

THE OKLAHOMA BAPTIST CHRONICLE

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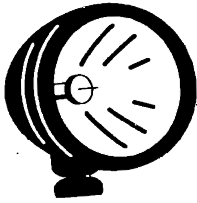
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Spotlight on the Archives

The Church Covenant

How many of you remember the old Church Covenant that used to be in almost all our churches?

I asked this question recently and one pastor said, "We still have it on the inside of our hymnals". Another pastor said he is just completing a series of sermons on the covenant.

I questioned the second pastor whether he meant the church covenant or the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message? He replied he was referring to the covenant.

I asked my last two "OBU in OKC" Baptist History and Theology classes the same question. Eight out of ten had never heard of a church covenant.

Well, we have such a creature in the Gaskin Archives. You may remember they were usually printed in a 3 X 5 format. Ours is also 3 X 5. That is, 3 X 5 feet.

This 3 X 5 foot framed edition was obtained from the Old Bokoshe Baptist Church, in LeFlore Association.

On September 17th I was walking through the near empty church when I spotted the large document in a back room.

"Can we have that?" I asked Calvin Terry, the former pastor. "Sure" he replied.

The framed version now stands in the entry room of our archives for all to see.

So what's the history on this little 3 X 5 item? The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, Vol. I., (Broadman Press, 1958) p. 283, says:

Perhaps the single most important contribution to the church covenant among the Baptists of America was made by J. Newton Brown, who, in 1833, presented to the Baptist Convention of New Hampshire a confession of faith with attached covenant, which that body adopted. Brown subsequently published both confession and covenant in 1853; and they were again published in 1867 and 1890, all under the title of the

New Hampshire Confession of Faith. This covenant was widely used, and is still the accepted covenant of most Baptist churches.

If you recall, the covenant begins with: "Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God..."

Most folk can't remember much after that. The only section usually remembered is the part which says, "To abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage."

I have seen this same covenant being used in churches of other denominations. You will want to come by and see this 3 X 5 foot document.

I would like to add a note about the Old Bokoshe Church. This church was begun in 1891 and had a good long history even up until its closing this year.

This is the church where a young J. M. Gaskin, was licensed and ordained to the ministry. Dr. Gaskin later served for 45 years as (what is now called) Historical Secretary for the BGCO, and he is still the prime source of historical knowledge on Oklahoma Baptists.

Freida and I had traveled to Old Bokoshe, not to find such documents, but to look at the old pulpit. We had heard the church was closing and that the pulpit was quite old and ornate. It was eventually delivered to our archives. Owing to lack of space, I currently have it in my office. Come by some time and I'll preach to you.

This old pulpit was handmade by one of the early pastors. No one remembers his name. It is dated from between the 1890's to the early 1900's.

When we think of covenants (and pulpits) we often only look at the present. Pulpits are now often of fiberglass or some translucent material which is so designed that it is almost unseen from the pew. In an effort to "communicate" many have removed these stately pieces of furniture as well as much theology that was once proclaimed from behind them.

Covenants likewise have been revised. We now have the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. It is unfortunate, however, that most of our covenants, whether from New Hampshire, Old Bokoshe, or the year 2000 are also almost unseen. They are usually ignored, disregarded, and seldom referred to in our daily living for Christ.

The Editor

**The Historical Society
of the
Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma**

**Annual Meeting - October 18, 2008
Kiamichi Baptist Assembly**

Attendance: 79 people registered

Call to order: Wayne Lane, Society president

Song: "Set My Soul Afire" -- composer, Gene Bartlett led by David Myer, grandson of Gene Bartlett

Dan Wimberly read from Genesis 45:4, 13 and led in opening prayer.

Del Allen, chairman of the Historical Commission, requested Society members volunteer to help at the Commission booth for the annual meeting of the BGCO, November 11-12, 2008, to be held at The Church at Battle Creek in Broken Arrow.

Wayne Lane, chairman of the Writer's Clinic Program, announced that a clinic would be held in 2009, on a Saturday, at the Capital Baptist Association's office in Oklahoma City -- with a date to be announced. A sign-up sheet was provided for those interested in attending this clinic.

Song: "Jesus Is The Song" -- composer, David Danner
Led by David Myer

Curtis Dixon, member of the Hall of Fame Standing Committee, moderated the induction ceremony.

Hall of Fame Inductions

| <u>Inductee</u> | <u>Remarks</u> |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Eugene Bartlett | Emma-Jeanne Bartlett, widow |
| David Danner | Eli Sheldon |
| Jack Gritz | Paul Gritz, son |
| Aaron Hancock | Wayne Lane |
| M.J. Lee | Jerry Walker |

The Society was happy to have as guests many family members and friends of the inductees.

Gene Bartlett --- his wife Emma-Jeanne Bartlett and their children Fran Myers and Reg Bartlett and their families.

David Danner --- his wife Judy and their daughters, his parents Jack and Joan Danner, and David's brothers Clark, Russell and Jeffery and their families.

Jack Gritz --- his son Paul

M.J. Lee --- his three sons and their wives, Tommy and Carolyn Lee, Jim and Diane Lee, and Bill and Mary Lee

Break

Mini-concert -- "Joyful Sound"

Awards

Distinguished Service Award -- This certificate was presented to Linda K. Been in recognition of over 40 years work with, and writing for, Sunbeams/Missions Friends in her local church, their association and the BGCO. Linda's husband, Sonny, and her pastor A.J. Tiger and his wife Janice, and several friends, accompanied her.

Gaskin Church History Award -- Certificates were presented to Carol Campbell, author/editor of the 2008 best church history (50th), and to the Midway Baptist Church, Cyril. Her pastor, Don Wright and his wife, Roberta, and several members of the congregation accompanied her.

Atwood, First Baptist (100th), and the author Randa Phillips, will receive Certificates of Merit for her work on their church history.

Society Business Session

Eli Sheldon, historical secretary, recognized the newest commissioners. Sheldon then commented on his hopes for the future of the Archives and Commission work, and the desire to be helpful to churches as they preserve their histories.

Society chairman, Wayne Lane, recognized Michael Dershem, who will move from the position of vice-president to president of the Society.

Nominations were asked for vice president. Jerry Walker was nominated. Curtis Dixon asked that Jerry be elected by acclamation. Ramona Allen seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Nominations were asked for secretary. Curtis made the motion that Freida Sheldon continue as secretary. Ramona Allen seconded that motion and the motion passed.

Eli Sheldon presented a certificate to Del Allen in recognition of his work on the Commission for the past three years.

Wayne Lane prayed for all the new officers.

The business session closed and the meeting was adjourned for the unveiling and dedication of the "Uncle Bill" Lucas marker. Sarah Jobe and Bill Young, descendants of "Uncle Bill" unveiled the new marker located by the Lucas Museum Log Cabin on the Kiamichi Assembly ground.

A reporter/photographer from the *Talihina American* was present for the total Society meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Freida Sheldon
Secretary, Historical Society
Ministry Assistant, Gaskin Baptist Archives/Library

**The
Oklahoma
Baptist
Hall of Fame
2008
Inductees**

Gene Bartlett

Inducted 2008

Known to Oklahoma Baptists as “Gene” or “Uncle Gene”, **Eu-gene Monroe Bartlett, Jr.**, was born in Greenwood, Arkansas, May 4, 1918, the first child of E. M. Bartlett, Sr. and Joan Tatum Bartlett.

A few weeks later the Bartletts moved to Hartford, Arkansas, 18 miles away. Mr. Bartlett Sr. established a music publishing company there. The company published paperback songbooks to be used in singing conventions and by gospel quartets.

The music company began in 1919 and is still in existence. In later years it was brought by Albert E. Brumley and Sons and moved to Powell, Missouri. Baptist heritage was an important part of Gene's life. His grandfather Tatum was a Baptist preacher and his father was a deacon. The Bartletts were members of Hartford First Baptist Church.



