
[NOTE: According to my best recollection, the minutes of that first conference also revealed the first expenditure of church funds, as the church voted to purchase a ledger for recordkeeping (10¢) and a bottle of wine for the Lord's Supper (75¢).—GS]

Discovering this fragment of the history of Liberty Church is a little like finding an old landmark that was lost, but has been found and restored, marking a position in the history of the Baptist churches of South Mississippi—a position established in 1873, still visible and maintained today by the congregation of Liberty Baptist Church. At the very least, we are informed of the persons, purposes, and principles involved in the beginning of the Liberty Church. Speaking personally, I will be on the lookout for more! Thank God for our heritage in Christ Jesus!



The headstones of G. W. and Mary Jane Hemeter—two charter members of Liberty Baptist Church. Their graves are in a small cemetery on Lyons Road near Williamsburg. The Hemeter School House was located nearby, across the road from the graveyard.



* My sincere apologies to the memory of J.M. Pendleton. He, along with J.R. Graves and A.C. Dayton, comprised the Great Triumvirate of the Landmark Movement among Baptists of the middle and late Nineteenth Century. Pendleton wrote a 36 page pamphlet, *An Old Landmark Re-Set*, (1854), which is considered a founding document of Landmarkism. Since Liberty Church has held traditional Landmark principles from its beginnings, the title seemed very fitting for this article.—GS.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

Presented by Glenn Shoemake

*To a meeting of the Covington County
Genealogical & Historical Society*

May 15, 2010

*At the Seminary Depot
Seminary, Mississippi*

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read and approved, the Abstract of Faith of The Ebenezer Baptist Association was then presented and adopted by them. After examination, and finding them orderly and orthodox and number sufficient to maintain the worship of God among them, they were the 20th day of June, 1873, declared by us to be a Church of Jesus Christ with power and authority to do all things and enjoy all privileges that the Independent Church of Christ may request and do and enjoy.

(signed) Elder K.M. Watkins and Elder H. Graham, Presbytery.

The following brethren and sisters were charter members:

Males: M. Hemeter, G.W. Hemeter, J.D.Kelly, D.G. Bullock, and A.J. Robertson.

Females: Jimima Hemeter, M.J. Hemeter, Emmaline Kelly, Rhoda Bullock, E.P. Robertson, Catherine Watts, and S.A. Robertson.

Church Covenant

The State of Mississippi, Covington Co.

We, whose names are hereunto affixed, having been baptized upon a profession of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and having obtained letters from the church with whom we had membership, have this the 20th day of June 1873, met at the Hemeter School House and do solemnly and in the presence of God and the presbytery present, enter into the following covenant or agreement:

“That we give ourselves to God and each other; to live together in church relationship; to observe our duty to God, to each other, to our pastor, ourselves and the world, according to the direction of the New Testament. Adopting the Abstract Principles of Faith set forth by the Ebenezer Baptist Association, As witness, hands and seals.” (Signed)

The first conference of the church resulted in the choice of Brothers M. and G.W. Hemeter as deacons, and Brother A.J. Robertson as clerk. Bro. H. Graham was the first pastor and the time of meeting was set to be the Third Sunday and Saturday before, in each month.

On August 16, 1873, Liberty Church voted to join the Ebenezer Baptist Association, and sent Brothers G.W. Hemeter and A.J. Robertson as delegates.

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ment in a large buffet in the dining room. Shortly after I entered the preaching ministry in 1965, I re-read the old minutes to reinforce my knowledge of the history of my home church. I returned the books to their storage place, and that was the last time I would see them. When the house caught fire and burned down in 1969, by the Providence of God the minute books were spared, escaping the flames without damage.

The minutes were sometime later taken to the church for safekeeping. Some years after that, an unknown arsonist set fire to the church and everything was lost, including all the church minutes. I counted the loss of the church records a great tragedy for a church that was over 100 years old.

Since I have been associated with the BMAM Commission on History and Archives, I have related the loss of the minutes many times as an encouragement to local churches to take steps to preserve their precious records for future generations. That has proved effective, and I thank God for that benefit from a great loss.

To find just the beginning page of the history of Liberty Church was thrilling to me; and I count it a real privilege to present those simple minutes to the readers of the *Banner* today.

