was extremely helpful when he organized the first black Baptist association in Florida in 1869. It consisted of at least twenty-eight churches when it began. Page continued to serve black Florida Baptist churches until the week of his death at the age of seventy-five.²⁸

Conclusion

While it is lamentable that history does not record the ministries and influence of countless black preachers and leaders in the early days of the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptists and blacks have a relationship that has influenced the worship practice of far many more people of all races than will ever be known by mere mortals. However, I have no doubt that when they stood before the God whom they served faithfully and without the praise of men, they heard the Creator and Sustainer of all utter those words, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” To that, I would like to say, “Amen!”

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State Board of Missions— Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida

Donald S. Hepburn

Acting Secretary-Treasurer

Florida Baptist Historical Society



It had been 26 years since the Florida Baptist State Convention was organized on November 20, 1854 in Madison, Florida. Yet, according to John Rosser, who later wrote reflecting on the progress made by the young statewide organization, “It must be admitted that the Florida Baptist Convention, judged by high standards of concrete, tangible statistics, had not thus far made an impressive showing.”¹

This lethargy by Baptists appeared to be caused by a variety of issues, not the least of which were a provincial mind set and a lack of missionary vision. “The interest of some Baptists did not range beyond the local churches and of others not beyond the district association,” Rosser claimed. “Many people who accepted a missionary creed were anti-missionary in practice.”²

During the first two and one-half decades of the State Convention’s existence, the so-called day-to-day responsibilities for promoting missions’ awareness and directing missionary activities had been assigned to a six-member executive committee. Initially appointed in 1854, the group represented Florida Baptist’s best of leadership. These included: H. Z. Ardis, Samuel C. Craft, William B. Cooper, B. S. Fuller, W. H. Goldwire, and William J. Blewett.

Unfortunately the group had no significant financial resources with which to underwrite any mission and ministry activities. Much of this lack of funding can be attributed to what John Rosser characterized as Florida Baptists’ provincial mind set.

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However, no real effort had been made to promote the cause of statewide missions. All of these members of the executive committee were caught up in not only the responsibilities of itinerant preaching circuits, but they had to earn a living as farmers and tradesman. In those days, only rarely was there such thing as a paid clergy.

The nearly 200 Baptist churches and the approximately 8,900 members which existed in 1880 were greatly separated and isolated from each other. Without an exclusive Florida-oriented denominational newspaper, the “Baptist news” that was reported came from the mouths of the itinerant preachers, the few missionaries who had been commissioned by then 13 associations, and the Georgia Baptist news journal *The Christian Index*.

Against that backdrop, the State Convention held its four-day 1880 annual meeting at the Baptist Church in Madison. A report on missions was presented which cited facts which made the case for the need of a greater missionary commitment by Florida Baptists. “To oppose missions, whether as individuals or as churches,” the committee noted, “produces blight and spiritual decay.” The committee requested the State Convention to appoint a Board of Missions “whose business it shall be to furnish the preached word to every destitute section in our territory.”³

The Convention messengers agreed to create the Board and approved a motion to designate William N. Chaudoin of Jacksonville as secretary of the yet to be named board. Earlier, on the opening day of the State Convention Chaudoin was elected as convention president.

Before the State Convention adjourned it approved a four-part recommendation that: designated that the Board would be located in Madison; be comprised of fourteen members (including the previously approved W. N. Chaudoin, as Board corresponding secretary); specified that five members constituted a quorum to transact business; and designated the Board as “the Executive Committee of the Convention.” The first Board of

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Missions members elected were: the pastor of Madison Church (a permanent designation that meant whoever was church pastor was automatically a member of the Board); S. B. Thomas, Sr.; John W. Beggs; B. F. Wardlaw; C. W. Stevens; J. F. B. Mays; W. M. Davis; Walter Gwynn; A. C. McCants; Paul Willis; G. W. Hall; C. V. Waugh; and T. E. Langley.⁴

A New Era Begins: 1880-1901

The new board still had no financial resources with which to carry out its assignment, save for a paltry few dollars in the treasury. Chaudoin proposed that in order for him to work on behalf of the interests of the State Board, he would request the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (now known as the North American Mission Board) to continue his appointment as a missionary to Florida.⁵

Chaudoin, at age 51, had been serving the then-called Domestic and Indian Board since 1871 as a district secretary for Georgia, Alabama and Florida. The assignment actively engaged him in preaching and church starting. Chaudoin's employment proposal was quickly agreed to by the Domestic Board and represented an investment of \$600 per year.

The first official meeting of the State Board was held in Madison on March 28, 1881. The group did two things of note. They elected Board leadership and employed two missionaries. In organizing the Board leadership, they elected C. C. Green, president of the Board, and C. W. Stevens as recording secretary. Although the historical record is unclear regarding how C. C. Green came to serve on the Board,⁶ the very fact that Green was elected as board president reflected the members' high regard for the man.

In keeping with its assigned mandate, the Board appointed its very first missionaries. They were N. A. Bailey of Micanopy and A. H. Robinson of Lake Como, who were commissioned for a nine month period and were to be paid \$25 per quarter.⁷ Basically, the Board's missionaries continued to serve as pastor of their respective churches, but were expected to

State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida be itinerant preachers during the week and even on alternate Sundays. They led mid-week prayer meetings and baptized persons whom they had led to become believers in Jesus Christ. And if they found a group of Baptists in an area, they organized them into a church and provided at least a monthly preaching service.⁸

Establishing a pattern to meet quarterly, the Board reconvened three months later and heard reports from its corresponding secretary and two missionaries and authorized the quarterly salary disbursements to Bailey and Robinson. Chaudoin reported that the Board on behalf of the State Convention had received \$104.11 and paid out \$103.60 during 1881. This left the Board a grand total of fifty-one cents in cash on hand for mission expenditures.⁹

Although a humble beginning, the Board began to realize the missions’ vision which W. N. Chaudoin and others had set before them. In his March 28, 1882 report to the Board, Chaudoin expressed his enthusiasm by the response of Florida Baptists. “A year ago, with not quite two hundred dollars in pledges and no money, we ventured to commission two missionaries. We have now nine men at work or commissioned and their salaries have been paid...,” Chaudoin noted.¹⁰

In the 1882 treasurer’s report to the State Convention, Chaudoin reported receipts from churches and associations for the past year totaling \$887.91, plus an additional \$165.37 from Home Mission Board funds, and \$63.93 carried forward from the prior year, which yielded a total income of \$1117.21. During the same year salaries, travel and administrative expenses amounted to \$1107.75. This left a balance of \$9.46 for use in 1883.¹¹ For comparison purposes, that \$9.46 would be equal to \$190.11 in today’s economy.¹²

The significance of the secretary-treasurer’s report reflected the growing awareness of and commitment to state missions by Florida Baptists. The reported income represented gifts and fulfilled pledge commitments from churches, associations and many individuals. And it was evident that the

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itinerant efforts of Chaudoin and the growing corps of missionary personnel were paying dividends. The Board was attempting to prioritize the assignment of personnel across the state in the most spiritually destitute areas “uninfluenced by personal preferences and sectional feelings,” Chaudoin reported to the State Convention in 1882.¹³

During an 1882 meeting, Isaac T. Tichenor, corresponding secretary of the Home Mission Board, proposed to the State Board to provide an annual subsidy of \$2,000 for mission work in Florida. [This was in addition to the \$600 salary supplement for Chaudoin.] The only requirement was that the Florida Board of Missions was to provide copies of their field missionaries’ quarterly reports to the Home Mission Board. Otherwise, the Florida Board was free to determine where the money would be used and to hire whatever missionary personnel they needed.¹⁴ Approval of the agreement strengthened the growing relationship between the two entities and affirmed the role of Florida as an important domestic mission field for Southern Baptists.

Within a few years with increased income, the number of missionary personnel increased. And in practically every instance these missionaries were assigned to associations to assist in the starting of new churches and to provide pulpit supply for the many churches that were without pastoral leadership. Other missionaries (designated as mission pastors) were assigned to assist specific churches. This placement of missionary personnel accomplished two things. It helped local Baptists realize what could be done in their “Jerusalem.” Equally important it provided a real live state missionary that local Baptists could relate to and who served as rationale for financially supporting the State Convention which was sending missionary resources into their local area.

A second major undertaking by the Board in its early years was to provide financial assistance to help construct church buildings. The need for a visible and viable church presence was most pronounced in the growing towns and cities across the state.

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The Board took steps to establish a loan fund and a gift fund with the proceeds to be used to assist churches. Initially, to secure funds for these endeavors, the Board authorized Chaudoin to travel to Georgia and solicit contributions. The first year of the solicitation effort netted \$240.56. Immediately, these funds were meagerly distributed (\$25 to \$50) to assist church building projects across the state.¹⁵

During the 1882 State Convention meeting Chaudoin told of the Board’s plan to borrow money from individuals and banks, which in turn would be loaned to churches. In somewhat of a prophetic observation regarding the church building assistance, Chaudoin told the State Convention, “For years to come, in the very nature of things in our state, this will be a very important part of our State mission work.”¹⁶ Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Board was annually appropriating nearly twenty percent of its income for church building purposes. This assistance program has been modified and continues to the present day.

A third undertaking assumed by the Board in the early 1880s was providing scholarship funds for ministerial students. The State Convention had long recognized the need for growing up a trained ministerial leadership who could serve Florida’s many churches that were without pastors. Up until this point an offering collected at the annual meeting provided scholarships to men attending The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Mercer University. After its formation, the Board assumed the scholarship responsibility and required its missionaries to take quarterly ministerial education offerings. By the end of the Nineteenth Century nearly ten percent of the Board’s income was annually spent on ministerial scholarships.¹⁷ A variation of this scholarship program continues to the present day.

Parallel to the desire for an indigenous trained clergy was the growing interest to establish a uniquely Florida Baptist institution of higher learning. During the 1884 State Convention messengers received a report from its school study committee. The Board was “instructed and authorized to elect a board of nine

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trustees” once a Convention-appointed location committee had identified a site for the proposed institution.¹⁸ Subsequently, Northern industrialist Henry A. Deland, who had founded DeLand Academy in November 1883, proposed to the location study committee that his academy could address the needs of the State Convention. Deland offered the use of a building, proposed to match the \$10,000 Convention endowment pledge, and offered an additional \$15,000 in combined cash and land.¹⁹

Upon hearing the report of the State Convention’s location study committee, the Board agreed to accept the Deland offer. To affirm its commitment, the Board authorized a solicitation effort to fulfill the \$10,000 endowment pledge. The Board also set into motion steps to incorporate thereby placing it in a legal posture to own property (i.e. a college) and borrow money.²⁰ (Although the Board had incorporated as the “Florida Baptist Convention” in 1899, it was not until the July 15, 1903 session of the Florida Legislature that a Board charter complying with state statutes was submitted and approved.) Two years of solicitation efforts failed to raise the promised endowment. Henry Deland demanded the fulfillment of the Convention’s commitment or his offer would be withdrawn. In response, 13 Board members personally signed a \$10,000 promissory note to Deland guaranteeing payment.²¹

The efforts to start and maintain a uniquely Florida oriented denominational news journal are chronicled in a separate narrative. However, it should be noted that the Board had an on-going vested interest to ensure there was a medium for telling the “missions” story to Florida Baptists. And to that end the Board made repeated financial commitments to ensure the *Florida Baptist Witness* survived.²²

Additionally, in time, the Board became responsible for assessing the financial and practical viability for the State Convention to establish various agencies and institutions. These proposals included: an orphanage; colleges; hospitals; an educational foundation; Bible Institute; retirement center; and assembly grounds. Some of these ministries were embraced as

State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida agencies and are reported in separate articles.

