TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUMES XXX - XXXI 2010 - 2011

TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORY is published by the Texas Baptist Historical Society, an auxiliary of the Historical Council of the Texas Baptist Historical Collection of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and is sent to all members of the Society. Regular annual membership dues in the Society are ten dollars. Student memberships are seven dollars and family memberships are thirteen dollars.

Correspondence concerning memberships should be addressed to the Secretary-Treasurer, 333 North Washington, Dallas, Texas, 75246-1798. Notice of nonreceipt of an issue must be sent to the Society within three months of the date of publication of the issue. The Society is not responsible for copies lost because of failure to report a change of address. Article typescripts should be sent to Editor, *Texas Baptist History*, 3000 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas, Texas, 75211. Books for review should be sent to *Texas Baptist History*, Dallas Baptist University.

The views expressed in the journal do not necessarily represent those of the Texas Baptist Historical Society, the Historical Council, the Texas Baptist Historical Collection, or the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

US ISSN 0732-43274

CONTENTS

Volume XXX, 2010

Volume XXXI, 2011

EDITOR'S NOTES

We are proud to bring you this combined issue of *Texas Baptist History, 2010-2011*. With this issue, we resume what we expect to be a two-year cycle of combined issues. However, if at any point we see the need to issue an edition that will be for a single year as we did in 2009, we will certainly do so.

I am also pleased to introduce this issue's copy editor, Dr. Mary K. Nelson. Dr. Nelson is a graduate of Baylor University (B.A.), Southern Methodist University (M.A.), and Rice University, (M.A., Ph.D.) and is Associate Professor of English at Dallas Baptist University where she joined the faculty in 2004. At DBU she enjoys teaching a variety of classes including Shakespeare, Global Drama, and World Literature. Her recent publications include articles on Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *Henry VIII*. In 2009, she enjoyed participating in the Young Scholars of the Baptist Academy conference held in Oxford, England. Mary lives with her husband, Alan, in Grand Prairie, Texas. They are members of First Baptist Church of Arlington.

The articles for the 2010 issue begin with one of two presentations about Baptists and their response to Roman Catholic presidential candidates in the twentieth-century, originally presented at the Spring Joint Meeting of the Texas Baptist Historical Society and the Texas State Historical Association in Dallas in March of 2010. This particular article, written by David Holcomb, Associate Professor of History and Political Science at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor focuses upon the response of Texas Baptists to the first Roman Catholic to run for president in the United States, Governor Al Smith of New York. While the other presentation, one done on the Texas Baptist response to the presidential candidacy of

John F. Kennedy was not available as this issue of the journal went to press, perhaps it will be available in the future for publication.

The other article in the 2010 issue is about early Texas Baptist giant, Rufus C. Burleson. Written by Scott Bryant, University Chaplain and Vice President for Spiritual Development at East Texas Baptist University, the article discusses Burleson's initial appearance in Texas as a missionary and pastor from 1848-1851. Bryant explores how Burleson's early involvement in the frontier state shaped both his later ministry in Texas and how Baptist life in Texas would develop.

The 20ll issue includes four articles. The first three were presented at the 2011 joint meeting of the Texas Baptist Historical Society and Texas State Historical Association under a session titled "We've Got a Story to Tell: The Impact and Influence of Denominational Media in the Shaping of Texas Baptists." The first article, written by Marv Knox, Editor of the *Baptist Standard* examines the place of denominational journalism in Texas Baptist life. In it Knox demonstrates the significant role that the *Baptist Standard* has had of informing Texas Baptists and sometimes as he writes, helping "Baptists process and determine the big issues or turning points in the convention."

Knox's article is followed by one written by Scott Collins, Vice President of Communications at Buckner International. Like Knox, Collins builds upon the role of denominational press but especially focuses upon the role of public relations in informing and shaping public opinion among Texas Baptists. Collins asks serious questions about the sociological shift "from mass communications to personal communications."

The third article features a response to Knox's and Collins's presentations written by Rand Jenkins, Director of Communications for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Jenkins builds upon ideas introduced by Collins and thoughtfully responds to both presentations by drawing attention to shifts in sociological trends regarding "brand

names" and "trust" which have serious implications for the future of Texas Baptist life. All three of these presentations present both a historical perspective and a consideration of how this history of denominational media may be changing as we move into the second decade of the twenty-first-century.

The final article for 2011 comes from a presentation made by Jennifer Hawks at the TBHS fall meeting held at the BGCT meeting in November of 2011. Hawks, a graduate student at George W. Truett Theological Seminary gives an overview of the life and ministry of another Texas Baptist giant, Mary Hill Davis. This article outlines the critical role that Davis had in focusing the attention of Texas Baptists on missions primarily through speaking across the state as a representative of the WMU. Hawks suggests that "The tireless commitment of Mary Hill Davis to missions left an indelible mark upon all future generations of Texas Baptists."

B. F. Riley was one of the first historians of Texas Baptist life. In his *A History of Texas Baptists* published in 1907, Riley recorded the first seven decades of Texas Baptist life. As he reflected upon these decades in his conclusion, Riley wrote on pages 472-73, "The world beyond has not infrequently misunderstood the varied conditions through which Texas Baptists have passed. They have been thought to be sometimes feverishly contentious, living and thriving in disorder. . . . [However] Great spirits are theirs, not a few, alike in pulpit and in pew, of men and women, too, and the possibilities of achievements are multiplying with the years. If the same wisdom, the same unflinching courage, the same resistance to the invasion of error shall mark the periods to come, Texas Baptists are destined to achieve a work that will place them most conspicuously in the eye of the world." We hope that as you read this issue of *Texas Baptist History* that you will catch a glimpse of these "great spirits" called Texas Baptists.

TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XXX 2010

THE DANGEROUS AL SMITH: TEXAS BAPTISTS' FEARS CONCERNING THE 1928 ELECTION

When Al Smith emerged as the leading candidate for the Democratic Party's nomination for president in 1928, Texas Baptists were whipped into a frenzy. As a Catholic, anti-Prohibitionist New Yorker, and grandson of immigrants, Smith represented the very things that Texas Baptists feared. Smith's nomination also presented for those "solid-South" Democrats a political and religious dilemma. Politically, no Republican presidential candidate had ever carried Texas. The Smith candidacy forced white Texas Baptists to consider the heretofore unthinkable prospect of voting for a Republican. At the same time, fears of a "wet" Catholic president threatened the tradition of Baptist clergy shunning partisan politics in favor of otherworldly endeavors. For many Texas Baptists, the threat of a Catholic and anti-Prohibitionist in the White House transcended their traditional reticence to mix religion and politics.

Scholars differ in their interpretations of what dominated Southern Protestant opposition to Smith. Some argue that the "liquor question" was the key issue while others argue that it was Smith's Catholicism. Still others contend it was urban America and her host of social problems. In reality, all of these factors were closely related making both "Rum" and "Romanism" the focus of political activism on the part of Texas Baptists during the 1928 campaign. These factors, combined with a good dose of intra-party factionalism in Texas, paved the way for a Democratic rebellion and a Herbert Hoover victory in the Lone Star State.

Al Smith and Prohibitionist Fears

With a political career nurtured in the Tammany Hall and machine politics of New York City, Al Smith became a national figure and a leader in the Democratic Party after winning his second term as governor of New York in 1922. By 1924, Smith's name was frequently being raised as a possible presidential candidate. When the Democratic Convention met in New York City in 1924, Franklin Roosevelt nominated Smith who by then represented a rising group of urban Democrats who opposed Prohibition. Smith did not secure the nomination as delegates sought not to alienate Southerners with a candidate who was urban, Catholic, and wet. Nonetheless, Smith's stock continued to rise in the party as he won another term as governor of New York and even gained support from a number of state Republicans in the process. By 1928, Smith became the key figure of the Democratic Party. Nominated once again by Roosevelt, Smith won the 1928 Democratic presidential nomination on the first ballot.[1]

Even before Smith secured the Democratic nomination, Baptists in Texas began raising opposition to the prospect of an anti-Prohibitionist candidate. Dating back to the nineteenth-century, Baptists were some of the staunchest supporters of Prohibition, often arguing that it was the source of a multitude of social ills. And for many Baptists, it was no coincidence that these ills plagued urban immigrant America. Viewing the salvation of souls as their ultimate concern, most Texas Baptist leaders spent their time emphasizing missions and evangelism and were reluctant to engage in social or political advocacy. Nonetheless, the abuse of alcohol or the consumption of alcohol was perceived to be such a significant moral problem that Baptists, as early as the 1880s, began advocating for legal solutions to the "liquor problem." Even the Texas Baptist statesman, George W. Truett, who conspicuously avoided partisan politics from the pulpit, travelled the country in support of the ban on liquor sales. Truett's vigorous advocacy

was reflected in his characterization of alcohol as "still the great enemy of decent civil government, the Gibralter [*sic*] of bad politics in America. It is political harlotry for the state to go into the business of legalizing the liquor traffic."[2] Not surprisingly, then, the rise of an anti-Prohibition political leader met with formal responses from Texas Baptists. As early as November of 1927, the Baptist General Convention of Texas passed a resolution opposing any presidential candidate who was "a friend of the outlawed liquor traffic."[3]

Prohibition was the most common theme of political protest expressed on the pages of the *Baptist Standard* during the 1928 campaign. In January, the editor declared: "We have a great host of men and women who will not be deceived by any aid for the favor of the South. They will not vote for any man, whatever his party affiliation, who, according to his record and declarations, stands for the modification or nullification of the Eighteenth Amendment."[4] When F. M. McConnell became editor of the *Baptist Standard* in February of 1928, he committed to keep the paper out of partisan politics. On several occasions, and no doubt under regular pressure to denounce Smith and endorse the Republican candidate, Herbert Hoover, McConnell affirmed that it was inappropriate for a religious paper to endorse political candidates or parties. "Those who contribute articles for the *Baptist Standard*," McConnell editorialized, "are earnestly requested to keep out of them the advocacy of political candidates."[5] McConnell, however, was not reticent about attacking the liquor trade and, in one editorial, even argued that the nation's prosperity of the 1920s was a consequence of the nation's commitment to Prohibition.[6]

McConnell and other Texas Baptist leaders justified their Prohibitionist advocacy during the presidential election year as primarily a moral, rather than a political, concern. Pressure mounted on Texas Baptist leaders to take a stand on the prospects of a Smith candidacy, however. When a report emerged identifying Truett as a supporter of Smith, Truett, typically uncomfortable discussing political candidates, felt compelled

to make the following public statement: "While I uniformly voted with one party, I could not, in the present condition of our country, vote for the candidates of any party, of whatever name, who are avowed enemies of our prohibition laws, and who stand for the nullification of the Eighteenth Amendment to our national constitution."[7] Despite McConnell's early calls for nonpartisanship, the editorials of the *Baptist Standard* grew increasingly anti-Smith as the election year progressed. By August of 1928, the *Baptist Standard* editor declared: "Several times, as a Democrat, the editor has been handed candidates to vote for who were not to his liking; but this time one has been handed [to] him for whom he cannot vote."[8]

Prohibition loomed large in the minds of other Baptists outside of Texas as well. "No political party can ride to the White House on a beer keg" declared the Social Service Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Similar opposition to anti-Prohibition candidates was made by the SBC's Woman's Missionary Union. Likewise, the 1928 Southern Baptist Convention, held in Chattanooga, Tennessee, passed a resolution calling for Baptists to abandon the Democratic Party if it nominated an anti-Prohibitionist candidate.[9] Flamboyant fundamentalist Baptist pastor, J. Frank Norris, admitted to the saliency of Prohibition when he declared that one could "dismiss Smith's other faults and still oppose him for his support of 'the greatest curse of all time, namely, the liquor traffic.'"[10]

Immigration, Urbanization, and Anti-Catholicism

Rum was inextricably intertwined with the Romanism that Texas Baptists feared in a Smith presidency as well. As products of a Democratic, southern, Protestant, and prohibitionist culture, Texas Baptists had long felt threatened by the significant social changes that were taking place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Rapid immigration and urbanization had been changing the character of the nation and by the 1920s, a

clear divide had emerged between rural and urban society. As Texas Baptists' leading statesman of the 1920s, Truett, identified urbanization and immigration as two of the "manifold perils" that threatened America. "We are menaced," Truett declared, "by our vast and fast-growing cities . . . The challenge of our civilization and the test of our Christianity are these same cities."[11] For Truett, the so-called "lawlessness," "frivolities and vanities," "craze for amusements," and "divorce mills" of urban America were in large part due to what he considered the "alien populations of the world with their strange customs and beliefs and ideals and sentimentalisms."[12]

The large influx of Catholic and Jewish immigrants from southern and eastern Europe heightened anti-Catholic and nativist sentiments among American Protestants in general and Texas Baptists in particular. Expanding religious pluralism was one of the primary "historical realities" that hindered the Protestant quest for a "Christian America" according to Robert Handy.[13] Thus, as the non-Protestant population grew, responses by Protestant leaders often became more strident. Represented in organizations such as the American Protective Association, nativism often warned of "popish plots" and Catholic subservience to a "foreign potentate."[14]

For Texas Baptists such as Truett, Catholicism presented not only a cultural threat, but a challenge to their political theology as well. Baptists, with their commitment to freedom of conscience, congregational polity, and the separation of church and state, were champions of American democracy and its commitment to religious and other political freedoms. The growing Catholic presence in the United States was perceived as a threat to these values due to its "sacerdotal, sacramentarian, and ecclesiastical" message, according to Truett.[15] The Catholic Church's tendency toward church-state establishments received Truett's clear denunciation as well. Declaring that "every state church on earth is a spiritual tyranny," Truett frequently traced the declining spiritual power of the Church after its becoming the official religion of the

Roman Empire.[16] Nonetheless, Truett did not engage in some of the more acidic barbs leveled by more extreme nativists of his time. While the Catholic Church provided a perfect foil for his defense of Baptist principles and American democracy, he likewise argued that religious freedom be extended to all people, including Catholics. Apparently, the main source of concern was papal involvement in politics. Even the *Baptist Standard's* editor McConnell suggested that the Pope should get out of politics so that Baptists could vote for Catholics just as they vote for Methodists and Presbyterians.[17]

Baptists and other Protestants feared papal influence in American politics with the rise of Catholic political power. According to James Thompson, "Smith's supposed subjection to papal directives caused Baptists to shudder. It took little prompting to believe that the election of a Catholic president would be the first step toward the persecution of the Baptist people and the silencing of their witness for God."[18] Such concerns were expressed on several occasions in the *Baptist Standard*. Smith was accused of being a "tool of the Romanist conspiracy" who would "use political office to further his church's interest." According to Richard Hughes, Texas Baptists feared that "a Catholic official like Smith was not only going to violate the Eighteenth Amendment but the First, which forbids favoritism toward one church."[19] Baptists argued that Catholic teaching and practice made it mandatory for a Catholic official to prefer the Catholic Church over other denominations. Thus, for Texas Baptists, there was an irreconcilable conflict between Catholic practice and the First Amendment.[20]