MINUTES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF LIBERTY BAPTIST CHURCH

Declaration of The Presbytery

State of Miss., Covington, County.

We, the undersigned Ministers of the Gospel, of the Order and Denomination of Regular Baptist, at the request of a number of Brethren and Sisters, have this day convened at the Hemeter School House, for the purpose of taking into consideration, the prospects of constituting them into a church.

Sermon appropriate to the occasion was delivered by Eld. K.M. Watkins from the 65th Psalm, 1st verse, and I Cor. 13:13. We then resolved ourselves into a presbytery.

Elder K.M. Watkins, Moderator and Elder H. Graham, Clerk.

Letters and recommendations were then called for, which being

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

by Glenn Shoemake

To say that Baptists are the predominant religious denomination in Mississippi would be a statement of fact, since 55% of the state's people claim affiliation with Baptist churches. Of course, these are divided among many denominations of Baptists. My best "guesstimates" of the distribution of Baptists in Mississippi would be as follows:

- ◆ Southern Baptists — 900,000
- ◆ Black Baptists — 400,000
- ◆ Missionary Baptists (BMA, ABA, Landmark (Faithway), General Assoc., etc.) 100,000
- ◆ Other (Independent, Freewill, Primitive, Reformed, German Baptists, etc.) — 200,000

But to grow from a handful of Baptist settlers in the late 1700's to over 1 ½ million adherents in just over two centuries calls for an explanation. That is what I will attempt to give in this survey, but it will be partial and sketchy, and by no means exhaustive or authoritative. And since history is always subjective and biased to some degree, correction on any point of error will be gladly received.

Boggy, Mississippi

May 14, 2010

The first Baptists to set foot on what is now Mississippi soil were explorers and settlers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. European powers were laying claim to territories in the New World, and the claims shifted between Spain, France, and England. In the late Colonial days and in the years of the American Revolution, Baptists began to come to Mississippi in increasing numbers. They were looking for a better, more peaceable and prosperous life than the Atlantic seaboard offered them.

The first permanent settlement that was predominantly Baptist was made about 20 miles north of Natchez on Cole's Creek in 1780. Led by Richard Curtis, Sr. of South Carolina, thirty-five emigrants survived a long and dangerous journey overland and by river, stopping at one point for some months to build flatboats and raise a crop of corn. The party fought disease and hostile natives, losing one of three boats with all but one aboard killed in an attack near the mouth of the Clinch River on the Tennessee River.

The settlement was established under Spanish jurisdiction, and the Roman Catholic Church was the only form of public worship allowed. So the Baptists practiced their religion in private until 1791, when they began holding church services, led by Richard Curtis, Jr., who was a licensed preacher. Persecution came. Curtis and two of the early converts fled to South Carolina, where he was ordained. They returned to Cole's Creek in 1798, when the Natchez area came under American control. The church was officially constituted that year, and took the name Salem.

Soon other churches were organized throughout the Mississippi Territory during those years, and an association of churches—the Mississippi Association—was formed in 1806. Among the early Mississippi Baptist leaders were Thomas Mercer, David Cooper, Moses Hadley, Ezra Courtney, J.P. Martin, Zachariah Reeves, and Norvell Robertson, Sr.

These early Baptist churches were Calvinistic, evangelistic, and missionary in their practice, adhering to the London Confession of 1689 and the Philadelphia Confession of 1742/43. As the number of churches increased across southern and central Mississippi, other associations were formed, including the Union, Pearl River, Leaf River, and Yazoo Associations. Divisions came as ministers with differing ideas and teachings came into Mississippi. The first came as a reaction to the efforts of Dr. James Mullen, who arrived in 1797, preaching the doctrine of general atonement. He was not accepted as a member of the church at Cole's Creek, but succeeded in drawing away some of the members after him. After failing to constitute his followers into a church, he left the Territory for greener pastures else-

1958 – Oak Grove Association (NABA) organized
1963 – Gulf Association (NABA) organized
1964 – Tombigbee Association (NABA) organized
1969 — North American Baptist Association (NABA) re-named Baptist Missionary Association of America (BMAA)
1969 – Mississippi State Association re-named Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi
1975 – Delta Association (BMA) organized
1983 – East Central Association (BMA) organized
1990 — Gulf Coast Baptist Institute (ABA) moved to Hattiesburg
2002 – Mid-Central Association (BMA) organized.

