





SCRIPTURAL CHURCH ASSOCIATION

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by

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Misunderstandings usually are rooted in the failure of a speaker or writer to clarify the subject being discussed. Too often we take for granted our hearers or readers know what we are discussing, when they really do not. When there is a misunderstanding, the fault usually lies with the speaker or writer. For this reason, I propose to lay a good foundation to support the positions that shall be advanced concerning the all important subject of how churches can associate scripturally.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

Let us first define our subject, Scriptural Church Association, to guard against misunderstandings.

Scriptural - is the adjective form of the noun "Scripture." It is made up of the root word "Scripture" and the suffix "al." By Scripture, I mean the Bible, God's Holy Word. The suffix "al" means "of," "relating to," "characterized by." The word scriptural means "of the Bible," "relating to the Bible," "characterized by the Bible," "God's Holy Word."

Church - will be a little harder term to deal with. But if this is to be a profitable study, there must be a clear understanding of the term. The English word "Church" was translated from the Greek work "Ekklesia." It is used 109 times in the New Testament. Each time it is used in the sense of a local body. Sometimes it refers to no particular body, but in such cases it is used in the institutional sense of a local body. Many people have difficulty understanding and accepting this premise regarding church truth. But the same people have no difficulty in always thinking of the American Flag as a local flag. They never for one instance think of all the local flags making up one great big invisible flag. People do not think of all the American housewives

making up one great big invisible housewife. But most people do have trouble with the word “church.” When one speaks of the church, most people think of a great big universal invisible body composed of all the saved. This is wrong. This is no more possible than for all visible flags to make up one large invisible flag or for all visible housewives to make up one large invisible housewife.

The Greek work “Ekklesia” demands a local visible body. The word is made up of the root word “Kaleo” and the prefix “Ex.” “Kaleo” means called, and “Ex” means out. Thus, the word “Ekklesia” means called out—a called out assembly. An assembly is always local. It cannot be otherwise. An assembly can be assembled. It can also disassemble. It can then reassemble. But if it cannot be assembled, it cannot be a church.

A church is a local assembly of people. A New Testament Church is a local assembly of a particular kind of people. There are at least three (3) qualifications that an assembly of people must meet before it can in truth claim to be one of our Lord's Churches. First, each person must have confessed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, each person must have been baptized according to the Scriptures; third, all persons must have agreed to work together under heaven's authority as a body to carry out the commands of the Lord.

Association - An association is a company of persons or things having a common interest. It is a company of persons or things joining as partners in accomplishing a common purpose.

The ABA is either the American Bar Association or the American Baptist Association, depending on whether the associating principles are lawyers or Baptist churches. The American Baptist Association is a group of true churches uniting their interests and energies to accomplish a common purpose.

Scriptural Church Association - Is then defined as a group of scriptural churches uniting as

partners in carrying out the work of the Lord in such a way as not to violate the Scriptures in any way.

ESTABLISHING SOME BASIC FACTS

Any position advanced is only speculative theory when it is not established on basic facts. A position based on facts is no longer speculative theory. It is proven truth. There are some basic facts that must be set forth if this study is to advance beyond speculative theory.

God is Sovereign. To be sovereign is to have absolute power--complete control. Since the sovereignty of one rules out the sovereignty of all others, God alone is sovereign. This does not mean that one who is sovereign cannot give the business of executing His will to another. If a sovereign chooses to appoint another to execute his will within his kingdom, he surely has the liberty to do so. And in no sense is he any less sovereign.

This is precisely what God has done in every age of His dealing with man on the earth. This church age is no exception. God has appointed His Church (now Churches) to execute kingdom law on the earth.

God, being sovereign, sits in judgment on whether His chosen, commissioned executive witness on the earth executes kingdom law in keeping with His plan and purpose for His kingdom.

The form of government the United States of America operates under seems to illustrate how God's kingdom business functions. There are three branches of power making up the government of the United States of America—they are the legislative, executive and judicial. The legislative branch-the congress-makes all law. The executive branch-the president and his

cabinet-executes law. The judicial branch-Supreme Court and lower courts-judges the laws and the executing of the laws.

In the kingdom of Heaven, God is the Legislator—He has made all kingdom law and has given it to His executive. Kingdom law is the Bible. His executive in this age is His churches. God, Himself, also fills the judicial branch; for every action of every church is finally amendable unto God alone.

In this church age, each church has been vested with the authority to execute kingdom law. Each church serves as God's executive on earth. But it should be noted here that the kingdom business over which each church serves as an executive is not a new business. It is the same kingdom business over which Israel served as God's executive. Israel failed God and God took His kingdom business from Israel and gave it to a new executive—His church (Now Churches). The parable of the householder (Matt. 21:33-46), along with Luke 12:32, serves to prove this point. It should be noted that the kingdom taken from Israel is the same kingdom given to this first church; and is the same kingdom possessed by each church in this age. It should also be noted that Jesus clearly taught that the kingdom was something the church possessed. The church was not and is not the kingdom. Each church is a local executive of God's kingdom business on earth.

A church has no authority beyond that which God has given her. She cannot make law. She has no authority to legislate. She only has authority to execute law already made in heaven. That is all—and any church going beyond this is in trouble with God. Those who constitute her membership may not know it. They may not admit it. But one day when all are called into account, those involved shall be made acutely aware of it and shall be judged for the misuse of power.

In scriptural church association, the units associating are churches. Thus, an association never meets. It cannot. Member churches elect messengers to represent them in messenger assemblies. But messenger assemblies are not associations, even though they are so called by most ministers. We would all do well to correct our language. Maybe such a correction would help our church people to see that there is a difference in Associational Baptist and other kinds of Baptists.

These messenger assemblies are nothing more than large committee meetings composed of messengers of many churches. They have no authority beyond making recommendations that churches can adopt or reject at will.

DRIVING DOWN SOME STAKES

With our proposition defined and having established some basic facts, it seems necessary to drive down some stakes to tie our principle arguments to. With so many good works setting forth many of these truths, it does not seem necessary to go to great lengths to prove the points contained in the part of this work presently before us.

Isaiah 40:3 prophesies of one who would be sent to prepare the way for the Lord. Matthew 3:1-3 establishes that this was fulfilled in the person and work of John the Baptist. John did indeed prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.

The Lord, as the man Jesus Christ, identified Himself with this prepared people by submitting to the baptism of John (Matthew 3:13-17).

The baptized Lord called out from among this prepared (penitent and baptized) people those of His own choosing and thus organized His first New Testament Church (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:14-20).

From the organization of His church until His ascension, our Lord personally pastored and directed the work of this first church. Included in His many activities were preaching the organizational message (Matthew 5:1-7;29); setting the apostles in the church (Mark 3:13-19; I Corinthians 12:28); the sending out of the twelve (Matthew 10:1-42; Mark 6:7-13); and the sending out of the seventy (Luke 10:1-12).

Before ascending to the Father, the Lord commissioned His church. The record of this commissioning is set forth in Matthew 28:18,19; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8. "Commission" is defined as (1) a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts and duties; (2) the authority to act in a prescribed manner in performing prescribed acts.

