

Long Run Association of Baptists



A Brief Review of

Who They Are
What They Believe
How They Work and
What They Do in the
Local Mission Program

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There appeared in the Sunday Louisville Courier Journal under date of April 17, 1949, a full page article on Baptist life in Jefferson County, Kentucky. This was the third of a series on "Religion in Louisville," which was prepared by Mr. Orval H. Austin, Institutional Chaplain of the Louisville Council of Churches.

Because of the fine reception accorded that article by Baptists of the area, the Superintendent of Missions of the Association was instructed to prepare a pamphlet for widespread distribution based on this and other information. This brochure is the result. It is sent out with the hope that its message may be well received and that a responsive cord may be struck in the hearts of Baptists of Long Run Association.

H. FLOYD FOLSOM,
Superintendent of Missions

INTRODUCTION

According to legend, back in the days of the late 1700's an Indian pursued a white man for miles along a creek near the Shelby-Jefferson County line. When he finally caught him, the Indian remarked: "White man, he long run." One of the oldest Baptist churches of continuous history in Jefferson County was organized in 1797 on property which lies to the east of Long Run Creek, and is named the Long Run Baptist Church. Abraham Lincoln's grandfather had settled on this land and was buried there in 1786. The present Long Run Baptist Church building was constructed in 1845 and extends over the portion of the old burying ground where rests the body of Mr. Lincoln, who was himself a Baptist layman.

In 1803, the Long Run Baptist Church was host church when the Association was formed which bears the same name. Taking part in the formation of the Association were messengers from twenty-five Baptist Churches comprising a total membership of 1,715, an average of 68 members per church.

NUMERICAL STRENGTH

Beginning with this nucleus of 1700 members who were represented at that initial meeting nearly a century and a half ago, Baptists of Long Run Association have grown to number more than 55,000 members in 76 churches. Colored Baptists of the Louisville-Jefferson County area number more than 26,000 members, in 77 churches. When one is reminded that Baptists do not count as members babies and small children who have not expressed a personal faith in Christ (prerequisite to baptism and membership in a Baptist church), and also that approximately 15,000 Baptist new-comers have not moved their membership to churches in the Louisville area, it is apparent that the local Baptist constituency is in excess of 100,000 persons. This means that Baptist strength is greater than that of any other religious group in the area, which fact is also true of the State of Kentucky where 1/3 of the total church membership is Baptist.

DOCTRINES

Baptists are not Protestants (with a capital "P"). Through the centuries from the time of the Apostles, evidences can be found of a continuing descent of the principles of churches formed of regenerate believers. Evidence is lent to this conviction in the appearance of Anabaptists, who ac-

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cepted members from other sects only on condition of their receiving believers baptism. Therefore "ana" meaning "again" was prefixed to "Baptist" and the name "Anabaptist" applied. This group existed well before the Protestant Reformation of the 17th Century, and "Baptist" is a shortened form of "Anabaptist." Just as the name "Christian" was first given by their enemies to the followers of Christ, so was the name "Anabaptist" first given to Baptists by their persecutors. Baptists are spiritual heirs of other groups which clung to Baptist principles in spite of fierce martyrdom.

Baptists have much in common with other Christian denominations. Belief is held with Romanists and Protestants alike in the sovereignty of the one and only God, the threefold nature of the Godhead, the deity of Christ, the brotherhood of all believers, and the assurance of the hope of eternal life.

There are some five basic principles, however, upon which Baptists agree which differentiate them in varying degrees from other Christian bodies. These principles have been stated well by Dr. S. L. Stealey, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, as follows:

1. The Supreme authority of the Scriptures.
2. The competency of the individual soul to deal directly with God without official priestly mediation.
3. Baptism by immersion only, of believers only.
4. Congregational (democratic) government.
5. Separation of church and state.

Dr. Stealey continues; "These great principles, all taken absolutely together and applied vigorously, constitute both the strength and distinctiveness of Baptists. Other denominations or sects have accepted one or more of them, and to that extent are like Baptists; but the principles are so vitally related that the lack of any one of them seriously weakens the rest of them."

1. By the "supreme authority of the Scriptures." is meant simply that Baptists recognize no other authority whatsoever. The Bible is the only trustworthy source from which doctrine can be derived. There is no other source of infallible truth in either a person or an institution. The Bible is not only infallible, but it is sufficient in its doctrinal expression.