As if the missions challenges in Florida were not sufficiently daunting during its first twenty years the Board of Missions took seriously the mandate “to furnish the preached word to every destitute section in our territory.” In addition to what it already funded, the Board before the end of the Nineteenth Century responded to provide funds to underwrite: missionary efforts in Cuba as well as to the growing influx of Cuban workers within Florida; evangelism of the displaced Seminole Indians; and educational resources for African-American pastors.

With the growing number of churches and several dozen field missionaries scattered across the state, the task of serving as corresponding secretary and traveling personnel supervisor of the Board took its toll on Chaudoin. As a result, in 1889, the Board authorized Chaudoin to employ an assistant. Initially, Chaudoin employed N. A. Bailey, who was a member of the Board, and paid him \$600 annually which was the identical salary Chaudoin received. Within a few years, another Board member L. D. Geiger was employed to replace Bailey.

A New Century Begins: 1901-1909

Geiger, a native of Marion County, and long-time Florida pastor in 1890 began a decade of voluntary service on the Board of Missions. These included several years as its recording secretary and as president for five consecutive years.²³ As a consequence it only seemed natural for the Board to turn to Geiger to fill the leadership void created in 1901 with the departure of corresponding secretary W. N. Chaudoin, who resigned because of ill health.

One of the first tasks he confronted was finding the means to pay off the Board-created \$10,000 debt owed to Henry Deland which was to benefit the renamed Stetson University. Geiger realistically noted in 1902 that people “generally give with greater reluctance for the paying off of this note than for almost anything else.”²⁴ Eventually the debt was paid.

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The indebtedness only compounded the two most significant challenges Geiger and the Board faced often during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Those were the lack of financial resources and the shortage of pastors. Both of these problems often impinged on each other. The Board found it impossible to employ and to pay for the much needed field missionaries.²⁵ Some churches found it impossible to hold worship services without someone to fill the pulpit preaching responsibilities. The Board reported to the 1901 State Convention that several county seat towns—Milton, DeFuniak Springs, Bronson, Inverness, among others—some with good houses of worship, had been unable to hold regular preaching services during the past year.²⁶

Not only were ministers in short supply in Florida, but the prospects of producing Baptist leadership for the future looked slim. In 1904, only two ministerial students were enrolled at Stetson.²⁷ The lack of requests for financial assistance from ministerial students did not dampen the State Board's continued directives to its field missionaries to collect offerings for ministerial financial aid which resulted in the Board earmarking over \$1,000 annually for scholarship funds.²⁸ The Board's serious concern that scholarship applicants would benefit Florida Baptist churches, resulted in a 1902 policy requiring recipients to refund all the funds with interest if they failed to subsequently serve in the Baptist ministry for ten years.²⁹

Meanwhile, the institution for which Florida Baptists had great hopes for resolving the ministerial leadership vacuum found itself in a tug of war conflict between the leaders of Stetson University and the Board of Missions. This resulted in a trial separation in the relationship that lasted from 1907 to 1919.

The main source of conflict was the university charter which had been approved by the Florida Legislature. In brief, the university charter called for a self-perpetuating board of trustees, three-fourths of whose members would be Baptists. But the charter did not specify Baptist ownership and control. By 1907, the Board leaders' dissatisfaction with the charter was not only

State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida revived, but the emotional tenor became so intense that the State Convention voted to go to court to get the charter changed.³⁰ Board member and former Florida Governor William B. Jennings determined the best course of action would be for the Board to go directly to the Legislature and have the university charter revised. Subsequently the Senate’s Judiciary Committee voted to postpone indefinitely taking any action of the charter revision request, which effectively left the Stetson charter as it was.³¹

The Board’s failure to “take control” of Stetson University, caused Baptist leadership to begin reconsidering the ways and means for establishing a school that would be Baptist in commitment and control. That opportunity soon arose when Lake City found itself without a college after the Legislature moved Florida Agricultural College to Gainesville in 1905. The city was given the property and the abandoned buildings.³² On June 18, 1907, the State Board’s Executive Committee, along with members of the State Convention’s Education Committee, went before the Lake City Council to propose to establish a Baptist college if the city would deed the property and provide \$15,000 to the State Convention.³³ The City Council’s affirmative reaction resulted in a special session of the State Convention being held in Lake City, July 24, 1907. The large contingent of Baptists who assembled in Lake City enthusiastically endorsed the proposal to establish a college in which the convention would “be the unquestionable owners of the property and have a voice in its control.”³⁴ It was called Columbia College.

During the early years of the new century, Florida’s agricultural-based economy was still reeling from the effects of the great freeze of 1895 and the ravages of the boll weevil. Despite the economic conditions, the Board continued to employ general missionaries, evangelists and church builders (mission pastors) to assist the existing churches as well as start new churches in the growing cities. Additionally the Board defined the duties of its missionaries more specifically than ever before in an attempt to make the best possible use of their efforts. The Board required each field missionary to pledge to do five basic

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things: (1) perform colportage work, which was the selling and circulating of books among pastors; (2) “give special attention to Christian work among the colored people;” (3) conduct frequent evangelistic meetings for children; (4) subscribe to, read and promote the state Baptist newspaper; and (5) take an offering for missions in each church they were serving at least once each quarter.³⁵

In an effort to make the Board more efficient, Jacksonville pastor W. A. Hobson proposed that the Board organize itself into committees. This delegation of tasks was designed to ensure the various and different issues would be first studied by a committee before being considered by the entire Board. A committee, it was believed, could more thoroughly study an issue and secure a consensus on a recommended action by the Board. The first such committees named were: evangelism, education, building, and Sunday school.³⁶ This committee process was refined and expanded during the first two decades of the century to include designations for: church extension; association apportionment; ministerial (pastoral salary) aid; loans and gifts; student aid; as well as the long-term committees on evangelism and church building. This organizational structure continues to the present day.

Securing Financial Stability: 1909-1926

L. D. Geiger’s service was cut short when he died suddenly on April 20, 1909. Within weeks of Geiger’s death, Stuart Beggs Rogers, pastor of the Gainesville Baptist Church, was unanimously appointed corresponding secretary by the Board. The native of Macon, Georgia, had served Florida churches for the previous ten years and during six of those years he served as State Convention president.³⁷

As his initial task, Rogers led the Board to recommend and the State Convention to approve four goals to achieve financial stability to under gird mission work within the state. These included the adoption of a more systematic plan of giving by the churches and the adoption of a percentage basis for all

State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida causes supported and fostered by the Board. Churches also were encouraged to make a 20 percent increase in their gifts for state missions during 1910.³⁸ Up until this time, the average churches’ financial contributions to the Board were received as designated gifts, which were limited to contributor-specified uses. This resulted in some mission needs receiving plenty of financial support while others were sadly neglected. The Rogers’ proposals were designed to provide for a more equitable distribution of funds according to need.

To implement these plans further, the Board suggested that the churches adopt budgets with stated dollar amounts to be contributed to state missions and to other mission causes.³⁹ To raise more funds, church leaders began to learn about the Southern Baptist Convention’s emphasis encouraging all Baptists to embrace the Biblical practice of tithing and systematic giving. Prior to the twentieth century, Southern Baptists—as individuals and as a group—did not generally practice and did not widely promote systematic giving.

Following the lead of the Southern Baptist Convention,⁴⁰ the Board became so impressed with the south wide emphasis on financial stewardship “efficiency” (as it was called) that it implemented a variety of changes. The first change was the creation of a Board budget committee to improve planning and allocation of financial resources. The Board also agreed to employ a person assigned the dual tasks of Sunday school promotion and the promotion of stewardship “efficiency” in the churches. Despite some misgivings, the “efficiency” staff person resulted in not only a better understanding of stewardship education, but the increased income soon convinced many Florida Baptist church leaders of the worth of “efficiency.”⁴¹ One outcome initially implemented by some churches was the “every member canvas,” a financial pledging campaign which brought more money into many churches than they had dreamed possible. The “canvas” was the forerunner to various tither enlistment campaigns and the Cooperative Program developed by Southern Baptists.⁴²

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Several factors contributed to the need for and gave credence to Florida's stewardship efficiency plan. One was a \$50,000 debt the Board assumed with the closing of Columbia College in 1918. Other factors were the decision to construct the first ever Baptist building in downtown Jacksonville and the growing need for financial assistance to churches.

Earlier in 1909, the Board agreed to employ the first non-missionary employee—a combination Sunday School and Baptist Young People's Union Secretary—assigned to assist churches in developing religious education programs.⁴³ In the ensuing decades the Board approved the creation of various programs of work and hired personnel who provided resources and personal consultation to local church leaders. These program resources typically fell into one of three general categories: educational ministries (i.e. Sunday school, Training Union/Discipleship, church music); missions support (i.e. church extension/starting; Brotherhood/Baptist Men; Woman's Missionary Union; church/community ministries; language ministries); and support resources (i.e. stewardship, evangelism; African American ministries; leadership development, theological education).

Economic Restraints: 1926-1941

In 1926 Rogers resigned his position because of ill health which had plagued him through much of his tenure. The Board turned to Charles M. Brittain who had served as assistant secretary to Rogers for six years.

Brittain's tenure was affected by economic restraints caused by the hurricanes of 1926 and 1928, the Great Depression and the beginning of World War II. These multiple outside influences created a spiritual inertia among many churches which had a negative impact upon missions giving. This inertia began with a devastating hurricane in 1926 which heavily damaged or destroyed many churches in the Miami area and created economic disaster in many other communities.⁴⁴ No sooner had economic recovery begun than a 1928 hurricane struck in the West Palm

State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida Beach area. The two calamities had a devastating effect upon giving through the Cooperative Program.⁴⁵

Unfortunately, while the Board was struggling financially to address the needs with which it was being confronted, the greatest blow of all came: the stock market crash of 1929. The Board had been borrowing money to meet obligations when it was forced to reduce its work further.⁴⁶ In 1930 the budget was reduced to \$61,736, the smallest in many years.⁴⁷ Yet, the Board’s continuing efforts to rein in operating expenses, resulted in a proposed \$100,000 budget for 1933 being reduced drastically to \$53,249.⁴⁸

Despite the difficult economic times, the Board voted to promote and encourage churches to participate in a simultaneous evangelistic campaign to be held in April, 1933.⁴⁹ Additionally, during the decade of the Thirties, the Board continued to provide financial assistance to over 550 churches.