APPENDIX E

The following article is reprinted from the New Bethany Banner, issued on October 3, 2010:

An Old Landmark Reset *

*by Glenn Shoemake, Director
Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi
Commission on History & Archives*

While visiting with my parents a few days ago, I was given a folded piece of paper that was mixed in with some old pictures from an aunt containing a typed copy of notes from a sermon (partial) that possibly had been written by my great-grandfather, Stephen Alexander Shoemake. On the reverse side of the little sheet was a copy of the minutes of the organization of my home church, Liberty Baptist Church of Covington County. The church was organized in June of 1873. I was familiar with these minutes, having read them in their original form in my grandfather's house when I was a boy.

My grandfather, Lavelle Shoemake, was for many years the clerk of Liberty Church. He had all the minutes of the church in his possession at his home when he died in 1963. My Mother succeeded him as clerk when he became an invalid; but the old records remained at his house, tied up and stored in a compart-

- 1855 – Judson Association organized in northeastern Mississippi
- 1856 — Hololochitto Association organized in South Mississippi and Southeast Louisiana.
- 1869 – General Baptist Convention (Black) organized.
- 1872 – General Baptist Association (Black) constituted.
- 1873 – Blue Mountain College established.
- 1880 – Two black state bodies unite in General Missionary Baptist State Convention.
- 1896 – Landmark Baptist Association organized in south Mississippi (now Big Creek Association)
- 1897 – Baptist Children’s Village opens in Jackson
- 1905 — Baptist General Association formed by the union of the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas (organized 1900) and the Baptist General Association of Arkansas (organized 1902)
- 1908 – Clarke Memorial College opens in Newton (turned over to MS Baptist convention in 1913, closed in 1992)
- 1908 — Mississippi State Association of Missionary Baptist Churches constituted (Landmark),
- 1911 — Mississippi Women’s College opens in Hattiesburg (closed 1940k reopened 1946, becomes co-educational and renamed William Carey College in 1954, renamed William Carey University in 2006)
- 1912 – Washington Association organized
- 1923/4 – American Baptist Association organized.
- 1944 — Baptist Chldren’s Home founded in Laurel (Mississippi State Association, now BMA of MS)
- 1948 — Southeastern Baptist College opens in Laurel (Mississippi State Association, now BMA of MS)
- 1950 — North American Baptist Association (NABA) formed.
- 1950 – Ten Mile Association (NABA) organized
- 1951 – Mississippi State (Landmark, Faith Way) Association. constituted
- 1953 – Magnolia State Association (ABA) organized
- 1954 – Harmony Association (NABA) organized
- 1957 — Liberty Association (ABA) organized
- 1958 – Capitol Association (NABA) organized

where. The Baptist Missionary Societies sent agents out among the churches, raising funds for the Asian missions of Adoniram Judson and Luther Rice, other foreign missionary projects, and efforts to reach Native American nations. These were generally well educated and dynamic preachers, and their work on the frontier aroused opposition among the less educated and more locally-focused pastors and church members. The resulting “anti-mission” movement among the “Old School” Regular Baptists resulted in the formation of Primitive Baptist churches and associations. The next wave of division came as Campbellites invaded Baptist churches, dividing congregations and drawing members away to form “Christian Baptist” churches or “Churches of Christ.” Parkerism also came to Mississippi, bringing in the “two-seed” predestinarian doctrine, disturbing and dividing Missionary and Primitive Baptist churches.

The movement to form a State Convention to bring the associations together in a united effort also proved divisive, as many churches and some associations did not participate in the effort. Norvell Robertson, Sr. and later his son, Norvell, Jr. were involved in this effort from the very beginning. The first attempt failed, and was abandoned in 1829.

The second State Convention was organized in 1836, with Norvell Robertson, Jr. as a vice president, and Norvell, Sr. on the Board of Directors. It was a permanent success, although it never succeeded in enlisting all the local and regional associations in its membership.