As Smith's ascendancy to the Democratic ticket seemed likely, the measured pronouncements of Truett and McClellan seemed to be drowned out by more radical voices. Fundamentalist pastor J. Frank Norris led many of the pro-Hoover efforts in Texas and engaged in some of the most vitriolic anti-Smith rhetoric. Through his newspaper, *The Fundamentalist*, Norris even attacked fellow Baptists who were unwilling to publicly endorse Hoover. As early as the summer of 1927, Norris

began challenging the legitimacy of any candidate who "owes his first allegiance to a foreign power." By 1928, Norris was predicting a St. Bartholomew's Day-type massacre would occur in the United States if a Roman Catholic were elected president.[21] If Catholics gained political power in the U.S., he warned, they would "behead every Protestant preacher and disembowel every Protestant mother. They would burn to ashes every Protestant Church and dynamite every Protestant school. They would destroy the public schools and annihilate every one of our institutions."[22]

Norris likewise seized upon any attempt to reinforce the stereotype of Catholics as intemperate and a threat to accepted social mores. Dredging up old Smith quotes such as, "Wouldn't you like to have your foot on the rail and blow the foam off some suds?" anti-Smith forces such as Norris echoed claims that Smith was a drunkard.[23] Norris was not alone in issuing scathing attacks on Smith. Capturing virtually every perceived threat of his day in one statement, J. W. Hunt, President of McMurry College in Abilene, Texas, warned of a "Catholic shrine in the White House" if Smith were elected. According to Hunt, it was the "chicken stealing, crap-shooting, bootlegging negro crowd" that supported the "dirty, drunken, bum," Smith.[24]

Baptist Electioneering

Despite the Southern Baptist tradition of shunning political activism, particularly among its clergy, the threat of a Catholic in the White House pushed many Baptist pastors into the political arena. According to Barry Hankins, Norris began speaking out against Smith as early as 1926, but with Smith's nomination, Norris suspended his ministry and began actively campaigning for Hoover in Texas and Oklahoma. By that time, Norris had already published a booklet arguing against a Smith presidency and had given numerous anti-Smith addresses, including his sermon "The Conspiracy of Rum and Romanism to Rule This Government."[25] In 3½ months, Norris spoke

119 times in thirty cities promoting the Hoover campaign and attacking the "wet-Catholic Smith."[26]

After the Smith nomination became a reality in the summer of 1928, some Texas Baptists moved beyond the guise of Prohibition and joined Norris in more explicit political opposition to Smith. According to *The Dallas Morning News*, two hundred and fifty preachers and laymen in Texas came out in support of Hoover in August of 1928. In September, another forty pastors of churches affiliated with the San Antonio Baptist Association publicly declared their political opposition to Smith.[27] Former editor of the *Baptist Standard* and trustee of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, J. B. Cranfill, was a leading Hoover proponent in 1928. His *Southern Advance* newspaper provided yet another outlet for pro-Hoover and anti-Smith propaganda that no doubt influenced Baptist voters. When Cranfill published a special edition of his paper that included a sample ballot illustrating how Texas Democrats could vote for Hoover and the remainder of the Democratic ticket, the Republican Party paid for half of a million copies to be mailed to rural Texans.[28] Norris and Cranfill as well as J. D. Sandefer, president of Simmons University in Abilene (now Hardin-Simmons University), were some of the leading Baptist anti-Smith forces in Texas.[29]

Baptist electioneering intensified during the months leading up to the Democratic Convention held in Houston. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary had become particularly influential in anti-Smith circles, especially Professor B. A. Copass. Copass pleaded with Texas Baptists to "tell that organization behind this iniquitious [*sic*] program that if they use the lawless and Irish Catholic elements in the North to force the nomination of Smith, we will break ranks and defeat him at the polls in November."[30] Baptists likewise mobilized in Houston with prayer vigils being held at First Baptist Church apparently seeking divine intervention to derail the Smith nomination. Once Smith received the nomination, many of these same Baptists became outspoken supporters of

the Hoover campaign. Along with Norris, wealthy Baptist layman Carr Collins campaigned for Hoover as did the former pastor of the First Baptist Church, Dallas, R. T. Hanks, who had become the chairman of an anti-Smith club.[31]

Whether through Prohibitionist advocacy or outright endorsement for Hoover, the Baptists in Texas were overwhelmingly anti-Smith in the 1928 presidential election. Many broke with the Democratic Party regulars and became "Hoovercrats. Baptist laymen included the current governor, Dan Moody, former governor and Baylor University President Pat Neff, Carr Collins, and State Supreme Court Justice William Pierson.[32] There were a few notable exceptions to the Hoovercrat movement among Texas Baptists. Governor Moody, for example, committed publicly to support the Democratic ticket. At the same time, however, he criticized Smith's anti-Prohibition stance and refused to actively campaign for Smith. Former Congressman and active Baptist layman, James Young, however, became the Democratic Party chairman and pledged to support all Democratic candidates, including Smith. Moreover, Young, a supporter of Prohibition, pushed the State Democratic Executive Committee to prevent "Hoovercrats" from participating in future Democratic primaries until they supported the entire Democratic ticket in a future primary.[33]

Moody and Young became central figures in a Texas Democratic Party split between so-called "bone-dry Hoovercrats" and party regulars. Among the party regulars was a growing number of liberal Democrats who had sought to rid Texas of its Klan influenced nativism and fanatical embrace of Prohibition. Moody faced pressure from anti-Smith Democrats not to actively campaign for the presidential candidate while party leaders frequently called upon him to begin making public appearances for Smith.[34] Moody's tepid support of the Democratic ticket along with Democratic factionalism in the state spelled doom for the Smith campaign. For the first time in history, a Republican won Texas in a presidential election. Even the Democratic governor's Baptist wife voted for Hoover.[35]

Conclusion

In the end, Texas Baptists played a significant role in the 1928 presidential election. Whether motivated by Prohibition or anti-Catholicism, Texas Baptists became actively involved in a political fight to save, from their perspective, American culture, values, and democracy. While some have argued that the 1928 election was merely another political sparring match over Prohibition, Norman Brown has suggested that the religious question impacted the electoral outcome as well. For instance, Smith performed worse in those areas of the state that not only had heavy Baptist populations, but also where Norris and other anti-Smith and anti-Catholic leaders concentrated their efforts.[36]

The fact that Smith won in a number of other Southern states with large Baptist populations suggests that while the anti-Smith rhetoric found receptive ears throughout much of the South, Texas Baptists organized more effectively and advocated more forcefully than their counterparts in other states. It also suggests that Texas Baptists were more willing to shed their party loyalty due to the prospect of a Catholic president although this was fostered by pre-existing party factionalism. Texas Baptist clergy, normally unwilling to engage in partisan politics, were also thrust into the political arena because of the gravity of the issues at stake. Certainly the fears of what would happen to the separation of church and state and religious liberty enhanced the effect of the anti-Smith polemics by Baptist clergy. After Smith's defeat in the 1928 election, Texas Baptist clergy were able to return to their primary mission of personal salvation only for some of them to brandish their rhetorical swords again when a similar crisis emerged in 1960.

J. David Holcomb
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
Belton, Texas

NOTES

[1]Barry Hankins, *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, the Roaring Twenties and Today's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); see also Allan J. Lichtman, *Prejudice and the Old Politics: The Presidential Election of 1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); and Christopher M. Finan, *Alfred E. Smith: The Happy Warrior* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).

[2]"Dr. Truett Makes Vigorous Appeal to American People to Retain 18th Amendment," October 22, 1933, untitled newspaper clipping, George W. Truett Collection, A. Webb Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, file 275.

[3]*Proceedings of the 79th Annual Session of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Held at Wichita Falls, Texas, November 16-20, 1927* (Dallas, 1928), p. 99.

[4]"Current Comment," *Baptist Standard,* January 19, 1928, 6.

[5]"The *Baptist Standard* and Partisan Politics," *Baptist Standard*, March 22, 1928, 4.

[6]*Baptist Standard,* June 28, 1928, quoted in Richard Bennett Hughes, "Texas Churches and Presidential Politics, 1928 and 1960" (Ph.D. diss., St. Louis University, 1968), 44.

[7]George W. Truett, "Southern Baptist President Denies Being for Al Smith," untitled newspaper clipping, George W. Truett Collection, file 166.

[8]F. M. McConnell, "Misunderstood," *Baptist Standard*, August 9, 1928, 4.

[9]Hughes, 41.

[10]James J. Thompson, *Tried As By Fire: Southern Baptists and Religious Controversies of the 1920s* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1982), 189.

[11]George W. Truett, "The Coming of the Kingdom in America," *Baptist Standard,* October 5, 1911, 2.

[12]Ibid.

[13]See Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[14]Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 854.

[15]George W. Truett, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today," Presidential Address to the Sixth Baptist World Congress in Atlanta, Georgia (Nashville, TN.: The Sunday School Board, 1939), 5-6.

[16]George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," reprinted in *Baptist History and Heritage* 33 (Winter 1998): 69.

[17]Hughes, 40.

[18]Thompson, 191.

[19]Hughes, 44-45.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Hankins, *Jesus and Gin*, 199-200.

[22]J. Frank Norris, "Roman Catholicism versus Protestantism," *Searchlight* (July 14, 1922): 1; quoted in Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 51-52.

[23]Hankins, *Jesus and Gin*, 193 and Norman D. Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1984), 411.

[24]Quoted in Bailey, *Southern White Protestantism*, 105.

[25]Hankins, *Jesus and Gin*, 199.

[26]Brown, 411.

[27]Hughes, 42.

[28]Brown, 411.

[29]Ibid., 403.

[30]B. A. Copass, "Al Smith and Company Throw Down the Gauntlet," *Baptist Standard* (February 2, 1928), 2.

[31]Hughes, 47.

[32]Hughes, 36.

[33]Brown, 409.

[34]Brown, 417.

[35]Brown, 415.

[36]Brown, 417-18.

RUFUS C. BURLESON: MISSIONARY-PASTOR, 1848-1851

To borrow a phrase from a well-known bumper sticker, Rufus Burleson was not born in Texas, but he got here as fast as he could, and after arriving in the Lone Star State, he decided never to leave. Born and raised in Alabama and educated in Tennessee and Kentucky, Burleson spent the majority of his professional life in his adopted state. Burleson was an important Texas Baptist leader who worked diligently to educate and serve Baptist individuals, congregations, and institutions in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. While perhaps best known for his role as the only two time president of Baylor University in both Independence and Waco, Burleson's contributions to Texas Baptist history far exceed simply his connection with the oldest Baptist institution of higher learning in the state. Before accepting the call to lead Baylor at Independence in 1851, Burleson was the Pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston and a missionary assigned to Texas by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Because Burleson's contributions as Baylor president have been well-chronicled, this paper seeks to evaluate his years of ministry in Texas prior to his acceptance of the Baylor presidency.

Burleson was educated at Nashville University and Western Baptist Theological Seminary in Covington, Kentucky. During his studies in Nashville he was a member of the First Baptist Church of Nashville. That congregation recognized God's calling on Burleson's life and issued him a ministerial license on December 12, 1840.[1] Burleson committed his career to Texas at the conclusion of his studies in Kentucky. Upon

the completion of his theological studies at Western Baptist Theological Seminary, early biographer Harry Haynes reports that Burleson faced the West, diploma in hand and vowed, "This day I consecrate my life to Texas."[2] Although he was committed to ministering in Texas, he did not go immediately to the Lone Star State and instead spent his first few post-graduate years serving in northern Mississippi. During his time in Mississippi he was ordained to the ministry on June 8, 1845 by Catalpa Baptist Church in Octibbeha, Mississippi.[3]

For the duration of his Mississippi pastorate, Burleson never gave up on his desire to serve in Texas. In 1848, Burleson's dream came true as he was appointed a missionary to Texas by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.[4] In the fall just prior to Burleson's appointment, William Tryon, the pastor of the First Baptist Church [FBC] of Houston, tragically died after contracting yellow fever while caring for his congregation during an epidemic.[5] In an undated letter to Tryon's granddaughter, Sadie Clark, Burleson reported that Tryon was urged to leave town until the epidemic was over but refused. Burleson further wrote that when prompted to leave Houston, Tryon responded, "a brave soldier never deserts his post in the hour of danger."[6] Burleson had learned much about the beloved Tryon from the members of the Houston congregation and acknowledged him as an important Texas Baptist leader. At the conclusion of his letter to Clark, Burleson offered that her grandfather's name would "shine as a resplendent star amid the galaxy of Texas heroes forever."[7]

Following the death of their beloved pastor, the First Baptist Church of Houston contacted the Home Mission Board for suggestions, and the Board informed the church of Burleson's recent appointment and availability. The Home Mission Board heaped high praise on Burleson as they stated, "We most cordially commend him to the church and the denomination. He is a young man of piety, talents and good acquirements."[8] The church responded by affirming Burleson as their pastor on March 4, 1848.[9]

Early Years in Houston

When Burleson arrived in Houston, the congregation was still in the infancy stage as James Huckins, the first missionary sent to Texas from the American Baptist Home Mission Society, had helped organize the Houston congregation in 1841. As a missionary supported by the Home Mission Board, Burleson was expected to send regular reports to the Board's home office. His first report indicated that he baptized one person during his first month of service and was greatly encouraged by his prospects for the future.[10] The Houston congregation expressed their gratitude to the Home Mission Board by sending in a $5.00 contribution that was reported in the July issue of the journal.[11] Burleson believed that the missionary activity was not limited to the officers of the church and desired to pass along his missionary zeal and fervor to the members of the congregation. He viewed the Texas frontier as spiritually ripe for harvest and knew that the Baptist laity could play an important role in proclaiming the gospel. In his September report, he indicated his desire to dedicate a season to emphasize the importance of missions, and he was optimistic that "by this plan we hope to make our people eminently a missionary people."[12]

Although his formal education had ended years before, Burleson remained committed to his own private study. He fully believed that his pastoral responsibilities demanded continued study and intense mental preparation. His personal diary reveals elements of concern regarding his own spiritual growth and maturity. Numerous entries reveal Burleson's belief that he carried a great burden as the pastor and spiritual leader of the congregation. If he failed to prepare, grow, and mature spiritually, then he would be unable to meet the demands of his pastoral position. An entry from his journal reflects his belief that his private study and education determined one's success as a minister. "I must," he wrote, "fix some hours for study when no one can be admitted to my studio or I shall fail

miserably as a minister."[13] His diary also reveals Burleson's self-awareness as he admitted that he enjoyed receiving praise from men for his actions. He wrote, "My ruling passion I fear is love of approbation—whatever I do or determine to do—this hateful passion pollutes it." Burleson also displayed his spiritual maturity in the same diary entry as he concluded with the prayer, "Oh God enable me to guard this passion with ceaseless vigilance."[14]

Revivalistic Preaching

During Burleson's tenure as pastor of FBC of Houston, he still viewed himself as a missionary who was solely responsible not only for his congregation but also the surrounding communities. In the mid-nineteenth century, Baptist work in Texas was still in the beginning stages. The need for spiritual instruction and gospel proclamation throughout the state was great as the population of Texas increased rapidly following its acceptance into the Union in 1845. Baptist preachers around Houston quickly grew to respect Burleson and appreciate his missionary zeal, and many of them asked him to lead revival services in their congregations.[15] Individual Baptists also learned of his passion and interest in missionary work and invited Burleson to come and help organize new Baptist congregations.[16] Burleson's preaching style and engaging personality connected well with audiences, and the invitations to preach in various congregations and locations continued throughout his time in Houston. Although highly educated for his time, the majority of Burleson's audiences were not, and he made it a point to communicate on the level of his audience.

