



Here & Now

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An update for Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors and Friends

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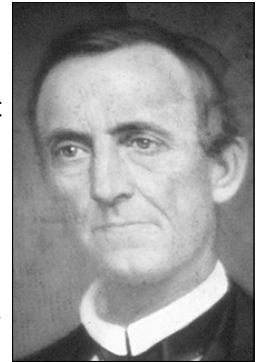


Penny Baumgardner
Administrative Assistant

Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

What a difference 100 years can make. It is of some interest to note some subtle changes in local Florida Baptist theology and beliefs over a period of 100 years. I chose the Florida Baptist Association for a comparative analysis because of the influences and leadership that have come from that great body of believers. For theological comparisons I chose the years 1846 and 1946.

In 1846, R. J. Mays was the associational moderator and Sam C. Craft was the associational clerk. In 1846 there were 14 extensive statements of belief that they referred to as a "brief declaration of the sentiments and faith" of the association. In 1946, the faith statements had been significantly reduced in length and number. The 1846 statement had 14 articles and the 1946 statement had ten articles.



Richard J. Mays

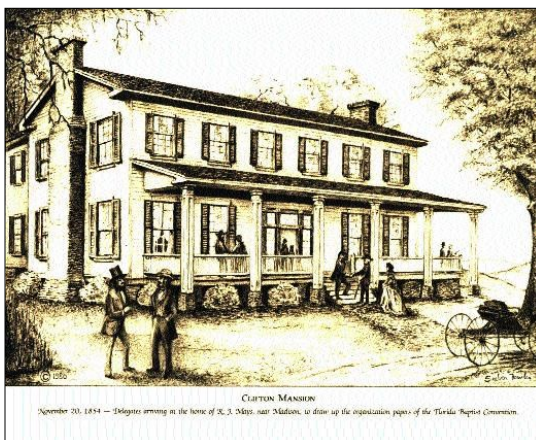
The 1846 statement of faith had sections on the Bible, God, the fall, salvation, justification, freeness of salvation, grace in regeneration, God's purpose of grace, perseverance of the saints, harmony of law and the gospel, baptism and the Lord's Supper, a gospel church, sabbath and the world to come.

The 1946 articles of faith had statements on God, the Bible, original sin, man's inability to save himself, justification, perseverance, baptism and the Lord's Supper, general judgment, eternal reward and punishment, and authority to administer the ordinances.

A cursive glance reveals interesting differences.

The 1846 document has about 80 words on their beliefs about the Bible and the 1946 document expresses that belief in 23 words. The 1946 document simply says the Bible is the "Word of God." The 1846 document says the Bible "has God for its author, salvation for its end, truth, without mixture of error, for its matter."

The 1846 document has far more emphasis upon grace. Articles four, five, six, seven and eight emphasize grace. In the 1946 document grace is only mentioned in passing in article six, in a statement about perseverance.



CLYTON MANSON
November 20, 1854 — Delegates among the home of R. J. Mays, near Madison, to draw up the organization paper of the Florida Baptist Convention.

Baptism is emphasized in both documents as being by "immersion." Baptism and the Lord's Supper are referred to as "ordinances" in the 1946 document, but in the 1846 article baptism is called an "emblem" and the Lord's Supper is a "commemoration."

The 1846 document has sections on the church and Sabbath, but the 1946 statement does not address these teachings.

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Both writings refer to a “general” resurrection and a “general” judgment. This preceded any emphasis on dispensational theology.

The impact of Landmarkism is plainly visible in the 1946 statement where it is stated only Baptist preachers are viewed as having the “right” to administer the ordinances.

The 1846 statement says there was “voluntary” transgression and the 1946 document says, “We believe in the doctrine of original sin.”

The 1846 reading states that the blessings of salvation are made “free to all” by the gospel, and both documents hold forth the perseverance of the saints.

Article nine of the 1946 document speaks of punishment versus joy in eternity, and the 1846 statement lists heaven and hell as final states.

A man once said, “I don’t know anything about doctrine. All I know is God created the world, Christ died for me, and arose, and is coming again.” That theological position will do for a starter.



Concord Baptist Church, Madison

The years 1846 and 1946 are interesting contrasts in doctrinal belief and expression, and the basic statements made are certainly good for a starter.

The former Floridian Adrian Rogers once said, “In the essentials unity. In the non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.” May that ever be so for Florida Baptists.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jerry Windsor". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33
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