Gene's conversion came when he was 11 years old. The pastor, Ford F. Gantt, was preaching a revival. Although Gene's parents had provided a Christian home for him, he credited his favorite Sunday School teacher for helping him realize his need for Christ in his life. This teacher was Mrs. John Griffith, the mother of Mrs. Robert S. Scales.

The amazing grace of God was evident even in the early years of Gene Bartlett as God raised up people to influence him in ways that would last a lifetime.

Gene's formal education began with high school in Hartford. He helped around the Music Company before and after school. He also traveled over Western Arkansas and Eastern Oklahoma singing in gospel quartets. Twice each year, January and June, the Music Company sponsored “singing normals” which lasted three weeks. Gene was allowed to attend. Six weeks out of school didn't do much for his grades but he learned a lot of music.

In one of those three week sessions, Will H. and J. H. Ruebush were the teachers. They were the founders of Shenandoah Conservatory of Music in Dayton, Virginia. They offered Gene a scholarship to attend the school, so the fall of 1934 found father and son on their way to launch Gene's college career.

For the next two years, Gene studied music, music theory, piano, composition, and voice in the area which has been called the "Cradle of Shaped-Note Singing". He learned the fabulous heritage of the music which is unique to America.

After graduation from Shenandoah Music School, Gene did not have a definite direction for his career. He knew he would be doing something in music. When asked he would say, "I don't know exactly, but it will be music that glorifies the name of Jesus".

The music company in Hartford was sold and the Bartletts moved to Dallas. Soon after the move Gene was called to be part-time Minister of Music at First Baptist Church, Batesville, Arkansas, and to continue his education at Arkansas College. The pastor was a boyhood friend of the elder Bartlett.

Meanwhile, the Bartlett family had moved once again. Siloam Springs, Arkansas would be their new home, as the father went to work for the Vaughn Music Company. The fall of 1938 Gene was a second semester junior at Arkansas College where I was a sophomore.

We met on campus and dated as time permitted. At the end of the school year, Gene went home to Siloam Springs to help care for his father, who had a stroke a while before. In the fall of 1939, Gene enrolled in John Brown University and received his degree in the spring of 1940. There had been many interruptions but he finally had his diploma.

After coming to Oklahoma City, Gene earned a music degree from Oklahoma Baptist University, and in 1971 was honored with a Doctor of Music degree from OBU.

B. B. McKinney was directing the music at Arkansas' Baptist encampment and Gene was able to make an appointment with Dr. McKinney. Among the many things Dr. McKinney pointed out the most important was the encouragement that if Gene gave Christ first priority in his life nothing was impossible. You see, Gene had been told by some Baptist leaders that he would never be able to work in a Baptist Church because of his Stamps-Baxter background. Isn't God's grace amazing?

On August 25, 1940, at 4:00 p.m., Gene and I, Emma-Jeanne Stephens, were married in Batesville, Arkansas. God had great plans for Gene Bartlett. He had great success in church music serving in Pine Bluff, North Little Rock, and Blytheville, Arkansas.

In World War II, Gene served in the Navy. After the war was over, he went to Muskogee to Central Baptist Church and then to Oklahoma City, Trinity.

In North Little Rock we started our family. Twins, Larry Eugene and Frances Maurine, were born in 1941. Another son, Reggie was born in Oklahoma City in 1952.

From 1947 to 1954 Gene served as Minister of Music at Trinity Baptist Church in Oklahoma City. In 1954 he became director of the Department of Church Music for the BGCO. For 26 years he served in that capacity. The music of Falls Creek was part of his job description. As he prepared for Falls Creek each year he always said, "I have the best job in all of the Southern Baptist Convention." Gene loved Falls Creek and Oklahoma Baptists.

After turning 40, Gene began to write more music. He became a weekend composer. Some of his best known hymns and gospel songs were:

"All The Way My Savior Leads Me"

"Set My Soul Afire"

"Tell The Good News"

"I Believe"

"God's Grace Is Enough For Me"

"Here Is My Life"

"Grace So Amazing"

"I Can Never Thank My God Enough"

On Sunday morning, July 20, 1988, at 70 years of age, Gene Bartlett went to be with the Lord. For 13 years he suffered from Parkinson's Disease. The debilitating disease took much from Gene but it never took his strong affirmation of faith.

In 1999, our son Larry, at age 57, joined his dad and as Gene's father's song "Victory In Jesus" suggests, they are with the Lord singing the song of victory.

Emma-Jeanne Bartlett

DAVID L. DANNER

Inducted 2008

David Lynn Danner was born August 8, 1951, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to Jack and Joan Danner. He was the first of four sons born to the family.



The Danners soon moved to Oklahoma City where at the age of eight, David accepted Jesus as Lord. David had already shown an interest in playing the piano and organ. By age 11 he was an accomplished pianist.

In 1972, while attending Oklahoma Central State University, he met and married Judith Dunn. Their marriage was blessed with two daughters. Diane Elizabeth was born in 1975 and Karen Denise in 1978.

David graduated from CSU in 1973 with a bachelor in music education (BME) and earned his masters (MME) from George Peabody College for Teachers (now Vanderbilt University) in 1978.

Mr. Danner was well known throughout the nation for his musical skills and abilities.

He began his professional career at age 17 as organist at Crown Heights Baptist Church and then at Olivet Baptist, both in Oklahoma City.

He also served as accompanist for the Capital Baptist Association in Oklahoma City, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, and was organist at Falls Creek Baptist Assembly the summers of 1970 through 1973.

In 1973, at age 22, the newly married Danner and his wife moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where he began his life long work for the Southern Baptist Convention Sunday School Board (now Lifeway).

He rose quickly from assistant editor in the church music department to full editor. By 1982 he was the church music editor and helped lead the church music department in the establishment of

Genevox Music Group. In 1987 he became manager of Genevox for the SBSSB.

As a keyboard and choral clinician, and composer and arranger, David Danner worked with churches throughout the nation and state Baptist conventions.

More than 50 anthems by Danner have been published by Broadman Press. He produced over 120 compositions and arrangements for choirs. His most noted works include an Easter musical entitled *Joy Comes In The Morning*, a youth musical *Beginning Again*, and *He Is Lord*, which is a collection of gospel songs.

His well-known *Jesus Is The Song* has become a favorite from the *Baptist Hymnal* (1991) and was named the hymn of the month in September 1993. The tune was named *Simpson* in honor of Lorene Simpson of Oklahoma City as a way of recognizing and expressing appreciation for her encouragement of his musical development.

David later became a freelance composer, arranger, and conductor, and formed a production company called *David Danner Productions*.

His work with Baptists continued all his life as he arranged for various instrumental groups and worked with publishers such as Genevox, Henbaw, Cantus, and Laurel and Theodore Presser.

Among his many awards he was a member of the Southern Baptist Church Music Conference, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, and served as a member of the Hymnal Committee for the SBC's 1991 Baptist Hymnal.

Danner always used his daytime hours to help other composers and artists. His own compositions were done at home during the late night hours.

His father recalls the midnight calls from David. Jack would ask, "What are you doing up at this hour?" David would say, "Oh, just hangin' around".

Since music filled his mind, his compositions were all hand-written at his desk, with very little composition actually done at the piano.

He always tried to include his family in weekend choral clinics to local churches. His love for his entire family is well remembered. His laughter and bright brown eyes gave a sense of God's presence in his life.

He once said, "The Lord gives us desire, insight, and abilities. We need to hone them until they are the way He intended them to be".

Danner understood the musical challenges of our churches. "I have begun to discover the value of our hymnody and heritage", he said.

"The old hymns have a lot of good theology, and they are a familiar place for people to hang their hats. I'd like to make old hymns more accessible. It's easier to take new things if there is something familiar included".

His father related, "I will never forget the flight in a single-engine airplane that I took with David and his flight instructor. Dave was the pilot on that trip except for the takeoff and landing routines. Dave had been taking flight training for some time, and had paid for the lessons from his earnings as a shoe shine boy in a barber shop. He was twelve years old. ...

