

BIOGRAPHY OF JEREMIAH LOUIS GUTHRIE

BY R. L. VAUGHN, DECEMBER 2022



Jeremiah Louis Guthrie was born May 20, 1877 in Appanoose County, Iowa. He is the son of Creed T. Guthrie (1848-1928) and Emily Jane Evans (1848-1920). Guthrie was initially educated in the rural schools of Seymour, Wayne County, Iowa. His higher education includes:¹

- 1902, Bachelor of Oratory Degree from the Chillicothe Normal School, Chillicothe, Missouri²
- 1902, Bachelor of Arts Degree from the Chillicothe Normal School, Chillicothe, Missouri³ • 1911, Bachelor of Arts Degree from William Jewel College, Liberty, Missouri • 1916, Master of Arts Degree from William Jewel College, Liberty, Missouri (Greek & Latin)
- 1933, Doctor of Philosophy Degree from Peoples National University, Atlanta, Georgia (later called Webster University)⁴

¹ The dates on his degrees from Chillicothe differ in the brief bio in the *Missionary Baptist Seminary General Catalog* (p. 8), which says, “He received the Bachelor of Oratory Degree from the Chillicothe Normal School, Chillicothe, Missouri, in 1898 or 1899, and the Bachelor of Arts Degree from the same college one year later.”

² <https://www.chillicothe-city.org/community/our-local-history-grand-river-museum/pages/old-chillicothe-business-college> “At one time, the college was considered a pioneer in the field of teacher training.” ³ B. Pd. and B. O., 1902 from Chillicothe Normal School, according to “The Faculty of O. B. U.,” *The Shawnee Daily News-Herald*, Thursday, August 31, 1916, page 2. It is not clear to me what the “B. Pd.” is. ⁴ “His dissertation topic was ‘The Place of Jesus Christ in Creation.’” *MBS General Catalog*, page 8.

J. Louis Guthrie was a preacher, but he is remembered primarily as an educator. He taught school in Iowa from 1895 to 1899, when he then enrolled in the Chillicothe Normal School and Business Institute in Chillicothe, Livingston County, Missouri. He taught in public schools in Missouri, and then served as Professor of Elocution and Oratory at the Chillicothe Normal School 1904-05. He removed to and studied at William Jewell College from 1906-11.⁵In 1907-11, he was a student teacher at William Jewell College, as well as the business manager of the Glee Club (1906-07). His career track followed with teaching at Union University, Jackson, Tennessee, 1911-13; President of Laneview College, Laneview, Gibson County, Tennessee, 1913-15; teaching at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma, 1915-1926; and President of Caledonia Baptist Academy, Caledonia, Union County Arkansas, 1926-28.⁶ Guthrie participated in band in most of these institutions, including “leader of the college band in the Oklahoma Baptist University.”⁷

Guthrie attended, worked at, and participated in Southern Baptist Convention institutions until 1932. “In 1932 the Guthrie family became members of the Liberty Baptist Church in Shawnee, thereby breaking affiliation with Southern Baptist work and beginning affiliation with Missionary Baptist Churches.”⁸ He served as state missionary of the Baptist General Association of Oklahoma in 1933, as well as an associate editor of the *Oklahoma Missionary Baptist*.⁹“While he participated in helping many colleges and conducted ‘Bible Schools’ in various churches, his crowning endeavor was what is now the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock (begun in 1934). Its first president was J. Louis Guthrie, Ph.D., who knew seven languages and had an encyclopedic knowledge of the Bible.”¹⁰“The need for a sustainable, credible Bible School moved the church to call Dr. J. Louis Guthrie, a Baptist preacher and educator, to serve as the founding President. Dr. Ben Bogard, the pastor of the church, and Dr. C. N. Glover



Figure 1: Union University, 1912

⁵ Liberty in Clay County is a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri. Members of the Missouri Baptist General Association founded William Jewell College in 1849.

⁶ Caledonia Academy was chartered in 1920, and opened in September 1920. It was a high school and junior college.