From the beginning, publications were of vital importance in the development of Baptist work in Mississippi. The primary publications were the minutes of the association meetings. These yearly booklets contained “circular letters” on various doctrinal and practical subjects of interest among the churches. Queries from member congregations and answers by appointed ministers and leaders were vital to the unity and discipline of each fellowship of churches. Often sermons on current issues would be printed.

A number of Baptist periodicals were established in the 1800’s with wide circulation in the state. These generally faced financial struggles, but they had great influence. The *Mississippi-*

pi Baptist began in 1846 and ultimately became the *Baptist Record*. But there were years when its printing were interrupted, and the Baptists turned to regional publications like the *Tennessee Baptist*, which had a “Mississippi Department”. The editor-publisher of the *Tennessee Baptist*, J.R. Graves, became one of the most influential preachers in the history of Mississippi Baptists, though he was not a resident of the state. There remains today a state Baptist paper that carries the name, *Mississippi Baptist*, published by the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi, and edited by Don Brown, pastor of Big Creek Baptist Church in Jones County.

The education movement gained strength throughout the first half of the Nineteenth Century, and Mississippi College was established at Clinton in 1826. A number of Bible Institutes, women’s colleges and “seminaries.” academie, and trade schools were also promoted and organized, but most were disbanded or destroyed in the War Between the States.

The establishment of Sunday schools was encouraged from the early days, and became a movement in itself. Sunday School Unions were formed and these held conventions in various places. These meetings would often be “protracted” for a number of days or even weeks after the business sessions were over. Publishers of Sunday School literature worked hard to promote Sunday Schools with enlightened self-interest.

Slavery was of vital interest to Mississippi Baptists, who passed resolutions on the fair treatment of slaves and black congregations in the decades before the War. The early black Baptists had their separate churches and preachers, and where they did not, they held membership in the white churches. The early associations included black congregations. Beginning in 1869, the black churches, Associations, and the existing Conventions were brought together in a unified state body in 1880, known today as the General Missionary Baptist State Convention.

Beginning in 1826, the Temperance movement gained support among Baptists in Mississippi, where the use of alcohol was a major social problem. The associations encouraged delegates to refrain from public use of alcohol during their meetings, and encouraged abstinence from liquor among the member

APPENDIX D

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CHRONOLOGY

- 1780 – Richard Curtis, Sr. party arrives at Cole’s Creek near Natchez, MS from South Carolina.
- 1791 – Baptists begin meeting as a church at Cole’s Creek
- 1798 – Salem Church officially organized and named.
- 1806 – Mississippi Baptist Association organized
- 1818 – Norvell Robertson, Sr. & family arrive in Mississippi from GA. Providence Church organized.
- 1820 – Organization of Union & Pearl River Association (Pearl River Assn. contributed churches to the formation of Mount Pisgah, Ebenezer, Leaf River, Strong River, Bogue Chitto, West Pearl River, Fair River, Magee's Creek, Pearl Leaf, Oak Grove, and Copiah Associations.)
- 1820-1830 – Introduction of Anti-Mission teaching (“Parkerism,” “Hardshellism”)
- 1825 – Buttahatchie Association Organized – MS/AL (Anti-Mission)
- 1826 – Campbellism introduced in Mississippi by Jacob Creath, Sr. & Jr.
- 1824 – First State Convention formed.
- 1828 – Leaf River Association organized (churches in Marion, Jones, Pike, Copiah, Covington, Lawrence, Green, Perry, Jackson, Simpson, and Wayne counties, and in Washington Parish, LA)
- 1828/9 – Leaf River Church (Covington County) organized.
- 1829 – First State Convention dissolved.
- 1832 – Yazoo Association constituted
- 1836 – State Baptist Convention organized (Second)
- 1837 – Mt. Pisgah Association organized
- 1845 – Southern Baptist Convention constituted.
- 1846—Ebenezer Association organized in southeast Mississippi.
- 1846 – *Mississippi Baptist* begins publication
- 1853 – General Association of Regular Baptist Churches of Mississippi Organized.

a letter and a parcel of minutes, by their messenger, T. C. Hunt—their other messengers, N. Robertson, Sr., and Geo. Davis, having, to our deep regret, failed to meet with us." Here, so far as this Association is concerned, the veil is drawn over the declining years of this worthy pioneer preacher, after twenty-one years of service and vigilance for the body.