He was advancing rapidly in his music studies. ... I recall that he asked me if I thought he could teach piano. ... He was fifteen, which I thought was too young to attract students. He soon had ten students. ... Time and time again, Dave would exceed what was expected of him".

David Danner's untimely death on February 6, 1993, at age 41, left a void in the melodies of our lives. He, however, left a legacy of music within our hearts.

Wesley Forbis, Director of Church Music for the SBC expressed it best by saying "David's life proved Jesus is the song".

His mother, Joan, often remembers Psalms 30:5 which reads, "Weeping may last for the night but a shout of joy comes in the morning". His father added, "When I see David again, I will ask what he has been doing. I know he will say, "Oh, just hangin' around!"

Submitted by Eli H. Sheldon

Bibliography

E-mail, Jack Danner, July 29, 2008

E-mail, Joan Danner, July 29, 2008

Wesley Forbis, "In Memory..."

Lifeway Corp Affairs, News Release, 10-13-05

Milburn Price, September: Hymn of the Month

Charles Willis, "Music Is David's Vocation and Avocation"

JACK LINTON GRITZ

Inducted 2008

Mission pastor, editor, theologian, religious educator, church pastor, writer...

Any of these titles may be correctly used to identify Jack Linton Gritz who became the youngest editor of the *Baptist Messenger* of Oklahoma (age 30) in 1949. His road to serving 30 years as editor (1949-1979), the longest tenure of Southern Baptist state paper editors, was paved with many previous accomplishments.



The only child of Harry V. and Katie Gritz, he was born in Okmulgee. He graduated from high school in Enid and attended Phillips University, Enid, 1935-37. Converted at the age of eight at First Church, Enid, Gritz was baptized there in 1926 and ordained the ministry by that church in 1940 while serving as mission pastor of Baptist Chapel, Enid, 1940-41.

At Oklahoma Baptist University, he served as editor of *The Bison* and graduated with an A.B. degree magna cum laude, 1939. Gritz earned his master of theology at Southwestern Seminary, 1942, and the doctor of theology degree at Southern Seminary, 1947. While at Southern Seminary, he served as interim pastor at Eighteenth Street Church and Tabernacle Church in Louisville.

From 1944 to 1947, he was associate secretary of the Department of Religious Education for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Then followed serving as pastor of First Church, Tahlequah, 1947-49.

In 1947, he married Veva Chloe Hammack in Tulsa and they had one child, Paul Linton, born in Tulsa in 1950. Paul graduated from OBU, attended Oxford University and served on Oklahoma Governor David Boren's staff. He is a professor at Southwestern Seminary.

Being short (5 feet, 7 inches), light weight (135 pounds) and prematurely bald didn't deter Gritz from taking on giants. When he became editor, he wrote: "...we shall endeavor to report accurately

the news of Baptists in Oklahoma and beyond. Our interest will center on missions and evangelism...we shall endeavor to publish feature articles which will entertain and inspire, presenting outstanding personalities and unusual events...we intend to stand by the true Faith once for all delivered to the saints. We have no compromise for those within or without who doubt the fundamental teachings of the Word of God or deny the basic beliefs of Christianity."

His editorials were well researched, pithy and most usually hard hitting, but seldom degrading or demeaning (these usually against the vices of alcoholic beverages and gambling). During his editorship, the *Messenger* became the voice for Oklahoma Baptists with Gritz often being quoted by secular news media.

Readership surveys showed that his short weekly "Just a Minute" feature of human interest, unusual happenings which could be read in 60 seconds or less was one of the most popular items in the *Messenger*.

One of his first goals as editor was to increase the circulation (which was about 48,000). By 1950 subscriptions passed the 50,000 mark. In 1954, Gritz oversaw the move of the printing operation from Shawnee to the basement of the Baptist Building at 1141 N. Robinson in Oklahoma City. New typesetting equipment and a Miller Major press capable of 4,250 impressions per hour served until the early 1970s when a new and larger press, manufactured in West Germany, was purchased to handle the increasing circulation.

Addressing the 10 cents per subscription per month for the *Messenger*, Gritz in his report to the state convention once asked: "How much does it cost not to send the *Messenger*? How much does it cost in church members who are indifferent, un-enlisted and uninformed? How much does it cost in the fires of missionary enthusiasms turned into the cold ashes of sinful selfishness? How much does it cost in lost evangelistic zeal which leaves souls doomed and damned? How can we measure the cost?"

Gritz sometimes jokingly said that the *Messenger* was worth the 10 cents per issue (or whatever the cost was at the time), but it was worth 25 cents for what was left out.

The "Every Baptist Family in Oklahoma Reading the *Baptist Messenger* through the Church Budget Plan" campaign stated "the paper pays in the form of informed, invigorated, world-visioned membership continuously reminded of their duty to the local church and all Kingdom causes...Informed Baptists do more than uninformed Baptists."

Gritz was instrumental in increasing the number of churches subscribing to the *Messenger* through the Church Budget Plan, the Club plan whereby a smaller number could be sent to the same post

office and individual subscriptions. Church Budget and Club plans cost less than individual subscriptions. Another way of increasing subscriptions was the system of printing local church newsletter on the front and/or back of the *Messenger*, thus encouraging churches to send the publication (and their local newsletter) in a combined package to every member family. In later years, associations were afforded the opportunity to print their newsletters in the *Messenger*, thus adding more circulation. By the end of his 30 years, circulation was more than 94,000 with the publication going to all 50 states and 39 foreign countries.

In 1976, the “Best of the *Baptist Messenger*” selections were put on one-hour cassette tapes for the blind and mailed monthly for a cost of \$25. Another Gritz feature was a pre-printed issue (to allow printers time off for vacations) in late July containing an anthology of Christian literature such as poems and prayers plus selections of sermons from great preachers of the past.

For several years Gritz had struggled with a bipolar disorder which resulted in periodic medical leaves for recovery. Soon after his 30th anniversary as editor in 1979, the BGCO Board of Directors mandated he take “early retirement” due to his disability. Although surprised and hurt by his dismissal, he said, “I have some good years left and hope to make them count for the Lord.”

Those later years did, indeed, count for the Lord. From 1979 until 1984, he and his wife cared for his father, and he was able to work and complete several writing projects.

The longtime editor died April 14, 1985 at age 68 at his son's home in Fort Worth, Texas. His funeral was held April 18 at First Church, Oklahoma City with burial in Tulsa.

Submitted by Bob E. Mathews

Sources:

Baptist Messenger files

Personal emails from Paul Gritz

Personal recollections from serving as Gritz's associate editor, 1964-79

AARON WILLIS HANCOCK

Inducted 2008

Aaron Willis Hancock was an all-giving servant of the Lord, working to convert his Indian kinsmen in eastern Oklahoma during difficult economic times and sometimes trying physical circumstances, but always in unwavering faith and with confidence that he was following a call to the service he was rendering.



While members of various tribes heard the gospel through his evangelistic efforts, particularly early in his career, most of his work among the Indians focused on his own tribe, the Choctaws. However, the influence of his ministry extended to all people in many parts of the country from his first appointment as a part-time missionary in 1927 until, and even after, his retirement in 1961.

Born February 27, 1894, near Red Oak, in Indian Territory, Hancock was the oldest of six children. His father was Choctaw, his mother half Chickasaw and half Scotch.

Not yet 10 years old, Hancock left home to attend Jones Academy, a Choctaw Indian School, near Hartshorne. After completing studies there, he enrolled in the United States Indian School at Chilocco, graduating with the class of 1916. For a year after leaving Chilocco, he attended a business college in Chillicothe, Missouri.

It was while on a summer vacation from Chilocco that Hancock went to services one Sunday at the Rock Creek Church he had attended as a child. During the sermon by a Choctaw preacher, Hancock came under conviction and responded at the invitation to accept Christ as his Savior. He was baptized the same day.

When the United States became involved in World War I, Hancock volunteered for service in the army; but before he reported for military duty, another important matter required attention.