His personal diary also reveals some of his strategies in communicating the gospel on the frontier. He made an effort to "give religious experience great prominence and study to make every sermon and exhortation clear, pathetical, and powerful."[17] Another diary entry reveals his desire to "touch if possible the heart, the intellect, the imagination, and the

passions."[18] Burleson recognized that individuals would respond to the gospel in different ways and attempted to communicate the gospel through various means in order to maximize his effectiveness as a preacher. He evidently was able to accomplish these goals as he became an in-demand preacher throughout the region.

When reflecting on the preaching abilities of Burleson, Harlan J. Matthews wrote, "He was one of the most cultured preachers who ever graced a Texas pulpit. He was not a profound expositor of the Word, neither did he excel in exegesis, but his messages were filled with practical lessons and illustrated with impressive stories from history, literature and personal experience and observation."[19]

Another entry in his personal diary illustrates his excitement regarding his position in the city of Houston, a burgeoning city at the time of his arrival. Burleson observed, "Houston is a central point at which men assemble from all Western Texas. My acquaintance in the county and position in the denomination enable me to do immense good. And God will hold me responsible for my influence."[20] Burleson definitely took advantage of the influence and responsibility afforded him by his position as pastor of FBC Houston as he quickly became involved in the broader Baptist work in the area and state.

Burleson enjoyed particular success in preaching in protracted meetings in both Galveston and Huntsville. In a report from the end of 1848, he was glad to state, "I have spent the most of the last quarter in attending protracted meetings at Galveston, Fanthorps, and Huntsville. In each place the Lord has prospered the work gloriously. The churches have been much strengthened by the addition of some of the best persons in the community. At the several meetings from sixty to seventy have professed—I have witnessed the baptism of forty-eight."[21] In an entry in his diary at the end of 1848 he recorded that he spent seventy-one days in protracted meetings.[22]

The opportunities to preach revivals in existing churches and to help establish congregations in new communities fit

perfectly with what Burleson understood God wanted him to do with his life. He was so inspired by and drawn to missionary work that he offered his resignation as pastor of FBC Houston on September 2, 1850 in order to devote himself full-time to his traveling missionary work. The church did not immediately accept the resignation and urged and begged him to reconsider.[23] The church was evidently persuasive in their argument as he continued in his role as pastor until the following year.

Convention Activities

His position as pastor of FBC Houston and his missionary activities in the surrounding areas provided Burleson with the opportunity to get to know many other Baptist leaders throughout the state. He participated in the first meeting of the Baptist State Convention on September 8, 1848 in which he was asked to serve as the first corresponding secretary and was appointed a member of the committee to draft the organization's constitution.[24] The position of corresponding secretary meshed well with his traveling ministry as the appointment necessitated that he travel throughout the region in an effort to learn about and report on the happenings among the various congregations associated with the newly formed convention. His responsibilities as corresponding secretary also allowed him the opportunity to encourage Baptist congregations and individuals to support further mission work. Burleson's traveling ministry also helped convince him of the need for an educated ministry. Burleson believed that the education of the next generation of Baptist clergy was a crucial element in the future success of the Baptist denomination in Texas. Burleson's own life indicates that he believed strongly in an educated ministry. At the 1849 annual meeting hosted by Burleson's FBC Houston, he urged the ministers and Baptist laity in attendance to support ministerial education. He stated, "As the claims of ministerial education are so urgent upon

us; the widespread destitution around us so lamentable; the 'Macedonian cry' is so loudly shrieked in our ears, by six hundred millions of perishing heathens; are not the Baptists of Texas called upon for united, strong, and unceasing effort?"[25] Burleson clearly believed that Texas Baptists had a role to play in evangelizing not just the citizens of Texas but the citizens of the world.

After a little more than a year in Houston, Burleson had a good understanding of the extensive needs of the region and state. In the following example from one of his missionary reports to the Home Mission Board, Burleson makes a desperate appeal for more workers while also lauding the beautiful landscape of his adopted state:

> My heart is often burdened while beholding the moral desert that spreads along the beautiful rivers and over the fertile plains of Texas. Here is field more than one hundred miles square, embracing five wealthy counties, and the cities of Houston and Galveston, and but ONE BAPTIST MINISTER. Shall our earnest prayer for more laborers be unheeded? God forbid![26]

The missionary journal of the convention was a source of information for readers but also a marketing tool for the convention. Burleson did his part in encouraging the readers to consider joining him in missionary service in Texas.[27] Burleson's entry, and others like it, would prompt those not interested in serving as a missionary themselves to offer more financial support of the work. From Burleson's perspective, Texas was in dire need of both, more ministers and financial support of those already in place.[28]

Texas was certainly a ripe mission field for the Southern Baptists, but Burleson also took great pride in what the Baptists in the state were able to accomplish. A report from early 1849 reveals the great strides achieved by the Baptists in Texas in a relatively short amount of time: "The recent organization of our State convention, the encouraging commencement of the endowment of our University, which has four teachers, and

the harmonious feeling and action of our denomination in all the benevolent enterprises of the age, indicate the healthy state of our cause."[29] Burleson's pride in the accomplishments of Texas Baptists is evident, and the report served to encourage the supporters of the Home Mission Board as they read of the organizational and institutional successes of their missionaries.

It is clear from Burleson's reports that he wanted the Baptists in Texas to contribute financially to the Home Mission Board. His missionary zeal no doubt contributed to this desire, but he also indicated a sense of obligation to the Board for their support of the work in Texas. "Our brethren throughout the State," Burleson said, "feel a deep and lasting sense of obligation for the aid furnished them by the Board of Domestic Missions. We are resolved to pay the debt of gratitude we owe by co-operating to the extent of our ability with the Southern Baptist Convention, in all its plans of benevolence."[30] The Baptists in Texas wanted to be equal partners on mission with the Board, not only as recipients of missionaries and money, but as contributors as well.[31]

The FBC Houston was a member of the Union Association, the first Baptist association of churches in the state. As pastor, Burleson regularly participated in the meetings of the Union Association. Burleson wrote the circular letter for the 1849 annual meeting in which he urged the Baptist congregations to defend believer's baptism. In "The Importance of Sound Doctrine," he argued that "we hold some important parts of Christianity which all other denominations omit or obscure."[32] From Burleson's perspective, believer's baptism was an important element of true Christianity, and the Baptist denomination had the responsibility to bear witness to this important teaching. Burleson knew that many other Protestant groups rejected the practice of believer's baptism, but he was adamant that Texas Baptists needed to defend the practice—not to be divisive but because Jesus himself instituted the practice. Burleson declared, "Let all men see

that we are not influenced by the love of party or of strife, but that we are impelled by a sincere desire to defend and promote the truth, as it came from the lips of our Savior and our Father."[33] Burleson believed it was important to proclaim and defend the practice of believer's baptism not only for the witness of the existing Baptist congregations but also for the future work of the Baptists in Texas. His concern for the future is clearly evident in the report: "We are now laying the foundation stone upon which the Baptist church in Texas will be built."[34]

An important part of that foundation for Texas Baptists was an educated ministry. At the meeting of the Texas Baptist Educational Society that was held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Union Baptist Association, Burleson declared that "The education of the rising ministry is of vital importance, and should be near the heart of every Baptist in Texas."[35] Little did Burleson know at the time that he would continue to extend the call to support ministerial education for the remainder of his career.

Because he believed in the importance of higher education, and out of his concern for the Baptist movement in the state, Burleson made it a point to attend the commencement exercises at the close of each academic year at Baylor University, then located at Independence, Texas. The travel required as the corresponding secretary of the Baptist State Convention also gave Burleson the opportunity to solicit funds for scholarships for Baylor. He was one of six agents appointed to help endow the presidency through the sale of scholarships.[36] While preaching revivals and ministering in towns throughout Southeast Texas, Burleson informed people of the financial needs of Baylor and also encouraged Baptist young people to attend the university.

The first President of Baylor, Dr. Henry L. Graves, submitted his resignation to the trustees of the university in the spring of 1851. The Trustees accepted Graves's resignation and then elected Burleson as his successor. Burleson accepted the

call and informed his beloved Houston congregation of his desire to resign from the pastorate and accept the presidency of Baylor. The mixture of emotions of the Houston church was evident as they made the decision to "yield without murmur, to the loss, for the greater good which may flow to our beloved denomination."[37] While the Houston congregation mourned the loss of their beloved pastor, they sent him off with their full support knowing that his leadership of the Baptist university in the state would ultimately be of great benefit to the entire Baptist denomination. Burleson's affection for the congregation in Houston is found in a letter he wrote to his brother Richard in 1863. In reflecting back on his relationship with the congregation, he noted that the "Houston Church was my first love and a truer, nobler church I never knew than it was when I accepted the Presidency of Baylor University."[38] The love and affection demonstrated by the congregation at his departure was evidently mutual as Burleson retained great love and respect for the First Baptist Church of Houston.

Conclusion

Burleson's time as both missionary and pastor in Houston was relatively short (1848-1851), and yet it was a very productive time. Burleson's diary includes a list of people that he baptized into membership of the congregation, and it reveals that forty-four whites and fifty-two "colored" people joined the congregation by baptism during his tenure.[39] The congregation stabilized under his leadership, and Burleson also learned of the Baptist work throughout the region as he became a popular and successful revival preacher and church organizer. His Houston pastorate also opened the doors to the Baptist work throughout the state as he participated in the early years of the state convention. In all of these activities he remained committed to the work of a missionary in a frontier location, including preaching sermons in his home church, leading revivals in existing congregations, and attempting

to establish new Baptist congregations in areas where none existed.

Texas's status as a frontier region for Baptist work also prompted Burleson to work towards establishing a foundation for Baptist work for future generations. At least one member of the next generation of Baptist leaders in the state recognized his contribution. When reflecting on Burleson's contribution to Baptist work in the state, J. M. Dawson, the long-time pastor of the First Baptist Church of Waco, wrote, "He was the greatest gift any mission board ever made to Texas."[40] Baptist higher education received the lion's share of the fruit of the "gift" of Rufus Burleson. After his short pastorate in Houston, Burleson spent the rest of his career educating Baptist laity and Baptist clergy in order to further the Baptist cause throughout the state. From his first days in Texas he believed he was called to serve the entire state, and it is clear from his activity while pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston that he did not limit his ministry solely to his congregation. He believed he was called to serve the people of the state, and so he did. While Burleson's leadership as an educator was significant in the early days of Baptist work in Texas, Burleson's contribution as a pastor, revival preacher, and missions advocate during the early stages of Baptist work in Texas helped lay a strong foundation for Baptists in the state and must not be neglected.

Scott Bryant
Baylor University
Waco, Texas

NOTES

[1]The ministerial license is located in the Rufus C. Burleson Collection held at The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. The license was signed by the Pastor and Moderator of FBC Nashville, R.B.C. Howell, the second President of the Southern Baptist Convention (1851-1858).

[2]*The Life and Writings of Rufus C. Burleson, D.D., L.L.D.,* comp. Georgia Burleson (Dallas, TX: Published by Family, 1901), 57.

[3]The ordination certificate can also be found in the Rufus C. Burleson Collection held at The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Serving as the clerk of the ordination council was another future president of Baylor University, William Carey Crane.

[4]"Appointments," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 2, no. 9 (February 1848): 217.

[5]He died November 16, 1847. In a surprising note, the *Missionary Journal* reported at his death that "he was more distinguished for his talent in originating plans for general improvement in morals and religion, than for his pastoral ability. "Obituaries," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 3, no. 2 (July 1848): 43.

[6]Undated letter from Rufus C. Burleson to Sadie Clark located in the Burleson Collection.

[7]Ibid.

[8]"Houston Church," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 2, no. 12 (May 1848): 292-93.

[9]*The Life and Writings of Rufus C. Burleson,* 76.

[10]"Rev. R.C. Burleson's Report," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal,* vol. 2, #12 (May 1848): 290.

[11]"Contributions," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal,* vol. 3, #3 (July 1848): 40.

[12]"Rev. R. C. Burleson's Report," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal,* vol. 3, #4 (September 1848): 91.

[13]*Diary of Rufus C. Burleson 1847-1849* , January 7, 1849 entry, Rufus Burleson Collection, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX, 38.

[14]*Rufus C. Burleson Diary 1847-1849*, 29.

[15]Burleson led a notable revival at FBC of Galveston in June 1848. *The Life and Writings of Rufus C. Burleson*, 79-82.

[16]Burleson helped form the FBC of Brenham and was present for its first service in 1851. He preached in the area for two weeks in December 1848 and was asked to preach the inaugural sermon celebrating the birth of the congregation. *The Life and Writings of Rufus C. Burleson*, 89.

[17]*Rufus C. Burleson Diary 1847-1849*, 33.

[18]*Rufus C. Burleson Diary 1847-1849*, 121.

[19]Harlan J. Matthews, "Preaching and Preachers," in *Centennial Story of Texas Baptists* ed. L. R. Elliott, (Dallas: Executive Board of Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1936), 95.

[20]*Rufus C. Burleson Diary 1847-1849*, 32.

[21]"Rev. R. C. Burleson's Report," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 3, no. 7 (December 1848): 163.

[22]*Rufus C. Burleson Diary 1847-1849*, 34.

[23]"Resolved unanimously that Bro. Burleson be requested to withdraw his letter of resignation." September 2, 1850 entry in *First Baptist Church Houston, Texas Minute Books 1841-1882,* ed. Loretta Burns and Martha Findley, (Pasadena, TX: C&L Printing,n.d.).

[24]*Organization Proceedings of the Baptist State Convention of Texas September 8-12, 1848*, 4.

[25]*Proceedings of the First Anniversary of the Baptist State Convention of Texas* (n.p. 1849). 9.

[26]"Rev. R. C. Burleson's Report," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* vol. 3, #12 (May 1849): 284.

[27]The Home Missions Board reported in January, 1849, that there was one Baptist minister for every ten thousand citizens in the state. See "Tabular View," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 3, no.8 (January 1849): 185.