Norvell Robertson, Sr., was, in 1830, in the Leaf River Association, as his church had gone into that new organization. The year before, he was requested by the Pearl River to secure for the Association a sound Baptist confession of faith, sparing no pains in his effort, and barring no cost, to the amount of \$150.00. David Cooper had failed to find such a confession of faith, but Norvell Robertson, Sr., had succeeded. This was great satisfaction to the Association, and Robertson was given ten dollars as a tribute to his success. Norvell Robertson, Sr., was in a joyful state of mind at that time; his son Norvell Robertson, Jr., now known as "Father Robertson," was that year converted, truly, and soundly, and was awaiting baptism. The confessions of faith were, in a motherly way, divided between the Pearl River, and the Leaf River Associations, according to the number of churches in each.

[NOTE: The above quotations were copied from *A Complete History of Mississippi Baptists from the Earliest Times*, by Z.T. Leavell and T.J. Bailey, Mississippi Baptist Publishing Company, Jackson, 1904. Volume I of this set is available online at books.google.com --GS]

Norvell Robinson, Sr.
Organizing pastor of
Providence Baptist Church,
Perry County (now Forrest)
1818
Leaf River Baptist Church
Covington County 1828/9



churches. A resolution, passed in the 1830 meeting of the Pearl River Association reads: "'Resolved, That the churches, and friends, in general, provide no ardent spirits for the Association, where she may hereafter meet, as we do not want it.'"

The opening of Choctaw and Chickasaw lands in eastern and northern Mississippi brought hordes of settlers into the state. Churches and associations sprang up everywhere. The Judson Association was constituted in 1853 in the northeastern prairie section of the state. It became highly influenced by Landmarkism. The Judson Association churches supported the establishment of a women's college in 1873, an enterprise led by General Mark Lowrey, which now continues as co-educational Blue Mountain College.

In the years of sectional strife and the resulting War for Southern Independence, Mississippi Baptists were staunch supporters of the Southern cause. Their pastors went to minister to the troops as chaplains and missionaries. Their work was successful, and many men returned from the war with new-found faith in Jesus Christ.

The war left Mississippi, its people and its churches impoverished and distressed, whereas it had been the nation's wealthiest state before the war. The stress caused many Baptists to go west, and they took their doctrines and practices with them, planting and augmenting churches of like faith and order wherever they settled. Reconstruction was a turbulent and difficult time for Mississippi, but a productive time for many churches. New churches were formed, and local and state-wide Black Baptist associations were organized. The population that remained in the state shifted and segregated, and floods of new immigrants brought in further diversity. A seminary for the education of Negro ministers was founded in 1877 at Natchez by the American Baptist Home Mission Society of New York. It passed from church to public control in 1940, and is now Jackson State University.

During the century that followed the War and Reconstruction, Baptists made rapid progress in local missions and benevolent programs. Orphanages were built and expanded. In 1893 a movement was begun for a State Orphanage, and one

was opened in Jackson in 1897. New colleges were established by individuals in the Judson Association (Blue Mountain, 1873), the General Association of Regular Baptists (Clarke Memorial College, Newton, 1908-1992) and the Mississippi State Association of Missionary Baptist Churches (Southeastern Baptist College, Laurel, 1948). Missions were carried on to the Native Tribes in Mississippi, largely by the General Association, led by N. L. Clarke. The Baptist Hospital was opened in Jackson in 1911, by the State Convention Board.

Baptists continued to debate and divide over doctrinal and practical issues. The Landmark movement, promoted in Mississippi by J. R. Graves of Tennessee, made significant inroads in the state, and disrupted the fellowship of some associations (a totally unintended result). Many, if not most, Baptist churches in the state still adhere to the Landmark principles.

Another divisive issue revolved around M.T. Martin, a teacher and official at Mississippi College and business manager of the *Baptist Record*. He was a powerful evangelist with hundreds of converts in his ministry, many of them coming for rebaptism. He was called in question and censured by the Mississippi Baptist Association, which later apologized for their harsh treatment of him (but not their censure).