An action taken by the Board in 1939 continues to benefit churches and ministers to the present day. The Board recommended and the State Convention agree to participate in the newly developed Southern Baptist Convention Ministers’ Retirement Plan. The State Convention initially agreed to contribute two percent in matching funds to a minister’s retirement plan. In that first year, 211 Florida pastors and 233 churches signed on to participate.⁵⁰

The Board began 1940 with a deficit of \$6,393 which grew to over \$12,500 by May. The Board’s executive committee tentatively agreed to cut employee salaries by ten percent and to reduce to 55 percent from 65 percent the Cooperative Program allocation to SBC causes. Several Board members resigned over the planned action. But by the end of the year receipts had increased and the salary cuts were restored.⁵¹ However, the Cooperative percentage allocation to the Southern Baptist Convention was permanently lowered to 40 percent by 1942 to accommodate the growing mission and institutional needs within Florida.

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As a result of failing health, Charles M. Brittain resigned in 1941.

A Progressive Missions Program: 1941-1944

Again turning to its own members the Board selected Charles H. Bolton who subsequently served a three-year tenure as executive secretary-treasurer. Bolton oversaw the liquidation of debt created in 1926 by the construction of the Baptist Building.⁵² He also led the Board to establish a financial reserve fund for emergencies and contingencies that grew to \$99,990 having four years of steady contributions.⁵³ The Board approved a plan that Bolton designed to provide a more progressive approach to rural and city mission work. In cooperation with the Home Mission Board, the plan provided for superintendent of missions positions being established in four major cities (Jacksonville, Tampa, Pensacola and Miami) which were jointly funded by the State Board and the Home Board.⁵⁴ Also set into motion was a shift away from the Board financially supporting individual mission pastors to an emphasis upon underwriting area missionaries in the state's mostly rural associations. These area missionaries were to guide and encourage local churches to support the start of a mission congregation and its pastor.

Bolton resigned in July 1, 1944 to return to the pastorate. Unable to draft a permanent leader from among its ranks, the Board appointed its chairman Homer G. Lindsay, Sr., and pastor, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, to serve as interim executive secretary.

An Era of Expansion: 1945-1967

Alabama pastor John Henry Maguire became the first executive secretary-treasurer that the Board employed as a result of the recommendation of a Board-appointed search committee. Up until this time, the Board had typically looked within its own ranks and selected someone within a matter of days or weeks.

After assessing the Board missions' strategy and personnel, Maguire recommended the creation of eight mission

State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida districts and negotiated a revised agreement with the Home Mission Board to fund one-half the salary expense of the regional missionaries.⁵⁵ Subsequently, the State Board agreed to assume the travel expense of the area missionaries and reaffirmed the Board’s expectation that its missionary personnel were to promote all aspects of the denominational program.⁵⁶

In its continuing commitment to Stetson University, the Board in 1946 entered into its fourth of what became six agreements (1911, 1919, 1926, 1946, 1957, and 1990) with the university trustees that reaffirmed the State Convention’s commitment to the institution. And within two years, when several fund solicitation efforts faltered in achieving the goals, the Board recommended a four percent increase to 18 percent in the annual budget allocation to Stetson University.⁵⁷ Initially, the Board refused to consider providing financial assistance to Baptist Bible Institute an educational enterprise supported by the South Florida Association.⁵⁸ But in 1957 the school was embraced as a State Convention institution. At various times, the Board refused to support continuing efforts by some Baptists to establish a Baptist college in West Florida and later in West Palm Beach. So emphatic was the Board’s position, that they approved a policy restricting financial support to only one educational institution (and by implication it was Stetson).⁵⁹

In one of its most visionary actions up to that time, the Board embraced a Maguire proposal for a ten-year plan. The plan sought to establish baptisms goals, the starting of new churches, an increase in total church membership, and a variety of numeric enrollment goals for the convention’s programs. The plan also proposed a capital fund program that would designate money received above and beyond the regular Cooperative Program budget to initially assist the State Convention’s agencies and institutions.⁶⁰ An outgrowth of the plan was the Board’s 1958 decision to sell the Rogers Building in downtown Jacksonville and construct a new Baptist Building on the Southside of the city.⁶¹

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As the Board moved into the decade of the 1960s, Maguire led the Board and the State Convention to assume ownership and expansion of the Baptist Bible Institute in Graceville; established the Florida Baptist Retirement Center in Vero Beach; and supported the expansion of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes to a statewide ministry. He led in the establishment of the Florida Baptist Witness Commission and the Florida Baptist Foundation. Maguire also pushed for the development of the Lake Yale Baptist Assembly and an assembly in West Florida. During his tenure, the Woman's Missionary Union transitioned from an auxiliary of the State Convention to a Convention program department.⁶²

Completing 22 years of service, John Maguire retired in December 31, 1967.

A Priority on Church Starting: 1967-1978

As the eighth executive secretary, former Texas Baptist missions' leader Harold Bennett led the Board to focus on the priority of starting 400 new churches and missions within ten years. These efforts were complemented by the establishment of a State Convention Church Site Committee to locate property sites and a Bond Plan to assist churches in building needed facilities.⁶³ The Board developed a new cooperative agreement with the Home Mission Board, which resulted in increased financial support and effectiveness of Florida's total mission program. The Board recommended that Florida Baptist participate in a major evangelistic missions' effort in Korea.⁶⁴

Bennett implemented restructuring of convention staff to enhance their job performance and accountability. And he led the Board to purchase property for the construction of the Blue Springs Assembly and additional property for the Lake Yale Assembly.⁶⁵

Accepting the position of executive secretary-treasurer for the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, Bennett resigned the Florida post in February 1979.

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A 50-50 Funding Plan: 1979-1989

Recognizing its need for an executive director with experience in both state convention leadership and multi-cultural ministries, the Board elected Dan C. Stringer, who previously led the state conventions of Arizona and the Northwest.

During his tenure, Stringer led churches to more than double their gifts through the Cooperative Program. By the mid-1980s, Stringer developed a Board-approved plan to eventually budget Cooperative Program receipts on a 50-50 percentage basis distribution between the State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. Although achieved, sluggish growth in Cooperative Program income and the demands of Florida mission needs required the 50-50 plan to be abandoned.⁶⁶

Stringer helped the Board to broaden their priority of evangelizing and ministering to Florida’s growing ethnic populations. In response the Board approved two new program departments—language missions and ethnic education—to assist local churches in responding to these mission opportunities. A new work assistance program was developed to provide a comprehensive strategy for starting new churches among African-Americans, ethnic groups, suburban and inner city communities. And to further address the strategy for helping churches reach people for Christ, the Board annually approved goals to complement the national Bold Mission Thrust emphases.⁶⁷

To increase the opportunities for missions involvement by Florida Baptists, the Board authorized several foreign mission evangelism partnerships in West Africa and the Caribbean, as well as state-to-state partnerships with Baptist conventions in Pennsylvania-South Jersey, and the Northern Plains (Montana, and North and South Dakota).⁶⁸

Setting Three Priorities: 1989 to present

Following the early retirement of Dan Stringer, the Board again selected a non Floridian and Louisiana pastor T. G. “John” Sullivan as executive director-treasurer on January, 1989.

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Within the first year of coming to the Florida, Sullivan defined three priorities embraced by the Board that dictated the personnel, budgetary and calendar commitments: evangelism, intentional church starting, and developing stronger existing churches. This ultimately evolved into a strategic planning process that established annual objectives, goals and action plans.⁶⁹ Growing out of the priorities was the creation of two program divisions targeted at two major segments of the Florida population: African-Americans and language and ethnic groups.⁷⁰

Reviving a nineteenth century Board priority to provide trained pastors and leaders for Florida churches, Sullivan led the Board to authorize a program of theological education and distance learning. The program, developed in cooperation with the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and The Baptist College of Florida, permits church staff to continue in their church ministry while enrolled in theology, doctrine and church growth studies.⁷¹

The Board's love hate relationship with Stetson University finally came to a conclusion when in 1995 the Board recommended and the State Convention agreed to sever all relationships with the University. The proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back" was the University trustees' refusal to rescind a policy to permit the drinking of alcoholic beverages on campus.⁷²

Although the Board had approved disaster relief policy and action plans in the 1970s, this ministry did not get fully tested until the early 1990s when a series of catastrophic hurricanes began to strike the state. Sullivan on numerous occasions led in the mobilization of convention staff to provide aid and comfort to victims, as well as secured the Board's commitment of significant financial resources to assist churches and people in need.⁷³

One of the most significant inquiries the Board undertook in its history was to determine what constituted cooperation between local churches and the State Convention. The result was a proposal that was adopted as Bylaw Two in the

State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida State Convention’s Bylaws which defined cooperating churches in terms of financial support, doctrinal integrity and information sharing.⁷⁴

Continuing a commitment to provide hands-on missions’ experiences for Florida Baptists the Board approved the establishment of foreign partnerships with the countries of in the Caribbean, Cuba, Haiti, Belgium and Brazil.⁷⁵ Similar state-to-state partnerships were expanded to include Indiana, West Virginia and Nevada.⁷⁶ These partnerships committed budget and personnel.

These emphases upon evangelism and missions likely contributed to Florida Baptists’ giving generosity of \$420 million made through the Cooperative Program from 1989 to 2004. The giving alone reflected a major shift in perspective and commitment by Florida Baptists since W. N. Chaudoin first collected \$104.11 in 1881.

In 2005 the State Board of Missions completed 125 years of service to Florida Baptists in casting the missions’ vision and implementing the resources which have sought to fulfill its original mandate to “furnish the preached word to every destitute section in our territory.”

ENDNOTES

1 John L. Rosser, *A History of Florida Baptists*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1949), 56.

2 *Ibid.* 57-58.

3 *Florida Baptist Convention, Minutes*, 1880, p. 10.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

5 E. H. Reynolds, Sr., “William Newell Chaudoin,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, January 27, 1904, p. 9. For an extensive biographical narrative on Chaudoin, see an article by Joel R. Breidenbaugh, “W. N. Chaudoin: Pioneer, Preacher, and President of Florida Baptist Work,” *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Fall, 2004, pp. 6-20.

6 To the casual reader, a question may arise regarding C. C. Green whose name did not appear in the original group appointed to the Board of Missions by the State Convention. Contributing to the

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mystery is the fact that the Board's initial meeting held March 28, 1881 was not recorded in the Board's official meeting *Minutes* book. *The Minutes'* first page begins with the second meeting dated June 27. John Rosser's compendium reported on the March 28 meeting with neither citations nor clarification of who is C. C. Green or how he came to be placed on the Board. It could be assumed that Green was pastor of the Madison Church. However, Edwin Browning's *First Baptist Church, Madison, Florida: A Historical Sketch 1835-1956* (n.p., 1956) makes the following assertion: "On the new board were from our church: our pastor, Reverend J. O. Harris; S. B. Thomas, Sr., John W. Beggs; B. F. Wardlaw; and J. F. B. Mays." The absence of a printed version of the 1881 *Minutes*, Florida Baptist State Convention, makes it difficult to clarify the circumstances of C. C. Green's ascension to the State Board.

7 Rosser, 64.

8 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, June 27, 1881.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*, March 28, 1882.

11 Florida Baptist Convention, *Minutes*, 1882, 15.

12 Calculation of comparative dollar values between 1880 and 2005 derived from "Consumer Price Index: 1800-2005," prepared by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and posted on <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/reserach/data/us/calc/hist1800.cfm>.

13 Florida Baptist Convention, *Minutes*, 1882, 6.

14 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, December 10, 1882.