[28]In his September, 1848 report he wrote, "Three Baptist ministers might be profitably employed in Houston and vicinity." "Rev. R. C. Burleson's Report," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 3, no. 4 (September 1848): 91.

[29]"Rev. R. C. Burleson's Report," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 3, no. 10 (March 1849): 238.

[30]Ibid.

[31]The March 1849 report also indicates that FBC of Houston was financially stable and no longer needed assistance from the Board. See "Rev. R.C. Burleson's Report," *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* 3, no. 10 (March 1849): 238.

[32]Rufus C. Burleson, "The Importance of Sound Doctrine" in *Minutes of the Ninth Anniversary of the Union Baptist Association* (Huntsville, TX: Texas Banner, 1849), 6.

[33]Ibid., 7.

[34]Ibid., 6.

[35]Ibid., 7-8.

[36]*Copy of the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of Baylor University at Independence, Texas*, June 13, 1850, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, TX, 55.

[37]*The Life and Writings of Rufus C. Burleson*, 97-98.

[38]Aug. 17, 1863 letter to Richard Burleson. Rufus Burleson Collection, The Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

[39]*Rufus C. Burleson Diary 1847-1849*, 139-40. Of the fifty-two "colored" individuals, three were noted as free, thirty-six as slaves and thirteen undesignated.

[40]J. M. Dawson, "Missions and Missionaries" in *Centennial Story of Texas Baptists*, 35.

TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Minutes
2009 Annual Meeting
November 16, 2009

The Texas Baptist Historical Society met Monday, November 16 at 10:00am at the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Houston, Texas, with fifty people present.

Alan Lefever, Fort Worth, presented the annual membership and financial report. For 2009 the society had a membership of eighty-six. During the year, the Society received income from journal sales and dues totaling $800.00 with expenditures of $10,125.00. On November 16, the checking account balance was $4,379.49.

The Society members endorsed the recommendations of the Nominating Committee and elected the following officers for 2009-2010: Butch Strickland, Independence, President; Don Wilkey, Onalaska, Vice-President; Alan Lefever, Fort Worth, Secretary-Treasurer; and Mark Bumpus, San Angelo, and Kyle Henderson, Athens, Executive Committee.

Lefever presented the following budget for 2009-1010:

INCOME

BGCT	$1,000.00
Membership Dues & Journal Sales	1,000.00
Sponsoring Schools	4,000.00
Luncheon	600.00
Total Income	$6,600.00

EXPENSES

Journal Printing	$3,500.00
Journal Postage	400.00
Journal Labor	-0-
Journal Supplies	-0-
Newsletter Printing	-0-
Newsletter Postage	-0-
Awards	600.00
Speaker's Honorarium	600.00
Miscellaneous Supplies	50.00
Luncheon	600.00
Total Expenses	$5,750.00

Butch Strickland presented the 2009 Church History Writing awards:

Church Resident Membership Under 500: Jeff Kuckeby for *125 Years Down by the Creek: 1882-2007 Pecan Grove Baptist Church,* Gatesville, Texas

General Texas Baptist and Associational Histories: Keith Mack and Herb Weaver for *100 Years of Royal Ambassadors*

Unpublished Manuscripts:

Ron Ellison for *Transplanted Tennessean Adoniram Judson Hill's Only Texas Pastorate, 1879-1884 (2008)*

Mary Moore for *From a Missionary's Heart: The Writings of Anne Luther Bagby (2009)*

Dr. Kelly Pigott presented a paper entitled "George W. Truett: Hawk or Dove?" The meeting adjourned at 12:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Alan J. Lefever
Secretary-Treasurer
Texas Baptist Historical Society

TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF THE TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME XXXI 2011

WE'VE A STORY TO TELL: THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF DENOMINATIONAL MEDIA IN THE SHAPING OF TEXAS BAPTISTS

Denominational Journalism's Place in the History of Texas Baptist Life

Think of the history of denominational newspapers as a topical relief map. If one studies them carefully, one detects peaks and valleys, arid spaces and lush regions, and density and sparseness. Most particularly, the story of Baptist newspapers reminds me of following water-flow patterns on those maps. Intricately detailed maps reveal dry-bed arroyos, creeks, streams and forks. Some run only in the seasons of bounty, some play out completely, and some flow together, eventually forming rivers.

So it was in nineteenth-century Texas. Beginning in 1855 with the first issue of the *Texas Baptist*, Lone Star Baptists in various regions and at various times have read from the pages of at least eight newspapers. Across thirty years, they have published under eleven mastheads.[1] Like Texas streams, most ran dry, a few merged, and one, the *Baptist Standard*, still flows.

And as topical relief maps reflect the power of nature—from earthquakes, to floods, to erosion by water and wind—so, too, the history of denominations and their papers reflect the forces of the times. This occurred in the late 1800s, when controversialist/supplanter/editor S.A. Hayden utilized his *Texas Baptist and Herald* to sow discord and division within the two-year old Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). In order to counter Hayden's divisiveness and provide a conduit of information about and rallying point for the BGCT, Lewis Holland launched another newspaper, *The Baptist News*, in

Honey Grove in 1888. Four years, two ownership sales and two name changes later, that newspaper moved to Dallas and began publishing as the *Baptist Standard.*[2]

From its beginning, the *Standard* sought to exert itself as a force for good in Texas and among Baptists. An editorial in the first edition stated, "It is the purpose of the management to make a paper equal to the demands of the great field it is intended to cultivate. We are in the enterprise for the glory of God, in it to stay, and in it with all our souls, minds, and strength."[3]

Such commitment has echoed through the years. After the *Standard* came under the ownership of the BGCT in 1914, the Baptist Standard Publishing Company envisioned that its purpose was to support the BGCT. Today, the company's purpose remains "the operation of a communications organization, using a variety of technologies to support, inform and resource the Baptist General Convention of Texas, churches and faith-based institutions that serve the broader Christian community, and individual people of faith."[4] The organization's mission statement declares that "Baptist Standard Publishing exists to inform, inspire, equip and empower people of faith to follow Christ and expand the Kingdom of God."[5]

Throughout its history, the *Standard* has faced a tenacious challenge. On the one hand, it was founded and has existed as a force of support for the BGCT. On the other hand, in order for its voice to be authentic, it also must be free. So, each of the thirteen editors has exercised editorial freedom which has enabled him to advocate on behalf of the convention while also pointing out when the convention—and particularly its leaders—have erred. These editors also have sought to maintain the delicate balance between speaking for and speaking to Texas Baptists. Famously (or possibly infamously) independent, folks in this state like to proclaim that, "No one speaks *for* Texas Baptists." They are correct, for where two or three Baptists are gathered together, five or six opinions abound. No one can proclaim, "Thus saith Texas Baptists." Still, more than any other piece of writing, the *Standard* editorial often has been examined as

a reflection of grassroots Texas Baptist opinion. This has been a prickly point, particularly when an editor speaks *to* Texas Baptists, taking on a sensitive issue and using his page to inform, educate and inspire his fellow Baptists.

As a group, the editors have been leaders who were deeply involved in other aspects of Texas Baptist life. For example, three editors also served as what today is known today as the executive director of the state convention. The first editor after the paper came to be known as the *Baptist Standard*, J. B. Cranfill (1892-1904), served as the BGCT mission secretary one year (1893) of his editorship. J. B. Gambrell (1909-1914) was the BGCT's corresponding secretary both before (1897-1909) and after (1914-1918) he was editor. F. M. McConnell (1928-1944) provided convention leadership as the corresponding secretary prior to his service as editor (1910-1914). E. S. James (1954-1966) was a member of the BGCT Executive Board and was the runner-up candidate when the executive secretary position was open in 1953.[6] Presnall Wood (1977-1995) served on the *Standard* board of directors prior to his editorship and on the Baylor Health Care System board following his tenure. Toby Druin (1995-1998) joined the Baylor University board of regents after he retired.

Despite the entwined relationships between the paper's editors (to say nothing of its board of directors) and leadership in the broader context of Texas Baptist life, the *Standard* has maintained a strong position of independence. In his sesquicentennial history of Texas Baptists, H. Leon McBeth asserts that perhaps "no Baptist paper in America has the degree of editorial freedom that the *Baptist Standard* does, and that, no doubt, is one reason the paper is highly regarded as an authentic voice of Baptist conviction and not merely a parroting of some party line dictated by convention bureaucrats."[7] If McBeth's statement is true—and I hope and pray that it is—then it is due to three factors: historical circumstances, organizational structure and intentional design.

The unique historical circumstances that shaped and strengthened the *Baptist Standard* date at least to 1909. That's when the fiery editor and majority stockholder, J. Frank Norris, accepted the pastorate of the First Baptist Church in Fort Worth and put the *Standard* up for sale. The group that bought the paper was composed of BGCT loyalists—Gambrell, corresponding secretary of the state convention; George W. Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas; R. C. Buckner, president of the BGCT and president and founder of Buckner Baptist Children's Home; and two wealthy laymen, H. Z. Duke and Charles D. Fine. Their purchase of the paper resurrected a dormant discussion about shifting the paper's ownership to the BGCT. The prevailing sentiment weighed in favor of convention ownership, and both the *Standard* board of directors and messengers to the 1913 BGCT annual meeting agreed to the transfer. However, the convention would not take the *Standard* until the paper paid off $30,000 in indebtedness, which was accomplished early the following year. The BGCT accepted the paper on March 14, 1914.[8]

The convention's insistence on receiving the *Standard* only after its indebtedness was eliminated set a singular and significant precedent. The mindset that the *Standard* should not saddle the convention with debt carried over to the notion that the paper should pay its own way. So, while the BGCT gladly accepted ownership, it did not put the paper in the convention budget. Thus, the *Standard* became the only state Baptist newspaper that is not subsidized by the convention with which it affiliates. Other state papers receive from as little as 45 percent to as much as 100 percent of their operating budgets from their respective conventions. The *Standard* has always covered its own expenses through subscription income, advertising and, more recently, endowment and annual fund-raising campaigns.

Consequently, the *Standard* enjoys a foundation of freedom. Other denominational periodicals—including those with appearances of freedom—can be controlled by the purse strings. If editors cross certain lines, then precious funding can be crimped or curtailed completely. Financial dependency means surrendering ultimate editorial control. So, even though the *Standard* may be subject to general economic conditions that impact a church's ability to buy subscriptions and an advertisers' ability to buy space, no outside force has told the *Standard* what to publish. Or, perhaps more critically, no force has told the paper what not to publish.

Organizational Structure

For ninety-seven years, the historical circumstances that resulted in financial freedom for the *Standard* have been supplemented by an organizational structure that supports freedom. When the BGCT accepted the *Standard* in 1914, it left in place the paper's trustee-governance structure. The convention owns the Baptist Standard Publishing Company, but it vests that ownership in the hands of a sixteen-member board of directors, all of whom are Baptists and of whom the convention elects at least 75 percent. The directors are responsible to the convention for setting policy and supervising the fiscal responsibility of the company, but the convention does not possess the prerogative to micromanage the organization. This contrasts sharply with the structure of the majority of state Baptist newspapers, whose editors work on the staffs of the state conventions and either report to the executive directors or convention executive committees. In many cases, these editors double as the public relations directors for their conventions and their primary tasks are to promote the convention and do the will of the executive director.

The *Standard*'s governance structure has been challenged from time to time. For example, in the late 1950s, the BGCT hired the Chicago-based Booz, Allen, Hamilton management consultant

firm to analyze the convention's entire organizational structure and suggest improvements. The BAH recommendations suggested the *Standard* retain its own board but advised against allowing the editor "too much freedom."[9] The chair of the BGCT committee that worked with the BAH team was T. A. Patterson, then pastor of the First Baptist Church in Beaumont, who subsequently became executive secretary of the BGCT Executive Board. After he moved into the executive position, he sometimes clashed with *Standard* Editor E. S. James, who wrote editorials with which Patterson did not agree. So, Patterson attempted to implement a BAH suggestion that would have required the editor, the BGCT executive secretary and the convention's Program Coordinating Committee to establish editorial policy for the paper. James resisted, the *Standard* board stuck with him, and the Program Coordinating Committee supported the *Standard* by refusing to call James for a meeting. Admitting his offense, Patterson later reflected, "I think that (James) felt like he, and not the executive secretary, was the spokesman for Texas Baptists."[10]

A couple of decades later, supporters of the so-called "conservative resurgence" to take control of the Southern Baptist Convention aimed their sights on several news organizations that reported on the denominational political fight. One of their leaders infamously said they planned to take over Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, the *Baptist Standard* and Baylor University. Their pattern would have been to gain control by packing these organization's boards of directors with loyalists. In that era, the BGCT stood up to the takeover and continued to elect strong, independent-minded members to the *Standard* board. The board maintained the open, independent course set by its predecessors more than six decades previously.

Intentional Design

The *Standard* board built upon its strong organizational structure through intentional design. Across the past five decades, it has maintained a stringent editorial policy, stated here in full:

> The editorial policy of the *Baptist Standard* shall be to pursue the fivefold objectives of promoting all phases of work sponsored and promoted by the denomination and cooperating churches, the dissemination of all information relevant to the growth and welfare of these Baptist people, the development of a fuller understanding of Baptist doctrines by all who bear the name Baptist, the evangelization of all persons within reach of this convention, and the encouragement to high moral standards and living among all peoples.
>
> In order to accomplish these noble aims, the editor should be given full editorial freedom at all times. The interpretation of this freedom is that the editor should be left free to select, edit, delete, arrange and publish such materials as seem most suitable to the particular occasions. In the matter of interpretation, the editor should be free to discuss and expound opinions and convictions concerning all subjects that pertain to the Christian life and Christian work; but as the editor does so exercise freedom, the editor is to bear in mind that the editor is responsible for everything published in this paper and that such responsibility involves the general welfare of every individual Baptist and every Baptist church and endeavor within the state. The directors should never undertake to dictate what the editor shall or shall not write, but they will hold the editor responsible for any departure from the Scriptures, the time-honored beliefs of Baptists, the general welfare of the denomination or the Baptist ideal of righteousness.[11]

So, the board of directors lays a mantle of freedom upon the editor's shoulders. The editor functions under complete freedom in the day-to-day operation of the organization. The board does not micromanage or second-guess the editor's decisions. The editor understands that this freedom comes with accountability for the editorial operation and fiscal viability of the company. More importantly, the editor understands freedom is not license; it is stewardship and responsibility. To whom much has been given, much is required. The editor's focus is not on doing anything he or she wants to do, but on being the eyes and ears of the readers. All Texas Baptists cannot attend every Executive Board meeting or convention annual session. Leaders of the convention cannot accept phone

calls from every member of every church. So, the editor and the staff attend and call in their places. Freedom is a tool the editor and staff implement to provide Texas Baptists with a newspaper and online news products that enable them to know what they need to know to be free and faithful Baptists.