“Prescribe” means to write at the beginning; to lay down a rule; to dictate. It should be noted that to prescribe one thing is to prohibit all others. “Commission” further means (3) the authority to act for, in behalf of, or in the place of another.

What the Lord did in commissioning His church was (1) to give her the authority to act for Him; in behalf of Him; and in the place of Him; (2) The Lord also gave a written warrant granting His church power to act for Him, power to perform various duties. (3) Further, the Lord commanded His church (now churches) to act in a prescribed manner and to perform prescribed duties. It should be noted that since the Lord did indeed specify at the beginning the duties expected of His church, all others are prohibited.

The Lord placed in His church (now churches) the authority for doing kingdom business. Three scriptures are noted to prove this. First Matthew 16:13-19 records our Lord giving to His church (churches) the keys of kingdom authority and pledging heaven's support in the exercise of this authority. Second, Matthew 18:15-19 records our Lord instructing His church (now churches) in church discipline. In this matter He gives final authority on earth to His church (now churches). Third, Matthew 28:18-20 points out that all power or authority in heaven and on earth has been given to our Lord Jesus Christ. Based on this claim, Jesus prescribed who would execute kingdom business on earth and of what this kingdom business consisted.

It was to His assembled church He gave this commission (Matthew 28:7-10; 16:20). Although Matthew 28:16 refers only to the eleven, it is quite evident that more were present (Acts 1:21-23; I Corinthians 15:6). Since Jesus specified who was given authority to act for Him, all others are excluded. To make a legitimate claim for heaven's authority to act for God, any church must find her roots in the local church body Jesus organized on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The prescription for business to be performed by his church (now churches) was threefold: make disciples, baptize these disciples, and teach these disciples whatsoever He commanded. Christianity, as a whole, has wandered far afield from the narrow confinements of this—the Great Commission, having gotten involved in the fields of medicine, secular education, general welfare work, as well as political involvement. It is sad to say, but no few of our Lord's own churches are permitting themselves to extend their work into nonauthorized fields. Suffice it to say—a prescribed work rules out all others. So long as a church operates within the sphere of her commission, she operates with heaven's authority and blessings. Outside the sphere of her commission, she expends her energy in vain.

The church (now churches) is sovereign in the sphere of her commission. In binding and loosing, each church is sovereign (Matthew 16:18,19). In matters of church discipline, each church is sovereign (Matthew 18:15-19). In every work of the Great Commission, each church is sovereign (Matthew 28:18-20). All of this means that the unit of authority for all of these works is the church. Binding and loosing is by the authority of a church. Making disciples is by the authority of a church. Baptizing is by the authority of a church. Teaching all things whatsoever I have commanded you is by the authority of a church.

Church authority necessitates congregational rule. Jesus very plainly establishes church sovereignty both positively and negatively in Matthew 20:20-28. He pointed out that Gentiles had rulers over rulers; princes who ruled the commons; and great rulers who ruled over the princes. After which He said, “That this shall not be so among you.” In this Jesus established congregational rule. He also ruled out apostolic succession of power and with it preacher rule. And He prohibited rule by boards, bishops, popes, presiding elders and such like.

The law of sovereignty establishes that when the sphere of authority is named, all other

spheres are ruled out. Since the Lord specifically names His church (now churches) as His authorized executive to execute His kingdom business in this dispensation, since he gave His church (now churches) the authority to act for Him; no other sphere of authority has heaven's sanction to act for God in this church age.

As a side note, I offer this interesting observation. The logic of the Roman Catholic position on church authority is more defensible than the position espoused by Convention Baptists. *Note: while the Roman Catholic position on what constitutes a church is totally wrong, all authority is kept within the church. On the other hand, the Convention Baptist concept of what constitutes a church is basically right, the convention permits extra-church authorities sovereignty in their own spheres.*

No person will ever understand the scriptural concept of church association and cooperating until he gets his thinking straight on church sovereignty. When a person accepts the Bible teaching on church authority—that none other than true churches has authority to act for God—he will have very little trouble with the subject of Scriptural Church Association.

SCRIPTURAL CHURCH ASSOCIATION
PRESERVES THE SOVEREIGNTY OF EACH CHURCH

This writer feels that an article authored by the late Dr. A.J. Kirkland which appeared in the December 5, 1949 issue of the Baptist Monitor very effectively introduces the present section of this work. Therefore his article entitled, “Do We Believe in The Sovereignty of the Churches?” is here included.

“One of the bed-rock doctrines of Baptists has been, all through the ages, that a church of Jesus Christ is a sovereign body under Christ, and that there is no court of higher appeal than that of a church body. Every Baptist Manual, every expression of Baptist doctrine that we know anything about declares this doctrine. We believe that it is a bed-rock Bible doctrine.

It is upon this basis of doctrine that we have always contended, as Baptists, that association of churches and cooperation of churches must be upon an equal basis and absolutely voluntary on the part of every church. Therefore, every work of enterprise, every institution or undertaking in Baptist endeavor must stand upon its merits before the churches, with every church the sole judge as to whether or not it shall support it. Any other plan of association or cooperation would be a plan that would coerce churches and destroy their sovereignty

Therefore, all true Baptists have agreed that since each church is a sovereign unit within itself, what an association of messengers does, or what any group of churches does, even though the group represents a majority, still cannot bind a church who elects

to dissist from them. For if one church should be bound by what the others did, then the church which was thus bound would lose its sovereignty and would become a servant of others.

Baptists have always recognized the sovereignty and independence of a church even to the point of isolation from all other church or cooperative programs if it so chooses.

Thus, if and when a church wishes to put out a missionary by itself, that right is respected as a scriptural right by all true Baptists. If a church elects to have an educational program and be solely responsible for it, that right is respected as a scriptural right by all good Baptists. Furthermore, if one church voluntarily elects to support a missionary, educational or benevolent program which may be initiated and controlled by another church, that right has always been respected as a scriptural right by all good Baptists.

A church may make a mistake in its alignments, but it certainly has the scriptural right to make its own choices as to what it shall do.

It is sad to say that this great principle of doctrine and freedom is being belittled and stamped in the mud today. There are those who are unlearned that have been prejudiced and who now think that a church that puts on its own program or who dissents from a program made by others commits a terrible crime. Thus unwittingly, they are demanding that every church give up its sovereignty or independence and accept a program handed down by a messenger body or board. They are doing this even to the point of making it a test of fellowship.

All true Baptists recognize the right of church cooperation on a voluntary and equal

basis, but in order to conserve this principle, it must be on an equal and voluntary basis.

There are those who think that if one church sends out a missionary or projects some other program, and, if another church voluntarily helps, that this would not be church equality. It would not be, if it were not voluntary on the part of the church that helps, but when it is left on the voluntary basis, then every church is sovereign and independent in its actions. Every Baptist historian knows, and every honest Baptist who is informed will readily admit that this was the way Baptists cooperated for over fifteen hundred years after Christ left the first church upon the earth.

Some Baptist associations are good and adhere to this principle, but some associations as well as conventions are not practicing this principle today. There are many individual Baptists among association Baptists who are openly against this time honored principle in spirit and in practice. Better watch them. They have axes to grind.”
A.J.K.¹

It seems very clear that there are seven principles to be respected if the sovereignty of the Lord's churches is to be preserved in associated work.