15 Rosser, 66.

16 Florida Baptist Convention, *Minutes*, 1882, 6.

17 *Ibid.*, 1889, 40.

18 *Ibid.*, 1884, 30-31.

19 Gilbert L. Lycan, *Stetson University: The First 100 Years*, (Deland: Stetson University Press, 1983), 7.

20 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, February 19, 1885.

21 *Ibid.*, March 2, 1887.

22 Rosser, 151-158.

23 *Florida Baptist Witness*, April 29, 1909, pp. 2-3.

24 John E. Shaffett, "L. D. Geiger: Executive Secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention 1902-1909," *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Fall, 2004, 25.

- State Board of Missions – Casting the Missions’ Vision in Florida*
- 25 Editorial by L. D. Geiger, *Florida Baptist Witness*, June 27, 1905.
- 26 Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1901, 29. (It was about 1935 before we had as many Baptist preachers as we did churches. ed.)
- 27 Editorial, “Ministerial Education,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, March 10, 1904.
- 28 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, January 8, 1897, 10; and January 8, 1898, 110.
- 29 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1902.
- 30 Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1907, 49-51.
- 31 Harry C. Garwood, *Stetson University and Florida Baptists*, (Deland: Florida Baptist Historical Society, 1962), 124-126. Also see *Tallahassee Morning Sun*, April 25, 1907.
- 32 Lycan, 187.
- 33 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, June 18, 1907.
- 34 Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1907, 21.
- 35 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, August 1, 1906.
- 36 *Ibid.*, April 11, 1907.
- 37 Jerry M. Windsor, “Stuart Beggs Rogers, The Quiet Before the Storm,” *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Fall, 2004, 32-43.
- 38 Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1910, 17-18.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 1914, 18.
- 40 W. W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention 1845-1953*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), 177.
- 41 S. B. Rogers, “Efficiency in the Country,” *Florida Baptist Witness*, April 29, 1915.
- 42 Howard Foshee, “The Tithe,” *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Vol. II, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 1418-1420.
- 43 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, July 8, 1909; April 12, 1911.
- 44 Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1926, 44-45.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 1927-1928, 13-14
- 46 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, May 27, 1929.
- 47 *Ibid.*, February 3, 1931.
- 48 State Board of Missions *Minutes*, January 10-11, 1933.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1939, 28-31.
- 51 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, September 3, 1940 and December 3, 1940.

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- 52 Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1944, 14.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 1945, 61.
- 54 *Florida Baptist Witness*, February 22, 1945.
- 55 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, December 5, 1944.
- 56 *Ibid.*, May 26, 1953.
- 57 Garwood, 204.
- 58 State Board of Missions, *Minutes*, December 9, 1947.
- 59 *Ibid.*, September 4-5, 1952; also Florida Baptist State Convention, *Annual*, 1952, 41.
- 60 *Ibid.*, September 4, 1952; and November 11, 1952.
- 61 *Ibid.*, May 8, 1958; November 17, 1958; and December 9, 1958;
- 62 *Ibid.*, August 31, 1961 through September 1, 1967.
- 63 *Ibid.*, April 23, 1968 through January 11, 1973.
- 64 *Ibid.*, May 15-16, 1972 through November 12, 1975.
- 65 *Ibid.*, January 23, 1976 through November 15, 1978.
- 66 *Ibid.*, September 11, 1987; and January 19, 1990.
- 67 *Ibid.*, January 23, 1981; March 15, 1983; May 20, 1983; and September 14, 1984.
- 68 *Ibid.*, May, 1978; January 24, 1986; May 22, 1987; and September 11, 1987.
- 69 *Ibid.*, January 29, 1999.
- 70 *Ibid.*, November 9, 1992; and May 20, 1993.
- 71 *Ibid.*, May 17, 1991 and September 13, 1991.
- 72 *Ibid.*, September 8, 1995.
- 73 *Ibid.*, September 11, 1992; January 22, 1993; and November 16, 1998.
- 74 *Ibid.*, September 8, 1995; January 26, 1996; May 17, 1996; and September 13, 1996.
- 75 *Ibid.*, September 10, 1993; May 19, 1995; September 13, 1996; November 11, 1996; May 23, 1997; and November 8, 2004.
- 76 *Ibid.*, May 19, 2000; November 12, 2001; and May 21, 2004.



A Sketch of the Florida Baptist Historical Society

Jerry M. Windsor

*Secretary-Treasurer (2002-2016)
Florida Baptist Historical Society*

According to the 1954 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, H. C. Garwood was elected the Curator-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Historical Society. He served for seven years in this capacity (1954-1960) until his death after a tragic stroke. Dr. Garwood was presented to the 1954 gathering of the Florida Baptist State Convention by W. Hal Hunter, pastor of First Baptist Church, Crestview and the President of the historical society. Hunter noted that “Dr. Garwood is the best informed man on Florida Baptist history ever to serve as Curator.” This high praise proved true in the work that Garwood did. However there is an interesting footnote to the Garwood credentials and service. At his death his historical society work was not even mentioned in his obituary in the *Florida Baptist Witness*. His pastoral service and academic work at Stetson was highlighted, but his historical stint was hardly noteworthy. In a microcosm, that has been the work of the Florida Baptist Historical Society. Quietly and professionally going about its work. Unobtrusive yet diligently faithful to the collection, recording, and interpreting of Florida Baptist history.¹

1894—State Historical Society

As early as the 1894 Florida Baptist State Convention meeting in Plant City there was a call for “compiling the history of our denomination in this state.”² This request came from three men who had a rich background of historical perspective and reading. All three were pastors from the Alachua Association.

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D. B. Farmer was a native of Maine and worked for 25 years in Florida before his death in Massachusetts in 1905. Farmer was known for his doctrinal preaching and had one of the finest ministry libraries in the state. N. A. Bailey (1833-1897) received his A.B. degree from Union University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 1857, and his pastor was the renowned Dr. J. M. Pendleton. Bailey had moved to Florida in 1860 due to bronchial problems and became pastor at Monticello. E. H. Rennolds, Sr., was just as interested in history but from a different perspective. Rennolds (1839-1912) was born in Virginia and raised in Tennessee. He lived out history as a member of the ill-fated Tennessee 5th Regiment in the Civil War.³ Rennolds would go on to become one of the most important men in the first century of Florida Baptist historical interest and research.

The “Alachua Three” made five basic points at the 1894 State Convention. They noted that the convention in its 40th year of existence⁴ needed to (1) gather material; (2) protect resources; (3) interview witnesses; (4) appoint a committee; and (5) compile the history of the state convention. This forward thinking trio probably was responsible for the early emphasis of Florida Baptists on document preservation.

1895-1912—The Historical Secretary

In 1895 the Florida Baptist State Convention met at Leesburg. W. N. Chaudoin presided as president and R. H. Whitehead served as vice-president. E. H. Rennolds, Sr., reported as the Historical Secretary.⁵ The commitment, enthusiasm, and hard work of Rennolds are detailed in this first historical report to the convention.

Rennolds knew what he wanted and he knew where he needed to go to get it. Rennolds stated, “I have in my work endeavoured to secure files of the minutes of the associations and state conventions first.” He reported that he had collected a total of 227 minutes. He had a full collection of associational minutes from Graves, Indian River, LaFayette, Manatee River, Marion, Pasco, and Pensacola Bay associations. In addition,

Rennolds said he had a full synopsis of all the minutes of Alachua Association except for 1868, 1870-1872. Rennolds also observed that J. M. Hayman (1822-1902) had a full set of the South Florida minutes.⁶

Rennolds also noted that he had collected 28 biographical sketches of deceased ministers and 12 sketches of living ones. In that this is still a very important goal even in 2005, it is interesting to note what Rennolds said about this biographical quest. He said we have forty biographical sketches in all. "Some of these are not as full as they should be, but they can be supplemented from time to time. I have deemed it best to push forward the collection of sketches of deceased ministers, leaving the living ministry to be written up later on."⁷

It is also of interest to note that Rennolds "found the brethren and sisters everywhere easily interested in the work and ready to promise help." In 1894-1895 Rennolds visited the Florida, South Florida, Pensacola Bay associations, and the New River Union. All of this was in pursuit of materials "so that the early history of our older associations may not be wanting."

The excursion that offers the most interesting historical perspective is the trip Rennolds made to visit Samuel Colgate at Orange, New Jersey. In the 1896 *Convention Annual*, Rennolds stated, "I have not been idle." He visited Colgate by the courtesies of the Florida Central and Peninsular and Southern railroads. Rennolds found 66 Florida Baptist Convention and Florida Baptist Association minutes that he had not seen before. He also added 34 biographical sketches to the historical collection.

The trip to visit Colgate must have been a dream come true for Rennolds. He knew that there were some very important documents out there and now to get to see them, extract some, and purchase others must have been a very satisfying experience. Meeting and talking to Colgate had to bring a new vision to Rennolds.

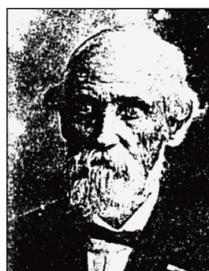
Samuel Colgate (1822-1897) was a Baptist
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industrialist and bibliophile. He was the son of William Colgate (1783-1857) the founder of the Colgate Palmolive Peet Soap Company, and a very active Baptist leader in New York. He was the leading contributor to the Triennial Missionary Convention, and from 1829 to 1852 was a member of the organization that would become the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.

William Colgate had two sons who were as interested in Baptist causes as he was. Samuel and his brother James endowed Colgate Baptist University and the University of Rochester.

Rennolds could not have found Samuel Colgate at a better time. In 1887 Colgate was asked to give a speech on the rise of women's missions and could not locate sufficient data. He began to purchase and collect Baptist books, pamphlets, and reports and in 1892 over a quarter of a million items were donated to Colgate University from this special Baptist collection.⁸ This donation was providential



E. H. Rennolds, Sr.

for in February 1896, the valuable files of the Historical Society at Philadelphia were lost when their building burned. Rennolds noted in his 1896 report, "I congratulate the convention on having secured abstracts from this collection while it was yet possible."

It is my belief that the best sources we have are the personal primary sources of ministers. This information comes to us in the form of diaries, letters, books, sermons, and published materials. Yet a great need always exists for the personal data on each minister. This helps us understand his background, thinking, training, and theological conclusions. For some reason, ministers are slow to share this information. Getting a birth date, ordination date, service date, or educational verification is not as simple as it may seem. All historical secretaries faced this dilemma. It seems that Rennolds spoke for all of us when he announced over one hundred years ago that, "I feel assured that I have grounds of complaint against the brethren who have neglected to comply with the urgent but reasonable request to aid me in this work by

A Sketch of the Florida Baptist Historical Society supplying such data as they could easily have given, and thus save the future biographers the laborious task of getting it by piecemeal from their relatives and friends when they have ceased from their ministry here.”⁹

In 1900 Rennolds reported that he had visited all the associations in the state except LaFayette and Middle Florida. He made a heart cry commitment to Florida Baptists stating that a history of the convention needed to be recorded and he was “willing to spend the remainder of his life working to that end.”¹⁰ In 1905 Rennolds had a budget of \$27.70 for the year. Railroad fare was \$15.86, postage was \$2.00, and his salary was \$9.84 for the year.