John Jeter Hurt, editor of the *Standard* from 1966 to 1977, understood the newspaper's responsibility to be "reporting, and the reporting requires the unfavorable as well as the favorable."[12] James, Hurt's immediate predecessor, pointed to the editor's responsibility to fulfill the newspaper's mission by informing readers. James felt the tremendous responsibility he bore as editor of the "most influential institution" in Texas. He believed that part of his job as editor was "to make the issues plain and important enough for our people to understand and accept the Christian teachings relative to our attitudes toward others."[13]

The *Baptist Standard* editor's "tremendous responsibility" described by James has been exercised in the service of Texas Baptists facing a multitude of issues, ranging from social and cultural to denominational and theological. Information is the grease in the wheels of democracy. Although grease does not necessarily turn the wheels, if applied expertly, it frees locked wheels and enables them to turn smoothly and powerfully. This is particularly important for Baptists because our polity is the purest form of democracy. We cannot make good decisions—individually and corporately—without a free flow of information.

Through the generations, *Baptist Standard* editors have helped readers sort things out, find their way, and make decisions. We have not always been correct, and occasionally, we have even been off-point and silly. As McBeth notes, "Sometimes, the *Baptist Standard* carried articles or editorials against such practices as professional boxing, college football and women riding men's bicycles."[14] Still, the editor's job has been to place issues face-up on the table, so all of us can see them together and discuss them openly and based upon solid information.

Most of the time, the *Standard*'s journalistic task has been straightforward—to disseminate news and information about the meat-and-potatoes issues of the day, week, or year. Issue after issue has been filled with news about developments and interesting ministries in the churches and associations; tasks and innovations taken on by Texas Baptist institutions; programs, projects and events sponsored by the Executive Board and its staff; missions and ministry opportunities; offerings and volunteer opportunities; and Christian implications of issues facing our communities, state, nation and world. The *Standard* consistently reports on the mechanics of the convention, such as budget proposals, officer elections, board meetings and big events.

Across the decades, the *Standard* has held a distinctive place in denominational life by helping Texas Baptists process and determine the big issues or turning points in the convention. Scores of illustrations could tell the tale; a few will have to suffice:

• In the early years of the BGCT, when Hayden and his followers tried to divide and conquer, the *Standard* provided the informational stack pole around which Texas Baptists could gather and stay together.

• During fearful years spanning two world wars and the Great Depression, the *Standard* consistently carried hope and comfort into Baptist homes.

• In the late 1950s, Baptists in Texarkana attempted to secure for the BGCT a brand-new state-of-the-art hospital, 40 percent of which would be funded by a federal government grant. A special BGCT committee recommended accepting the hospital outright, and the convention's Executive Board voted to lease it for ninety-nine years. But Editor E.S. James felt both arrangements violated church-state separation principles and were hypocritical, since Baptists criticized Catholics for similar arrangements. Under editorial pressure, the hospital offer was rescinded, but messengers insisted on validating James' position and voted to rebuke the Executive Board.[15]

• In 1968, when the BGCT Christian Education Commission tried to place a veil of secrecy over the "Carden Report"—which recommended selling two of the convention's colleges, converting another into a junior college, making still another a satellite campus of a larger school and getting rid of yet another—Editor Hurt advocated for Texas Baptists' right to know the full story.[16] While nothing came of the report, Hurt's advocacy for full disclosure of vital convention information provided a template for news reporting and editorial freedom that served Texas Baptists well in the volatile years of the "Baptist Battles" that divided the denomination.

• From the late 1970s through the early years of this decade, Texans were among the best-informed Baptists about the controversy that split the Southern Baptist Convention and later impacted most state conventions. This primarily was due to the editorial freedom enjoyed by the *Standard* and the aggressive reporting of its editors and managing editors. Key issues included political maneuverings by operatives on both "sides" of the controversy in the 1970s and 1980s; the charter change at Baylor University in 1990; the redefinition of the Cooperative Program unified budget in 1994; the Effectiveness and Efficiency Committee, which reported in 1997 and 1998, and whose proposals were implemented for several years following; the formation of a rival convention in 1998; and the fallout in membership and finances that diminished the size of the BGCT in the early years of this decade.

• In 2006, the *Standard* extensively covered one of the most significant stories to impact the state convention in many years—the church-starting scandal in the Rio Grande Valley. The Executive Board officers and staff leadership cooperated in the news reporting of this event. But the independent strength of the *Standard*'s structure surfaced in its analytic pieces and editorials. The *Standard* exercised the freedom to point out where administrative failures and oversight laxity enabled this scandal to happen and to occur for a protracted period. If the editor of the *Standard* reported to the executive director or the Executive Board, the depth and focus of analysis would

not have been possible and pressure for changes could have been muted.

• More recently, working with its New Voice Media Group partners—Associated Baptist Press, Virginia's *Religious Herald* and Missouri's *Word & Way*—the *Standard* has focused on helping readers deal with significant issues impacting our congregations and conventions. The issues have ranged from resurgent Calvinism, to information technology, to membership migration between churches, to church-leadership issues, to the changing dynamics among evangelicals, to the implications of rapidly changing racial and ethnic demographics, to the unique challenges facing rural congregations. The *Standard's* intent is to enable individuals and churches to find their way forward productively and innovatively for the cause of Christ.

That last idea points to the *Standard*'s current consuming task: determining its place in Texas Baptist life in a post-denominational, post-newspaper, post-Gutenberg era. Fortunately, we live in such an era. The possibilities are endless—the *Standard* should carry Baptist principles with it as it works with and alongside a broad range of Christian brothers and sisters, and to harness the energy, power and creativity of digital media. For one hundred and ten years, the Baptist Standard Publishing Company produced a printed newspaper. For about twelve years, the *Standard* has been online. Now, the Baptist Standard Publishing Company produces one printed paper and three digital products. This year, it is gearing up to launch FaithVillage, an online community designed specifically to provide resources, build relationships and encourage collaboration among evangelical Christians ages eighteen to forty-four. There are twenty million of them "out there." Get ready to hang on.

Marv Knox
Baptist Standard
Dallas, Texas

NOTES

[1]Presnall H. Wood and Floyd W. Thatcher, Prophets with Pens: A History of the Baptist Standard, (Dallas, TX: The Baptist Standard Publishing Company, 1969), 12-14.

[2]Harry Leon McBeth, *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History* (Dallas, TX: BaptistWay Press, 1998), 112-13 and Wood and Thatcher, 13-14.

[3]J. B. Cranfill, ed., *Baptist Standard*, 4: 13, March 3, 1892, as cited in Wood and Thatcher, 19.

[4]Cited in the Articles of Incorporation, Baptist Standard Publishing Co., issued by the State of Texas, September 16, 1915, amended most recently May 18, 2010.

[5]"Mission Statement," *Operations Manual: Baptist Standard*, Dallas, TX: Baptist Standard Publishing Co., AO1a, May 18, 2010. The *Operations Manual* is dated page by page, depending upon when the policy on each page was updated.

[6]McBeth, 255.

[7]Ibid., 415.

[8]Wood and Thatcher, 75-77 and McBeth, 135-36.

[9]McBeth, 276.

[10]Ibid., 287-88.

[11]"Editorial Policy," *Operations Manual: Baptist Standard*, C01, February 16, 2009.

[12]Thomas L. Charlton and David B. Stricklin, interviewers, *Oral Memoirs of John Jeter Hurt, Jr.*, Waco, TX: Texas Baptist Oral History Consortium, Baylor University Program for Oral History, 1978, 431.

[13]Charlton and Rufus B. Spain, interviewers, *Oral Memoirs of E. S. James*, Waco, TX: Religion and Culture Project, Baylor University, 1973, 89.

[14]McBeth, 244.

[15]Ibid., 269-72.

[16]Charlton and Stricklin, *Hurt*, 453-64.

WE'VE A STORY TO TELL: THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF DENOMINATIONAL MEDIA IN THE SHAPING OF TEXAS BAPTISTS

Public Relations' Role in the History of Texas Baptist Life

As he strode into the auditorium preparing to address the 1914 Annual Meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Abilene, R. C. Buckner brought with him some seven hundred orphan children from the Buckner Orphans Home in Dallas. Historian Karen Bullock notes that those children "stood holding hands around the auditorium, encircling the messengers in their vast embrace. They were the visible demonstration of years of Texas Baptists' gifts and support."[1]

For nineteen years, Buckner had served as president of the BGCT, having first been elected in 1894 at the annual meeting in Marshall. He was seen as a unifier of the disgruntled, disordered, divided, and fledging convention. Upon his election in 1894, Buckner chose to present messengers with a bouquet of roses rather than the customary gavel as a symbolic indication of the need for Texas Baptists to come together and lay aside their differences and disunity.[2]

Now, Buckner stood before the messengers in 1914, an eighty-year old man celebrating sixty years of marriage to his wife Vienna. As he addressed those attending the meeting, the orphans who had accompanied him into the hall surrounded the messengers. In a statement that caught many by surprise, Father Buckner, as he was known, announced that, "It is in my mind, as President and General Manager of the Buckner Orphans Home, to tender its entire property and control to the Baptist General Convention of Texas."[3] And again, using the power of symbolism, Buckner informed the messengers in the hall that

the orphans surrounding them were now their responsibility. A BGCT committee chaired by George W. Truett reported that the property alone was worth in excess of $700,000. Truett's committee accepted "that which has been tendered to us, in the same spirit of confidence, loyalty and love with which it has been offered." With the affirmative vote of the messengers, Buckner Orphans Home passed to control of the BGCT.[4]

Buckner's actions at the conventions of 1894 and 1914 clearly demonstrate the keen understanding that Texas Baptist leaders have shown for decades concerning the role and function of effective communications which resonate with their constituencies. As the state convention itself and the myriad of agencies given birth by Texas Baptists have emerged on the scene and at times struggled for survival, leaders have used a variety of communication tools and techniques to make their case to the constituency known as the BGCT—a target group today numbering nearly 2.5 million people.

Public Relations in America

Many consider the early twentieth-century American Edward L. Bernays to be the father of modern public relations. However, the simple words *public* and *relations*, with their Latin origins, were used as early as 1882 in the United States. Dorman Eaton, a lawyer, used them in combination in a speech before the Yale Law School to mean the "general good."[5] In many ways, the emergence of the discipline and practice of public relations tools and techniques among the general public mirrors the emergence of public relations among Baptists.

In the secular world of business and politics in the late nineteenth-century, the public began exerting its influence as a result of the agitation of the Populists, trade unionists, and Christian Socialists. Revolutions in technology, communications, transportation, and increased literacy produced more people power. Before the Civil War, the United States was limited in these elements and was unconcerned

with public relationships. After the war, however, the country became more industrialized and industry maintained secrecy—a public-be-damned attitude. President Theodore Roosevelt's Square Deal gave the momentum to people, and before long, muckrakers led by Lincoln Steffens, Ida S. Tarbell, and others focused public attention on abuses by big business and other institutions. The muckrakers attacked not only big business and big institutions but also the newspapermen that big business and others hired to defend them with words, not deeds, a practice then called "whitewashing."[6]

In 1906, an era of public information was introduced, first exemplified by the hiring of pitchman Ivy Lee by the coal operators, who were facing difficult labor relations. Lee issued his "Declaration of Principles" in which he stressed supplying news to the newspapers. "I believe in telling your story to the public," he said. Soon other organizations followed, such as the American Telephone and Telegraph, the Rockefeller family, railroads, streetcar companies, and public utilities. As public relations teachers and practitioners Doug Newsom of Texas Christian University and Alan Scott of the University of Texas at Austin point out, "the phrase public relations came into use for this activity, but it was mainly restricted to the industries that used it and to the trade press. Emphasis in the public relations of [the early twentieth-century] was put on words, not deeds; on putting on a good front, not on constructive social action."[7]

Baptists and Public Relations

One can compare and contrast the uses of public relations tools and even the basic principles among Texas Baptists at the end of the nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth-century. Even before Eaton combined the words "public" and "relations" in 1882, leaders among Texas Baptists understood the power of communications and of sending their messages to a loyal, but divided constituency. In 1876, three years before Buckner Orphans Home opened its doors and accepted its first

three resident orphans, R. C. Buckner utilized the pages of the *Texas Baptist* to outline the need for an orphanage in Texas.[8] His attempts, unlike those of his secular counterparts, were designed to match words and deeds long before muckrakers and whitewashers understood that public relations was "not just a matter of saying good things, but of doing good as well," as media scholars David Clark and William Blankenburg assert. Clark and Blankenburg further assess that while, "much of PR is just a slather of frosting on stale cake, the best is a disclosure of an active social conscience."[9]

While the emergence of public relations as a formal discipline among Texas Baptists did not take on a professional tone until the 1950s, Texas Baptist leaders clearly understood and used the powers of persuasion and communications long before they ever hired professional practitioners to do the job for them and their agencies. As *Baptist Standard* Editor Marv Knox pointed out in his presentation on the role of denominational journalism, Texas Baptists have "in various regions and at various times read from the pages of at least eight newspapers" published under eleven mastheads.[10] The content of today's *Standard* mirrors that of previous years, filled with stories written by employees of Baptist agencies and the staff of the convention's Executive Board. The content and the intent of the articles aim to promote the particular agency or ministry featured in the article and at the same time function to spur Baptist Christians on to good deeds.

In 2003, Texas Baptists' ministry, Buckner International, needed to find homes for thirteen Russian orphans. Buckner International's goal was to place these boys and girls in Christian homes here in the United States through our international adoption program. Our communications team utilized a variety of strategies at our disposal to publicize the need as well as the availability of these children. One strategy we employed was the placement of each child's photo along with a brief biography in the *Baptist Standard*. By Monday after the *Standard* was published and began hitting mailboxes

around Texas, the phone lines at our adoption office were jammed with calls from Texas Baptists who had seen the photos in the *Standard* and expressed interest in adopting these children. Eleven of the thirteen children were adopted within a year by readers of the *Baptist Standard*. As recent as last fall, Buckner was seeking an adoptive family for a young boy with spina bifida. Having exhausted numerous channels, we again turned to *The Baptist Standard*, which ran a photo and brief story about the boy on the *Standard's* website. Today, Alan is living with his "forever family," a family that found him through the *Baptist Standard*.

These stories illustrate the driving passion and goal of professional public relations practitioners in many contexts in which the profession is practiced today, do not only say simply good things, but do good as well. That goal is being realized daily through non-profit organizations around the world, but perhaps nowhere is this understood better than in religious non-profit ministries, such as those affiliated with Texas Baptists.

Baptist Professional Public Relations

While the functions of public relations, marketing, promotion and philanthropy were guided primarily by Baptist institutional leaders in the latter part of the nineteenth-century and the early twentieth-century, by the 1950s the professional discipline of public relations began to crystallize among Southern Baptist communicators across the national denomination.