While attending Chilocco, Hancock met a Cherokee girl, Hilda Sallateeska. A mutual attraction blossomed into romance, and the two were married on August 18, 1917, at the courthouse in Chandler.

Hilda was to fulfill a key role in the missionary lives they later led.

Sent overseas with an infantry unit during the war, Hancock recalled talking to the Lord from foxholes and trenches. He was crouched one day under a ledge of rock during a drizzling rain in the Argonne Forest. In that setting he sensed that God was calling him for some special service, and he surrendered then to minister in some way to his own people.

However, he did not immediately respond to that call upon his release from the armed forces. He had worked in the audit department of the Government Service in Pawhuska and McAlester, but in 1919 was employed by Carter Oil Company. He was chief clerk for that business for ten years, until 1929. It was not until 1926, while still in the employ of that company and living in Shidler, that he surrendered to preach.

His first work as a minister was in the Ponca Indian Mission Church, which he served with very little pay for three years, from 1926 to 1929. A total of 187 conversions were recorded during that period. In addition to the work there, a mission also was established for the Kaw Indians at Washunga.

In May, 1927, before they left the Ponca City field, Hancock and his wife Hilda were employed by the Home Mission Board at a salary of \$75 a month. He was ordained by the Ponca City Baptist Church on April 29, 1928. Unhappy in part-time ministry, Hancock resigned his position with the oil company in June, 1929, giving up an excellent salary and a promising future in the business world. He was moved the next month by the Mission Board to Pawhuska to work with the Osage Indians, receiving a salary of \$100 a month.

The work of Aaron Hancock cannot be told without recognizing the role his wife played as his partner in all of his endeavors. She was born in Shawnee on Christmas Day, 1901, one of eight siblings. Orphaned at the age of four, she lived the rest of her early years in the Shawnee Indian Mission. She was educated in the Chilocco Indian School, where she met Hancock and was married to him at the age of 16. Their daughter Wanda was born May 23, 1921.

Hilda was blessed with extraordinary musical talents. Although she performed in secular situations early in her life, she subsequently devoted herself exclusively to singing and playing musical instruments in her husband's revivals and other religious services. Her musical talents were widely recognized, and she had numerous opportunities to perform on stage, in movies and for recording studios, all of which she turned down.

She was totally supportive of her husband's work and participated in various mission projects herself, both as an effective speaker and a vocalist. Her emotion-stirring songs were known to have result-

ed in numerous conversions themselves. She performed in testimony and song at meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention and in time became a leader in SBC programs on the national level.

Although officially retired, Hilda continued in some types of missionary work after her husband's death in 1965. That included a year under appointment of the Home Mission Board to work among Indians in Chicago. Hilda married a retired rancher, Byron Hawkins, in early 1971. She died May 1, 1972.

While the Hancocks were living in Pawhuska in 1929, Aaron became aware of his need for further training to be a more effective missionary. They moved to Shawnee, where he enrolled at Oklahoma Baptist University, majoring in Christianity and minoring in religious education.

While at OBU, the Hancocks worked at different times among the Sac and Fox Indians at a mission near Cushing and among the Otoes at Red Rock. He also pastored the Only Way Indian Baptist Church near Stroud. In spite of extreme financial difficulties and offers of full-time missionary appointments, Aaron determined to complete his work at the university. He was graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1936. Offered a scholarship for seminary study, he turned it down, believing that he needed to begin work immediately on the needs of his people.

His first assignment by the Home Mission Board after his graduation was as general missionary to the five Indian tribes of eastern Oklahoma. He and his wife established a home in McAlester. Not long thereafter Hancock was reassigned full-time as a missionary to the Choctaws, although in some of his work he was in contact with other tribes, including the Chickasaws, Creeks and Seminoles.

In a report to the Home Mission Board regarding an early survey of his field, Hancock said he found 29 churches, many of which had reported no conversions in the last year, some without pastors and most with deteriorating facilities. Some of the pastors who were in the area were considered unqualified and others showed little enthusiasm for evangelism. There were even objections to revivals and vacation Bible schools.

It was to correct these conditions that dominated Hancock's first years in that area. He determined to visit as many of the churches as often as possible and found himself traveling frequently to remote areas in adverse weather conditions through rough terrain. His efforts began to produce dividends as revivals were organized, churches were renewed and conversions increased. His travels for various services would in time average thirty thousand miles a year.

In periodic reports to the Home Mission Board, Hancock told of many dramatic conversions and rededications. In attempting to

involve more young people in church activities, he and Hilda organized vacation Bible schools and participated in special assemblies and conferences. They spent untold hours dealing with spiritual crises in the lives of individuals and responding to calls for prayers and guidance in religious matters.

Hancock expressed great joy in his work, but he had to labor under a number of frustrating circumstances. His field was so large that it was impossible to visit as many churches as he would have liked. He found low spiritual conditions in the churches and a need to fill a depressing number of pastoral vacancies. He regretted his inability to respond to all of the calls that churches made for his services.

Because of limited housing and the economic conditions in some of the vicinities they served, Hancock and his wife lived at times in a tent, cooking over open fires and using other primitive facilities. During an 18-year period, they lived three months out of each year in a tent. Other Indians often camped with them.

As time passed and Hancock's reputation grew, his work through revivals and Bible conferences extended to other areas of the state. These developments were followed by calls from churches and associations in other states, seeking the services of Hancock and his wife. They traveled as far as Tennessee and Maryland, in addition to states surrounding Oklahoma. Many requests had to be turned down because of time and scheduling limitations.

They were booked for speaking engagements in churches along their route as they traveled to and from meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention and other national events.

With the innovation of Schools of Missions, the Hancocks were natural choices to speak and teach. They conducted such schools in at least 20 states and the District of Columbia. Hundreds of churches invited them to speak on missions, most of the times in connection with Week of Prayer programs of the Women's Missionary Union.

Because of their popularity, dozens of missionary circles, youth groups and other church units named themselves in honor of the Hancocks. His character and understanding of their problems and conditions made Hancock a natural choice to serve his people in Indian organizations outside the church. For several years he was one of five members of the Intertribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma, representing the Choctaw Nation. He was a delegate to the National Congress of American Indians, serving that organization as chaplain for three years. He also was chaplain for the Choctaw Indian Hospital at Talihina for three years..

Hancock was president of the Choctaw Council of Pittsburg County. When some of his friends suggested he seek the office of tribal chief, he declined, preferring to focus on the people's spiritual needs.

Even after he retired in 1961, Hancock continued to work in mission schools and conferences. Although officially in retirement, he and his wife Hilda spent some time working in the Pacific Northwest at the behest of the Home Mission Board in the early 1960s.

Hancock became ill in late 1964 and died three months later on February 5, 1965, three weeks before his 71st birthday. Funeral services were in the First Baptist Church of McAlester on February 8. Burial was in Hillside Cemetery.

Hancock's work in the Choctaw Nation and with the Indian population of Oklahoma as a whole was monumental. His influence and that of his wife Hilda went well beyond that, however, as untold numbers throughout the nation learned of their work and heard the gospel message shared by a uniquely dedicated couple of native Americans.

Submitted by Wayne Lane

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Maurice John Lee

Inducted 2008

Anne Morrow Lindberg likened the death of a great man to a giant tree which had fallen in the forest. The height of the tree could not be measured until it fell to the ground. Likewise we cannot know how tall a man stands until we examine and review his life from birth to death.

Maurice John Lee, or simply M.J. Lee, “Doctor” * Lee or “Preacher” Lee’s life spanned a period of seventy years. M.J. Lee is remembered by many as the pastor who greeted his congregation each Sunday by saying “Isn’t it marvelous being a Christian?” or “It’s a marvelous thing to be a Christian isn’t it?” He pronounced marvelous as “mar-you-lous.”

A close examination of M.J. Lee’s life reveals that he had a desire to pursue excellence, to teach and preach passionately God’s Word, to love country people especially, to be tenacious and determined and above all to lead people to faith in Christ.