Rennolds began to see himself as a “gleaner” of information. In 1903 he realized that there was an “ebb” in convention interest in historical research. He called for the compilation of the collected biographical sketches and research material in a book form.¹¹ He was somewhat discouraged and suggested the suspension of data collection until some kind of printing could be done. He felt that data processing without publication was an unwise research delay.

In the 1903 Florida Baptist State Convention meeting in January in Lake City there was a report from a Special Committee on History. This committee was composed of T. J. Sparkman (died in 1916 in Palmetto), L. D. Geiger (1854-1909), C. S. Farris, and J. F. Forbes (1853-1926). Geiger served as the state convention secretary-treasurer (1901-1907) and Forbes was president of Stetson from 1885 to 1903. Either of them could have seen the history project through but Geiger was busy with convention business and Forbes left the state to enter private business in Rochester, New York. However, this 1903 committee of four showed wise judgment in setting the parameters for the needed historical publication. They had major concerns. They wanted the history of the Florida Baptists to be accurate, well done, interesting, written and printed. They requested that a “capable person” be asked to gather the material and then print the book in an attractive manner. Furthermore they felt no “mission

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money” should be used for this project as they recommended that a Florida Baptist Historical Society be organized to raise funds for the cost of the book.¹² The idea was wonderful but the lack of funding and loss of Forbes delayed the project for over 50 years.

Edwin Hansford Rennolds, Sr., was the steady guiding light for Florida Baptist data collection but life was not always fair to him. Born on October 30, 1830, in Louisa County, Virginia, Rennolds moved with his family to Henry County, Tennessee as a child.¹³ He served throughout the Civil War without serious injury but maintained a fear of death without repentance. It was in 1868 that he was clearly converted, and in 1869 he was licensed to preach upon his feeling that “there was something for me to do in the Masters Kingdom.” This was followed by ordination in 1870 but Rennolds seemed to feel uncomfortable in the pulpit. He was a person of ability and humility but life dealt him very harsh reality in economic struggles and disadvantaged illnesses. Rennolds and his wife, Margaret C. Cox Rennolds, moved to Sumter County, Florida, in November 1882. In November 1883, he and his wife joined Equity Baptist Church and in 1884 they joined a church start at Whitney Station on the S.A.L. Railroad where he became a deacon, Sunday School teacher, and church clerk. This triggered some service interest in Rennolds because he stated in his autobiography that he felt that he had “found the work intended for me to do.” A historical interest was pursued as Rennolds was elected clerk of the Alachua Association in October 1884, and he received encouragement from such pastors as L. D. Geiger, B. M. Bean, and A. E. Cloud.

Rennolds became interested in the history of the Alachua Association but realized “that it would be better that a history of all the associations in the state be written in one volume.”¹⁴ He somehow felt much more at home with pen and ink than he did in the pulpit. In December 1901, he became pastor of Bethany in Nassau County. This pastorate lasted only ten months and Rennolds was shocked to find that he had been replaced.¹⁵ He then became pastor at Macedonia where he

A Sketch of the Florida Baptist Historical Society stated, “My experience here was about the same as at Bethany...” He spent a total of only about two years of his life in the pastoral ministry but these church experiences quickened a historical interest in the early work of Baptists in Florida.¹⁶

Rennolds loved history and historical research. His mother had primed this interest and his Civil War experiences documented it. For four terms Rennolds served as chaplain of the Florida State Senate, and for ten years he was Secretary of the Florida Baptist State Convention. He said of his convention work that, “I have felt fitted especially for this position and have done some of the hardest work of my life to fill it satisfactorily.”¹⁷

The 1894 Alachua Association request to “compile the history of our denomination in this State” was signed off on by N. A. Bailey, D. B. Farmer, and Rennolds. For Edwin Hansford Rennolds, Sr., this was a calculated request that was issued with earnestness and sincerity.

Baptist Historical Society–1921

A Baptist Historical Society was appointed at the Florida Baptist State Convention meeting at Miami in 1921.¹⁸ This action came from an external impetus. The Southern Baptist Convention meeting in its previous session had recommended that each state create a Baptist Historical Society for the gathering and preservation of historical records and activities of the denomination.

Adoniram Judson Holt (1847-1933) of Florida was elected chair of the Southern Baptist Convention committee. Holt was a native of Somerset, Kentucky, and attended Baylor and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was well known in the Southern Baptist Convention in that he served as pastor in Texas, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Florida. He served as editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* from 1914-1918, and had a helpful overview of Southern Baptist work and ministry. He served as pastor at Lake City, Kissimmee, Boca Grande, Arcadia, and Punta Gorda (1922-1927). He saw the need

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for Baptist history to be recorded at the state convention level and felt local church clerks were a very important part of seeing this work completed.¹⁹

Holt would get rather frustrated from time to time with those who were not ready to step forward and publish their historical work. In his 1923 report to the Florida Baptist State Convention, Holt noted, “We have been making history this year as usual; and as usual, we have not been making a record of it.” However Holt was pleased to point out one single exception. He reported, “Only one Florida Baptist church has had its history written and published.” That church was First Baptist Church, Arcadia. Holt wanted to make sure that church was recognized and emulated.

Committee on Florida Baptist History (1931-1938)

In 1931 the Florida Baptist State Convention appointed a Committee on Baptist History. The committee reported in 1932 that they had been given the task to report on the preservation and publication of Florida Baptist history. Floyd T. Wilson and W. A. Hobson composed this committee. Their main contribution was the recommendation that all of the Baptist history now collected be filed in the library of Stetson University under the direction of Stetson President Lincoln Hulley and the Committee on Baptist History.

The committee also made a magnificent find in the person of Gordon C. Reeves. During the depression the Works Progress Administration (WPA) made great effort to find work for unemployed artists, writers, and scholars. Reeves was born in Bellevue, Kentucky, in 1910. His family moved to St. Petersburg in 1925, and he graduated from St. Petersburg Junior College in 1931. He graduated from Stetson in 1936, and served as research assistant to Dr. H. C. Garwood while he was working on his masters degree. Reeves became the church historian of the Florida Historical Survey of the Works Progress Administration. His Stetson thesis was *A History of Florida Baptists*, and the 1938 project was 225 pages of well documented Baptist history.

A Sketch of the Florida Baptist Historical Society

It was Reeves who made the motion at the 1938 Florida Baptist State Convention at Jacksonville that a state historical society be formed for Baptists “with the understanding that such organization shall have no authority to make the Convention liable for any expenditure of funds.” The motion carried. Gordon C. Reeves should be listed in that early pantheon of leaders that would include Edwin Hansford Rennolds, Sr., Adoniram Judson Holt, and the first official Florida Baptist historian, John Leonidas Rosser.

Florida Baptist Historical Society (1939-1996)

In 1939 William Dudley Nowlin (1864-1950) brought the Florida Baptist History Committee report to the convention that met at West Palm Beach. Nowlin was licensed to preach before he was called. As happened with George W. Truett, the local church saw the giftedness of the man and he surrendered and attended The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Nowlin served as pastor at Lexington, Kentucky, and Knoxville, Tennessee, before moving to Florida in 1911. Nowlin was a natural to give impetus to Florida Baptist historical research and writing. His contributions include the fact that he served as editor of the Kentucky *Western Recorder* and the *Florida Baptist Witness*. He served as president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Florida Baptist State Convention (1930-1931). At the request of Kentucky Baptists he also wrote a history of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Nowlin read the Baptist History report at the 1939 State Convention and it was spoken to by C. M. Brittain and Gordon Reeves. It was just understood that Dr. Charles Mercer Brittain (1873-1943) would be the one to write the long expected history of Florida Baptists. He was well educated, well qualified, and had the important Florida experience. He served as secretary-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention from 1926-1941, and saw the convention through its most difficult days since Chaudoin.

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The 1942 State Convention that met in Panama City actually voted for Dr. Brittain to “prepare and publish our Florida Baptist History.” But providence intervened.²⁰ Due to illness and the soon death of Dr. Brittain, the Florida Baptist History Committee suggested that Gordon Reeves complete the work. A glitch of some kind occurred and within months the committee was back before the Executive Committee of the State Board of Missions to “clear up any obscurity or uncertainty on the matter” of producing a history of Florida Baptists.²¹

Out of a September 12, 1944 joint meeting, J. L. Rosser was asked to prepare and publish the manuscript of Florida Baptist history. This was finally completed in 1949 when the 351 page *A History of Florida Baptists* was authored by Rosser and published by Broadman Press of Nashville.²²

This was a coup for Florida Baptists. Stuart Beggs Rogers (1866-1926) had written a 25 page booklet “A Brief History of Florida Baptists 1825-1925” but its conclusions were suspect. Gordon Reeves had written his Stetson thesis on “A History of Florida Baptists” in 1938, but it was the Rosser book that was authenticated by convention action and finances. The 1949 publication of the Rosser book brought legitimacy to the Florida Baptist Historical Society that was greatly needed.

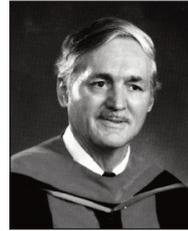
The actual organizational date of the Florida Baptist Historical Society was November 15, 1951 at Winter Haven, Florida. The previous year at the Florida Baptist State Convention, J. Ivey Edwards, chairman of the Florida Baptist History Committee, recommended that Dr. Pope Duncan, Professor of Church History at John B. Stetson University, be elected as the first Secretary-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, and that the organization be organized with the approval of the state convention and be responsible to it.²³

In 1951 Dr. Thomas Hansen (1897-1964), pastor of the First Baptist Church of Fort Lauderdale, brought the Committee on Florida Baptist History report. He noted that a constitution was being recommended for the new organization and Dr. Duncan was now Secretary-Treasurer of the organization and the newly

A Sketch of the Florida Baptist Historical Society

appointed Curator of the Florida Baptist Collection in the Sampson Library at Stetson University. The newly formed Florida Baptist Historical Society had 37 charter members and annual dues were one dollar per year.

Pope A. Duncan (1920-2003) was a logical choice for Secretary-Treasurer. He was a Kentucky native and a graduate of The University of Georgia (B.A., M.S.) and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div., Th.D.). He was an ordained Baptist pastor and taught at Stetson (1946-1948; 1949-1953), and actually became president of three different schools (South Georgia College; Georgia Southern College, and Stetson University). Duncan was greatly respected as scholar, preacher, author, and administrator. He gave the Florida Baptist Historical Society the type of gifted leadership that was essential for the early years and he served as Secretary-Treasurer of the organization from 1950 to 1952.



Pope A. Duncan

In 1952 Dr. Pope Duncan resigned as President of the Florida Baptist Historical Society when he accepted the position of Associate Professor of Church History at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Upon his resignation in Florida, Hugh McKinley, who succeeded Dr. Duncan at Stetson, also succeeded him as Secretary-Treasurer-Curator of the Florida Baptist Historical Society.