To vary from the teachings of the Bible would be to contravene the sovereignty of God. To go

beyond the written authority is as detrimental to the revealed truth as would be the deletion of express passages from the Bible. The major divisions of Christendom have resulted from a failure to accept the New Testament as the "final rule for faith and practice."

Baptists do not claim to have a monopoly on Biblical truth. Any individual or church has the same access to the genius of Christianity as Baptists do, in proportion to their obedience to the word of God.

2. Possibly the strongest tenet of Baptists is not that having to do with baptism, but rather with man himself. The belief in the "competency of the individual soul" means that man is competent to go directly to God, without any other mediator but Christ. Man is a free moral agent. Baptists hold, therefore, that the commitment of a child in infancy (before he can make an enlightened choice) is a violation of his freedom. Each individual is competent to do business with God without the intervention of any other individual or any institution. In other words, Baptists believe in the **priesthood of every believer**, rather than in an ecclesiastical priesthood.

3. Baptists recognize no sacraments, and only two church ordinances. They are baptism and the Memorial Supper. Salvation, inasmuch as it is not dependent upon any human agency or institution, is accessible to any individual regardless of church affiliation. Salvation comes through repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ to forgive and save. It is a free gift from God. There is no saving power in works or from within the church itself. Good works are prompted by love and gratitude to God in **appreciation of salvation**, and in recognition of the Biblical truth that man will be rewarded for his good works.

Baptism, therefore, is not practiced because of any sacramental value or saving power. It is done in obedience to the command of Jesus. The ordinance of baptism is seen to be a symbol. In it are pictured the death, burial, and resurrection of the believer with Christ, as stated in Romans, ch. 6. Immersion is the only Scriptural baptism, and is the only baptism which portrays the burial and resurrection.

Baptism of "believers only" rules out infant baptism or anything that may be classed as a form of baptism when administered to a candidate who has not reached the age of accountability, or competency.

The Memorial Supper, like baptism, is not sacramental, but symbolical. It is observed, according to His command, as a memorial to Christ, and in it His body and His blood are pictorially represented by the bread and the "fruit of the vine."

4. Government. The 55,000 Baptists of Long Run Association do not in any sense constitute "The Baptist Church" of this geographical area. There is no such thing as "The Baptist Church." The churches of the New Testament were local, independent, self-governing, democratic organizations. There was no ecclesiastical hierarchy. The churches joined in cooperative endeavor for mission purposes and mutual strengthening (for example, Paul's great collection taken among the Gentile churches for the poor in the church at Jerusalem). Baptist churches follow this pattern. The local association wields no power over the individual church. It exists, as do the State and Southwide agencies, to serve the local churches in local and world-wide missionary activity. The only authority recognized by the more than 70 Baptist churches of Long Run Association is that of the Scriptures. The only recognized head is Jesus, the Christ. Every individual who is a member of a local church has full voting and speaking privileges at any business meeting of that church, and no voting privilege in any other Baptist church. He may vote and speak at the meeting of any association of which his church is a part, and to which his church has duly elected him messenger. The officers (pastor and deacons) do not represent gradations of authority, but diversity of function. Inasmuch as all authority is vested in the membership, a Baptist church is theoretically a pure democracy.

Denominational grouping of churches into "associations" is on the basis of mutual choice in co-operation, and not that of organic union. No association can commit a local church to any thing. Each church remains free to give whatever support it may choose to the recommendations of such bodies.

The associations meet annually to coordinate and promote the work which is of mutual interest to the churches. There is an executive board, composed of representatives elected by the churches, which promotes the work between the annual sessions. This pattern is followed by all Baptist groups, whether local, state, south-wide or world-wide in scope.

5. The fifth distinctive basic principle to which Baptists have held tenaciously and which they have championed aggressively, is the separation of church

and state. The American pattern with respect to the relationship of church and state is based on the Rhode Island experiment. There Roger Williams established a colony which became the first instance in America of a "free church in a free state." Williams developed Baptist principles through his experience with the Puritans, and began the first Baptist church in the New World at Providence, Rhode Island, in 1638. These principles became embodied in the Constitution of the United States of America, and guarantee "freedom of religion" to every American citizen.