Reverend Lee was comfortable in his dark suit, white shirt and tie along with his Stetson hat and cowboy boots. He was at home with the common people and always enjoyed visiting new families in the community. Usually he cultivated the friendship of youth and children in the homes he visited.

Jim W. Lee, M.J. Lee’s oldest son, tells about a visit his father made to a cynical “tough” rancher in one community. The man stated that he didn’t need God, the church or Reverend Lee and asked Lee not to come back to his house. M.J. Lee told him that if he didn’t change that he would “fry in Hell like a sausage.” In a few days following the encounter, Reverend Lee had the privilege of leading the man to faith in Christ.

The story is told that M.J. Lee walked one-hundred miles to enroll in Louisiana College only to find that the school would not admit him without a high school diploma. Lee audited some college courses and was permitted to take the final exams proving that he was worthy of college entrance.



“Can’t” wasn’t in M.J. Lee’s vocabulary. As a prize fighter in his younger days he was acquainted with opposition and adversity. One of his sayings was “Do the best you can with what you have.” He also believed that no matter how many times you get knocked down just get up one more time. He admonished his sons to plan well and then to work the plan.

Now let’s return to the beginning of M.J. Lee’s story. He was born September 21, 1906, near the Gulf of Mexico in Belle Isle, Louisiana, to Clarence and Clara Laplace Lee. Lee was born into a Roman Catholic family whose father’s background was English and his mother’s was French. M.J. Lee had five brothers (Purvis, Burt, Wallace, Otis and Ray) and three sisters (Mae, Pearl and Ruby). M.J. had the privilege of leading several of his family members to faith in Christ.

The story has circulated that M.J. Lee was fourteen before he ever saw a Bible. At a funeral in Louisiana he heard the preacher read from the Book and at that time he determined to know more of its contents.

Reverend M.J. Lee was born again at Port Arthur, Texas, on January 31, 1932, and was baptized on February 17, 1932. He was licensed to the Gospel ministry at Port Arthur, Texas, on July 22, 1932, with Reverend Oscar Perkins as pastor. Lee was ordained to the ministry by the Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church at Church Point, Louisiana on December 5, 1934.

M.J. Lee’s education included attendance at Acadia Baptist Academy, Louisiana College with a BA degree in 1939, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. ** He completed his college degree in 3 ½ years. Lee had a speaking knowledge of English, French and Spanish and a working knowledge of Latin, Hebrew and Greek.

Preacher Lee was the author of three books: *Notes on Revelation*, *Studies in the Christian Experience* and *Bible Briefs of Baptist Beliefs*. He also prepared outlines and pamphlets to be distributed in the churches where he was pastor. He had articles published in Southern Baptist periodicals including sermons in the “Baptist Messenger” of Oklahoma. These sermons included:

- “Unmuzzle The Ox”
- “Salute the Church”
- “Revivals – As You Go, Preach”
- “Living The Christian Life”

On June 13, 1935, M.J. Lee was united in marriage to Beatrice Robertson in Welch, Louisiana. Their three sons were Jim W. Lee of Edmond, Oklahoma, born in 1939; Tom R. Lee of Mounds, Oklahoma, born in 1941, and Dr. Bill W. Lee of Norman, Oklahoma, born in

1944. These sons became the lifelong objects of their love and affection. They were proud of these sons who achieved success in law (Jim), pastoral ministry (Tom) and in psychology (Bill). M.J. Lee and his wife Bea enjoyed Jim's, Tom's, and Bill's involvement in sports. Jim participated in football and basketball at Guymon High School and baseball at Baylor University. Tom was an all-district quarterback at Guymon High School and Bill was an outstanding all-around athlete at Guymon High School.

During M.J. Lee's college days he served several halftime churches in Louisiana at Pine Hill, Laurel Hill, Macedonia, New Prospect and Calvary. His full-time pastorates included Boyce, Louisiana (1938-1940), Memorial Baptist in Vidor, Texas (1940-1943), Dimmitt, Texas (1943-1948), Quanah, Texas (1948-1952) and First Baptist Church, Guymon, Oklahoma (1952-1971).

Some of M.J. Lee's accomplishments are as follows:

- Chairman of the Budget & Finance Committee of the Executive Board of the Texas Baptist Convention.
- On the Board of Directors of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.
- Served on the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission.
- President of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (1962-1963).
- Member of the Home Mission Board.
- Speaker at Glorieta Conference Center.
- Teacher at the School of Preachers at Oklahoma Baptist University.
- Trustee at Oklahoma Baptist University (1957-1961).
- Spoke in over 300 revivals.
- Served as interim pastor in nine different churches after retiring.
- Pastor Emeritus at First Baptist Church, Guymon, Oklahoma, until his death.

M.J. Lee's hobby was collecting wedding ring boxes from couples that he united in marriage. He enjoyed golf, fishing and watching his sons play in sporting events. Lee would sometimes don his work clothes and go to the ranch of a fellow church member to help brand cattle. His annual vacation usually included a trip with his family to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Reverend Lee's membership included participation in Lodge 335 A.F. & A.M., a member of Alpha Amicron Language Society, Sigma Delta Pi (International Language Fraternity) and was a 32nd Degree York Rite Mason.

At a commencement address at Guymon High School, Reverend Lee spoke on the subject "What The Centuries Say To The

Hours.” Following his address, seven high school seniors trusted Christ as Savior.

Perhaps his favorite hymn was “The King is Coming,” which he enjoyed humming and singing. One of his favorite books was *The Trail of Tears* by Rev. A.A. Davis.

His son, Jim Lee, recalls his father was a devout man of prayer. On more than one occasion Jim heard his father praying and weeping. Reverend Lee was concerned and burdened for lost souls who had failed to accept Christ at his last preaching service. Jim also remembered asking his mother to explain why one corner of the cedar chest was so stained. His mother’s answer was that Reverend Lee bathed that corner with tears as he prayed for Jim as a child suffering with osteomyelitis.

M.J. Lee died at his home in Guymon on April 11, 1977. The death certificate listed lung cancer as the cause of death. Many people came to visit him at his home before he died. He directed his family to invite three young preachers to speak five minutes each at his memorial service. Those officiating were Rev. Don Chaffin, pastor of First Baptist Church, Guymon; Dr. Jim Logsdon of Enid, Oklahoma; Dr. J.W. Lee, Lee’s nephew, of Florida; Rev. Jimmy Reece of Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Rev. Laddie Adams, of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Pastor M.J. Lee never owned a house but paid the First Baptist Church of Guymon \$1.00 a year to lease the parsonage. He did not have a burial plot because he believed the Lord could return during his lifetime. A burial plot was purchased by his sons at Elmhurst Cemetery in Guymon, Oklahoma, and the funeral director, a Methodist, insisted that the boys put Lee’s saying on the headstone, “It is a marvelous thing to be a Christian, isn’t it?” That saying is on the headstone as a witness to all who see it. So ended the earthly journey of a great and godly man. Memorial gifts were donated to the Baptist Bible Institute in Graceville, Florida, in memory of Preacher Lee.

Revelation 14:13

Submitted by Jerry Walker

NOTES

* I have found no record of either an earned or honorary doctor’s degree. Perhaps he completed a correspondence study.

** The registrar at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has no record of M.J. Lee’s attendance at that school. The author read several articles stating that Lee attended that seminary.

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Letter from Bill W. Lee, M.J. Lee's son, dated June 9, 2008.

Letter from Tom R. Lee, M.J. Lee's son, dated June 9, 2008, with testimonials and articles enclosed.

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LINDA K. BEEN RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

At the Historical Society meeting at Kiamichi Baptist Assembly, October, 18, 2008, **Linda K. Been** received the Distinguished Service Award for over 40 years as a Mission Friends worker. This fine lady was also so honored at the BGCO meeting November 11, at Broken Arrow.



Linda asked Jesus into her heart at age 13 during a revival at Dewar, FBC. According to Linda, all of her school friends went there to church. She relates that it was her grade school friends from church that kept her out of trouble. They were friends with a mission before she had ever heard of Mission Friends.