The Whitsitt controversy, involving the famous professor and president of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville upset many of the Baptists of the state. It highlighted disagreements over the historical development of the Baptist denomination, including the issue of Baptist succession and the mode of their baptism. In opposition to Landmarkism, William Whitsitt held that Baptist origins dated from the early Seventeenth Century and that their practice of immersion began in 1641. These were academic debates that were thrust into church and associational life—with results that are still apparent today.

In 1896, the Landmark Association was formed in Southeastern Mississippi, and had many flourishing churches in its membership. They upheld the traditional faith of the early Mississippi Baptists and the Landmark movement. Today the remnant of this association bears the name Big Creek Association. The Mississippi State Association of Missionary Baptist

made to law and justice by becoming an “Offering for Sin” hath redeemed His people from under the curse of the law, that they might be accepted in the Beloved.

8. We believe that good works are not meritorious, that they are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, and that it is the duty of believers to perform them from a principle of love.

9. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and a general judgment, and that the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will be eternal.

[NOTE; These Articles of Faith were copied from the minute books of these associations in the archives at Mississippi College and Southeastern Baptist College. The first list of Articles are strictly Old School Baptist, while the second might be acceptable to *some* New School Baptists as well. — *GS*]

APPENDIX C

TWO QUOTES REFERRING TO THE CHARACTER AND MINISTRY OF NORVELL ROBERTSON, SR., A TYPICAL PI- ONEER PREACHER IN MISSISSIPPI

Norvell Robertson, Sr., was a native of Virginia, but a contribution to the Baptist ministry of Mississippi, from the State of Georgia. From the frequent reference that is made to him in the minutes of the Pearl River Association, and from his recorded actions, he appears to have been a man of sterling worth, and of impressing personality. He is mentioned as a delegate to the Pearl River Association last, in 1829, when he represented Providence church. In 1830, his name appears as correspondent from Leaf River Association. He continued to represent the Leaf River Association, at the meeting of the Pearl, until 1841. In the minutes of the meeting of that year, it is said: "from Leaf River,

law, that they might be holy and without blame, before him in love.

8. believe good works are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification; are evidence of a gracious state; and that it is the duty of believers to perform them from a principle of love.

9. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and a general judgment, and that the happiness of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked will be eternal.

**ARTICLES OF FAITH OF THE
LANDMARK BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
(now known as Big Creek Association)**

Held at Spring Hill Baptist Church, October 2, 1916

1. We believe in only one true and living God, and that there is a trinity of persons in the Godhead—The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—one and the same in essence, equal in power and glory.

2. We believe the Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, that they are of divine authority; that they contain the whole of the Divine Will and Purpose, as revealed to man, and that they are the only standard of Divine Truth and the only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.

3. We believe in the fall of Adam, and in him of all his posterity, the total corruption of man's moral nature, and in man's inability to restore himself into the favor of God.

4. We believe in the everlasting love of God to His people; in the eternal, unconditional election of all His spiritual children to grace and glory.

5. We believe that by an everlasting covenant grace is treasured up in Christ to insure the regeneration, the sanctification, and the preservation of all God's people, so that not one of them will be finally lost.

6. We believe that sinners are justified in the sight of God only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them.

7. We believe that there is one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus—who by the satisfaction He has

Churches, solidly in the Landmark camp, was organized in 1908. This state association joined with other likeminded associations in other states in 1923/4 in the formation of the American Baptist Association. When this national association split in 1950, the majority of the state association voted to associate with the newly formed North American Baptist Association (re-named Baptist Missionary Association of America in 1969). The state association later changed its name to Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi.

During the late 1940's and early 1950's, a group of Landmark churches in South Mississippi, South Alabama, and Southeast Louisiana withdrew from Landmark associations that were moving away from certain principles of faith and practices they held in common, such as feet-washing and pastoral and missionary support by free-will offerings only. Their movement became known as the Faithway. Led by Elders. Jim Stewart, Carl Sullivan, and other strong preachers, they established a State association in 1951, which has three local fellowships within it: Black Creek, Red Creek, and Landmark Associations.

The Magnolia State Association (constituted in 1953) is a traditional Landmark association with 34 churches at present, affiliated with the American Baptist Association. Their local Liberty Association, organized in 1957, takes its name from the Liberty Baptist Church of Covington County, near Collins.