⁷“Faculty of Oklahoma Baptist University Has Been Completed,” *The Shawnee Daily News-Herald*, Sunday, August 8, 1915, p. 8. See also <https://www.okbu.edu/obumagazine/campaign-update/>

⁸ Robert Ashcraft, editor. *History of the American Baptist Association*, Texarkana, TX: Baptist Sunday School Committee, 2000, p. 612.

⁹ See issues of the *Oklahoma Missionary Baptist* periodical, 1933.

¹⁰ Robert Ashcraft, *Contending for the Faith, An Updated History of the Baptists*, 2006, pp. 688-690. Ashcraft says that Guthrie experimented with the church-sponsored educational model later used by Antioch MBC of Little Rock, Arkansas for the Missionary Baptist Seminary while he was pastor of the North Church in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

2

of Sheridan, with Dr. Guthrie organized the seminary to give affordable yet excellent Bible teaching and ministerial training.”¹¹ From 1934 until his death in 1945, Guthrie served as President of the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock.¹²

There was a great deal of upheaval in Oklahoma Baptist life in the 2nd and 3rd decades of the 20th century. Perhaps this created the atmosphere in which Guthrie left Oklahoma Baptist University. There is a newspaper record that he filed a civil case for damages against the Oklahoma Baptist University in 1926.¹³ How that was resolved is unknown to this author. Along with other Missionary Baptists, he participated for a time with the Orthodox Baptist Fellowship, guided by former OBU teacher W. Lee Rector.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he seems to have passionately settled in to the work of the American Baptist Association. Known pastorates of Guthrie include North Baptist Church, Shawnee, Oklahoma; Clayton Avenue Baptist Church, Hugo, Oklahoma; and First Baptist Church, Nash, Oklahoma. J. Louis Guthrie produced at least the following works:

- *The Didache of the Twelve Apostles, Or, The First Church Manual Ever Written* (translator, editor), Little Rock: J. Louis Guthrie, 1938
- *Acts 2:38 and the Greek Preposition “Eis” Translated, Explained, and Exposed*, Little Rock: J. Louis Guthrie, 1940
- *A Short History of the Baptismal Salvation Heresy*, Little Rock: J. Louis Guthrie, 1940¹⁵
- *The Bible in 8 Periods*, Little Rock: J. Louis Guthrie, 1940¹⁶
- *Creation of the Heavens and the Earth*, Little Rock, AR: M. B. I. Printery, 1943
- *Christ in Creation*, Texarkana, TX: Seminary Publications, 1975¹⁷

No doubt there are other writings by Guthrie that this writer has not located. Through his ministry at the Missionary Baptist Seminary of Little Rock, Guthrie exerted influence on the theology of Missionary Baptists. For example, Tom McElmurry writes that the “Gap Theory” of creation “entered our ranks largely through the brilliant, fertile mind of Dr. J. Louis Guthrie.”¹⁸ Further, he influenced Missionary Baptist Bible schools, institutes, and seminaries to follow a curriculum

¹¹“History,” *Missionary Baptist Seminary General Catalog*, Little Rock, AR: Missionary Baptist Seminary, 2021, p. 14. | https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/52/526e6f8a-b5e4-48f5-9bdbd42a894583b1/documents/2021General_Catalog_4.9.2021.pdf

¹²“Past and Present Administrators,” *Missionary Baptist Seminary General Catalog*, Little Rock, AR: Missionary Baptist Seminary, 2021, p. 9.

¹³“Setting of Civil Cases,” *Shawnee Weekly Herald*, Thursday, 25 Feb 1926, p. 4. Probably settled out of court, since there appears to be no further mention of it in the papers.