First it should be noted that:

**SCRIPTURAL CHURCH ASSOCIATION
REQUIRES VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATION.**

Dr. A.J. Kirkland was a strong voice for the voluntary association of our Lord's churches as already seen in his article used to introduce this part of our study.

Dr. J.M. Pendleton (Baptist Church Manual, page 173) said, “Every church acts voluntarily in connecting itself with an association. There is not—there cannot be—compulsion in the matter. This results from the fact that the Scriptures recognize no higher tribunal than a church.”

Dr. I.K. Cross said,

“However, some things must be observed about the nature of these associated efforts. First of all, though the churches were admonished and encouraged by the preaching of the brethren and the examples of other churches, the final decision and action of each church was its own. It was a voluntary matter with each congregation, and each church remained sovereign.”²

To be scriptural, association must be initiated and continued by the authority of each church involved. No power can scripturally reside in any messenger assembly that can in any way abridge the freedom of any local church. If any compulsion is exercised over any church, the church over which it is exercised ceases to be sovereign in so far as her will is violated.

A practice of many associational messenger assemblies that calls for messengers to vote on seating messengers of other churches is in my opinion unscriptural. It can be argued that this has been done for centuries, but antiquity does not make it scriptural. The articles of agreement of some associations may permit this practice and the churches may have adopted these articles of agreement, but such does not make the practice scriptural.

Now, before you shut your mind to what has been said; this question is raised—If it is scriptural for messenger assemblies to vote to seat messengers, why did our founding fathers fail to include this in the Articles of Agreement of the American Baptist Association? The same

question can be asked again of the Texas brethren concerning the Articles of Agreement of the Missionary Baptist Association of Texas.

A few years ago, a fine young preacher wrote and asked me why many local associations in the state of Texas required petitionary letters from new churches. This practice permitted messengers to vote to accept or reject any new church as a cooperating church of an association. He pointed out that this practice was not permitted on the state (MBA) and national (ABA) levels of association. How would you have answered him?

The constitutional practice of voting to receive churches into an associational fellowship also carries with it the constitutional approval of voting to expel associating churches. If it is scriptural to vote to receive, it is scriptural to vote to exclude. In either case the vote infringes on the sovereignty of the church involved.

Most of our newer associations (less than 100 years old) such as the American Baptist Association, the Missionary Baptist Association of Texas, and some local associations do not include the provisions for messengers to vote on accepting (or rejecting) new churches into the fellowship. About the strongest language used is: This association shall be composed of regular Missionary Baptist churches that have adopted the Doctrinal Statement and Articles of Agreement.

Some object by saying that some churches with which our churches don't want to fellowship may send messengers. Therefore it is necessary to have the option of voting to seat messengers to guard against this possibility. My answer is: Association demands trust. When any church has voted to accept the doctrinal statement of an association and has voted to approve the Articles of Agreement under which all messenger assemblies will operate and has elected messengers to represent her; she has done all that is necessary to be included in an association of churches. She

has done as much as the churches who first formed the association. For who voted to seat their messengers in the first assembly? To go beyond this is to infringe on the sovereignty of the churches. And such would violate the freedom of association.

Some warnings need to be noted right here. 1) Might does not make right. 2) When churches permit messenger bodies to violate the freedom of some other church, the time may well come that the power may shift and their own freedom will be violated.

It is interesting to note that in the General Baptist Convention of Texas, freedom of association was dealt a severe blow in the passage of the infamous Ninth Article in 1899.

“We recommend the adoption of the following amendment and that all the other proposed amendments be not considered.”

“Article IX.--Whenever any church or association or society shall by a majority vote of the Convention be declared to be in an attitude of general or continued hostility or unfriendliness to the work or purposes of the Convention, or when any person is declared to be in such attitude, then such church or association or society shall, by such majority vote, be denied a seat as a messenger from any church, association, or society, and when such church association or society shall be denied messengers, or such person denied a seat as a messenger, then the privilege so denied shall not thereafter be exercised by said church, association or society or person, until granted by a majority vote of the Convention after permanent organization.”³

Passage of this article set the stage for the organization of the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas which was very careful not to infringe upon the freedom of churches to

associate. But, in 1949 when power hungry men who could not stand the heat of criticism got in control of the messenger assembly of the BMA, history repeated itself. A resolution patterned after the infamous Ninth Article of the General Baptist Convention was passed.

“BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Baptist Missionary Association, reaffirm our desire to work and have fellowship with any regular Missionary Baptist Church believing in the principles and policies of the Baptist Missionary Association on a basis of church, pastor and preacher equality, recognizing our solemn responsibility to our Lord Jesus Christ, and accepting our moral obligations toward each other.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, this Association declare non-fellowship with any church and pastor that shall continue to attack, falsely accuse, and intimidate our churches, pastors, and that churches and pastors be indefinitely suspended from this Association, or until they prove themselves peacemakers and willing to co-operate with the majority of this Association.”⁴

Messengers from two churches (Bethel, Jacksonville and South Harwood, Dallas) were denied seats. And the Articles of Agreement were amended to include Section 7 under Article III which called for the use of a petitionary letter and a two-third majority vote of the messengers as the means by which new churches could be received into the B.M.A. of Texas. And so freedom of association had fled the Baptist Missionary Association as it had the General Baptist Convention.

It is true; freedom of association may be at times a little gaulding. We may at times associate with some we had rather not. But laws instituted to obstruct the freedom of others are wrong.

And they who choose to use them shall live to regret their choice.

EQUALITY IN REPRESENTATION

Another bed-rock principle in the Scriptural is equality in representation. The Scriptures do not admit to large churches and small churches, rich church and poor churches. Each of our Lord's churches has been entrusted with the Great Commission work. Each is individually responsible to God for discharging this responsibility. Responsibility is accompanied by sovereignty to act. Sovereignty demands equality. Inequality abridges sovereignty insofar as the will of a church is overridden by the inequity.

If some church is given a stronger voice (more messengers) in associated work because of her size or the amount of her contributions, then the sovereignty of the smaller, weaker church is violated inasmuch as her voice is diminished.

Those who champion inequity of representation on the basis of church membership and monetary support, would cry the loudest if their government provided for inequity of votes based on the size of a family or on how much taxes were paid.

Our Lord's instruction on equality among His preachers certainly applies to His churches. Matthew 20:25b, 26a records:

“Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

But it shall not be so among you.”

No person can read this without being impressed that the Lord wills that equality rule in His work, whether it be between brethren or between churches.

It seems good to call attention to what some Baptist leaders have had to say concerning equality of representation in associated work.

Dr. Ben M. Bogard,

“There is no scriptural way by which churches may combine, but they may associate as equals.”⁵

Dr. L.D. Foreman,

“The churches of New Testament times associated as equals.”⁶

Dr. A. J. Kirkland,

“Since Missionary Baptists believe the doctrines of church sovereignty and authority, it follows that an association of churches can do nothing more than a group of sovereign, independent churches working together upon the basis of equality. For, if each church is sovereign, then, each one is equal to every other one.