W. Hal Hunter served as President of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society and reported in the 1954 state convention that Professor Hugh McKinley had to resign his work at the historical society “because of the pressure of studies toward his doctorate.” Hunter went on to announce that Harry Crawford Garwood had been elected as Secretary-Treasurer-Curator. Hunter was pastor of First Baptist Church, Crestview, at this time, and went on to assure the convention that Dr. Garwood was “the best informed man on Florida Baptist history ever to serve as curator.”²⁴

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Dr. Garwood served until his death in April 1960. He served faithfully on the Stetson campus for 39 years and was greatly beloved among Florida Baptists.

The Garwood years included two very important endeavors. There was another conscious effort toward the collection of association minutes. This is an on going project and fresh ideas and means are always needed. Dr. Garwood also saw the importance of microfilm technology. He saw to the purchase of all Southern Baptist minutes (1845-1952) and Florida Baptist State Convention minutes up until that time (1854-1952). These very exact microfilm sources are used constantly in the work of the Florida Baptist Historical Society today.

In 1958 the Baptist Historical Collection was moved from the library at Stetson to Allen Hall next to the office of Dr. Garwood. By this time there were 400 volumes in the Baptist Historical Collection. Finances were always a major consideration and Dr. Garwood felt that many needed sources had been missed simply because the money was not available to buy them. In 1959 the society reported receipts of \$419.77 and expenditures of \$442 for a negative balance of \$22.23.²⁵

The death of Dr. Garwood brought a short stint for Edward A. Holmes, Jr., as Secretary-Treasurer-Curator of the Florida Baptist Historical Society. During the 1960 Holmes service the Florida Baptist State Convention raised its traditional funding level from \$300 to \$560.50. This increase in gifts from the convention assisted greatly in purchasing some available books and microfilm.

Dr. Holmes reported an increase in library volumes for 1960 but a loss of “card carrying membership” as there were only 22 members in the historical society. The pending completion of the Stetson library meant that the Baptist Collection could be moved back there from Allen Hall. This was finally done in 1969. The historical society also authorized the publication of *Stetson University and Florida Baptists* in 1962. *A Historical Atlas of Florida Baptists* was planned but no publication was released.²⁶

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In the 1962 Florida Baptist annual report, Edward A. Holmes presented Mrs. H. C. Garwood to the convention. It was stated at that time that Dr. Garwood was the first "curator" of the society. This was an honest mistake, but a mistake non-the-less. Pope A. Duncan was the first Secretary-Treasurer-Curator back in 1950.²⁷ Holmes also presented his resignation as Curator and Secretary-Treasurer. He recommended that Professor Rollin Armour be elected in his place. Armour was elected and served in that capacity from 1962 to 1972.

In 1964 as part of the Baptist Jubilee Year, the Florida Baptist Historical Society sponsored a conference on Baptist history. There were over 50 people in attendance and Dr. Davis C. Woolley, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, was the featured speaker.²⁸

The year 1969 was a very eventful year for the historical society. Dr. Earl Joiner was commissioned by the State Board of Missions to write a new history of Florida Baptists. In that secretary Rollin Armour was on academic leave, Joiner was also asked to serve as acting curator. This came at the time when the Baptist holdings were moved from Allen Hall to the DuPoint-Ball Library. The Baptist Collection was dedicated to the memory of Harry C. Garwood.



E. Earl Joiner

A Florida Baptist contingent was also involved in the research for the *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*. Volumes one and two (1958) sold over 14,500 copies. Volumes three (1971) and four (1982) were helpful extensions of the original work, and Floridians were prominent in the production of this excellent research tool. William Guy Stracener was the original Florida representative, and he was later joined by Pope Duncan, Rollin Armour, T. M. Johns, Gus Johnson, Earl Joiner, Gordon Reeves, James A. Sawyer, H. C. Garwood, John H. Mitchell, G. A. Leichliter, Jack P. Dalton, and Arthur W. Mathis.²⁹

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The controlling document of the Florida Baptist Historical Society for over twenty years was the basic 500 word 1950 constitution.³⁰ Then there was the constitution of 1975 and the agreement documents of 1996. These well prepared statements have been a guiding star for the organization ever since its official organizational date in 1950. Rennolds always had to be guided by Chaudoin and the convention directly. These official documents have given the historical society a written beacon for staying on course.

Yet something more important than documentation has been involved in the historical work of the convention since 1894. There has been trust, hard work, and commitment on the part of the secretaries of the society. Rennolds poured his life into it. A. J. Holt and Pope Duncan committed to the proper organization of the work. H. C. Garwood and Rollin Armour took document collection very seriously and built up the corpus of the holdings. This laid a solid foundation for what we know today. In 1973 the Florida Baptist Historical Society started a new day with the coming of Edward Earl Joiner (1924-1996) as the Secretary-Treasurer-Curator.

Joiner started out his work by writing his own job description.³¹ He wanted to be efficient and he was goal oriented. In 1973 he began the acquisition of the minutes of the National Baptist Convention and showed interest in other Baptist entities and related subjects.³²

In the 1975 State Convention an unexpected motion caused a stir relating to the work of the historical society. Messenger Carl L. Bailey, pastor of Jasmine Lakes Baptist Church of New Port Richey, made a motion that the depository of the Historical Society be moved from Stetson to either Lake Yale or Blue Springs Baptist Assembly and consideration be given to constructing a building for that purpose. After surprise and discussion the motion actually passed by a required standing vote.³³ Obviously this was not done but it shows once again the need for a well worded governing document for the historical society and level headed leadership.

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Out of the “assembly vote” there did come a helpful compromise. The convention and the historical society decided to have historical displays of Baptist work at Lake Yale and Blue Springs. The convention agreed to fund the project and the historical society agreed to provide the display.³⁴ All of these understandings came about by a gentlemen’s agreement. In 1975 there were ten members in the Florida Baptist Historical Society and in 2005 the membership is 83 members which include 30 lifetime memberships. The Florida Baptist State Convention trusts the historical society and the historical society trusts the state convention. The 1975 constitution is a wonderful document and it was written by people who trusted one another.

The innovative spirit and hard working ethic of Earl Joiner brought some very important changes to the Florida Baptist Historical Society. He chaired the first annual seminar of the Historical Society on May 22, 1976. He oversaw the indexing of the state annual and the *Florida Baptist Witness*. He planted the seeds for the annual Heritage Award and gave us our most important Florida Baptist history with the publication of *A History of Florida Baptists* in 1972. Earl was a hard worker and he loved people. His work as Curator and Secretary-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Historical Society was a labor of love from 1973 to 1996.³⁵

Dr. Joiner presented his last report to the state convention at the 1996 meeting. In 1995 the Florida Baptist Historical Society as a joint agency of the Florida Baptist State Convention was dissolved and in the May 4-5, 1996, society meeting directors of the organization authorized Dr. Joiner, Dr. R. C. Hammack, and Dr. David Gasperson to work with convention staff Dr. John Sullivan and Donald Hepburn to recommend to the State Board an appropriate form for the new society to take.

On April 16, 1997, the Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors met with Dr. John Sullivan, Dr. Thomas Kinchen, and Donald Hepburn at the Florida Baptist

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Theological College for the purpose of reviewing an agreement between the Florida Baptist Convention and the Florida Baptist Theological College relating to society work. It was agreed that the college would become the “home base” of the society and it had already been determined that the Florida Baptist Theological College library would serve as the depository and collection point of Florida Baptist historical documents. It was at this meeting that Dr. Mark Rathel was invited to become the Secretary-Treasurer of the Florida Baptist Historical Society under the new agreement drawn up with the college and the Florida Baptist Convention.

Dr. Mark Rathel (1957-) served for six years (1997-2002) as Secretary-Treasurer of the society and had three very notable accomplishments. He was very wise and careful in his document acquisition and also began the work of the annual journal of Florida Baptist history. The professional work of Dr. Rathel built a firm foundation for the newly reorganized society that was not a convention agency but now was a true partner in convention work.

Dr. Rathel also oversaw the beginning Heritage Award presentation. This program gives the Florida Baptist Historical Society a way to honor annually a person or entity that has contributed to Baptist history publication and presentation in a special way. Through this award some very deserving people have been recognized for their special service in promoting Florida Baptist research and writing.

On April 16, 2002, Jerry M. Windsor (1940-) became the Secretary- Treasurer of the historical society. Dr. Rathel and Dr. Windsor teach at The Baptist College of Florida, and their work at the society was a responsibility that both of them took gladly when the opportunity arose.

Conclusion

It seems unfair to close out a historical sketch of an organization and not mention some of the good things that have providentially happened that would not likely be noticed.

The new 1996 agreement would not have been hammered out had it not been for Dr. Earl Joiner, Dr. John

Sullivan, Dr. Tom Kinchen, Dr. R. C. Hammack, and Donald Hepburn. Dr. Joiner was already ill at the actual time of the new plan but he was as helpful and kind about the process as one could be. Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Kinchen were determined to see that we had a historical society (both are lifetime members) and Dr. Hammack and Donald Hepburn were just as determined to work out the details.

The Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors has been a special group of people from day one. Each one asked to serve was picked for a reason. They have taken their work seriously and history records the results. We have had some kind of board or committee for over 100 years and everyone who has served has been a faithful Christian and Baptist.

A special word of appreciation needs to be also extended to a group of volunteer writers and researchers who have presented programs, published papers, and done the basic work of Baptist writing. We would not be able to function today without these volunteers.³⁶

No job would be fulfilling without getting to know so many delightful people along the way. Special friends have been Elouise Green, Elizabeth Mays Cook, Dr. Franklin Fowler, Parkhill Mays, Gene Stokes, Judge E. B. Browning, Jr., Sidney Lanier, Max and Sue Laseter, Fran Carlton, Frances Shaw, Vanita Baldwin, and Dr. Bill Sumners. These friends have made special efforts to help the society in many ways.

There are some current needs that will eventually have to be addressed if we are to be the custodian, guardian, and interpreter of Florida Baptist events that we need to be. We will soon be nervously experimenting with our first electronic web page. Securing annual association minutes has been a sad failure of the past ten years. Digitizing photographs and sources is a modern possibility that must be studied. Ownership of association minutes and other artifacts must be worked out. As more and more churches celebrate their centennial anniversaries, additional travel time and allowance must be considered for staff and board members to meet legitimate local church requests for society

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presence. Indexing and subject files need to be electronically available for church historians in their research. More funds are needed to purchase rare Florida Baptist documents while they exist. Programming needs to be extended to assist local churches in the research, writing, and publishing of their own church histories. Each of these concerns will need to be added to the agenda of society discussions.

A tree cannot be best measured until it is laid down. It may be time to measure our progress since 1894 and consider where we want to go and how we want to get there. May the next 111 years be as exciting and fruitful as the last has been.

ENDNOTES

1 *Florida Baptist Annual*, 1954, pp. 33-34. It was easy to go unnoticed when the membership level remained less than 20. In 1950 there were 37 charter members in the newly organized Florida Baptist Historical Society. In 1958, Dr. Garwood reported there were 13 members and the balance in the treasury was \$39.77.

2 This request came to the convention from the Alachua Baptist Association which had been organized in 1847. The request came from a committee composed of Napoleon Alexander Bailey (1833-1897), Edwin Hansford Rennolds, Sr. (1839-1912), and D. B. Farmer.

3 Rennolds and the Tennessee 5th Regiment were in most of the major battles of the war. In 1861 there were 1300 men in the regiment and on April 24, 1865, there were only 30 men left of the original 1300.