ORGANIZATION

The heart of the Baptist program within the local church is the worship service. The worship service has as its center the pulpit, from which the word of God is proclaimed. Scripture reading, hymn singing, and prayer are coupled with preaching so that there is a measure of "audience participation" in every worship service.

Evangelistic emphasis is perennial, being both mass and individual in form. Ideally, every member of a Baptist church is an evangelist to win new converts to Christ through personal work, even as the preacher expounds salvation by grace at the service of worship.

Baptist work is supported by tithes and offerings. Each member is urged to set aside one-tenth of his income as belonging to the Lord. Any further contribution is considered an offering. No resort is made to commercial methods for financial support. In years past, churches frequently turned to pie suppers, rummage sales, box suppers, and the like to secure funds for the operation of the church program. One such plan is reported to have been announced in the local church bulletin as follows:

"The Ladies' Aid will hold a rummage sale at the church Thursday night at 8:00. This is a good chance to get rid of something which you don't need, but which is too valuable to throw away. Be sure to bring your husband."

The Baptist program today, however, is financed almost exclusively by the tithes and offerings of members.

Baptists believe in organization. Manned by lay leaders and innumerable volunteer workers, they are used to implement the church program.

The Sunday School is depended upon largely by the church to enlist new people. The school

meets usually for one hour before the morning worship service, and the members are urged to participate in both units of the program.

Recognizing the need to be trained for the rendering of better service, Baptists promote an organization called the **Baptist Training Union**. With a department for every age group, the union meets for one hour before the evening worship service, and attempts to give practical training in applying Christian teachings to every day life, and training for church membership.

Missionary emphasis within the church is promoted largely by the **Woman's Missionary Union** and the youth groups which it sponsors. These groups are the **Sunbeams** (for small children), the **Royal Ambassadors** (for boys), the **Girls Auxiliary** (for girls), and the **Young Woman's Auxillary**.

The manpower of the church is enlisted through the **Baptist Brotherhood** which is designed to lead the men to support the work of the church in every way possible.

Inasmuch as the singing of gospel hymns occupies such an important place in Baptist worship, many churches have organized choirs to lead the music program.

Baptists have no organization where there has not been found a need for it. But where it has been determined that no existing organization is able to meet a need which arises, there is no hesitation to institute such a program in the interest of greater efficiency and accomplishment.

THE LONG RUN PROGRAM

Baptists of Long Run Association have joined efforts in the promotion of a local mission program which is well balanced and most progressive. In addition to the more than 70 churches in the association there are approximately 20 "mission churches." For the most part these missions are "children" of a "mother church." In each such instance the work was begun by one of the churches in a section of the association which was not served by an existing Baptist church. The mother church promotes the work financially, provides a meeting place, engages a pastor to lead the work, and furnishes the manpower needed. New members are added to the roll of the mother church, and all the offerings go to it. At such time as the mission is found to be capable of self-support, it is granted complete freedom, and often within a few years itself sponsors a mission church. This in part

demonstrates what Baptists mean when they speak of a church as being a **living organism**, and not an organization.

When Baptists move into a new community, they do not simply ask, "Are there any Baptists here?" They ask, "Are there any unchurched people here." Where there have been people, there have Baptists gone, and into such areas they will continue to go and preach the gospel.

Some mission work in Long Run Association is of such a nature that no one church can well assume responsibility for its promotion. The **Baptist Co-operative Program** is designed to promote such work on a wider scale, and the association employs a similar device for its local missionary endeavor. The individual churches make monthly contributions to the association. This is supplemented by the Cooperative Program through the State Mission Board in co-operation with the Home Mission Board. Long Run Association then budgets its income in somewhat the same manner as the local church handles its own budget.

The associational office, at 127 East Broadway, Louisville, Ky., serves the churches in innumerable ways. It is a centralizing agency. It is a clearing house. The Associational Sunday School, Training Union, Woman's Missionary Union, and Brotherhood each has a chairman, and Long Run office is available for use in the promotion of their programs.

Some of the direct mission projects of the association may well be described more fully at this point.