After accepting Christ, Linda really “took” to her GA’s teacher, Doris Phillips, who became her mentor. Another important friend who helped form her young Christian life was Lucille Stephens her Sunday school teacher.

Born Linda K. Haley, she married Carrol “Sonny” Been in 1963. They have been active workers at Silver Spring Baptist Church near Dewar, Oklahoma, for several years.

About 1967, Darlene Griffith from Henryetta was visiting the FBC, Dewar and realized there was no Sunbeam class. Darlene, being led of the Lord, asked if anyone would start a Sunbeam class. Linda volunteered, and thus began her long career in mission work.

In WMU work her education was expanded by Elva Landers from Okemah FBC who was the state WMU President, and Dorothy Thayer Jones, the state GA/Mission Friends Director.

Linda has been teaching Sunbeams and Mission Friends since that beginning.

Sunbeams, one of the oldest mission works for pre-school children, began in 1886 and changed its name to Mission Friends on October 1, 1970.

Mrs. Been has taught at Falls Creek, worked through Sunday school and Children’s Division of churches, and written the Preschool

Season of Prayer Literature for the Edna McMillan Mission Offering.

She has been a Mission Friends consultant for the Muscogee/Seminole/Wichita Baptist Association since the year 2000.

On May 4, 2008 she was honored by her home church, Silver Spring Baptist Church, with a certificate of appreciation for more than 40 years of service.

It was through this recognition that her name came to the Historical Society as a possible candidate for our award.

The Distinguished Service Award is given annually to a person who has exhibited many years of outstanding service for Oklahoma Baptists and is still serving faithfully in the current year.

Brother Michael Dershem, Chairman of the Distinguished Service Committee of the Historical Commission and his committee did an excellent job as they reviewed the names presented for consideration. It is Dershem's belief that all those nominated must exemplify the characteristics of those found in the book of Romans, Chapter 16. The chapter names over 20 people in the church at Rome, who were obviously so faithful their names were included in the Word, yet most of their work remains overlooked by the general population.

We are, indeed, grateful to the Lord for workers like Linda Been.

by Eli Sheldon
Historical Secretary

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Ryan Weber
2008 Winner
Gaskin History Award
OBU

A Paper Submitted for the Gaskin Baptist History Award

Oklahoma Baptist University

**The Struggle for Religious Liberty in Virginia with
Particular Reference to Elder John Leland,
Patrick Henry, and James Madison**

By Ryan Weber

14 April, 2008

Shawnee, Oklahoma

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Introduction

According to Leon McBeth, religious liberty and the separation of church and state have long been traditions among Baptists, so much so that many place them among the Baptist distinctives, alongside doctrines such as immersion and biblical authority.¹ There has, however, been much debate over the purpose and origin of this principle which has been so highly valued by Baptists, and indeed, all Americans for the last two and a half centuries.²

Some claim that Baptist support for the separation of church and state arose out of a prejudice against Catholics and a desire to prevent government support of Catholic private education during the nineteenth century. Regrettably, there is evidence that prejudice against Catholics may have motivated some Protestants to support the separation of church and state.³ However, this paper will demonstrate that the religious freedom movement had been begun much earlier by Baptist leaders and other religious dissenters by investigating the struggle for religious liberty in Virginia in the late 1700's.

Others claim that the separation of church and state was meant solely for the protection of the church from interference of the state, and have no qualms about the church accepting government aid. This paper will show that this view is also inconsistent with those of the founders.

Finally, some argue that because the founders were predominantly Christians, and that the country was founded as a Christian nation, the laws referring to religious liberty only guarantee that right to denominations of Christians. These people would deny Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and atheists their individual right to worship—or not to worship—according to their consciences. This study will also deny and disprove this view of religious liberty.

Persecution of Baptists in the South

Contrary to the common notion that America was from the beginning devoted to religious liberty for all, many of the colonies practiced severe religious intolerance. In fact, “all but four colonies—Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey—had officially established churches. All but two had religious qualifications for office, five denied basic civil rights to Catholics, and several made blasphemy a capital offense.”⁴

Virginians established the Anglican Church during the colonial days. According to Baptist historian David Benedict, early Baptists in North Carolina and Virginia were not considered worthy of concern to the men of power.⁵ However, as Baptists rapidly increased in number and influence, legal prosecution of Baptist preachers and adherents became common practice. Baptist preachers were arrested for disturbing the peace, imprisoned, and sometimes even beaten and whipped by sheriffs and other magistrates. The first instance of imprisonment occurred in Spotsylvania County on June 4, 1768, when John Waller, Lewis Craig, James Childs, James Reed, and William Marsh were arrested as disturbers of the peace.⁶ John Waller related another such occasion in a letter from Urbanna Prison in Middlesex County, in August of 1771.

The magistrate, and another, took hold of brother Webber, and dragging him from the stage, delivered him, with brethren Wafford, Robert Ware, Richard Falkner, James Greenwood and myself, into custody, and commanded that we should be brought before him for trial. Brother Wafford was severely scourged, and brother Henry Street received one lash, from one of the persecutors, who was prevented from proceeding to farther violence by his companions....⁷

They were offered the opportunity to be released upon promising not to preach in the county any more, but they refused. Wafford and Ralkner were released, but the rest were delivered to the sheriff, and remained in close jail. Waller went on to say that "Yesterday we had a large number of people to hear us preach; and among others, many of the great ones of the land...."⁸ Waller also regretfully informed the audience that six of the brethren were also confined in Caroline jail, including "brethren Lewis Craig, John Burrus, John Young, Edward Herndon, James Goodrick, and Bartholomew Cheming."⁹

Persecution of Baptists fueled their efforts to gain religious liberty. However, they sought a different kind of liberty than the Puritans had before them. It is clear that those dissenters who fled England in the hopes of gaining religious liberty were concerned only with gaining it for themselves, for they were relentless in denying that same right to others. Baptists, led by John Leland and others were the first to advocate religious liberty for all, not only themselves.

Patrick Henry's General Assessment Bills

Such persecution led many leaders to denounce the establishment of one denomination over the others as the Episcopalian Church had been. However, the idea that this church should be suddenly diminished in status was not favored by all. Therefore, there were many attempts by leaders such as Patrick Henry to raise other churches such as Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Methodists to the favored level of the Anglicans. There were many attempts in Virginia between 1779 and 1786 to pass a "general assessment" bill that would establish all churches, favoring the broadly Christian instead of the sectarian Anglican. The problem then became that only Christianity was to be official. Furthermore, to be 'official,' the state was necessarily in the business of defining precisely what was truly Christian.¹⁰ Baptists worked with other groups to defeat Henry's general assessment bills, and James Madison contributed the significant work *Memorial and Remonstrance*. In it, Madison provided fifteen reasons why state support for all churches was no better than its support for one church. He claimed that "religion...can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." He also pointed out that the bill violated equality by subjecting some to peculiar burdens, as well as granting to others peculiar exemptions. Also, the bill implied either that the civil magistrate was a competent judge of religious truths, or that he may employ religion as an engine of civil policy. Finally, past experience indicated that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of religion, have had a contrary operation.¹¹ The fact that these bills were not passed is strong evidence that religious liberty was not intended to be limited to Christian denominations.

John Leland, James Madison, and the Constitution

After the end of the Revolutionary War, a congress of representatives was called from the States to draft a Constitution, which the congress submitted for ratification on September 17, 1787. The Constitution faced much opposition, especially on the point which determined that there would be no religious tests. Some viewed this article as being excessive, others found it insufficient. The ratification of the Constitution seemingly hung on this issue, and on two states, Massachusetts and Virginia. In a eulogy upon Madison, J.S. Barbour

said that the credit of adopting the Constitution of the United States belonged to a Baptist clergyman by the name of Leland. He said that if Madison had not been in the Virginia Convention, the Constitution would not have been ratified by that State, if it had been rejected by her, the Constitution would have failed; and that it was by Elder Leland's influence that Madison was elected to the Convention.¹²

Patrick Henry led the party opposed to ratification in Virginia, and James Madison led the supporters of ratification. A State Convention was to be held to vote on ratification, to which a delegate from each county would be elected. Leland lived in the county of Orange, and became the candidate for that county opposed to ratification. James Madison, the candidate from Orange County in favor of ratification, had been in Philadelphia, which gave Henry and Leland's party the chance to canvas the state in his absence. When Mr. Madison made preparations to return to Virginia, a meeting was set in Orange County at which Madison and Leland would address the people.