Therefore, in order that an association be scriptural, it must preserve the principles of sovereignty and equality.”⁷

In my opinion, most churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention can be counted as New Testament Churches. But they must be counted as churches in error. The convention champions a system of representation that makes a mockery of church equality. Three instruments of proof are here included: Article III, Section I--Membership, of the Rusk-Panola

Baptist Association (SBC) reads:

“The membership of this Association shall be composed of messengers elected by the cooperating churches of this Association. Each church shall be entitled to four messengers for the first one hundred members or fractional part thereof, and one additional messenger for additional fifty members or major fractional part thereof, provided no church shall have more than fifteen messengers.”⁸

Article II of the Constitution of the Baptist General Convention of Texas reads:

“Section 1. This body shall be composed of Messengers from regular Baptist Churches, and Associations of Baptist Churches, and Baptist Missionary Societies, co-operating with the Convention.

Section 2. Each Church shall be entitled to two Messengers, and one additional messenger for each \$25.00 contributed to the funds of the Convention; and in no case shall any one Church be entitled to more than eight Messengers.

Section 3. Each Association shall be allowed two Messengers, and one additional for each \$100.00 contributed to the funds of this Convention; provided, in no case shall any Association be entitled to more than five Messengers.”⁹

Article III - (Membership) of the constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention reads:

“The Convention shall consist of messengers who are members of missionary

Baptist churches co-operating with the Convention as follows:

1. One Messenger for each regular Baptist church which is in friendly co-operation with this Convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work and has during the fiscal year preceding been a bonafide contributor to the Convention's work.
2. One additional messenger from each church for every 250 members; or for each \$250.00 paid to the work of the Convention during the fiscal year preceding the annual meeting.
3. The messengers shall be appointed and certified by the churches to the Convention, but no church may appoint more than ten (10).”¹⁰

NO REDELEGATION

A third very basic principle preserved by scriptural church association is stated in the negative: There can be no redelegation of authority; no re-commitment of authority.

On this subject, Dr. A. J. Kirkland said,

“In order that an association be scriptural, it must preserve the principles of sovereignty and equality. In view of this fact, it is also an inescapable conclusion that a church can in no sense transfer or delegate its power or authority.”¹¹

Dr. J. M. Pendleton said in his Church Manual,

“A third truth, recognized by the Congregational form of church government is, that **the power of a church cannot be transferred or alienated**, and that church action is final. The church at Corinth could not transfer her power to the church at Philippi, nor could the church at Antioch convey her authority to the church of Ephesus. Neither could all the apostolic churches combined delegate their power to an association, or synod, or convention. That church power is inalienable results from the foundation principle of Congregationalism--that power is in the hands of the people, the membership. And if the power of a church cannot be transferred, church action is final. That there is no tribunal higher than a church is evident from Matthew 18:15-17.”¹²

The Lord gave the keys to the kingdom of heaven to His church (now churches), Matthew

16:18,19. He said that all power was given unto Himself in heaven and earth. He then gave instructions to His church concerning His will for her during the entire church age, (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus also spoke of taking kingdom authority from Israel and giving it to another people--His church, (Matthew 21:33-45). But nowhere can any person find Scripture to even suggest that our Lord gave any one of His churches the freedom to transfer this God-given authority to an association, a convention, or a board of trustees. He holds each church individually responsible to Himself.

If a church could re-commit her authority, then in so doing she would cease to be sovereign. Such action would be bound by decisions made outside of her membership and could well be bound by decisions with which she disagreed and found to be inconsistent with her will. Such would not only violate the sovereignty of the church involved, but it would be totally contrary to the plan and purpose of our Lord in commissioning His church.

The spurious doctrine of recommitment of authority was one of the contributing factors to the 1949-50 division in the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas and the American Baptist Association. One instrument used to verify this is an article appearing in the Soul Winner, May 4, 1949, editor, A. J. Kirkland. Dr. Kirkland's article--More Heresy Concerning Associations--review an article written by Dr. Gerald Keller for the Baptist Progress, a part of which is herein reproduced:

“The president of Jacksonville College, writing in the Baptist Progress, April 28, 1948 under caption, “The Power of Associations,” makes the following significant statements:

‘The messengers are the messengers of the churches. Their vote is the vote of the church.’

The above quotation is some more rank heresy concerning associations. Of the three statements quoted, only one is true. It is true that the messengers are the messengers of the churches. To say that the vote of the messengers is the vote of the churches is to make the messenger body a body of churches. That is not only a physical impossibility, but the very import of the statement puts ecclesiastical power of authority in the messenger body. The statement is absurd and ridiculous. It often happens that where there are two messengers from the same church, one will vote for a thing while the other votes against it. If the vote of the messenger is the vote of the church, then that church back home would be voting on both sides of the same question.”¹³

Further evidence that the unscriptural concept of redelegation of authority figured very heavily in the division is proved by an excerpt from the book, Why Associational Baptist Divided, by Dr. A. J. Kirkland. Under the heading, “The Doctrine of Recommitment,” pp. 10,11:

“The doctrine of recommitment was a doctrine of convenience to justify the strange actions of the messenger bodies and boards of the Texas Association. It was no new doctrine at all, but it was an old one under a new name. It was the doctrine of redelegated church authority. This doctrine was introduced by the editor of the official organ of the Baptist Missionary Association, The Baptist Progress.

This doctrine was in effect that the churches could recommit to their agencies, such as messengers and boards, everything committed to them by Christ. It taught that when such a commitment was made that the authority of the churches was so fully transferred to such agencies that the authority of these agencies transcended the authority of the churches themselves, hence every act of messengers and boards was binding upon the churches.

This may sound fantastic, but it is true. They even carried the idea further and contended that when these bodies met, the churches themselves met in them. Thus, referring to the actions of the messengers, they would say, 'The churches in annual session elected the missionaries.' They reasoned therefore that since the churches committed ecclesiastical power to the messengers, the messengers therefore could recommit it to the executive board, hence, board action was church action. There was no end to which ecclesiastical authority could be committed, and therefore every agency, no matter how far removed from the churches, was acting by church authority.

It became a common practice, when the messenger bodies met, for the moderator to stand, call upon the messengers to stand with bowed heads, and with gavel raised toward heaven, solemnly announce, 'I now declare the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas in annual session and ready for business.' This same act was performed twice by Gerald D. Kellar, then president of Jacksonville College, when he was moderator of the American Baptist Association.

The doctrine of true association Baptists is that while churches are associated together in the labor of the Lord, the churches themselves never meet, but send messengers to counsel together and make such recommendations relative to the needs

of the field as they deem wise. They believe that whatever the messengers do is no more than a recommendation to the churches. They believe that no church is bound by the act of the messengers or any other agency, and that it exercises its prerogative under God to adopt or reject any part or all of the actions of its messenger assemblies or agencies.

This new doctrine was widely opposed by a large segment of the churches. It provoked bitter debate. It is a dangerous heresy, but it was either espoused or condoned by all those in the American Baptist Association belonging to the opposition group as they struggled for control of the national body.”¹⁴

This was not the first time an association had been split over this unscriptural doctrine. Robert A. Baker in his Baptist Source Book identified the problem of redelegation of authority as the cause of the 1770 division in the Sandy Creek Association.