As the Southern Baptist Convetion held its annual session in St. Louis, Missouri, a group of thirteen men and women attended the organizational meeting of the future Baptist Public Relations Association (BPRA) on June 3, 1954 at the Jefferson Hotel in St. Louis. The initial participants of that organizational meeting represented public relations practitioners from the staffs of SBC boards, seminaries, state conventions, commissions and the Executive Committee of the SBC.[11]

Along with organizing into a formal association, the group also set the date for what was to become an annual workshop for Baptist public relations staffs. Held February 17-18, 1955 in Fort Worth, Texas, the inaugural workshop consisted of "serious program content, including plenary and shirtsleeve sessions in small groups, coupled with a generous mixture of free and fellowship time."[12] Over time, BPRA, later renamed the Baptist Communicators Association (BCA), grew and developed into a forum of professional development and fellowship. In Texas, a state affiliate was organized and named the Texas Baptist Public Relations Association (TBPRA). In addition, as the fraternity of Baptist communicators grew and employed more and more professionally trained public relations practitioners, those professionals became involved with non-Baptist organizations such as the interfaith Religious Communicators Council (RCC) and the secular Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) which offers accreditation and certification and recognizes members' involvement with religious-affiliated organizations for credit toward certification.

In recent years, an independent group of Texas Baptist communicators has met separately from the broader Southern Baptist-aligned BCA. While this group has not formalized as an association, it has hosted an annual workshop called the Texas Baptist Media Forum, routinely drawing upwards of fifty to seventy public relations and news professionals, primarily from BGCT-affiliated agencies in Texas.

This issue of the journal is considering the "impact and influence of denominational media in the shaping of Texas Baptists." How has public relations shaped who Texas Baptists are today?

Consider First the Message

Communications icon and erstwhile godfather of mass communication theory Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase, "the medium is the message." By that McLuhan did not mean

that the way in which the message is delivered is inherently more important than the message itself, but rather that the power of the content may be in the change it reaps in public attitudes. A light bulb, McLuhan was fond of saying, does not have content, yet it is a medium that has a social effect; that is, a light bulb enables people to create spaces during nighttime that would otherwise be enveloped by darkness. As McLuhan observed, "A light bulb creates an environment by its mere presence."[13]

Through the pages of Harry Leon McBeth's comprehensive history*, Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History*, the themes of missions, education, and benevolent care emerge as the primary messages that have dominated Texas Baptist life.[14] In many ways, the history of communications messaging within Texas Baptist life has proved McLuhan's theory correct. In the process of promoting missions, education, and benevolent care for the past one hundred and fifty years, Texas Baptists have more often than not become not only the medium but the message. Ironically enough, it was also McLuhan, whose centennial birth is being celebrated in 2011, who unwittingly coined a phrase that current Baptists love; the global village.

Perhaps nowhere in Baptist life did the medium become the message more than in the unified funding approach adopted by Baptists in 1925 called the Cooperative Program. Here, encapsulated in two words, was a powerful medium—a Baptist light bulb–that McLuhan would say "created an environment by its mere presence."[15] Succeeding generations of Texas Baptists equated the message of the Cooperative Program as being synonymous with missions. Later the term came to mean everything we fund through our tithes and offerings. Soon, the very definition of missions was forever altered among Baptists. People and churches were judged for their mission activity based on the amount of money they gave to the Cooperative Program; the more money individuals gave to the Cooperative Program, the more mission-minded they were. Agencies and the convention had both a mutual obligation and a mutual interest

in promoting the Cooperative Program as the unified giving stream for Texas Baptists. The introduction of the cooperative approach to funding led to the demise of the societal method of seeking individual funding from local churches, and the messaging became centralized and harmonized. Today in the twenty-first-century that approach is waning dramatically as local churches question denominational affiliations and look for more ways their members can be directly involved in mission activities. The progressive communicator in Baptist life today must look beyond the comfortable concentric circles of the Baptist world into new circles that are emerging in a post-denominational era.

As Generation X becomes Generation Y, brand loyalty is becoming a thing of the past, affecting not only product marketing and merchandising, but also denominational life. Yet at the same time, the savvy communicator in Baptist life is aware that in public relations and marketing, core constituent groups are vital to the ongoing success of the organization. So while Baptist agencies today must send their message beyond the Baptist world, a wise and prudent strategy is to also keep the home fires burning.

Consider Second the Methods

In 1892, facing what seemed like an insurmountable and staggering debt of $92,000, Baylor University unleashed an unknown and "uncolleged" twenty-three year old named George W. Truett to raise funds for the university. R. F. Jenkins, pastor at Whitewright Baptist Church, wrote of Truett, "There is one thing I do know about George Truett. Wherever he speaks, the people do what he asks them to do."[16] Truett traveled across the state, speaking in "churches, association meetings, civic rallies, at country crossroads, and in civic pavilions."[17] The campaign that Truett spear-headed surpassed the needed goal of $92,000, and Baylor was financially secure. One wonders what a grand communicator like Truett could have done with a blog, daily tweets on his own

Twitter account, a website, an iPhone, and a Facebook fan page.

Today's Texas Baptists seek and receive information in a variety of ways from a plethora of sources. Sociologically, we are witnessing a shift in this generation from mass communications to personal communications, as seen in the explosion of social networking. Where once the *Baptist Standard* was the primary source of information for Baptists in Texas, information is now readily accessible through a multitude of channels. How this change in communications methods will ultimately affect Texas Baptists remains a mystery at this stage in the evolution of communications methodology. What is not a mystery is that change is happening. Access to and utilization of social network channels and other avenues of direct communication with constituents will be critical as the message of Baptist public relations practitioners moves beyond denominationally affiliated churches and constituencies. This de-centralized messaging away from the structures of the denomination is clearly having a long-term impact on Baptists in every conceivable way, from polity and theology to recent declines in financial support for the unified budget of the BGCT.[18] With some organizations, such as Buckner, the most immediate effect has been a rejuvenated interest in hands-on ministry and missions among our core constituency, namely Texas Baptists.

For decades, Texas Baptists were unified as much by the methods with which they received information as the message those methods carried. Uncharted waters lie ahead as we become less dependent on unified and centralized methods of communications. Perhaps future historians will one day answer the question whether or not the brand will survive?

Postscript

The importance and power of messaging became clear to me on March 9, 1994. I was serving as director of Public Relations at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary when the board

of trustees fired then president Russell H. Dilday. The firing occurred following the morning chapel service in an executive session of the board. The session lasted less than forty-five minutes. Dr. Dilday left the room, and as I was talking to him in the parking lot following his dismissal, I was summoned to a meeting with board Chairman Ralph Pulley and other leaders of the board. I was not fired, but it was made clear to me the message the board wanted communicated to the public and the methods through which that message was to be communicated. Not unlike a coup in a Third-World country in which leaders seize radio and television outlets simultaneous to their assumption of power, even in Baptist life, there was and is a clear understanding of the power of the message and who controls it.

In June 1994, three months after Dilday's firing at Southwestern Seminary, I made the transition to Buckner. My good friend and colleague from Southwestern days, Dr. Karen Bullock, also serves as historian and archivist at Buckner, a position she has held for more than twenty years. When I arrived at Buckner, Karen and I agreed that along with files from the president's office and minutes from Buckner trustee meetings, the files and records of the Public Relations Office would serve as primary sources for the history of the organization. Today, if you walk through the archives of Buckner, you will find an entire room filled with boxes containing every video, brochure, and periodical published by Buckner for the past seventeen years. I am keenly aware that the messages we promote today are tomorrow's history.

Scott A. Collins
Buckner International
Dallas, TX

NOTES

[1]Karen O'Dell Bullock, *Homeward Bound: The Heart and Heritage of Buckner* (Dallas, TX: Buckner Baptist Benevolences, 1993), 119.

[2]Karen O'Dell Bullock, "Founder's Day Address", (Buckner Baptist Benevolences, Dallas, TX: January 18, 1996).

[3]*Annual BGCT*, *1914*, quoted in Harry Leon McBeth, *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History* (Dallas, TX: BaptistWay Press, 1998), 138.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Doug Newsom and Alan Scott, *This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1975), 9.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Bullock, *Homeward Bound*, 25.

[9]Newsom and Scott, *This is PR*, 5.

[10]Marv Knox, "Denominational Journalism's Place in the History of Texas Baptist Life" (Paper presentation, El Paso, TX: Texas State Historical Association/Texas Baptist Historical Collection, March 3, 2011).

[11]James H.Cox, *We've a Story to Tell: A History of Baptist Public Relations Association*, (Brentwood, TN: Baptist Public Relations Association, 1986), 17 .

[12]Ibid.

[13]"Herbert Marshall McLuhan, the Man and His Message," 1, The Marshall McLuhan Center on Global Communications, www.mcluhanmedia.com (accessed January 17, 2011).

[14]McBeth, 97.

[15]"McLuhan, 1.

[16]Quoted in Ibid., 97.

[17]Ibid., 98.

[18]"BGCT ends year short of budget, behind 2009," *Baptist Standard*, January 17, 2011, 2.

WE'VE A STORY TO TELL: THE IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF DENOMINATIONAL MEDIA IN THE SHAPING OF TEXAS BAPTISTS

A Response to Denominational Journalism's Place in the History of Texas Baptist Life and *Public Relations' Role in the History of Texas Baptist Life*

As Marv Knox illustrates, the history of denominational newspapers resembles a topical relief map with peaks and valleys and creeks and streams eventually becoming rivers.[1] Today however, reveals a reversal of flow. The tributaries which were once merged are dividing into shallow creeks trickling to and informing a greater number of people. These streams have much less depth than before.

Baptist life, like a true democracy, depends on informed individuals to make responsible decisions affecting the direction of the denomination as well as the individual church. If the information flow is withheld or controlled, poor decisions will follow. Due to these facts, the need for an independent news agency such as the *Baptist Standard* has been a major factor in shaping Baptist life and the *Standard* should continue this role into the future. Leon McBeth has identified the reason in his book *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History* where he states, "Probably no Baptist paper in America has the degree of editorial freedom than the *Baptist Standard* does, and that, no doubt, is one reason the paper is highly regarded as an authentic voice of Baptist conviction and not merely a parroting of some party line dictated by convention bureaucrats."[2]

This declaration alone does not hold the proof that I require, but the fact that the Baptist General Convention of Texas has remained true to its foundational Baptist polity in spite of a

recent national conservative resurgence aimed at gaining power at the national and state conventions can be attributed to the free press of the *Baptist Standard*. In Texas and other Bible-belt states, the alternative exists. As an example, the *Southern Baptist Texan* is owned and published by the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention and is a mouthpiece for disseminating information for its leaders in Texas and across the southeast. The result is a narrowly informed population who is missing the larger debate and news of denominational changes.

As a communications employee of a state denomination, I would assert that a free press is not always the easiest way to operate, but it is by far the best. The importance of a free press brings to mind the James Matthew Barrie quote, "The printing press is either the greatest blessing or the greatest curse of modern times, one sometimes forgets which."[3] During the church-starting scandal in the Rio Grande Valley, which Knox mentions, information and accusations were made public which, had they not been, would have made my life much easier. They were, however, and gratefully so. This negative news brought about a change in the church-starting process that now creates churches that are 95 percent likely to be fully self-supporting in five years (it was previously about 60 percent). Had this controversy been swept under the rug, perhaps we would not have the new, successful process currently in place. This aspect of freedom of the press in Baptist life is certainly only an exception in American national life. We as Texas Baptists, and even as a nation, are missing unbiased journalism and being overfed with rhetoric and single-minded news.

If a newspaper or news organization is the source of unbiased information, then the responsibility of public relations in Baptist life has been to encourage and inspire action. These actions might include going on a mission trip, impacting one's community or giving one's money to support missions and ministries. This is in contrast to the typically negative view public relations has gained over the years. As Scott Collins mentions, PR has typically been taken to mean that a company

or an organization touts what it does simply to improve its brand image and sell more stuff.

With the dawning of the Internet and a vast change of information availability, simply bragging about an act of benevolence a corporation performs is no longer effective. One can go online and instantly find out if a company is truly dedicated to benevolence or to its mission. Being dedicated to one's mission is the ultimate in PR and branding.

On branding and loyalty, Mr. Collins states, "…brand loyalty is becoming a thing of the past, not only in product marketing and merchandising, but in denominational life as well."[4] On the surface, I could not agree more. After looking a little deeper, however, I disagree somewhat. Some brands are stronger than ever such as Diet Coke, Apple, Volkswagen, and OXO. The difference is that these brands all deliver on what they sell, deliver on who they are as a company and then deliver a message about the individual using that product.

Let me explain what I mean by this. If a customer walks into a Starbucks at any given point in time, he or she will see people working on laptop computers. When I walk in carrying my Mac, I get a nod from fellow Mac users. There is an understanding that we immediately have—we are creative, we are fun, we are trendy. (Please note that these understandings may or may not be true of said individual.) The strongest consumer product brands that have a loyal following have it because of how the product communicates who a person is as a consumer. Think of the "Harley wave." People riding Harley Davidson motorcycles wave at fellow Harley riders differently than the non-Harley riding public.

For years, "distrust" has been the reason thrown out there for why Gen-X, Y, and Millennials abandon the typical structure of brand loyalty and denominational loyalty. I'd like to introduce a different reason: distaste. Here is why I feel this is more accurate. While watching television or sitting in a coffee shop talking with friends, I can and often do instantly find out if a company is trustworthy. For instance, when I

watch television, I also have my Mac on my lap. If a company, brand, or fact mentioned during the show or even during an ad catches my attention, I Google it. By the way, notice how "Google" has become a verb? But of those organizations or causes I have checked out, I give time and money to very few. I have discovered that several of the companies I researched are doing what they say—they are trustworthy. I just do not necessarily agree with how they go about doing their mission or their mission does not appeal to me.

To apply brand loyalty and distaste to denominations and the shaping of Texas Baptists is scary, but revealing. This concept suggests that if an individual does not participate in an organization or institution, they do not like the way we do something or do not like what we do. That hurts. We all like to be liked. Let us consider the Baptists' mission funding source that Collins mentions, the Cooperative Program, as an example.

The Cooperative Program, or CP for short, was established to create a single way to support community, state, national and international mission efforts. However, at the root of the CP is the fact that one's offering is divided up according to a structure set by fellow Baptists from around the state during a budget approval session at the Annual Meeting. The wealth of information regarding missions and mission cause we now have provides numerous and easy ways to support missions directly, effectively circumventing the Cooperative Program. This same wealth of information has helped get people involved in giving and doing missions directly but has and is changing the CP. How it is changing it is obvious; the CP has been declining.