On his way home from Philadelphia, Mr. Madison went some distance out of his direct road to call upon him....Mr. Madison spent half a day with him, and fully and unreservedly communicated to him his opinions upon the great matters which were then agitating the people of the State and Confederacy.¹³

Leland withdrew from the race to support Madison, and the Baptists of the county elected Madison, trusting him to fight for the amendments that they desired. When the Convention assembled, Patrick Henry spoke out strongly against the Constitution, but Madison and his supporters prevailed. The Constitution was ratified by the Virginia Convention by a vote of eighty-nine for, and seventy-nine against.¹⁴

John Leland, James Madison, and the First Amendment

Although the Constitution had been successfully ratified, it remained clear that many did not believe it secured religious liberty well enough. In fact, the only mention of religion in the Constitution promised that no religious tests would be required to run for public office. The Constitution did not mention, however, the legality of the establishment of State Churches or the religious liberty of dissenters. In reality, there were many opponents to any amendments to the newly ratified Constitution. Massachusetts was devoted to the Congregational State Church. John Adams, later President of the United States, expressed disgust that the Baptists addressed the Congress

in Philadelphia praying for religious liberty. In a letter to Benjamin Kent, Adams expressed his hope that Congress will not meddle with the Massachusetts establishment. He related that he is “for the most liberal toleration of all denominations....” However, he went on to say, “Let every colony have its own religion without molestation.”¹⁵ The difference between toleration and religious liberty will be an important point which I will discuss later.

Baptists, though, were not satisfied. They pushed for the first amendment. The Baptists requested it through George Washington and James Madison. Madison, in a speech delivered on June 8, 1789, said that:

There is still a great number of our constituents who are dissatisfied with it [the Constitution], among whom are many respectable for their talents and patriotism....There is a great body of the people falling under this description, who at present feel much inclined to join their support to the cause of Federalism, if they were satisfied on this point.¹⁶

Madison also cited an amendment as the only way to convince Rhode Island and North Carolina—the only two states yet to ratify the Constitution—to join the confederacy. He concluded that if Congress proceeded with caution in making the amendment, they had nothing to lose, and much to gain.¹⁷

Madison advised that the issue be presented to George Washington, and a petition from the General Committee was prepared by John Leland. Dated August 8, 1789, the Committee expressed that “When the Constitution first made its appearance in Virginia, we, as a society, had unusual strugglings of mind, fearing that the liberty of conscience (dearer to us than property and life) was not sufficiently secured....”¹⁸

Washington replied agreeably, saying that he never would have signed the Constitution if he thought that it could threaten the religious rights of any church. However, he continued, “no one would be more zealous than myself to establish effectual barriers against the horrors of spiritual tyranny, and every species of religious persecution.” Further, he said that “every man...being accountable to God alone for his religious opinions, ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience.”¹⁹

When he first entered Congress, one of the first things proposed by Madison was an amendment to the Constitution on June 8, 1789. It read:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of

speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The Baptists accepted this as sufficient security, although the Bill of Rights was not passed until 1791. The amendment basically promised that the United States would never sponsor any belief or elevate it to the status of official religion; on the contrary, equal liberty would be conceded to all churches.

Inherent in this promise is the idea that the United States also will not provide funds for any religion. This is the main distinction between Madison's bill which succeeded and Henry's general assessment bills which failed. Americans and Baptists in particular did not wish to elevate all Christian denominations to the level of State-sponsored religion, they wished to demote the existing State religions. While Henry's bill would allow taxes to be paid to the denomination of the taxpayer's choice, Madison's amendment outlawed government support of religion altogether.

This seems to be very clear evidence for two principles. First, that the First Amendment was not passed primarily for the protection of Christian religion. It was in fact intended to protect the religious liberty of all. Second, that the First Amendment was intended primarily to be a protection of the church from the state. Contrarily, it was meant not only for that reason, but to protect the state from the influence of the church as well.

Disestablishment of the States

While the First Amendment was a powerful step in the direction of religious liberty for all, it was not the cure-all of State religion. The Constitution was a covenant between the Federal government and the churches. It did nothing to abolish the religious establishments in states which had not yet been separated. Some states, namely Connecticut and Massachusetts, clung to the Church-state alliance for years subsequent.

Virginia passed its State Constitution in 1776, and the sixteenth section of the Bill of Rights, which had originally contained language for toleration, was amended by Madison to guarantee the free exercise of religion. "Therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion according to the dictates of conscience..."²⁰ Another act was passed in October of 1776 which exempted dissenters from contributing to the support of the established church. As I mentioned earlier, the difference between toleration and religious liberty is vast. As George W. Truett so eloquently explained,

Toleration implies that somebody falsely claims the right to tolerate. Toleration is a concession, while liberty is a right. Toleration is a matter of expediency, while liberty is a matter of principle. Toleration is a gift from man, while liberty is a gift from God....God wants free worshipers and no other kind.²¹

Officially, though, the Episcopalian church remained the Established Church of Virginia for ten years after the Virginia Bill of Rights was passed. Thomas Jefferson introduced a bill to the Virginia Assembly in 1779 that would establish religious liberty. Jefferson presented it as an alternative to a general assessment bill, and the General Baptist Association endorsed it in that year. That bill was passed in January, 1786.²²

John Leland summed up the evils of Church Establishment in *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable*. He reasoned, "every man must give an account of himself to God, and therefore every man ought to be at liberty to serve God in a way that he can best reconcile to his conscience. If government can answer for individuals at the day of judgment, let men be controlled by it in religious matters; otherwise, let men be free."²³ He further speculated on the causes: "First. Ignorance, not being able to confute error by fair argument. Second. Indolence, not being willing to spend any time to confute the heretical. Third. But chiefly covetousness, to get money, for it may be observed that in all these establishments, settled salaries for the clergy, recoverable by law, are sure to be interwoven; and was not this the case, I am well convinced that there would not be many, if any religious establishments in the Christian world."²⁴

For Leland, the evils of Establishment were centered squarely on the evils of that church's clergy. Further, he echoed the sentiment of previous writers who denied that uniformity of religion was required for the state to stand. He pointed out that the states of Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania have stood without church establishments for significant amounts of time. Furthermore, he said, "Government has no more to do with the religious opinions of men, than it has with the principles of mathematics."²⁵

Conclusion

So what does this mean for Baptists today? As Baptists have grown in number and influence over the two centuries since the events just narrated, we have tended toward exclusivism. Landmark traditions, a lack of education, and Baptist self-righteousness have contributed to a prevailing unenlightened attitude among Southern

Baptists.

Evangelicals caricature other religious traditions without making an attempt to understand them. When tempted to blame others for the problems in the world, may we consider that it was our own sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. Denouncing other religions and seeking governmental favor for our own religion is counterproductive. Who among us would convert to Islam if a Muslim told us that we were infidels? We will not win the world to Christ through such methods? What is needed is a foundation of Christ's love, followed by a desire to understand, and concluded with a willingness to dialogue.