“The cause was partly convenience, but chiefly a mistake which this association fell into relative to their power and jurisdiction; they had carried matters so high as to leave hardly any power in particular churches, unfellowshipping ordinations, ministers and churches that acted independent of them; and pleading ‘That though complete power be in every church yet every church can transfer it to an Association;’ which is as much as to say that a man may take out his eyes, ears, etc., and give them to another to see, hear etc., for him; for if power be fixed by Christ in a particular church they cannot transfer it; nay, should they formally give it away yet it is not gone away.”¹⁵

NO UNION OF AUTHORITY

Again it seems that stating a principle in the negative will strengthen its presentation. It is clear to this writer that for church association to be scriptural, **there can be no union of the authority of the churches; no combining of authority; no co-sponsoring in the strict sense of the term.**

What must be guarded against is for any church to involve herself in a situation whereby her sovereignty could be violated. A union of authority would most certainly establish such a condition. For if two or more churches should determine to elect a board through which they would execute Great Commission work, they would have established a system through which the sovereignty of any one of the churches could be violated. For instance, if three churches should decide to cooperate a Bible school, how could they do it? Each of the three churches could elect three trustees and then the three churches could elect a tenth trustee-at-large. The responsibility of managing the school could be given to this Board of Trustees. The actions of the Board of Trustees would of course be amendable to the three churches. This may sound good, but what if churches number one and two vote to uphold some action of the Board of Trustees and church number three votes against the same action. What happens to the sovereignty of church number three? It is violated. Thus, it has been shown that the association of these three churches in executing Great Commission work is unscriptural. Church sovereignty has been violated.

Let it also be noted, if it is scriptural to execute the third point of the Great Commission as a union effort of the authority of three churches, then it would certainly be scriptural to execute the other two points by the same union of authority. Stated another way, this simply means that

if it is scriptural to teach “all things whatsoever I have commanded you” by the joint authority of three churches, then it would be scriptural to send out missionaries by joint authority and it would be scriptural to baptize by joint authority. It is the principle that is wrong, not what point of the Great Commission is being executed.

It should also be noted, that if it is scriptural for three churches to join their authority in executing the Great Commission, then it is scriptural for three hundred or three thousand churches to do the same. It is the principle that is wrong, not the number.

Two conclusions can be drawn from all this: 1) When any principle of local church authority is compromised, the stage has been set for wholesale violations; 2) When any church enters into any area of associating that can compromise her sovereignty, she is associating in an unscriptural way.

One note of explanation is needed here: It is possible for scriptural churches to associate in an unscriptural way.

**SCRIPTURAL CHURCH ASSOCIATION
EXCLUDES HETERO-ASSOCIATION**

The prefix “hetero” means other than the usual; it means different. Thus, hetero-association is the associating of different kinds.

So far as I know, this is not a problem anywhere in the American Baptist Association work. But since churches of some other Baptist group do err here, it seems wise to point out that scriptural church association excludes churches associating with associations, societies and such like. Positively stated, scriptural church association requires churches to associate with churches.

Likely some have wondered why this is even brought up. Surely, they think, everyone knows that churches never associate with associations or mission societies or committees. But “it ain't necessarily so.” The convention concept of association does permit Associations of Baptist churches and Baptist Missionary Societies to elect messengers.

This is verified by Article II of the constitution of the Baptist General Convention of Texas which reads:

Section 1. This body shall be composed of Messengers from regular Baptist Churches and Associations of Baptist Churches, and Baptist Missionary Societies, co-operating with the Convention.

Section 2. Each church shall be entitled to two messengers, and one additional Messenger for each \$25.00 contributed to the funds of the Convention; and in no case shall any one Church be entitled to more than eight Messengers.

Section 3. Each Association shall be allowed two Messengers, and one additional

for each \$100.00 expended in Missionary work done with in its own bounds, and one additional for every \$100.00 contributed to the funds of this Convention; provided, in no case shall any Association be entitled to more than five Messengers.¹⁶

Evidently the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention follow the same system of associating. This conclusion is drawn from the following quote from The Life and Works of Ben Marcus Bogard by L. D. Foreman and Alta Payne, Volume II, Page 314:

“In 1900 he (Bogard) went to the Southern Baptist Convention in Hot Springs, Arkansas, as a delegate from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.”¹⁷

This quote is only used to show that an unscriptural practice was more wide spread than among Texas Baptists. In no way do I imply that Dr. Bogard was ever in agreement with the Convention system. One need only to read the account of his fight against the convention system to know where that great man stood.

SCRIPTURAL CHURCH ASSOCIATION PROHIBITS EXTRA CHURCH AUTHORITY

It has been established that our Lord organized His church and gave her authority to execute His Kingdom business on the earth. It has also been established that to specify one executive is to rule out all others. Since our Lord did in fact specifically identify His church (now churches) as the executive to whom He gave the keys of the Kingdom of heaven, he did rule out any other executive. Thus any organization other than a New Testament church claiming executive sovereignty in Heaven's kingdom business during this church age makes a spurious claim. A New Testament church is the only body that can, with heaven's approval, claim executive authority. Any claim by association, convention, board, society, or such like of having authority to act as an executive in God's Kingdom business is contrary to Bible truth. Thus, the convention concept finds itself in conflict with the Bible, for the convention system does indeed proclaim the independent sovereignty of every Baptist body and the right of every Baptist body to act for God with sovereign authority within its own sphere. Robert A. Baker (professor of Church History at Southwestern Baptist Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas) made this very clear in an article entitled, "The Convention Concept," appearing in the Baptist Standard, October 26, 1977, Pages 12 and 13. Professor Baker wrote,

"As Texas Baptists make plans to meet at their state convention in Fort Worth, it is well to review what most Southern Baptists believe about the nature of those extra-church bodies with which we cooperate called district associations, state conventions (or general associations) and the Southern Baptist Convention. In summary they

believe:

That every Baptist body is completely autonomous under Christ. This means, as set out in Article IV of the Southern Baptist Convention, that while independent and sovereign in its own sphere, the Convention does not claim and will never attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organizations, association, or convention.

Of course the words “independent and sovereign” suggest that this body (or any Baptist body) has the right to determine its own membership and carry out its own program. Thus, if Baptist individuals or Baptist bodies adopt views or take actions which are not acceptable to another Baptist body, it has the right to decline to continue fellowship and cooperation with them.”¹⁸

Two problems with the convention concept arise at once: 1) Since Christ organized His church and gave the keys of Kingdom authority to her, then there is no scriptural justification for any other kind of Baptist body with any authority to do anything for God. It seems quite clear that even those who led in the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention, those who first espoused the convention concept of associated work admitted to the truth of this and therein created the second problem. 2) They sought authority from the state of Georgia to act.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR CHARTER OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

If a body has not received authority directly from God, that body has no authority to act for God. Since our Lord's churches are the only God-authorized executive in kingdom business for

this age, the claim to authority by all other bodies such as conventions, boards, associations, societies, is a false claim.