¹⁴“Baptist Meeting Set,” *The Commercial Appeal*, November 19, 1938, p. 5; “First Orthodox Baptist Church Host to Orthodox Missionary Baptist Fellowship,” *The Daily Admoreite*, March 29, 1942, p. 16. ¹⁵ In the preface, Guthrie

calls this a companion volume to *Acts 2:38 and the Greek Preposition "Eis"*.¹⁶ L. D. Foreman's *The Bible in Eight Ages* was based upon Guthrie's *The Bible in 8 Periods*.¹⁷ His dissertation "The Place of Jesus Christ in Creation" may be the background source of the *Creation of the Heavens and the Earth* issued in the 1940s, which in turn may be the same as *Christ in Creation* book of 1975.¹⁸

<https://baptistsearch.blogspot.com/2018/07/arkansas-missionary-baptists-and-gap.html> | Both *A Matter of Time: The Scientific Absurdities of a Young Earth from the Vantage Point of a scientifically Educated Believer* by Troy L. Bray and *Jesus Christ and the Planet Earth* by John E. Penn support McElmurry's assertion.

3

based upon a study of the Bible in the original languages. With his booklet *Acts 2:38 and the Greek Preposition "Eis"*, he engaged the baptism debate with the churches of Christ (Stone-Campbell movement). Further, he influenced Missionary Baptist Bible schools, institutes, and seminaries to follow a curriculum based upon a study of the Bible in the original languages. By producing a translation from the Greek, he introduced an early church document, the Didache, to Missionary Baptists. J. Louis Guthrie promoted an idea of church-sponsored religious education with seminary as a religious rather than secular institution. He wrote:

"This school [at Antioch MBC in Little Rock] must serve a definite purpose and that purpose to be entirely for preachers and Christian workers. Anything that might be worldly in its plans and programs or that might be seized on by any self-seeking individual to further his own interests is to be left out of consideration in the establishment of this school. And further, anything that can be seized on by the secular school systems of state or denominations shall be left entirely out of consideration in this school."¹⁹

The Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock continues to operate on the pattern established by J. Louis Guthrie, Ben M. Bogard, and C. N. Glover in 1934. The majority of the students of the school come from Missionary Baptist churches in Arkansas, but the student body also includes people from other states and foreign countries.

Early in his ministry, Guthrie advanced the need of strong missionary work in destitute towns in Missouri, urging Baptist people to "organize forces...and 'lift high his royal banner,' and conquer these places for Jesus." He continues:

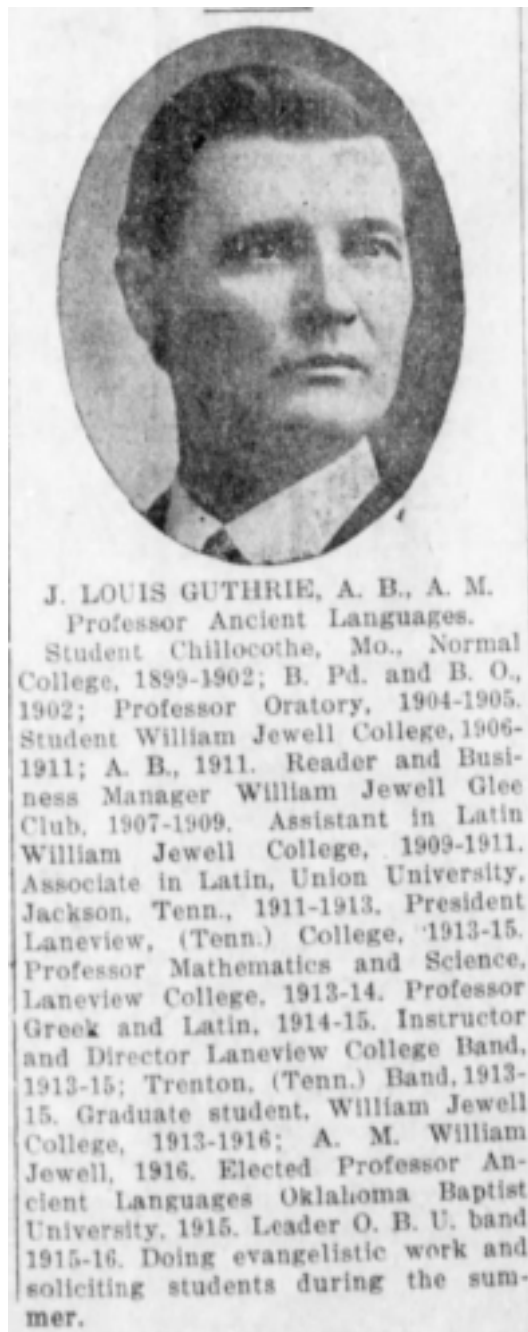
"I saw pitiful sights in Elliott. Young women in their teens watching a Sunday baseball game and yelling, waving parasols and handkerchiefs like savages; children that ought to have been in Sunday school running in the streets and learning to profane God's holy day. I was impressed and cannot soon forget this terrible Sabbath-breaking, heathenish recreation which men take is damning their souls to everlasting perdition."²⁰

The Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock named the Guthrie Memorial Building in honor of the Guthries. Built in 1979, it houses the Bogard Memorial Chapel, the Glover Memorial Library, as well as faculty offices and classrooms.²¹

¹⁹ <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/missionary-baptist-seminary-5291/> and *The History of the Missionary Baptist Seminary*, Robert Ashcraft, p. 6.

²⁰ Guthrie, writing from Moberly, Missouri in *The Word and Way* (Kansas City, Missouri) Thursday, June 29, 1905, pp. 9-10.

²¹ "Campus," *Missionary Baptist Seminary General Catalog*, 2021, p. 14.



The Shawnee Daily News-Herald, August 31, 1916

Guthrie taught a threefold salvation. In the resurrection, he writes, "Salvation is now full in

4

us and we have become triunely sanctified in the fullest sense. Spiritually at the new birth, mentally at the full stature of the growth to the image of the Son of God, and physically, when our bodies have become fashioned after the image of his glorious body as he is now resurrected." ("Salvation and Bible Holiness," *The Oklahoma Missionary Baptist*, Wednesday, November 1, 1933, p. 2)

Family

Jeremiah Louis Guthrie married Zula Neal, daughter of Matthew Henry Neal Mary Ann Irons of Randolph County, Missouri. He and Zula married on December 24, 1903 in Randolph County. Zula taught English at the Seminary in Little Rock. The Guthries had five children, Mattie Louise, Emily Ruth, Wesley Neal, Jeremiah Louis Jr, and Zula Frances. J. Louis Guthrie died April 18, 1945 in a Little Rock hospital at age 67.²²

Zula Guthrie died April 30, 1962 Arkansas Baptist Hospital in Little Rock at age 80. They are buried at the Roselawn Memorial Park, Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas.²³

The Guthries' son-in-law Malcolm McGregor Hagood was a Southern Baptist pastor, as well as a U. S. Air Force Chaplain for 20 years. He married Mattie Louise in 1934 in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Emily Ruth taught school. Wesley was a baker. Jerry (Jeremiah Jr.) was a grocer. Louis Dayle Capell married Zula Frances Guthrie on October 25, 1938 in Little Rock, with

Figure 2:

her father officiating. Capell, a Missionary the Missionary Baptist preacher, served as Dean of Students for Baptist Seminary from 1946 to 1988,²⁴ as well as editor of the *Missionary Baptist Searchlight*.²⁵

²² “Rev. J. Louis Guthrie Dies in Little Rock,” *Moberly Monitor-Index and Democrat*, Thursday, April 19, 1945, p. 9.

²³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/143996642/jeremiah-louis-guthrie>

²⁴ “Past and Present Administrators,” *Missionary Baptist Seminary General Catalog*, 2021, p. 9. ²⁵ “For many years Dr. L. D. Capell served with excellence as editor of the *Missionary Baptist Searchlight*. I remember Dr. Capell used to have a section in the *Searchlight* called ‘doctrinal dangers.’ Dr. Capell understood



Zula Neal, married J. Louis Guthrie in 1903

what I hope our readers will understand in our generation: truth is only one generation thick.” Roger Copeland, “Doctrinal Dangers,” *Missionary Baptist Searchlight*, January 2017. | <http://mb-seminary.com/searchlight/january2017>.