Christians today push the separation of church and state envelope by placing religious symbols in government buildings. We insist on keeping the name of God on money and in the Pledge of Allegiance. We place American flags in front of our churches and hold Independence Day services. To echo John Leland, 'What has the government to do with religion?' Some Christians come dangerously close to loving their country more than their God. May I ask, 'Where does our citizenship lie?' Is it with America, or with the Kingdom of God? As Paul wrote in Philippians 3:20, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

During the formation of this great country, Baptists were in the minority. Great Baptist leaders such as John Leland fought against the religious establishment for the benefit of all. Let us continue to fight for that same liberty now that we are no longer threatened by a powerful establishment. And that, not solely for our own benefit, but for the benefit of all. In the words of our own George W. Truett, "Baptists have one consistent record concerning liberty throughout their long and eventful history. They have never been a party to oppression of conscience. They have forever been the unwavering champions of liberty, both religious and civil."²⁶ Please God, may we cling to that heritage and continue to be champions of liberty throughout the world.

END NOTES

1. Albert Wardin, "Contrasting Views of Church and State," *Baptist History and Heritage*, (Winter 1998) 12.
2. Ibid.
3. J. Brent Walker, *Religious Liberty and Church-State Separation*, (Brentwood, Tennessee: Baptist History and Heritage Society, 2003), 28 (citing Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).
4. Ibid, 13.
5. David Benedict, "Persecution of Baptists in the South," in *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, ed. H. Leon McBeth (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1990) 181.
6. Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptist*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1980) 240.
7. John Waller, "Letter from Urbanna Prison" in *A Baptist Source Book*, ed. Robert A. Baker (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1966) 33.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Edwin S. Gaustad, "Baptists and the Making of a New Nation," in *Baptists and the American Experience*, ed. James E. Wood, Jr. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976) 45.
11. James Madison, "A Memorial and Remonstrance," in *A Baptist Source Book*, ed. Robert A. Baker (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press 1966) 36.
12. John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1926) 242 (quoting J.S. Barbour).
13. Ibid, 243, (quoting Governor Briggs of Massachusetts).
14. Ibid, 245.
15. Ibid, 244 (citing John Adams, "Letter to Benjamin Kent").
16. Ibid, 246 (citing James Madison, "Speech to Congress, June 8, 1789").
17. Ibid.
18. Baker, 43 (citing John Leland, "Letter of the General Committee of Virginia to George Washington").

19. Baker, 44 (citing George Washington, "Reply to the General Committee representing the United Baptist Churches in Virginia").
20. *A Declaration of Rights*, adopted by the Virginia Convention of 1776, quoted in Baker, 35.
21. George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," in *McBeth*, 469.
22. Baker, 38.
23. John Leland, "The Rights of Conscience Inalienable," 1791, in *McBeth*, 178.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Truett, 469.

A JOURNEY TO SILVER SPRING

As Historical Secretary, I made my way on I-40 eastward through the beautiful rolling hills of eastern Oklahoma toward my turn off at Tiger Mountain.

The foliage was beautiful and the warm sun had risen this November Sunday morning to produce colors of red, yellow, and green on the trees and scrubs along the way.

My journey, I thought, was to fill in some of the story of Linda Been, the 2008 recipient of the Oklahoma Baptist Distinguished Service Award. She serves at Silver Spring (with one "S" on Spring).

I ended up, however, with a fascinating story of times past and echoes of Native American sounds in the wind.

I arrived before Sunday school, and was immediately greeted by Carrol "Sonny" Been (Linda's husband), and A. J. Tiger the pastor. As we entered the foyer I met Richard and Joe "Spook" McIntosh (brothers of Ledtkey McIntosh), and Louis Bible. The Tiger's, McIntosh's and Bible's, are all workers and relatives of former pastors.

It was John McIntosh, the Creek Indian missionary who first founded the church in 1904. He returned to the area from his ministry at Rock Springs Indian church near Anadarko. He pastored at Silver Spring until an injury from a fall off his wagon at Greenwood Ferry on the North Canadian River prevented further service. He had left Silver Spring and was returning home when the accident occurred. He subsequently died on Christmas Day, 1906.

I met Dorcus Tiger, the pastor's mother, who showed me pictures lining the hall of the "new building".

They showed the pastors (beginning with John McIntosh), and the original buildings of the church.

Dorcus was shown in one of the pictures of the "Women Leaders". These fine ladies functioned in various capacities, but especially aided the girls in baptism at the pond over the hill west of the church. They held quilts to form a dressing room around the girls until they were ready for baptism.

She then opened for me the door at the east end of the hall. My eyes met a panoramic and majestic view of the hills below us and the eastern sky. We went down the gentle slope about 40 feet to the "Preaching Rock". This great flat rock is approximately 25 feet long

and 10 feet wide, and juts up a foot from the surrounding terrain.

"This", she said, "Is where it all began. This rock was the pulpit area". Other rocks nearby and the sloping hills provided the seating for the early church. There was no church building.

Approximately 100 feet to the northwest is Silver Spring. It was convenient for worshippers and neighbors alike. The spring was the main water source in the early days and one could see men with horse drawn wagons backing down the east and west slopes to fill their water barrels.

Brother Tiger, the pastor, approached to tell me of the days when camp houses were built along the spring near Preaching Rock. The simple wooden structures were used by families who would come once a month for the 3 day meetings. The circuit riding preacher would arrive on Friday and stay through Sunday.

We went back into the church in time for the Sunday school all church opening assembly. I sat down just as Louis Bible began singing a Creek Indian hymn from his place toward the back of the church. Other than his voice, silence prevailed.

The church was filled with people of all ages, most of Native American descent. As I meditated, I could tell this church of approximately 120 had a great past and a bright future.

After the services, Sonny Been and Dorcus Tiger showed me the remaining older structures.

To the south several yards stands the old sleep house. This was used for the visiting preachers. Just west of the new church is the old beautiful native flat stone church. This older church was the second one and was built in 1933.

The architect had put unusual items into the flat stone outer walls. High above the entry (which faces east) is a stone horn. This symbolizes the horn used by the early church to alert them the service was beginning. When the horn blew, everyone stopped wherever they were to meditate until it ceased. The horn was later replaced by a bell similar to those found in many other Native American Churches.

On the left of the entry door imbedded in the stone is what everyone describes as rabbit innards. The builder is deceased and no current members can explain why it is there.

To the right of the door is an 8 inch stone oval with rough layers. Dorcus Tiger said it is a pine cone, but again, no one knows why it's shown.

The great flat stones of the walkway are also interesting. There is a large 6 foot in diameter star near the end of the walkway with a point facing directly east toward the majestic hills. The older members offer two interpretations. Some say the builder was a Masonic member and this is the eastern star. Others relate that Native Ameri-

ca Churches were always built facing east, and the star shows the place of the coming Christ.

In Pastor Tiger's office I saw the framed original minutes of the organizational meeting of July 3, 1904. The minutes consist of a short covenant, an agreement to meet once a month, and the list of 9 charter members and 3 officials.

A note was also added stating after the church was duly organized they proceeded to elect Rev. John McIntosh of Big Arbor Church as pastor, Mrs. Lou A. McIntosh, treasurer, and Miss Katie Tiger, clerk. One final note said: Baptized – Cinnie Davis, Nov. 23, 1905.

After I reviewed the names of current members and realized those names of the past, I mentioned to Bro. A. J. Tiger how many preachers and missionaries I had noted. He smiled and said, "We have over the years sent out more people in God's service than any other church we know of".

As I drove away I thought of how close this was to Thanksgiving, and how close I had been to thankful people at Silver Spring Baptist Church.

By Eli H. Sheldon
Historical Secretary, BGCO

Sources:

A. J. Tiger, personal interview

Carrol Been, personal interview

Dorcus Tiger, personal interview

J. M. Gaskin, *Baptist Milestones in Oklahoma*, 1966

Memorial Gifts

On September 8, 1998 by vote of the Historical Commission, a memorial fund was established whereby a gift of \$25 or more may be made to the Gaskin Historical Archives and Library Forever Fund in memory of a deceased relative or friend.

James Ball, Claremore;
Given by Lemuel Ball

Margie Ball, Claremore;
Given by Lemuel Ball

Bob Burrows, Amarillo, Texas;
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George Hill, Coalgate;
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Almeda Welch, Durant;
Given by J.M. & Helen Gaskin

Hazel Marie Williams White, Wilburton
Given by Del and Ramona Allen