(The following is taken from The Southern Baptist Convention Charter)

CHARTER

An Act to Incorporate the Southern Baptist Convention

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Georgia, in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That from and after the passage of this Act, That William B. Johnson, Wilson Lumpkin, James B. Taylor, A. Docrey,* R. B. C. Howell, and others, their associated and successors, be and they are hereby incorporated and made a body politic by the name and style of the SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, with authority to receive, hold, possess, retain and dispose of property, either real or personal, to sue and be sued, and to make all by-laws, rules and regulations necessary to the transaction of their business, not inconsistent with the laws of this State or of the United States; said corporation being created for the purpose of eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the BAPTIST DENOMINATION OF CHRISTIANS, for the propagation of the gospel, any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

Approved December 27, 1845

*(Should be "A. Dockery" as given in 1846 Minutes reporting charter.)

AN ENABLING ACT

To authorize any and all eleemosynary or religious corporations heretofore created or hereafter chartered in Georgia, by virtue of their existence, for the propagation of the Gospel to exercise and carry on certain powers.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF
GEORGIA AND IT IS HEREBY ENACTED BY AUTHORITY OF THE SAME:

Section 1

That any eleemosynary or religious corporation heretofore created in Georgia or hereafter chartered is, by virtue of its existence, authorized, in addition to the propagation of the Gospel, to conduct schools for the training of the youth; to own and operate for itself or for others printing plants, publishing houses and any desired methods or means for the dissemination of news and information; to own and operate hospitals, nurses' homes and any and all institutions for the alleviation of pain and suffering; to own and operate for itself or others orphan asylums, old peoples' Homes and any and all institutions for the care of the needy and dependent; to conduct and carry into effect any plan for the care, maintenance and support of its workers and employees who may have become disabled, been retired, or otherwise made eligible for the benefits of said plan, and in connection therewith to conduct a plan for the establishment and payment of annuities in connection therewith; and further to do any and everything necessary and proper for the accomplishment of the objects herein enumerated, and in general to carry on any lawful business necessary incident to the attainment of these objects.

Section 2

Be it further enacted that this Act shall go into effect when approved by the Governor.

Section 3

Be it further enacted that all laws and parts of laws in conflict herewith be repealed.

Roy V. Harris

Speaker of the House of Representatives

Frank C. Gross

P. T. McCutchen, Jr.

President of the Senate

Clerk of the House of Representatives

Approved: Ellis Arnall

Henry W. Nevin

Governor

Secretary of the State

This 17th day of February, 1943

**SCRIPTURAL CHURCH ASSOCIATION REQUIRES THAT
THE SOVEREIGNTY OF EACH LOCAL CHURCH IS
RECOGNIZED, HONORED, AND PRESERVED**

There is one basic area of church sovereignty that claims our attention under this heading. It has been violated in most instances because the constitutions of many associations permit it.

The area in question has to do with constitutions prohibiting churches the freedom to elect whomever they may choose to serve as messengers to messenger assemblies. Many constitutions or articles of agreement in one way or another restrict churches in their choice of messengers to represent them in messenger assemblies. Some other constitutions make provisions for messenger assemblies to refuse to seat messengers who have been duly elected by some church. Also, there have been instances when messenger assemblies have passed resolutions prohibiting the seating of duly elected messengers.

Whatever means any association or messenger assembly may employ to dictate the qualifications of messengers any church may elect, it constitutes an infringement on the sovereignty of the Lord's churches. And it is therefore unscriptural.

The violation of this principle was one contributing factor to the division in the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas in 1949 and the American Baptist Association in 1950. A strange contradiction is found in a study of our associational history and the articles of agreement of many associations. To this day many local associations and some state associations have constitutions that permit this unscriptural violation of the sovereignty of our Lord's churches. Some who fought against the unscriptural practice on the state level catered to or overlooked the same practice on the local level.

Two things should be remembered in connection with this: 1) constitutionality does not guarantee scripturality; and 2) churches can associate in an unscriptural way and retain their status as true churches.

AUTHORITY TO ACT

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

The Churches of Her Membership

ARTICLE VI-POWERS

The powers of this Association shall be limited to the execution according to the teachings of the New Testament of the will of the churches composing it; and the Association, in annual session, shall elect such officers as are necessary for its deliberations and work and appoint such committees as are needed and transact other business as may be **directed by the churches**.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

The Churches of Her Membership

Article VI - Powers

The powers of this Association are limited to the executive of the expressed will of the churches composing it according to the teachings of the New Testament Scriptures. The Association in its annual session, will elect such officers as are necessary for the expediting of its deliberation and work, and will appoint such committees as are necessary, and transact any business as may be **directed by the churches** composing it.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

State of Georgia, USA

CHARTER

An Act to Incorporate the Southern Baptist Convention

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Georgia in General Assembly met, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same, That from and after the passage of this Act, That William B. Johnson, Wilson Lumpkin, James B. Taylor, A. Docey,* R.B.C. Howell, and others, their associates and successors, be and they are hereby incorporated and made a body politic by the name and style of the SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, with authority to receive, hold, possess, retain and dispose of property, either real or personal, to sue and be sued, and to make all by-laws, rules and regulations necessary to the transaction of their business, **not inconsistent with the laws** of this State or of the United States; said corporation being created for the purpose of eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the BAPTIST DENOMINATION OF CHRISTIANS, for the propagation of the gospel, any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

Approved December 27, 1845.

*(Should be "A. Dockery" as given in 1846 Minutes reporting charter.)

AN ENABLING ACT

To authorize any and all eleemosynary or religious corporation heretofore created or hereafter chartered in **Georgia**, by virtue of their existence for the propagation of the Gospel to exercise and carry on certain powers.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE **STATE OF GEORGIA** AND IT IS HEREBY ENACTED **BY AUTHORITY OF THE SAME**:

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

State of Missouri, USA

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this organization shall be: The Baptist Bible Fellowship International, (a duly incorporated body in the **State of Missouri, U.S.A.**)

OBJECT

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE II - OBJECT

The object of this Association is to encourage cooperation and Christian activity among the churches, to promote interest in, and encourage Missions on a New Testament basis among all people, to stimulate interest in Christian literature and general benevolence, and to provide a medium through which the churches may co-operate in these enterprises.

And further provided that the objects, or purposes, for which this Association is formed shall be exclusively religious, literary, and educational within the meaning of Section 501 ©) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or the corresponding provisions of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES OF CO-OPERATION Baptist Missionary Association of America

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this Association is to encourage and foster cooperation of the churches composing it is in carrying out the will of our Lord as expressed in the great commission as stated in Matt. 28:18-20. This means that this Association will seek to promote interest in the full and liberal support of missionaries in the home and foreign lands. This Association will seek to promote general benevolence, Christian education, and publications, and to provide a medium through which the churches may cooperate in these enterprises.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

CONSTITUTION

The messengers from missionary societies, churches and other religious bodies of the Baptist denomination in various parts of the United States, met in Augusta, Georgia, May 8, 1845, for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intention of our constituents by organizing a plan for **eliciting, combining, and directing the energies** of the denomination for the propagation of the gospel, adopted rules and fundamental principles which, as amended from time to time are as follows:

Article II. Purpose: It is the purpose of the Convention to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad, and any other objects such as Christian education, benevolent enterprises, and social services which it may deem proper and advisable for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Fellowship shall be: to obey in letter and spirit the commission given by our Lord in Matthew 28:18-20,

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

MEMBERSHIP

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION CHURCHES

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE III - MEMBERS

Section 1. This Association shall be **composed** of regular **Missionary Baptist Churches**.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA CHURCHES

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES OF CO-OPERATION Baptist Missionary Association of America

Article III - Membership

Section 1. This association is **composed** of regular missionary Baptist **churches** who are in sympathy with its efforts in providing this medium of cooperation. By regular missionary Baptist churches is meant those churches who hold tenaciously to the doctrines of the New Testament, believe in the principles of cooperation, fellowship, or association as taught in the New Testament Scriptures, and as defined in the Doctrinal Statement, Sections 20 and 21.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MESSENGERS

CONSTITUTION

Article I. The Name: The name of this body is the "Southern Baptist Convention."