Why it has changed is a little less obvious. As stated before, brand loyalty and denominational loyalty are declining. My thought is that this decline is due to the lack of intentional communications about the CP and Baptists. Years ago Collins said in an interview, "Baptists have been known for what we don't do. It's time for Baptists to be known for what we do do."[5]

As a donor, I will not support something I do not understand or that does not appeal to me. Inside the CP budget, funds are designated for hundreds of purposes including church-starting and hunger relief. For the sake of argument, let us say that church-starting does not appeal to me much, but feeding hungry families does. In the current setup of the CP, a donor is funding both with every gift. While this communal approach works great for making sure all aspects of Baptist life and missions are healthy, it does not communicate specificity. On the other hand, one sees Buckner—they take care of families. That is specific. That communicates. The CP takes care of everything. That's not specific and doesn't communicate well. The good news is that most churches and individuals still see the need for cooperative giving efforts through a denomination they can trust and like. What must happen now is a change in communications.

So, what is the effect of these ideas on denominational news and PR professionals? The term is called "narrowcasting." No longer do individuals have to settle for a one-size-fits-all type of information gathering. Any one of us can, and probably does, pull in only the information that we want. Google has a homepage available called "iGoogle," which is available to anyone and allows the user to create a dashboard that pulls in news, blogs, specific category information, weather, tweets and just about any other information one might desire.

Narrowcasting changes the landscape for newspapers, news agencies and PR professionals. People still want information; they just want what they want how they want it. Narrowcasting is regularly pushing specific topical information through several distribution means allowing customers to pull in the specific information they want. This creates the reversal of information flow from oceans, lakes and rivers to streams and creeks. What happens then is that the people wading in the creek care so much about the topics they follow, that they re-tweet or re-post the very information sent to them—effectively infecting other streams and creeks with the message.

Collins also suggests that the "medium is the message."[6] Narrowcasting allows, and encourages, an organization's employees, donors, customers, volunteers and even their friends to be the messengers. When the volunteers and donors spread the message, their actions of donating time and money do in fact become the main message. So, the new connotation of PR as "doing good, not just talking 'good'" is delivered authentically through a non-paid medium who is both the message and the messenger.

Like a free press, narrowcasting is both a blessing and a curse to denominational work. As a blessing, it engages people in a whole new way with news and missions. As a curse, it fosters the individual and not the corporation if done without focus. Without focused online narrowcasting, Baptists, and any group really, become less informed more quickly. Being less informed of the greater causes beyond one's microcosm gives way to ignoring many of the needs in our world today.

To survive this age, as in those past, we must come together, redefine collaboration within the Baptist family and among the broader Christian faith, and create a cohesive message of brand personality and action.

Henry David Thoreau said, "Before printing was discovered, a century was equal to a thousand years."[7] From a contemporary perspective, we might say before the Internet was discovered, a century was equal to an eon.

Rand Jenkins
BGCT
Dallas, Texas

NOTES

[1]Marv Knox, "Denominational Journalism's Place in the History of Texas Baptist Life," *Texas Baptist History* 21 (2011): 1.

[2]Harry Leon McBeth, *Texas Baptists: A Sesquicentennial History* (Dallas: BaptistWay Press, 1998), 112-13.

[3]"James Matthew Barrie quotes," 4, http://thinkexist.com/quotes/james_matthew_barrie/4.html (accessed February 25, 2011).

[4]Scott Collins, "Public Relations' Role in the History of Texas Baptist Life," *Texas Baptist History* 21 (2011), 6.

[5]Scott Collins, "Why I Am a Baptist," interview by author June 14, 2006.

[66]Ibid, 5.

[7]"Henry David Thoreau quotes," 1, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/equal.htmland (accessed February 25, 2011).

MARY HILL DAVIS: A TWENTIETH-CENTURY LEADER WITH A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY VISION

As the namesake of the state mission offering for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Mary Hill Davis is likely the most recognizable female Texas Baptist name. However, few Texas Baptists today could discuss who she was or why the state offering was named for her. This paper seeks to fill in some of these memory gaps surrounding one of Texas' most prominent nineteenth-century female Baptist leaders. Mary Hill Davis' unflinching commitment to missions and education became the cornerstone from which many ministries of the Baptist General Convention of Texas would flourish for subsequent generations of Texas Baptists.

Mary Hill Davis was born on March 4, 1863 in Greenville, Georgia. Her parents were Captain Waid Hampton Hill and Margaret Lawson Hill. Her sole sibling was an older brother named William.[1] The family had settled in Dallas, Texas by 1870 when Capt. and Mrs. Hill joined the newly organized First Baptist Church of Dallas. The family was very involved in the life and ministry of the young church. The recorded church minutes have numerous references to Capt. Hill. He was elected as a teacher in the mission Sunday School class and served as a messenger or alternate messenger for First Baptist Church (FBC) Dallas at several associational meetings. On December 1, 1880, he was appointed to a committee tasked to "investigate [the] feasibility of building or purchasing a new Pastor's home."[2] He was also one of two men, who along with the deacons, who were authorized to look after the church's legal interests in 1880.

The exact date Davis joined FBC Dallas is unknown. She was converted at a Dallas revival led by Texas evangelist William Penn.[3] FBC Dallas invited Penn to lead a revival in Dallas on three separate occasions: 1876, 1880, and 1882.[4] Since Mary Hill is included on a pre-1880 membership role, she was most likely among the one hundred and thirty professions of faith and one hundred and fifty additions to the church roll as a result of the 1876 revival.[5]

Like her parents, Mary Hill became an active member in the life and ministry of FBC Dallas. When FBC Dallas called George W. Truett as their new pastor in 1897, "Mr. and Mrs. Waid Hill and their daughter, Mrs. F. S. (Mary Hill) Davis liked the suggestion."[6] As an adult, she hosted some of the church's weekly teas and served both as an 1897 convention messenger and a delegate to the 1911 Baptist World Alliance meeting in Philadelphia. When the FBC Dallas chapter of the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) began raising money in 1908 to buy a new family carriage for Truett, Davis contributed five dollars. The ladies had been tentatively discussing buying the pastor an automobile "but such rashness was quickly vetoed by the men who would not think of risking Brother Truett's life in such a contraption."[7] She also taught some of the parliamentary law classes for the FBC Dallas chapter of the WMU.[8]

On November 14, 1887, Mary Hill married Dr. Fergus S. Davis. Many sources report that Mary Hill Davis married at the age of twenty. However, based upon her date of birth, she was twenty-four years of age on her wedding date.[9] The ceremony was held at FBC Dallas and was well attended by so many friends and family that *The Dallas Morning News* reported that the church was "crowded to its utmost capacity."[10] Among the wedding gifts reported in *The Dallas Morning News* was a grand piano from Dr. Davis to his bride.

Both before and after her wedding, Mary Hill Davis was among the social elite of Dallas. She was an active member of numerous organizations including the Lakeside Browning

Club, the Dallas Woman's Club, the Dallas Penwomen, the Southern Memorial Association, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.[11] She was a charter member of the Jane Douglas Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and filled the office of first vice-president for the Young Women's Christian Association of Dallas.[12] She sat on or chaired the board of advisors for the Training School in Ft. Worth from its inception until her death. She served as the vice-president for the second ward of the Cleaner Dallas League which worked with schools and city leaders in seeking the maintenance of clean neighborhoods and advocating city-wide sanitation.[13] *The Dallas Morning News* further reports numerous trips Mary Hill Davis took and visitors she hosted in these reform efforts.

Although Mary Hill Davis belonged to a plethora of organizations, she dedicated her life to the WMU of Texas. She served as its recording secretary from 1898 until 1906 under the leadership of Mrs. W. L. Williams. In 1906, she was elected the organization's third president and would continue serving for twenty-five years. As president of the WMU of Texas, Davis attended every state convention, mid-year meeting, and executive conference, traveling to Texas cities such as Amarillo, El Paso, Ft. Worth, Galveston, Houston, and San Antonio.[14] She paid her own traveling expenses until 1922 when the WMU began paying the travel expenses for its president and recording secretary.[15] Although she worked at the state office on various days of each week, she dedicated every Wednesday to her WMU work. During her tenure, she also edited the woman's page of the *Baptist Standard*. Before leaving home, Davis would call the WMU office to inform the staff of her plans in case they needed to reach her.

Due to her effectiveness as president, it is easy to romanticize her time in office. However, it was a taxing position. After all, the WMU membership had to convince her to remain for a twenty-fifth year of service. In 1931, Davis instructed the organization that she would not accept the position of president

for another year as it was time to get some new, younger blood behind the leadership reigns. Despite this instruction, the nominating committee submitted her name for a twenty-sixth term. Like all leaders, Mary Hill Davis overcame obstacles to achieve her goals. Correspondence between Josephine Jenkins Truett and Annie Jenkins Sallee shed some light on at least one of these obstacles.[16] In a letter dated October 4, 1908, Josephine writes "Mrs. Davis may refuse to let her name go before the nominating com. She doesn't mind the work, but to be handicapped by Mrs. G. in every thing is more than she is willing to stand much longer. I hope to make her keep it for Mrs. G. would run off with any body else they could put in."[17]

Davis provided leadership for the WMU of Texas by her words and actions. One year during the Great Depression, Davis received a check for $1,000.00 from her private investments. Instead of cashing the check, she sent it to Waco to be applied toward the existing debt on Baylor University's newly built Woman's Memorial Dormitory.[18] As a Christmas present in 1933, Dr. Davis gave his wife "an exquisite necklace of beautifully wrought amethysts."[19] Although Mrs. Davis loved the necklace, she returned it to the jeweler and donated the money to missions as she did not need another necklace.[20]

Mary Hill Davis died in a Dallas hospital on November 28, 1934. In her last will and testament, she provided for future generations. As a part of the celebrations of her twenty-fifth year in office, the WMU of Texas had presented Mrs. Davis with a silver tea set. In her will, this tea set was left to her son, Dr. Raymond Davis, for his lifetime and then was to be donated to the ladies at the Woman's Memorial Dormitory at Baylor. Her son wanted the Baylor female students to have as much use of the tea set as possible, and so he donated it immediately to Baylor University for the Woman's Memorial Dormitory.[21]

Texas Baptists have given three great tributes to honor the work of Mary Hill Davis in promoting statewide missions: the creation of a scholarship during her final year of service,

the posthumous naming of the state mission offering, and the publication of *Living Messages*. The scholarship continues to provide ethnic minorities the opportunity for educational achievement while the state mission offering funds many of the ongoing and one-time mission endeavors for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Finally, *Living Messages: Official Addresses of Mrs. F. S. Davis 1907-1931* is a compilation of her twenty-five annual messages. *Living Messages* provides a glimpse into the person of Mary Hill Davis. Her speeches are relevant, humorous, challenging, and inspiring while consistently articulating a larger vision for the WMU of Texas. Her speeches are filled with references to the Bible, preachers, classical and contemporary literature, cultural truisms, political figures, and current events.

In 1929, Davis reflected on the many changes in society that were occurring when she said, "All that has come to us in this flood of invention and discovery and mastery is a potential menace unless it is wielded by men and women whose spiritual powers are equal to their opportunities and tasks."[22] Much societal change occurred during the first third of the twentieth-century. The two most widely recognized events were World War I (1914-1918) and the 1929 crash of the U.S. stock market leading to the Great Depression. In addition to these catastrophic events, the foundations of modern society were being laid. Personal automobiles and commercial air travel were introduced. Traffic lights and highway signs were created. Dial telephones, television sets, household refrigerators, and teddy bears became must-haves for every household. Entertainment options expanded with feature films, Disney cartoons, and the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.[23] During her twenty-five year tenure, three territories became states: Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona, and the U.S. Constitution was amended six times including women's suffrage and the only repeal of a former amendment.[24]

Although political figures and current events were referenced in her speeches, politically sensitive or controversial issues

were largely omitted. For example, she advocated for the Temperance Movement but not for women's suffrage. Each year during World War I, her speeches revealed her pacifistic tendencies. For example, she told the gathering in Abilene in 1914 that "our Convention meets in a time of great world grief and sorrow. As women who love our husbands, our sons, and our homes, our hearts go out in the tenderest sympathy to our sisters in far-off lands where their cherished loved ones are being slaughtered by the thousands."[25] Long before the term "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" had entered into society's lexicon, Davis asked, "Is it well with the child? They have stood the test of the battlefields—can they withstand the acid test of the new life that comes with the readjustments that must precede the restoration of normal living?"[26]

In her speeches, Davis provided stability and vision to the WMU of Texas and covered numerous topics including stewardship, the Buckner Orphanage, the 75 Million Campaign, and Texas Baptists' place in the world. Three topics consistently appear throughout the twenty-five speeches: missions, immigration, and education. She referred to missions and education as Siamese twins, and she wanted Texas Baptist women to think of missions in terms of one person influencing another individual.

The overall theme of each annual message was missions. For Mary Hill Davis, the concept of missions was simple: one person touching the heart of another individual. She encouraged all members of the WMU of Texas to join in this cause. In 1908, she told the group gathered in Ft. Worth, "In prosecuting this plan of enrichment, we must never lose sight of the individual."[27] She described the qualities necessary to do mission work: "Only two things are needful for the new worker—a willing heart and a personal task. The possession and exercise of these qualities will remove mountains from our pathway…There is a special work for each and every one. Find your place and the what and the how, will soon be made plain to your willing mind and hands."[28]

Some of her speeches inspired a greater commitment to completing the task ahead. For example she remarked, "Let us be done with half-hearted service, and consecrate our lives anew to make real the highest ideal which has animated the hearts of Christians since the time of the Apostle Paul."[29] She continued the following year by saying "We have talked and prayed about it; now let us address ourselves to practical work. Dreams have their place, but strong, vigorous action is what counts in the final equation…We have the thousands—where are the ten thousands?"[30] In 1923, she described the ladies of the WMU as "good soldiers ever ready to do and dare in the cause of righteousness."[31] Davis served not only as a cheerleader commending the mission efforts attempted during the previous year, but sought to expand each woman's personal vision of missions. In 1925, she challenged her audience by envisioning the impact on the kingdom they could make if all the Baptists in Texas would be as generous in giving to the church and missions as they were in satisfying their own personal wants and desires.[32]

During her tenure as president, the collected offerings attributed to the WMU of Texas increased substantially. In the first year of her presidency, the WMU of Texas collected $48,446.69 to fund their mission endeavors. Even though the final year of her presidency occurred in 1931 amidst the Great Depression, the WMU of Texas still collected $1,229,854.68 for its mission projects and building campaigns.[33]

Mary Hill Davis once said, "Milestones that mark the progress of the past cannot be compared with the cornerstones that project the accomplishments of the future. Anniversaries are valuable only as they are birthdays of new enterprises."[34] Therefore, when she agreed to a final, twenty-fifth year in office, the WMU of Texas decided to mark the year as "Achievement Year" and set six goals to celebrate the previous years of increased mission activity and provide a foundation for future endeavors.[35] Four hundred and fifty women attended her silver anniversary luncheon held at FBC Dallas.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas has ongoing and special mission projects in almost every conceivable mission field. One's opportunity for involvement in local, statewide, national, or foreign missions has never been greater. Many of these opportunities are funded wholly or partially through the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions. Some endeavors, like the Texas Hunger Initiative, Restorative Justice, and Disaster Response, focus upon finding solutions for large societal issues. Other projects such as Panhandle Reach, church planting, and various age-specific training and programs seek to spread the gospel of Christ among our peers and neighbors. While Davis may not have initiated or inspired each individual project, her legacy lives on in the commitment both to find solutions to new problems and to rethink new solutions to older problems.