4 "The Baptist Convention of the State of Florida" was organized on November 20, 1854 near Madison, Florida, in the home of Richard Johnson Mays.

5 We are fortunate in having a copy of this report (1895 *Minutes of the Florida Baptist Convention*, pp. 21-23). One of the very important incidentals in this report is that John Albert Broadus spoke to the report. This is the same John A. Broadus who was a founding father of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and one of the persons for whom our "Broadman Press" was named. Broadus, Boyce, Manly, and Graves were very interested in the work of the

Florida Baptist Convention.

6 This Jeremiah H. Hayman (1822-1902) comment is of special interest. All of the “Alachua Three” had some academic interests and pursuits of some kind. Hayman had none. Hayman came to Florida with his parents in 1837, and they settled in Madison County. Hayman had very little education but learned to read and studied his Bible faithfully. He was very influential in early Baptist work in DeSoto, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Polk, and Pasco counties. He established churches in Bartow (1854), Tampa (1860), and Plant City (1866). Hayman served as a pastor for 51 years and his total salary in all those years did not exceed \$2,500.

7 We now have 1,437 biographical sketches on file at the Florida Baptist Historical Society. Many are “brief” but we gladly start with any information we can get. By the time this article is printed these sketches should be on our FBHS website and our goal is to add one sketch a day until we have as many biographical sketches as we do Florida Baptist churches (currently 2,796). These sketches are immensely valuable for churches as they write their church histories and seek information on former pastors.

8 For an excellent view of these matters consult Bill J. Leonard’s *Dictionary of Baptists in America*, and consult Director Betsy Dunbar at the American Baptist-Samuel Colgate Historical Library in Rochester, New York (585-473-1740). This library is believed to hold the largest collection of Baptist related research materials in the world. There are 80,000 volumes, and over 400 manuscript collections. Many of these volumes are the only ones known to be in existence.

9 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual Minutes*, 1879, p. 26.

10 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual Minutes*, 1900, p. 52.

11 *Ibid*, p. 19.

12 *Ibid*, pp. 56-57.

13 Rennolds left us two major writings. He wrote *A History of the Henry County Command* which served in the Confederate States Army, including rosters of the various companies enlisted in Henry County, Tennessee. This is an everlasting contribution to eye witness battles in the Civil War. For our purposes, *An Autobiography* begun by Rennolds on October 31, 1896 is indispensable. He was 58 years of age when he started this work and he was living in Orange Home,

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Florida. He last wrote on September 20, 1912, and died on Sunday morning, November 17, 1912, at his home as the first hymns of the morning were being sung at the Main Street Baptist Church in Jacksonville.

14 Rennolds autobiography, p. 56.

15 Rennolds autobiography, p. 57. Rennolds did not have much self confidence in his preaching and felt he was not “reaching them.” He invited Daniel Sikes (1855-1922) to come preach a revival at the church. The revival was a success so the church dismissed Rennolds and called Sikes as pastor.

16 Rennolds autobiography, p. 57. Rennolds stated, “Though I do not doubt my call to preach, I at the same time, think it was not intended that I should be engaged in regular pastoral work. I have always preferred praying to preaching. I had rather talk to God than to people.”

17 Rennolds autobiography, p. 58.

18 Southern Baptists were slow about giving official recognition to any historical organization. The American Baptist Historical Society was formed in 1853 but the Civil War and Reconstruction era interrupted any real historical collaboration. In 1916 the Sunday School Board was made responsible for preparing a “history of the Baptists of the South”. A writer was secured, a manuscript submitted, and a project dissolved. The manuscript submitted in 1919, deemed unsuitable, was never published. The Southern Baptist committee on the preservation of Baptist history was chaired by Floridian A. J. Holt (1847-1933).

19 In his 1922 report to the Florida State Convention meeting at Gainesville, Holt gave the “Florida Baptist Historic Society” report and gave church clerks some good advice. He said a church clerk “should carry with him a tablet and a pencil.” (p. 74).

20 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1942, p. 82.

21 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1944, p. 90.

22 There is not an author alive that can’t relate to Rosser in his publication deadline circumstances. The Florida Baptist annuals report that in 1944 Rosser said, “I’m late in getting a start” (p. 90). In 1945 he informed the convention the story had been “brought up to the beginning of the present century” (p. 105). In 1946 Rosser said again “it is our hope” (p. 65). In the 1947 convention report Rosser said “the volume is substantially complete” (p. 113). In 1948

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Rosser said “it is now in the hands of the printers” (p. 86). The next report said the forthcoming history of Florida Baptists will “soon be in your hands” (p. 87).

The 1949 Baptist History report claimed victory with the appearance of the Rosser book, but alas, Dr. Rosser had left the state and the report had to be given by E. D. Solomon, and spoken to by Pope Duncan.

23 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1950, p. 107.

24 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1954, p. 33.

25 See convention annuals and the reports of the historical society for the Garwood years (1954-1960).

26 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1962, p. 110.

27 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1950, p. 101. This misinformation comes up again and again. In the 1969 Annual (p. 131) Dr. Earl Joiner states again that Dr. Garwood was the first curator. He was mistaken. It was Pope Duncan.

28 This celebration motif has much to offer in spreading the message of Baptist work. The Biblical Jubilee was a 50 year celebration and this was a trinity of such years for Baptist organized work in America.

29 This is the same Jack P. Dalton who wrote his dissertation at the University of Florida in 1952 on the history of Florida Baptists. Dr. Dalton died in 1970 in Texas where he was head of the history and political science department of Mary Hardin-Baylor College.

30 *The Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1951, (pp. 101-102) has a copy of this simple document.

31 *Florida Baptist Convention Annual*, 1974, p. 138.

32 Earl Joiner became an authority on Baptists and the Holocaust. His own World War II military experience no doubt fed this research desire.

33 The word “consider” was a vital part of that motion. The State Board of Missions had only to “consider” the idea to be done with it. There would have been very few leaders of the Florida Baptist Convention who would have been in favor of moving the Baptist Collection to Blue Springs or Lake Yale.

34 In 2005 there are still display items at Lake Yale and historical documents made available at Blue Springs. There are no display cases at Blue Springs but exhibit space is always made available as needed.

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35 For an extensive view of the work of John L. Rosser and Earl Joiner, see *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, Volume 5, Fall 2003.

36 Such people as E. B. Browning, Sr., E. H. Rennolds, Sr., Don Hepburn, Mark Rathel, Judith Jolly, Martha Trotter, and Earl Joiner will always be held in the highest regard by Florida Baptist researchers. Gordon Reeves, Jack Dalton, Pope Duncan, Joe David Elder, H. C. Garwood, Wiley Richards, John Rosser, Doak Campbell, and James Semple have made tremendous contributions to our body of work. Secretaries like Pat Nordman and Jan Cunningham have given hundreds of hours to research and publication for the society.



The Baptist Association: Role and Purpose

Donald S. Hepburn
Acting Secretary-Treasurer
Florida Baptist Historical Society

By the time Baptists in Florida and parts of South Georgia determined in 1835 to form their own association of Baptist churches, the association movement in America was already 128 years old. Yet the Floridians' desire to organize an assembly of churches seemed to embrace the same fundamental need for fellowship which propelled the colonial American association movement begun on July 27, 1707. It was in that year, exactly 300 years ago this year, at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, that the Pennsylvania Baptist Association was organized. This organization was likely patterned after one of several early Baptist associations organized by Particular Baptists in England between 1653 (in Somersetshire) and 1655 (Midland), and later organizations in 1692 at Bristol and Frome.¹

The stated purpose for the planned Philadelphia gathering was, "to meet at the yearly meeting to consult about such things as were wanting [lacking] in the churches, and to set them in order..."² Responding to that invitation to meet were representatives from five churches: Lower Dublin (Pennepeck), the first Baptist church in Pennsylvania; three in New Jersey: Piscataqua (Piscataway), Middletown, and Cohansie; and the Welsh Tract church, Delaware. Curiously, the Philadelphia congregation, though lending its name to the association, was not represented as a constituting member, because it was regarded as a mission of the Lower Dublin church.³

Early Purposes of a Baptist Association

In an exhaustive analysis, Walter B. Shurden, one of the leading contemporary authorities on the Baptist association, *The Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage, Volume 20, 2018* 217

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identified four objectives of Baptist associations prior to 1814. These were to: “(1) promote fellowship among the churches, (2) maintain uniformity in faith and practice among the churches, (3) give counsel and assistance to the churches, and (4) provide an organizational structure through which churches could cooperate in their broader ministries.”⁴

Shurden pointed out that, “If an eighteenth century Baptist had been asked upon what basis his denomination justified associations, he likely would have answered with a verse of Scripture, a brief statement about the Baptist concept of the church, and an enumeration of practical benefits accruing from interchurch cooperation.”⁵

Gary Long in his polity assessment of the Philadelphia Association noted that it, “was loose in structure, without power or authority” and was “regarded simply as an advisory council.”⁶ Initially, that first American association of Baptist churches provided advice in response to inquiries from churches and even mediated disputes between churches.

Rational for the Baptist Association

Certainly there were pragmatic benefits to the interchurch cooperation that the association organization provided. But what also is clear from the past 300 years of Baptist history, are the Biblical and theological rationales that complement the practical aspects for the Baptist association.

Biblical Basis: “The most frequently quoted passage of Scripture given in support of associations – both in colonial American and in England – was Acts 15. It was not claimed that the Jerusalem Council was an association or even a prototype, but that it was an example of the propriety of interchurch “cooperation and counsel,” explained Baptist historian Jack Keep.⁷ This assessment also was affirmed by Shurden who stressed that those colonial Baptists were not, “so ecclesologically naïve and hermeneutically unskilled to regard Acts 15 as the prototype of Baptist associations.”⁸ Citing other scriptural foundations that provide parallels to the modern Baptist

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association, Keep observed that, “Several aspects of the Jerusalem Council were noted as worthy of imitation. One of these aspects was the inter-relationship, the care of churches for one another. At Jerusalem, doctrinal issues were discussed, debated and decided. A circular letter was sent out advising the churches of the result of the council,” Keep explained.⁹ Scripture also provides guidance on the cooperative efforts by an association of churches. As an example the sending of aid to Jerusalem from Macedonia and Achaia is highlighted in Romans 15:25-28 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. Other biblical examples that highlight the role and purpose of an association of churches can be found in Matthew 23:8, Romans 12:5 and I Corinthians 1:10.¹⁰

It is noteworthy that Baptist stalwart Charles O. Screven used as his text Ephesians 4:4-6 as he presided over the 1802 organization of the Savannah Baptist Association. “Screven believed that the Apostle Paul’s emphasis on one body, one spirit, and one faith was applicable to the founding of a new association,” Shurden observed.¹¹ And although colonial Baptists, “saw Biblical justification for associations, they did not claim to be restoring some ancient ecclesiastical organization. Interchurch cooperation is Biblical; an advisory council is Biblical; but any organization having power over a local church is not Biblical,” Keep declared.¹²

Theological Basis: “From a doctrinal perspective, the Baptist concept of the church provides the theological basis for Associationalism,” explained Keep. He defined two principles that provide the theological foundation for the Baptist association. “The first was the Baptist idea of the mystical church; the second was the Baptist emphasis on the local church.”¹³ Shurden clarified this duality by noting, that the mystical or universal church was comprised of persons who professed faith in Jesus Christ and obeyed God. In contrast, the local (visible) church was comprised of Christians who “voluntarily agreed in [the] doctrine and practice” of a given Baptist church.¹⁴ Shurden concluded, “The sense of Christian
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unity articulated in the concept of the universal church and the doctrinal restrictions placed upon membership in the local church provided the theological footing for Baptist associations.”¹⁵

Practical Basis: Looking to the Philadelphia Association and all other Baptist associations that have since formed, it is evident that practical considerations brought Baptists together by the formation of associations. As previously noted, the first meeting of the Philadelphia Baptist Association was held to discuss things that “were wanting [lacking] in the churches.” One of those concerns must have centered upon the integrity of pastoral leadership. As a consequence, one of the association’s first actions was the approval of a policy of caution concerning newly arrived preachers. Churches were warned, “that a person that is a stranger, that has neither a letter of recommendation, nor is known to be a person gifted, and of a good conversation, shall not be admitted to preach...”¹⁶ Apart from that specific issue, certainly the most obvious need was fellowship, given the geographical distances that existed between early Baptist churches. An associational annual meeting provided a time and place for fellowship with other like-minded Christians.