Article II. Purpose: It is the purpose of the Convention to provide a general organization for Baptists in the United States and its territories for the promotion of Christian missions at home and abroad, and any other objects such as Christian education, benevolent enterprises, and social services which it may deem proper and advisable for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God.

Article III. Membership: The **Convention** shall consist of **messengers** who are members of missionary Baptist churches co-operating with the Convention as follows:

BY-LAWS

In order to carry out the provisions of the Constitution, the following By-Laws are adopted for the government of the Convention:

1. Enrolment of Messengers: The Secretaries of the Convention, shall be at the place of meeting one day before each annual session convenes to enrol messengers who present proper credentials from the churches. These **messengers** with others who may be enrolled upon presentation of approved credentials during the session **shall constitute the Convention**.

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL PASTORS

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

ARTICLE II

AFFILIATION

Affiliation with the Baptist Bible Fellowship International is **open to any Baptist pastor** of a supporting Baptist church believing in and adhering to the Word of God, on the basis of the Articles of Faith appended hereto. A supporting Baptist church is one that financially supports our missions or colleges.

CONTROL OVER MEMBERSHIP

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

NONE *(Most local and State Associations do exercise some control)*

ARTICLE III - MEMBERS

Section 1. This Association shall be composed of regular Missionary Baptist churches.

Section 2. The annual or called sessions of this Association shall be held by Messengers elected by the churches composing said Association.

Section 3. Each Church Shall be entitled to three Messengers whose qualifications shall be determined by the church electing them.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

CONTROL IS PROVIDED FOR IN ARTICLE III

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. This association is composed of regular missionary Baptist churches who are in sympathy with its efforts in providing this medium of cooperation. By regular missionary Baptist churches is meant those churches who hold tenaciously to the doctrines of the New Testament, believe in the principles of cooperation, fellowship, or association as taught in the New Testament Scriptures, and as defined in the Doctrinal Statement, Sections 20 and 21.

Section 2. The desire and willingness of any regular missionary Baptist churches, as defined above, to cooperate will be expressed to the messenger body of this Association in writing. The petitioning church will state that she has, in conference, duly adopted this Statement of Principles of Co-operation and doctrinal statement, and is ready to work in harmony and in fellowship with all other churches having adopted the same. Such a church shall be received into the fellowship of this Association by a vote of the messengers present, unless just censure against said church is duly sustained.

Section 3. In the event a church within the membership of this body is challenged concerning her adherence to this statement of principles of cooperation and or doctrinal statement a committee of three shall be elected to investigate the charges and bring a report of their findings at a subsequent session. Messengers of the challenged church shall remain seated until and if the challenge is proven and fellowship is withdrawn.

Section 4. Each church in this Association is entitled to three messengers chosen from her own membership, the qualifications of said messengers being determined by the church electing them.

Section 5. In the event a church seeks membership in this body and a challenge is made concerning her being seated, the moderator shall appoint a committee of three from the state in which the church challenged is located to investigate the charges against her.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

COMPLETE CONTROL

Article III. Membership: The Convention shall consist of messengers who are members of missionary Baptist churches co-operating with the Convention as Follows:

1. One messenger for each regular Baptist church which is in friendly cooperation with this convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work and had during the fiscal year preceding been a bona fide contributor to the Convention's work.
2. One additional messenger from each such church for every 250 members; or for each \$250.00 paid to the work of the Convention during the fiscal year preceding the annual meeting.
3. The messengers shall be appointed and certified by the churches to the Convention, but no church may appoint more than ten (10).

BY-LAWS

In order to carry out the provisions of the Constitution, the following By-Laws are adopted for the government of the Convention:

1. Enrolment of Messengers: The Secretaries of the Convention shall be at the place of meeting one day before each annual session convenes to enroll messengers who present proper credential from the churches. Those messengers with others who may be enrolled upon presentation of approved credentials during the session shall constitute the Convention.

Any contention about seating messengers shall be referred to a committee on credentials appointed by the Convention which shall report back to the Convention.

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

COMPLETE CONTROL

ARTICLE III AFFILIATION

Affiliation with the Baptist Bible Fellowship International is **open to any Baptist pastor of supporting Baptist church** believing in and adhering to the Word of God, on the basis of the Articles of Faith appended hereto. A supporting Baptist church is one that financially supports our missions or colleges.

ARTICLE V VOTING RIGHTS

Each church shall have one vote. Recognizing that this is a **Fellowship of pastors**, this vote shall be cast by the pastor, or in his absence, by his authorized alternate.

MEETINGS

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

DOES NOT MEET (*Wording of Articles of Agreement and language of many imply that it does*)

ARTICLE XIV - MEETING

The regular meeting of the Church Messengers shall be at such time and place as the assembled Messengers may appoint, and the Missionary Committee herein is empowered to make a called session when necessary.

ARTICLE VII - OFFICERS

Section 7. In the event that the Association shall fail at its annual session to elect a Treasurer or Corresponding Secretaries, the same shall be elected by the Missionary Committee as soon as possible.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

DOES NOT MEET (*Wording of Statement of Principles implies that it does*)

Article XIX - Meetings

Section 1. The regular annual meeting of the messengers from the churches shall convene on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday following the third Sunday in April, at such time and place as the messengers may choose two years in advance. The week of the meeting may be adjusted, if necessary, by vote of the messengers at least one year in advance.

Article XIII - Enrollment Committee

Section 1. The committee on enrollment shall consist of seven members, two of whom shall constitute a quorum.

Section 2. The duties of the enrollment committee are as follows:

A. To enroll the messengers and visitors at the regular or called sessions of the Association.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

DOES MEET

ARTICLE XI. MEETINGS

1. The convention shall hold its meetings annually at such time and place as it may choose.

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

DOES MEET

ARTICLE IV MEETINGS

The Baptist Bible Fellowship International shall meet annually, beginning on the fourth Monday of September, for the transaction of business. The place of this meeting shall be fixed by the Directors in charge of Affairs of the Fellowship. Other meetings may be called by the President as the need arises, 30 days advance notification of such business session to be published in the Baptist Bible Tribune. Missionaries may be approved at any National Fellowship meeting. Any Fellowship pastor may attend any meeting of a committee, agency, or subsidiary of the Fellowship. The final authority in all matters rests with the Fellowship. Any pastor shall have the inalienable right to appeal to the National Fellowship.