Free Will Baptists, holding Arminian views, have been present in Mississippi since the early days, but they are few and far between. Less than 50 churches comprise their state association, which includes three local associations.

During the early part of the Twentieth Century, Mississippi Baptists of all kinds sided solidly with the Fundamentalists opposed to Modernism. They affirmed the five "fundamentals of the faith," including the inspiration of the Bible by the Holy Spirit and the inerrancy of Scripture as originally recorded, the virgin birth of Christ, the belief that Christ's death was the atonement for sin, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the historical reality of Christ's miracles.

Many social issues received attention among Mississippi Baptists in the first half of the Twentieth Century. In the matter

of Prohibition, they espoused total abstinence, In race relations, they favored segregation.

During the post-World War II years Baptists have continued to be active in community life throughout the state. Their dividing lines are marked and jealously defended, though all but a few show signs of modernizing. The gradual slide into Arminianism is obvious in most Missionary Baptist denominations in the state, but there has recently been a renewed interest among some in the older Calvinistic or Reformed Baptist beliefs and practices. Church discipline in most Baptist churches is a thing of the past. Evangelism has suffered for a number of reasons, including the prevalence of materialism, the “social gospel,” and the vestiges of Martinism. Benevolence—including orphanages and relief for the poor—has largely been shifted to or bugsummed by state and federal government agencies. The vision for ministry has not dimmed; rather the focus has been redirected toward foreign missions, with new models and strategies being implemented in recent years.

The history of Mississippi Baptists has involved not only the establishment and ministry of local churches, but the organization of corporate, if not always united, efforts in:

- ◆ Missions: foreign, Native American, state and local.
- ◆ Education: Sunday schools, colleges, Bible Institutes, seminaries.
- ◆ Publications: associational minutes, periodicals, tracts and literature.
- ◆ Moral and Social Action (issues include Temperance and Prohibition, gambling, abortion, drug abuse, etc.)
- ◆ Orphanages.
- ◆ Hospitals.
- ◆ Women’s work: mission societies, charitable work
- ◆ Men’s work: Brotherhoods, volunteer teams for construction of missions and church buildings, and disaster relief teams.

[NOTE: The foregoing information was taken from *A Popular History of Baptists in Mississippi*, by Jesse L. Boyd, (pp. 18-20). —GS]

APPENDIX B

ARTICLES OF FAITH FOR COMPARISON

ARTICLES OF FAITH OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

Adopted July, 1807

1. We believe in one only true and living God, and that there are a trinity of persons in the God-head, the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.
2. We believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God; are of divine authority, and the only rule of faith and practice.
3. We believe in the fall of Adam; in the imputation of his sin to all his posterity; in the total depravity of human nature; and in man’s inability to restore himself to the favor of God.
4. We believe in the everlasting love of God to his people; in the eternal unconditional election of a definite number of the human family to grace and glory.
5. We believe that sinners are only justified in the sight of God, by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ; which is unto all, and upon all them that believe.
6. We believe all those who were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, are in time effectually called, regenerated, converted and sanctified; and are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.
7. We believe there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who by the satisfaction which he made to law and justice, in becoming an offering for sin, hath by his most precious blood, redeemed the elect from under the curse of the

invisible, in whom we live, move and have our being, and to whom alone all divine Worship and adoration is to be rendered and ascribed both in time and Eternity by men and Angels, as being only worthy of it and that he will not give glory to another or his Praise to Idols, having strictly forbidden us to worship or adore any but himself.

Art. 3rd—That there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The same in Substance, Power and Glory and therefore not to be divided in essence, though Distinguished by several peculiar Personal Relations.

Art. 4th—That our Lord Jesus Christ, the second person in the adorable Trinity, who was Eternally with the Father, did in time take on him a real Human Nature in which he fulfilled the Law, and died to make atonement for sin, is the only Saviour of Sinners, the Prophet, Priest and King of his Church, appointed heir of all things and judge of the quick and the dead, in whom we alone hope for and expect Redemption and deliverance from Divine wrath and eternal misery.