By the time the first pro-missionary association organized in Florida the practical tasks of the association had become much broader. Jack Dalton in his exhaustively researched history of Florida Baptists explained that the Florida Baptist Association saw its role as more than fellowship. He noted that the association also sought, “to promote acquaintance and fellowship among neighboring churches, to give advice to perplexing problems of doctrine and discipline, to aid in erecting houses of worship, to point out imposters, and finally, to counsel in all matters pertaining to keeping orderliness in the churches. Later, the associations sought to encourage Sunday schools and to aid ministers in securing education. Associations became the theological instructors of the churches, through answers to queries and the sending out of annual letters. Missionary work beyond associational boundaries was encouraged and promoted,”

Dalton wrote.¹⁷

Theological Contributions to Baptist Faith and Practice

Probably one of the most significant contributions made by the Philadelphia Baptist Association was the development of a confession of faith in 1742. That confession of faith served as a model not only for other Baptist associations, but for newly started Baptist churches in the colonies, many of which were established by the association's own itinerant missionaries. More importantly, this statement provided the theological framework for defining what constituted a Baptist church. The Philadelphia statement was basically a re-statement of an earlier defense of doctrine known as the Second London Confession of 1689. The Philadelphia Confession reflected the same Calvinistic emphasis that had been defined in the Second London Confession. Both confessions set forth a clear doctrine on the authority of the scriptures, as well as a doctrine on the general or invisible church, and re-affirmed the validity of baptism by immersion.

The confession's unyielding position on scripture's authority harkened back to Balthasar Hubmaier's "apology" that had challenged Catholic dogma. The first article of the Philadelphia Confession affirmed: "The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain and infallible rule of all-saving knowledge, faith, and obedience; although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary unto salvation."¹⁸

As previously noted, a second significant doctrine set forth in the Philadelphia Confession was to clarify that the "invisible" church was comprised of all Christians who are gathered under Christ's authority. The Philadelphia Confession added two more provisions to the London Confession model. One dealt with the laying of hands upon baptized believers. A second addition encouraged the singing of hymns in worship, which had

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been a cause for disagreement between Particular and Separate Baptists.¹⁹

Baptist theologians, according to William Estep, generally agree that the Philadelphia statement of faith had a significant influence upon churches, associations and even the Southern Baptist Convention when it was organized in 1845. Many of these entities were later constituted on the basis of the Philadelphia Confession of Faith.²⁰

An Autonomous Baptist Body

As a uniquely Baptist concept, the Baptist association did not retain hierarchical powers over local churches. As noted in the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, the independent sovereignty of Baptist churches was affirmed by specifying its sole authority with respect to the church's doctrines, organization, officers, members, discipline, worship and ministry. However, as an autonomous Baptist body, the association did possess certain legitimate powers. Shurden broadly defined these as: (1) the right of determining membership, (2) the right of investigating membership, (3) the right of excluding from membership, (4) the right of working on behalf of membership, and (5) the right of regulating annual meetings.²¹

In exercising these rights, associations took on the role of monitor for theological soundness and mediator of disputes. "Doctrinal heresy, polity disorder, and division within a church constituted the majority of the problems investigated by associations," at least up until 1814, Shurden wrote.²²

Yet the positions or actions taken by the local association were not binding upon their cooperating churches. A church could accept or reject an association's decisions. However, the Philadelphia Association sought to clarify its own role as the theological guardian of Baptist life. Benjamin Griffith in 1749 set forth an abiding principle on the association's doctrinal authority in his "Essay on the Power and Duty of an Association of Churches." Griffith defended the authority of an

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association to “declare any person or party in a church, who are defective in principle or disorderly in practice, to be censurable.”²³ As a consequence of that essay, the Philadelphia Association adopted a principle that became the established norm for future Baptist associations. That monitory role sought to ensure the doctrinal integrity - encompassing theology, faith, practice and polity – of the association’s cooperating churches.²⁴ Subsequently, in rare cases, that guiding principle was used by associations to exercise its sole weapon against a church for deviations from Baptist doctrine or practice.²⁵ The separation procedure has been characterized in several ways, including: “excluding” churches; “dropping” churches from the association’s records; and “withdrawing fellowship” with churches.²⁶

Association Development in Florida

The first association organized within the Florida Territory (before statehood was granted in 1845) was convened on September 26, 1835, at Providence Baptist Church, in Columbia County, and was called Suwannee Baptist Association.²⁷ Within a short time the association encompassed much of the entire territory of Florida’s Panhandle and a portion of South Georgia.²⁸ Unfortunately, an anti-missionary sentiment and movement was growing throughout Georgia’s wiregrass country. It eventually embroiled the Suwannee Association’s churches in an on-going debate over the merits of being missionary. After nearly ten years of debating the issue, “some of the missionary churches withdrew in 1842 to take part in the creation of the Florida Association.”²⁹ And within three years the anti-missionary forces managed to take control of the Suwannee Association and rid itself of all affiliation with the remaining pro-missionary churches.

The anti-missionary sentiments that had gained a foothold in Suwannee also surfaced in Georgia’s Ochlocknee and Piedmont Baptist Associations which at the time had member churches from Florida’s Panhandle. Those Florida Baptist

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churches, that were supportive of the missionary cause, withdrew their affiliation with the Georgia-based associations and set about the task of creating a pro-missions association of churches.

Representatives from the Florida churches agreed to meet at Leon County's Shilo Baptist Church on October 22, 1842.³⁰ At that meeting it was agreed to write a letter to all the churches along Florida's Panhandle and invite them to participate in the organization of a new pro-missionary association. The organizational meeting was set for Thursday, March 2, 1843, to be held at Leon County's Indian Springs Baptist Church. Seventeen churches were represented at that first annual meeting of the Florida Baptist Association.³¹

The Florida Association clearly defined its role and purpose to assist churches and not provide oversight. "The Association thus organized shall have no power to lord it over God's heritage, nor infringe upon the internal rights of any church," stated the Association's Constitution. As reflected in that governing document, the recently organized Florida Association sought to emphasize fellowship among the churches, while still providing advice to churches, and appropriating money for mission causes. But equally important, it reserved the right to withdraw all relationship with any church which, "shall deviate from the orthodox principles of the revealed word of God."³²

Evolving Changes to Role and Purpose

Although fellowship among the churches had been a founding premise, Baptist scholar Shurden noted that by the early 1800s, the association's purpose began to change. The new emphasis was upon cooperative endeavors and the promotion of denominational interests.³³ According to J. C. Bradley, a specialist on the Baptist association, "The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of organizational experimentation for Baptists as they sought new structural forms to meet new and greatly increased mission challenges." He further pointed out that,

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“Although associations had been the basic unit of Baptist interchurch relationship for almost a century in this country, the early years of the nineteenth century provided societies, a national convention and state conventions.” Citing a study by Glynn Ford, Bradley noted that the role of the association shifted, “from a doctrinally-based fellowship of churches to an implementing agency of the denomination.”³⁴ This implementing role included the promotion of missions and missions education, promotion of Sunday school and other educational programs, and fund raising for missionary and benevolent causes. The value and importance of the local association’s promotional role was not lost upon Southern Baptist Convention (S.B.C.) leadership at the Sunday School Board at the dawning of the twentieth century. Baptist Sunday School Board (B.S.S.B.) leader J. N. Barnette championed the belief that, “The district association makes it possible to make a direct, sympathetic and constant contact with every church.”³⁵ This philosophical perspective led to the implementation of two back-to-back five-year programs (1936-40 and 1940-44) of the B.S.S.B. working through local associations to increase involvement and enrollment in local church Sunday schools. The resulting training campaign involved over 850 associations with over 50,000 Baptists being trained. “The net number of Sunday Schools increased by over 1,800 and enrollment increased by nearly 433,000,” Bradley noted, citing statistics the B.S.S.B. reported to the 1940 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.³⁶

During the mid-1950s the role of each component of organized Baptist life – from the local church, the association, the state convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention – underwent a period of critical appraisal. “Two of the most important factors contributing to this reappraisal were the theological interest in the nature of the church and the denomination’s efforts at correlation and coordination,” Bradley explained.³⁷ As a result of those appraisals, the association came to be understood as a vital missions’ partner in Baptist life. A subsequent outcome was the 1966 S.B.C. approval of a first-ever program statement for

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“associational administration services” assigned to the Home Mission Board. The newly defined assignment was expected to assist “associations in developing as associations.”³⁸ However, it was not until 1971 when the staff at the Home Mission Board, crafted a definition that affirmed, “an association as a fellowship of churches on mission in their setting.”³⁹

Ten years after its initial action, the S.B.C. continued its effort to enhance the role and purpose of the association in Baptist life. The Convention adopted a 1976 “Missions’ Challenge” report that said in part: “The association should be broadened and strengthened as a missionary organization. It should understand that it is churches on mission for Christ. It should not attempt to duplicate the churches, rather to serve them as they carry on the work.”⁴⁰ This action affirmed Baptists’ commitment, not only to missions, but the recognition that the association plays a vital role in helping the church fulfill its missionary purpose.

As a result of those evolving expectations on the association’s revitalized role and purpose, Bradley identified four underlying principles which define the contemporary association. That role and purpose is to be: (1) a “doctrinally-based fellowships of churches on mission together;” (2) a “self-governing Baptist” body “created by the churches, not the denomination;” (3) active participation by associations is the key to local church involvement in denominational emphases and projects; and (4) “While self-governance is an indisputable right of every Baptist body, it is tempered by the necessity for, the spirit of, and the duty to practice interdependence and cooperation.”⁴¹

Now after 300 years of existence, the Baptist association has experienced what Tom Roote has called “a revival of associational awareness.” He concluded in 1980 that, “Strong associations are the results of combined efforts of churches, state conventions, and the Southern Baptist Convention agencies. Likewise, strong churches and healthy

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support for state and convention purposes are the results of strong local associations where church leadership is informed and involved in the primary missionary task of the church.”⁴²

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