

Baptist History

Lesson 15

Formation of the General Association and ABA

Beginnings of the General Association

- W.A. Clark – editor of *Arkansas Baptist* from 1889-1905
 - He was against abuses of the convention system early on.
 - In 1880, the Arkansas State Convention met and decided: “The board recommends the appointment of a superintendent of missions, to be clothed with authority by the board.”
 - Clark wrote: “Here we have undoubted convention testimony that the old Landmark way was supplanted by an office created in 1880.”

Beginnings of the General Association

- Clark was elected to be the financial secretary of missions for the Arkansas Convention. He was told to superintend the missionaries and declined to do so.
- In June 1884, he was asked by the board to do mission work. He refused at first, but the board assured him he would be filling the role of an evangelist. He made sure to point out he did not place any pastors or missionaries. He also clarified that he stood for the authority of the local church.

Beginnings of the General Association

- Ben Bogard wrote: "When I came to Arkansas, I found a fight between the elements in the state convention. The brethren who stood for the old (Landmark) way were seeking to reform the convention and the conventionizing leaven was steadily working against it. I too had hope of reforming the convention...but at Paragould, when all the politics ever used by unscrupulous politicians were used to defeat the right, I decided that the effort to reform it was useless "

Beginnings of the General Association

- In the 1901 meeting at Paragould, the struggle between supporters of the local church method of mission work and the board system hit a peak.
- Bogard said the state convention would never be the same. "Some think their independence abridged by the convention. Hundreds of churches and many associations are certain to withdraw."

Beginnings of the General Association

- Two options for Landmarkers
 - Get all support they could gather and try to get back in control of the convention
 - Create a separate body and detach themselves from the state convention.
 - Many writers supported this option
 - William T. Box wrote, "If the churches are to furnish the men and means to run a convention, surely they ought to have the right to control it."

Early Days of the General Association

- In Feb. 1902, the Second Baptist Church of Fort Smith called for a meeting to be held to consider organizing a new association controlled by the churches.
- The First Annual session was in 1902. Messengers from 150 Missionary BCs met in Searcy for the first session of what is now the State Association of Missionary Baptist Churches of Arkansas.

Early Days of the General Association

- Men like Bogard, Clark, S.H. Ford and J.L. Brown led in organizing this state association. (From minutes)
“They created a body composed of equally independent Baptist Churches, associating together for mutual edification and council.”

Organization of the General Association

- Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas had formed state associations, but a desire came about for a national Landmark fellowship.
- The General Association was organized on March 22, 1905 in Texarkana. They met in the Miller County Courthouse. Three important things came out of this meeting...

Organization of the General Association

- A committee was appointed to draft a Statement of Principles and Methods of Work. After six hours of deliberating and passing some amendments, the GA was organized.
- S.M. Jureidini was endorsed as a missionary to Syria and I.N. Yohannon was endorsed as a missionary to Persia.
- A committee was appointed to “memorialize the SBC to so amend its Constitution and methods of work so that it may be possible for all Baptists to work together, and thus avoid permanent division.”
 - The GA had its official organizational meeting in November 1905. One hundred and seven churches from 11 states and territories met.

Organization of the ABA

- Most Baptist churches in Arkansas and many other states were involved in the GA, but Texas and Oklahoma were not unanimous in their support.
- C.C. Winters, Missionary Treasurer, wrote the following as one of five troubles the current mission work was having. "We are divided up into segments, which is a great hindrance to our work. We have in Texas the Baptist Missionary Association doing foreign mission work. We have in Tennessee and Kentucky the Tennessee and Kentucky Baptist Association which is doing both home and foreign mission work. ...We cannot see why all real Missionary Baptists cannot unite on Baptist principles, such as the General Association of Baptist Churches has, and do home and foreign mission work. In division, there is weakness: in unity there is strength. The Lord

Organization of the ABA

- The last meeting of the General Association was at Texarkana at First Baptist Church on Dec. 9, 1924. The Committee on Resolutions and Nominations recommended, "That we accept the Articles of Agreement which tentatively were adopted by the Unification Conference, March 4, 1924. That we favor the American Baptist Association, and that when such Association has been formed that all property now owned by the General Association be transferred to the American Baptist Association."