VOTING RIGHTS

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

EQUAL REPRESENTATION

ARTICLE III - MEMBERS

Section 3. Each church shall be entitled to three Messengers whose qualifications shall be determined by the church electing them.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

EQUAL REPRESENTATION

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 4. Each church in this Association is entitled to three messengers chosen from her own membership, the qualifications of said messengers being determined by the church electing them.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

UNEQUAL REPRESENTATION BASED ON MEMBERSHIP AND MONEY

Article III. Membership: The Convention shall consist of messengers who are members of missionary Baptist churches co-operating with the convention as follows:

1. One messenger for each regular Baptist church which is in friendly co-operation with this Convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work and has during the fiscal year preceding been a bona fide contributor to the Convention's work.
2. One additional messenger from each such church for every 250 members; or for each \$250.00 paid to the work of the Convention during the fiscal year preceding the annual meeting.
3. The messengers shall be appointed and certified by the churches to the Convention, but no church may appoint more than ten (10).

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

EQUAL REPRESENTATION

ARTICLE V VOTING RIGHTS

Each church shall have one vote. Recognizing that this is a Fellowship of pastors, this vote shall be cast by the pastor, or in his absence, by his authorized alternate.

CONTROL OVER CHURCHES

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

NONE *(Some local and State Associations do exercise some control over member churches)*

ARTICLE III - MEMBERS

Section 1. This Association shall be composed of regular Missionary Baptist churches.

Section 2. The annual or called sessions of this Association shall be held by Messengers elected by the churches composing said Association.

Section 3. Each Church Shall be entitled to three Messengers whose qualifications shall be determined by the church electing them.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

CLAIMS NONE - BUT IN FACT DOES EXERT SOME *(Also some State and Local Associations do exert control over churches)*

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 3. In the event a **church** within the membership of this body is **challenged** concerning her adherence to this statement of principles of cooperation and or doctrinal statement a committee of three shall be elected to investigate the charges and bring a report of their findings at a subsequent session. Messengers of the challenged church shall remain seated until and if the challenge is proven and fellowship is withdrawn.

Section 4. Each church in this Association is entitled to three messengers chosen **from her own membership**, the qualifications of said messengers being determined by the church electing them.

Section 5. In the event a church seeks membership in this body and a challenge is made concerning her being seated, the moderator shall appoint a committee of three from the state in which the church challenged is located to investigate the charges against her.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

CLAIMS NONE *(But in fact does exert some control over churches)*

CONSTITUTION

The messengers from missionary societies, churches and other religious bodies of the Baptist denomination in various parts of the United States, met in Augusta, Georgia, May 8, 1845, for the purpose of carrying into effect the benevolent intention of our constituents by organizing a plan for eliciting, combining, and **directing** the energies of the denomination for the propagation of the gospel, adopted rules and fundamental principles which, as amended from time to time are as follows:

Article III. Membership: The Convention shall consist of messengers who are **members** of missionary Baptist churches co-operating with the Convention as follows:

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

CLAIMS NONE - BUT DEMANDS CHURCHES DO CERTAIN THINGS

ARTICLE IX RELATIONSHIP TO CHURCHES

All New Testament Churches are autonomous and self-governing; therefore, no article in this Constitution or By-Laws shall ever be interpreted in any way as to infringe upon or jeopardize the absolute sovereignty of any local church.

ARTICLE V VOTING RIGHTS

Each church shall have one vote. Recognizing that this is a Fellowship of pastors, this vote **shall be cast by the pastor**, or in his absence, by his authorized alternate.

AUTHORITY

AMERICAN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION

NONE (*Acts as a large recommending committee*)

ARTICLE VI-POWERS

The powers of this Association shall be limited to the execution according to the teachings of the New Testament of the will of the churches composing it; and the Association, in annual session, shall elect such officers as are necessary for its deliberations and work and appoint such committees as are needed and transact other business as may be **directed by the churches**.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

CLAIMS NONE (*Acts on basis of redelegated authority*)

Article VI - Powers

The powers of this Association are limited to the executive of the expressed will of the churches composing it according to the teachings of the New Testament Scriptures. The Association in its annual session, will elect such officers as are necessary for the expediting of its deliberation and work, and will appoint such committees as are necessary, and transact any business as may be directed by the churches composing it.

Article VII - Officers

C. Christian Education Department: Annually this Association will elect the necessary number of persons to fill the vacant positions on the Board of trustees of the Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary, and the full board shall in turn when necessary elect a seminary president to promote the programs of that institution.

Article IX - Missionary Committee

Section 3. It is the duty of the missionary committee of this Association to act in its field as an executive between sessions, to carry out the purpose and the objectives of the Association; to fill vacancies in the missionary staff, and to attend to all the necessary business not otherwise provided for; and to render an annual report of its work to the Association.

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

SOVEREIGN IN ITS OWN SPHERE

CONSTITUTION

Article IV. Authority: While independent and sovereign in its own sphere, the Convention does not claim and will never attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organizations, association, or convention.

BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

SOVEREIGN IN HER WORK

ARTICLE IV MEETINGS

The Baptist Bible Fellowship International shall meet annually, beginning on the fourth Monday of September, for the transaction of business. The place of this meeting shall be fixed by the Directors in charge of Affairs of the Fellowship. Other meetings may be called by the President as the need arises, 30 days advance notification of such business session to be published in the Baptist Bible Tribune. Missionaries may be approved at any National Fellowship meeting. Any Fellowship pastor may attend any meeting of a committee, agency, or subsidiary of the Fellowship. The final authority in all matters rests with the Fellowship. Any pastor shall have the inalienable right to appeal to the National Fellowship.

1. A. J. Kirkland, "Do We Believe in the Sovereignty of the Churches?" Baptist Monitor, December 5, 1949.
2. I. K. Cross, What is the American Baptist Association? Baptist Sunday School Committee, Texarkana, AR-TX 75504, pp. 5,6.
3. J. M. Carroll, A History of Texas Baptists, Baptist Standard Publishing Company, 1923, p. 785.
4. Annual of the Baptist Missionary Association of Texas, 1949, p. 11.
5. Ben M. Bogard, The Baptist Way-Book, Bogard Press, 1946, p. 44.
6. L. D. Foreman, The Church that Jesus Built, Foreman-Payne Publishers, 1977, p. 291.
7. A. J. Kirkland, Credenda, Baptist Doctrine, Church Sovereignty in Missions, Seminary Press, p. 102.
8. Minutes of the Rusk-Panola Baptist Association, Texas, 1981-82, p. 10.
9. Annual of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.
10. Annual of Southern Baptist Convention, 1948, p. 19.
11. Kirkland, op. cit., p. 102.
12. J. M. Pendleton, Baptist Church Manual, Revised, Broadman Press, 1966, p. 111.
13. A. J. Kirkland, "More Heresy Concerning Associations," Soul Winner, May 4, 1949.
14. A. J. Kirkland, Why Association Baptists Divided, A. J. Kirkland, 1961, pp. 10,11.
15. Robert A. Baker, A Baptist Source Book, Broadman Press, 1966, p. 31.
16. Annual of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.
17. L. D. Foreman, and Alta Payne, The Life and Works of Ben Marcus Bogard, Foreman-Payne Publishers, 1966, Vol. II, p. 314.
18. Robert A. Baker, "The Convention Concept," Baptist Standard, October 26, 1977, pp. 12,13.