Central Baptist Mission is located at 114 East Jefferson Street. Formerly the Union Gospel Mission, this work came into Baptist hands several years ago. Converts are baptized into the fellowship of East Baptist Church. Serving the "Hay Market Area," 55 persons found Christ and requested baptism because of its ministry during the year 1948-49. Forty-nine others made decisions for Christ. In addition to the full Sunday program, there is a summer calendar of intensive evangelistic activity, including preaching five nights a week. Preaching service is provided for children on Sunday, separate from the adult group. Recreational facilities are made available for these spiritually hungry young people. The Association also helps pay the salary of a full-time worker on the field at near-by East Church.

Boyce Settlement House, 1701 West Main Street, is another work which was begun by an independent group a number of years ago, but later came into

the Baptist program. Unlike Central Baptist Mission, no Sunday services are held at Boyce. The week-day activities include Bible School, Mother's Club, Scouts, etc., and are designed primarily to aid the children and young people of this crowded section of Old Louisville.

One of the gravest problems facing our nation today is that of race. Long Run Baptists are demonstrating what can be done to help the relationship between the races by the employment of Christian principles, at **Baptist Fellowship Center**, 1023 West Madison Street. The Center is supported and manned jointly by Long Run Association and Central District Association (colored). This work is projected by means of Mother's Clubs, Youth Programs, Royal Ambassador Chapters, Scouts, work shop, Week-day Bible Schools, library, and various other means.

One of the most far-reaching tasks undertaken by the Association is that of providing a home for boys who have "no one to care." **Kentucky Boys' Estate**, on Westport Road, has ministered to approximately 45 teen-age boys since its inception some four years ago. There are at present about 20 boys there, for whom Long Run provides a home, clothing, food, spending money and all essentials. There is some source of income for a few of the boys. If there is a relative who can provide a portion of the cost of his upkeep, the home expects such aid in its work. For others there is no help except that which the Association provides. Several boys have "graduated" and now hold responsible positions, having taken their places in society as citizens.

Long Run Baptists long considered the need of assembly grounds where might be held encampments for the youth of our churches. In 1949 there came into the hands of the Association a four hundred acre tract in Shelby County which is ideal for such a project. Many improvements are on the property which may be converted to the use of an encampment. A large lake—said to be the largest privately owned lake in the state—will provide water-front building sites for many of our churches as the property is further developed, it is hoped. Known as **CEDARMORE**, this property has possibilities of becoming the greatest summer assembly grounds to be found. Plans have been made to prepare this tract for use so that the Association and other Associations of Central Region might reap the benefits of such a program without delay. Assembly dates have been set for the various groups, including Royal Ambassador, Girls' Auxiliary, Y.

W. A., Brotherhood, W. M. S., Sunday School, Training Union, Pastors, Baptist Student Union, and others.

These Baptist institutional projects are by no means the only expression of our missionary endeavor. A full-time minister is employed to coordinate the work of our churches in the public and other institutions of the city and county. Jails and hospitals afford countless opportunities for Baptists to lift high the name of Christ. Approximately thirty institutions are visited monthly in this organized program by a host of volunteer workers from the churches.

The work of ministering to the student is supported by the Association as a Baptist Student Secretary labors among the students at the University of Louisville. There is also student work at Kentucky Baptist Hospital and at General Hospital.

The Associational organization serves the churches in many additional ways. It employs a director of recreational activities. The 1948-49 season saw the Baptist Leagues break all records for programs of this type. Ninety-eight teams participated in the Baptist Bowling Leagues; the basketball leagues were composed of 87 teams; and the following year 88 teams were engaged in softball play.

Long Run Baptists are active in radio ministry. Seventeen Baptist Churches, plus the Association, have regularly scheduled broadcasts on "The Baptist Hour" over WGRC, Louisville, 8:00 A. M., Monday through Saturday. Many churches have regularly scheduled Sunday and week-day broadcasts.

The overall program of Long Run Association employs 23 paid workers and hundreds of volunteers, the number of which varies from month to month.

CONCLUSION

As Baptists heed the command of the Lord to go into all the world, may the time never come when Long Run Association forgets that He said, ". . . beginning at Jerusalem . . ." and that Jerusalem was the geographical point at which He was speaking to them. We must go to the uttermost part of the earth from a truly missionary, spiritually strengthened home base. Roughly one-half the population of the city of Louisville—an estimated 200,000 members of our population of less than half a million—are unchurched. Baptists should weep over Louisville, just as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and then go forth to sacrifice for them in His Name as He went forth to sacrifice in the name of God the Father for the whole world.