A subset of missions that Mary Hill Davis frequently addressed was immigration and missions without borders. She wanted the members of the WMU to see mission opportunities regardless of race or class. When speaking of the increase in immigration in 1910, she said "we have heard their cry for help, we have witnessed their ineffectual and unending struggle against racial prejudice, and strange environment; and the burning question is, how have we responded to their insistent appeal?"[36] In Beaumont in 1929, she reminded her audience that "God made the world and man made the maps. God recognizes no line of demarcation between countries, states, and nations. When they came from the hand of God they came as a world, not as a galaxy of geographical differences. All men of every race and clime and color are equally precious to God's all loving heart."[37] Davis saw the immigrant population as a vast mission opportunity. In 1913, she expressed a vision of reaching all immigrants who entered Texas with a copy of the Bible in their own language.[38] In describing their impact as now reaching the most remote parts of the planet, she commended her audience for quickly catching "the heart-cry of the oppressed nations without regard to racial differences

or class distinctions."[39] Realizing immigrants would be a long-term mission field for Texas Baptists, Davis said, "The immigrant is ever a perplexing problem, and one that calls for a most alert genius to successfully cope with its manifold complexities. Friends, we are only on the threshold of this stupendous work."[40]

Texas Baptists today continue Davis' dream to reach all immigrants with the gospel in their native language. The ISAAC Center through the Christian Life Commission trains churches on immigration issues and equips them to minister to immigrants. The Intercultural Ministry of the Baptist General Convention of Texas seeks to reach groups who are new to Texas including many refugee populations. The Hispanic ministries of Texas Baptists have grown over the decades in their ministry to citizen and immigrant Spanish-speakers. For example, Congresso is the largest gathering of young Hispanics in the United States and features corporate worship services and training in evangelism and discipleship.[41] The foundation laid by Mary Hill Davis of intentionally reaching immigrant populations has allowed these and many other on-going ministries of Texas Baptists to flourish.

Davis was also passionate about the importance of education, informing the 1919 Houston convention that "The best investment to establish the security of the world is the Christian school."[42] During her tenure as president, the WMU of Texas provided consistent financial support for Baylor Female College[43] and scholarships for young ladies to attend the Training School in Ft. Worth. They also completed four building projects: the Annie Jenkins Sallee School for Girls in China, the Williford-Miller Training School in China, the Woman's Missionary Training School in Ft. Worth that was attached to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Woman's Memorial Dormitory on the campus of Baylor University.

Today, Texas Baptists continue her emphasis on education through the financial support of numerous schools and

universities including: the Baptist University of the Americas, Baylor University, Dallas Baptist University, East Texas Baptist University, Hardin-Simmons University, Houston Baptist University, Howard Payne University, San Marcos Baptist Academy, University of Mary-Hardin Baylor, Valley Baptist Missions and Education Center, and Wayland Baptist University. Additionally, the Baptist General Convention of Texas also supports two seminaries: George W. Truett Theological Seminary at Baylor University and Logsdon Theological Seminary at Hardin-Simmons University.

It is always difficult to ask modern questions of historical figures. However, when considering her emphasis on education for all, including religious education for women, it is difficult to avoid this question: "How would Mary Hill Davis have approached the topic of women in ministerial leadership?" In 1912, she told a gathering at Ft. Worth, "We are living in a day of experts in every line of effort, and to train our young women for better and more effective service is not only a matter of wisdom, but of necessity."[44] In 1914, the advisory committee to the Woman's Missionary Training School in Ft. Worth consisted of Mrs. W.M. Reeves—chairperson, L.R. Scarborough, Mrs. F.S. (Mary Hill) Davis, and Mrs. W.L. Williams. They published a report at the 1914 convention that described the purpose of the Training School as training the young ladies in "the Word of God…soul winning and kingdom building" but not as training women to enter the pulpit as preachers.[45] Also in 1914, the principal of the Training School gave a report that included the following statement about the ladies' curriculum: "One of the most popular classes in our Training School is the class in public speaking…The object of this class is to train our women to speak easily and naturally, and to be ever ready to speak a word for Jesus when by so doing his cause may be advanced."[46] Two years later, Davis hoped that the impact of the Bible scholarships would continually expand "until hundreds of girls shall rise up and call you blessed and will witness for Him in Jerusalem,

Samaria, Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."[47] In 1921, Davis told the Dallas convention,

> The opportunities for religious work for a girl in these days are so many that she may well rejoice that it is her privilege to be alive in such an age. More and more her vision is being broadened and she sees her own neighborhood in relation to the work, and although she may not realize it, she herself is bound to become a person of power. Hence it is our part to equip her so she will use that power to glorify Him who is the source of all power.[48]

Finally, a curious entry is found in the WMU's statistical report for 1930: "Pulpits filled on Sunday (29)."[49] The other categories listed in the statistical report are miles traveled (23,000), talks made (304), district meetings attended (17), conferences held (175), books taught (21), institutions attended (8), assemblies attended (3), and letters of instruction written by hand (275). Unfortunately, the phrase "pulpits filled on Sunday" is not defined within the report and does not appear in any other report during her presidential tenure. Whether Davis spoke during the time of the message during a Sunday service or provided a missions report to a Sunday congregation is not clear, but something in these presentations was different from "talks made." It would be unwise to extrapolate the views of Mary Hill Davis on women in ministerial leadership from either the 1914 report of the Training School's advisory board or from the entry within the 1930 statistical report. She was passionate about missions and dedicated to ensuring that women had access to all of the available training that was necessary to successfully accomplish the task. Though it is unclear whether or not she would be promoting women in the pastorate today, the opportunities for female students to study at both Logsdon and Truett seminaries and the numerous graduate level religion programs throughout the state are a strong part of the living legacy of Mary Hill Davis.

The tireless commitment of Mary Hill Davis to missions left an indelible mark upon all future generations of Texas

Baptists. Even though her life was marked by social privilege, she dedicated herself to the advancement of the gospel, one individual at a time. She led the WMU of Texas by example, giving generously of her time, gifts, and money. As the state offering for missions bears her name, she will forever remain the symbol of involvement in missions for Texas Baptists. One of her most famous quotes was "Enthusiastic people may make blunders, but faint-hearted people never make anything."[50] May we be faithful bearers of her legacy by enthusiastically reaching individuals in every place where the opportunity arises.

Jennifer L. Hawks
Truett Theological Seminary
Waco, Texas

NOTES

[1]Review of 1880 census records for Dallas County, Texas. http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=census/search_census.asp (accessed on October 28, 2011) .

[2]Original Deacon Minutes of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, TX, Library at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, 63.

[3]Mrs. W. J. J. Smith, "Who Was Mary Hill Davis?" (1940?), Texas Baptist Historical Collection.

[4]Email from Ruthe Turner, Librarian at the First Baptist Church of Dallas, TX, to author, November 11, 2011.

[5]H. Leon McBeth, The First Baptist Church of Dallas: Centennial History (1868-1968), (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1968), 54.

[6]Ibid. , 112.

[7]Della Carroll, comp., W.M.U. History of the First Baptist Church Dallas, Texas, (1952?). 11.

[8]Ibid., 10.

[9]The gravesite of Mary Hill Davis at Grove Hill Memorial Park in Dallas has two markers. The first is her tombstone recording her date of birth as March 4, 1863 and her date of death as November 28, 1934. The second marker is from the Woman's Missionary Union listing her tenure as president and recognition that she is the namesake for the state mission offering.

[10]"Gay World of Fashion," *Dallas Morning News,* November 14, 1887, www.newsbank.com (accessed October 28, 2011).

[11]"Outstanding Leader in Baptist Church Activities Succumbs," *Dallas Morning News*, November 29, 1934, www.newsbank.com (accessed October 28, 2011).

[12]"Work Is Begun by Dallas Women," *Dallas Morning News*, May 3, 1908, www.newsbank.com (accessed October 28, 2011).

[13]"Help Keep the City Clean," *Dallas Morning News*, May 28, 1899,. Accessed through Newsbank, Inc. Online on October 28, 2011.

[14]Mrs. Theron J. Fouts, "Mrs. F. S. Davis," *Proceedings of the Forty-fifth Annual Meeting of the Woman's Missionary Union of Texas* (Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1931), 48.

[15]Olivia Bridges Davis, "Mary Hill Davis-(Mrs. F. S.)" Texas Baptist Historical Collection, 2.

[16]Josephine Jenkins Truett was the wife of Dr. George W. Truett, pastor of FBC Dallas. Annie Jenkins Sallee and her husband served as missionaries in China and were partially supported by the W.M.U. of Texas. Josephine Jenkins Truett and Annie Jenkins Sallee were sisters originally from Waco, TX.

[17]Josephine Jenkins Truett to Annie Jenkins Sallee, October 4, 1908. Transcript in the Annie Jenkins Sallee papers, Texas Collection, Carroll Library, Baylor University. It is unclear who Mrs. G referred to in this letter.

[18]Inez Boyle Hunt, "Mary Hill Davis: God's Great Woman" (Dallas: Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, February, 1996).

[19]Davis, "Mary Hill Davis-(Mrs. F. S.)," 3.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Hunt.

[22]Mary Hill Davis, *Living Messages: Official Addresses of Mrs. F.S. Davis 1907-1931, President of Woman's Missionary Union of Texas* (Dallas: Woman's Missionary Union of Texas, 1934), 114.

[23]http://www.infoplease.com (accessed October 28, 2011).

[24]The six amendments were: 16- income tax, 17- popular election of senators, 18- prohibition, 19- women's suffrage, 20- setting of congressional terms, and 21- repeal of prohibition. http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html (accessed October 28, 2011).

[25]Davis, Living Messages, 31.

[26]Ibid., 51.

[27]Ibid., 6.

[28]Ibid., 77.

[29]Ibid., 3.

[30]Ibid., 6.

[31]Ibid., 82.

[32]Ibid, 89.

[33]Ibid., iv.

[34]Ibid., 110.

[35]Carroll, 33-34.

[36]Davis, Living Messages, 12.

[37]Ibid., 111.

[38]Ibid., 25.

[39]Ibid., 50.

[40]Ibid., 9.

[41]http://texasbaptists.org/evangelism-missions/hispanic-evangelism/ (accessed October 28, 2011).

[42]Davis, Living Messages, 57.

[43]Baylor Female College has had many names during its history but is now known as the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor.

[44]Davis, Living Messages, 21.

[45]"Report on Woman's Missionary Training School by the Advisory Committee." Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Baptist Women Mission Workers of Texas, (Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1914), 244-49.

[46]Mary C. Tupper, "Report on the Baptist Women's Missionary Training School," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Baptist Women Mission Workers of Texas*" (Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1914), 241.

[47]Davis, *Living Messages*, 43.

[48]Ibid., 71.

[49]"Statistical Report," *Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the Woman's Missionary Union of Texas* (Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1930), 9.

[50]Davis, *Living Messages,* 9.

BOOK REVIEWS

David Stricklin
Book Review Editor

David Stricklin is a professor of history at Dallas Baptist University
3000 Mountain Creek Parkway, Dallas, Texas, 75211-9213
214-333-5496 / Fax: 214-333-6819
E-mail: davids@dbu.edu

An Act of Providence: A History of Houston Baptist University, 1960-2010. By Don Looser. Pearland, Texas: Halcyon Press, 2010. 576 pp.

Fifty years seems too short of a period of time in which to develop an historical perspective of an event as important as the founding of a university but Don Looser accomplishes this task mightily. Starting before the founding of the school itself, Looser shares the vision for a new college that took root in the Houston area as early as 1908. He follows the ups and downs of the journey of this vision through the rough waters of the depression, two world wars, and finally to its implementation in the 1950s and culmination in the fall of 1963. He follows this beginning with a thorough examination of the growth of Houston Baptist University from its first semester through its fiftieth anniversary in 2010.

A cursory look at *An Act of Providence* might lead one to think it is merely a list of hundreds of names of faculty, staff, supporters and students along with annual events that made the school what it is today. This would be a shortsighted conclusion. Professor Looser weaves the story of the struggles of a new university finding a foothold in the turbulence of the

1960s and 1970s through the early chapters and continues this process throughout the book. Looser is not afraid to confront and discuss the conflicts that took place on campus between students, faculty and/or the administration and in so doing brings a richer picture of the journey upon which Houston Baptists traveled as the university grew and prospered. Each new building or program, each new accomplishment or struggle, adds to the picture of a strong work of God in the southwest part of Houston.

With only three presidents over its first fifty years, HBU has had strong leadership to guide it through its establishment and growth. Dr. W.H. Hinton served HBU for its first twenty- five years before handing over the reins to Dr. E.D. Hodo who walked with HBU through the next nineteen years. Both men left their mark on the school and its students. Dr. Robert Sloan took on the presidential mantle in 2006. Dr. Looser does not neglect to point out that those influencing the direction of HBU included not only the presidents but also the founders, faculty, staff, students and alumni through the years and he includes their contributions as he moves through the major events of each period.

An Act of Providence while replete with well researched, names, dates, and facts is a thorough history of the founding and growth of a great university. Anyone interested in higher education would profit from studying this history. It is an excellent documentation of the journey of Houston Baptist University from early vision, through foundation and growth.—*Review by Lisa Seeley, Adjunct Professor of History, Dallas Baptist University.*

TEXAS BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Secretary-Treasurer's Report
November, 2010

The Texas Baptist Historical Society did not meet in 2010. Officers were elected by mail with the following outcome:

President: Don Wilkey, Onalaska
Vice President: Phil Hassell, Independence
Secretary-Treasurer: Alan Lefever, Fort Worth
Executive Committee 2011-2012: Kyle Henderson, Athens and Mark Bumpus, San Angelo

2010-2011 Budget:

INCOME

BGCT	$1,000.00
Membership Dues & Journal Sales	1,000.00
Sponsoring Schools	4,000.00
Luncheon	600.00
Total Income	$6,600.00

EXPENSES

Journal Printing	$3,500.00
Journal Postage	400.00
Journal Labor	-0-
Journal Supplies	-0-
Newsletter Printing	-0-
Newsletter Postage	-0-
Awards	600.00
Speaker's Honorarium	600.00

Miscellaneous Supplies	50.00
Luncheon	600.00
Total Expenses	$5,750.00

Respectfully submitted,
Alan J. Lefever
Secretary-Treasurer
Texas Baptist Historical Society