Art. 5th—We believe in the doctrine of Particular Redemption, in Personal Election, Effectual calling, Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Jesus Christ, Pardon of sins by his atoning blood, Believer's Baptism by Immersion, and Final perseverance of the Saints, the Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Art. 6th—That Christ will return in Glory to judge men and angels at the end of the world, at which time the Righteous shall enter into everlasting life and happiness, but the wicked shall be driven away into Everlasting and eternal Misery, which doctrines are contained at large in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.”

NAMES OF CHARTER MEMBERS

*Richard Curtis (pastor),
William Thompson (recording clerk),
William Curtis, John Jones, Benjamin Curtis,
Ealiff Lanier, Margaret Stampley*

- ◆ Music ministry: singing schools, singing conventions
- ◆ Youth work: Rallies, Bible drills, camps
- ◆ Short-term lay missions: evangelistic, construction, educational, and disaster-related.

The strength of Mississippi Baptists remains the local church in its congregational fellowship and autonomy and community ministry. Mississippi Baptists—despite the hardships, divisions, and periods of decline and revival that have punctuated their history—have had an effect in the Kingdom of God far beyond human expectation. Their generosity has never failed, despite the times of general poverty since the War for Southern Independence. Their missionary spirit—even among some who deny the validity of mission work—has led them to fields near and far around the world, with lasting results and eternal effect. Their love for Christ, His people, His Gospel, and the Word of God is beyond question, despite the deep divisions and conflicts that persist among them. And their self-criticism and sincere desire for revival speaks well of their character. Their numbers in Mississippi are overwhelming, but the evangelistic fervor is still alive. By the grace and help of God, they will be around for many generations to come.

APPENDIX A

RECORDS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN MISSISSIPPI

“October 1791. The Baptists of the vicinity of Natchez met by request of Richard Curtis and William Thompson at the house of sister Stampley, on Cole’s Creek, and formed into a body, receiving (or adopting) the following articles or rules, considering it necessary that such as have a mind to join the church are only to be received by letter or experience.”

CHURCH RULES

1. We agree to submit ourselves to God, and to each other, reprove and bear reproof, bear each others burdens and carry on the work of the Lord as well as we can.
2. We agree, as touching things temporal, not to go to law one against another, as the scriptures forbid that brother should go to law against brother.
3. We believe the Lord’s Day to be set apart for the worship of God, and whereas it has been much observed, not to pay particular attention to the day; and to make the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments our rule of practice in life.
4. We do fully believe the doctrines of particular redemption, personal election, effectual calling, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, pardon of sin by the atoning blood, believer’s baptism by immersion, the final perseverance of the saints, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

“We do further agree to conform to the following rules of discipline:

1. Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but constantly attend our appointed meetings as the Lord shall enable us; not neglecting any of them but in cases of necessity.
2. To bear each one his burden as the Lord shall prosper him, in defraying such expenses as are necessary for maintaining the

worship of God in decency and in order.

3. Not to expose the infirmities of each other by any means when it may be carefully avoided.
4. Not to remove our residence to any distant part without applying to the church for dismissal.
5. Not to be willing to live in neglect of any known duty to God, our neighbor, or one another; but to endeavor to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.
6. To bear reproof, and to reprove each other in cases of visible faults, in Christian and brotherly love, as ordained by Christ and the Gospel.”

CHURCH COVENANT

“Church Covenant and Articles of Faith agreed upon and entered into by the Baptist Church at Salem, Jefferson County, Mississippi Territory.

1st, Being baptised according to the apostolic mode, desirous to maintain the true Principles of Christianity to the Honor of God and the Edification of each other, having united together as a religious body to worship God, to celebrate his ordinances, to maintain his truths and to endeavor to promote his glory in the world. Thus we promise to profess, stand by and defend the following Doctrines, and to observe the Rules of Discipline hereinafter mentioned:

Art. 1st—That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God and the only certain and infallible rule of, Faith and obedience, containing everything needful for us to know, believe and do in the service of God, and to make us wise unto Salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus, by which we expect to be judged at the last day, and to which our opinions and Practices ought at all times to be conformed, and therefore that all persons who can read the Scriptures ought to search them daily, praying to God for light of his Holy Spirit without which none can understand them Effectually.

Art. 2nd—That there is but one Living and true God the Almighty creator, Preserver and disposer of all things, visible and