

# Baptist History

Lesson 14

Texas Baptists



# Texas Baptists

- Isaac Reed preached the first Baptist sermon after Texas won its independence.
- Reed and Lemuel Herrin were key figures in organizing Baptist churches in Texas early on.
- 1838 – Union MBC in Nacogdoches
- 1839 – Fellowship Church in Joaquin – Oldest continuous ABA church in Texas
- 1845 – Wedgewood (now Corinth BC) in Timpson was organized

# Texas Associations

- First Baptist Association in Texas was founded in 1840 and consisted of churches from LaGrange, Independence and Travis.
- First East Texas Baptist Association was established in 1843 (Sabine) but lasted only six years.
- Soda Lake Association followed. From that group, Mt. Zion and Shelby County associations, which still exist in the ABA today, formed.

# Division Among Texas Baptists

- First state association was formed in 1848 – The Baptist General Convention of Texas.
- Many East Texas churches never fully supported the Convention and started the Baptist General Association in 1853. This group more or less acted as an association within the Convention and never fully separated.

# Division Among Texas Baptists

By 1894, anti-Convention sentiment grew stronger.

S.A. Hayden and others led a charge against the BGC, challenging the salaries of Convention officials. Representation at meetings was also an issue. (Larger churches could have more influence because they contributed more)

In 1895, the Convention adopted this: “The Convention is composed of persons chosen by the churches, associations and societies, as their messengers, and when such persons are convened, they and not the churches, are the Convention.” (Centennial Story of Baptists, Page 57)

# Division Among Texas Baptists

- The board of directors at the 1896 meeting recommended that Hayden “no be allowed s eat in the body...A strong protest by some of the brethren resulted in Hayden being arraigned before the Convention.
- This lasted for three days and Hayden was denied a seat.

# Division Among Texas Baptists

- The BGC executive committee reported later that year: “For several years past an agent has been at work in our State undermining the mission work, drying up the mission spirit, and sowing down our once fertile fields with salt. The agent has persistently, ruthlessly and openly, in public attacked this board, its methods and work, charging it directly and indirectly, and by various methods of innuendo and insinuation, with misappropriation, wanton extravagance and reckless waste of public funds...With this agent nothing pertaining to this work is sacred or ever settled.” (From J.M. Carroll’s A History of Texas Baptists)

# Division Among Texas Baptists

- In 1900, a split between Church Party Baptists and Board Party Baptists came.
- Reasons for the split: 1) Wealthier churches could have more control at meetings 2) The Ninth Article to the Constitution which enabled the Convention to refuse a messenger from a church and yet receive other messengers from the same church if the body so desired. 3) The taking of Rusk Academy away from the Cherokee Baptist Association, without the consent and over the protest and vote of the Cherokee Baptist Association.

# The Baptist Missionary Association

- In March 1900, a meeting in Troup called for all churches who believed in “sovereignty and equal representation in associations.” They met in July and called the association the East Texas Baptist Convention. The name was soon changed to the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas. By 1903, 474 churches were represented at the annual meeting.

# Coming Together on a National Level

- The BMA was just a Texas body. The General Association (national) started in 1905 and included a few state associations. The GA had missionaries in Persia, China, Syria and Cuba.
- People in the BMA saw the benefits of associating on a national level.
- The Oklahoma BC and the BMA invited the GA to join them in “a call to all Baptist churches which are unwilling to submit to any sort of overhead domination and yet desire a general body that will be a real means of cooperative missionary work to send messengers to a mass meeting.”

## Coming Together on a National Level

- The BMA and GA met in March 1924. They wrote a Declaration of Principle which contained a constitution and laws for the association. This was called the Unification Committee meeting.
- At the BMA meeting in November 1924, the formation of the American Baptist Association was approved. The BMA still operated on the state level.

# Trouble in the BMA

- By the late 1940s there was dissention in the BMA. Issues similar to the ones that split the BGC caused the split of the BMA.
- Church representation and issues at Jacksonville College were the main arguments.
- An issue involving Bethel Baptist Church was the final straw.

# Trouble in the BMA

- Albert Garner led in organizing Bethel. The church was denied association with the Cherokee local association in 1948.
- Billy Dickerson brought up a resolution to refuse Bethel members at the BMA meeting that year, claiming Bethel was a Regular Baptist church and there was no fellowship for it.
- A committee was formed to investigate, but was not allowed to report until the last day of the meeting. Therefore, members of the church could not vote that year.

# Trouble in the BMA

- The *Soul Winner* published “Four Things that Occasioned Trouble in the BMA:
- 1) Closed door sessions and refusing the right of a brother to be heard.
- 2) Fighting and persecuting sovereign churches, for the actions in supporting what they have the God-given right to support, even to the point of keeping them out of the association.
- 3) The threat to change the constitution, divide the association, and exclude all who do not bow to those in power.
- 4) One-sided discussions in the Baptist Progress, allowing one group to slur and seek to brow-beat others, and allowing those who are thus mistreated no opportunity to reply: in shut the “Closed Door Policy” of the Baptist Progress

# Trouble in the BMA

- In 1949, South Harwood BC was denied seats at the BMA meeting. Many pastors and messengers walked out of the meeting.
- They met together to decide what to do.

# The Missionary Baptist Association

- Churches that walked out of the 1949 meeting and anyone else who was interested were invited to a meeting in Longview in December, 1950. The Missionary Baptist Association was proposed and accepted. The first regular meeting took place on Nov. 13-14, 1951 in Corsicana.