

THE RISE OF SOCIAL AWARENESS AMONG  
SOUTHERN BAPTISTS, 1910-1960

by

Sidney Lewis Harris

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A THESIS

Approved:

Committee

Committee

Committee

Committee

Approved:

Dean of the Graduate Division

THE RISE OF SOCIAL AWARENESS AMONG  
SOUTHERN BAPTISTS, 1910-1960

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A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of  
Sam Houston State Teachers College  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

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by

Sidney Lewis Harris

Lubbock, Texas

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### Purpose

It was the purpose of this study (1) to determine the extent to which Southern Baptists, as a denomination, expressed an awareness of various critical social conditions within the period 1910 - 1960; and (2) to reveal and evaluate the official attitudes assumed and the action taken by the denomination in facing those problems.

### Methods

The primary method of investigation of data used in this study was the examination of the reports of the old Social Service Commission, which later came to be known as the Christian Life Commission, to the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention. Some reports of this Commission's counterpart in various state Baptist Conventions were also examined.

Various books, treatises, articles, and pamphlets were studied to shed light on the subject. Correspondence was carried on with men both in the working field of social action and those who have given thought to similar areas of study. Conversation with Southern Baptist leaders has also

been employed in this investigation.

### Findings

From the evidence presented in this study the following conclusions appear to be valid:

1. Southern Baptists have become more socially aware during the past fifty years.
2. They have learned that social issues fall under the judgment of the Christian gospel as do personal matters.
3. The changing cultural and social patterns of the South, coupled with the expansion of the Southern Baptist Convention, have worked to produce new social situations, to which Southern Baptists have responded in a progressively more favorable way.
4. The advance in social awareness among Southern Baptists has come primarily in the past twenty years.
5. Southern Baptists have become more socially aware without departing from their conservative theological position.
6. The Christian Life Commission, and its predecessor, the Social Service Commission, has usually taken on the character and personality of its leadership. Progressive leadership has produced wider social concern and action.

Approved:

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Supervising Professor

### Acknowledgment

This study is the outgrowth of a growing interest in the social implications of the Christian gospel. That interest received its initial stimulation during undergraduate studies at Howard Payne College. Seminary professors increased the interest and faculty members in the Sociology department at Sam Houston State Teachers College provided the impetus for this research. Gratitude for creating social awareness on the writer's part is expressed to all of these people.

A special debt of gratitude is owed to Mrs. Mary Ann Weaver and Miss Deniese Magness who have transcribed the text and have contributed many hours of typing service and proofreading. Special gratitude is also extended to all those in Southern Baptist life who have shared their knowledge in the field of social concerns.

Finally, a heart full of gratitude is expressed to my wife, whose insistence upon the completion of this project has kept me at work on it, and to three little girls, whose unrestricted play can now be resumed.

Sidney Lewis Harris

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Southern Baptists, as a denomination, have traditionally been known as laggards in the field of the social application of the gospel. While other religious bodies have been active in varying degrees in social service activities since the beginning of the twentieth century (the period of real impetus of social Christianity in the United States) Southern Baptists have been slow in developing an awareness of the social and ethical implications of the New Testament. While other Christian groups have placed emphasis upon the horizontal relationships in Christ's teachings Southern Baptists have concentrated upon evangelism, missions, education, and benevolences almost exclusively with the vertical relationship in mind. Only as these areas have come in direct relationship to social theory and practice have Southern Baptists been concerned with this part of a total ministry.

#### Statement of the Problem

The social awareness of Southern Baptists, though limited in the past, has increased measurably in the last few years. In order to study scientifically and measure this increased concern an examination must be made of pronouncements and official declarations of the denomination. An effort must then be made to determine

the extent to which these official proclamations have been carried out.

### Purpose of the Study

It was the purpose of this study (1) to determine the extent to which Southern Baptists, as a denomination, expressed an awareness of various critical social conditions within the period 1910-1960; and (2) to reveal and evaluate the official attitudes assumed and the action taken by the denomination in facing those problems. In order to accomplish these goals, study has been given to the minutes of the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meetings from 1910-1960. Some state convention, district, and associational minutes have also been examined to try to determine the effect upon the smaller organizational units within the denomination of pronouncements and action by the messengers to the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention. Other source materials have been examined to try to determine reasons behind the reaction of Southern Baptists to the social implications of the gospel.

### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the rise of social awareness among Southern Baptists. There are many other Baptist groups in the United States, but no effort has been made in this paper to examine the issue among them.



The period covered in the years 1910-1960 represents another limitation in this study. This period was selected because the first signs of a real social awareness among Southern Baptists denominationally were seen around 1910 and 1960 represents the latest date for which data was available.

For several years before 1910 denominations in the North and Eastern sections of the United States had manifested interest and concern in a new movement called Social Christianity. Later this movement became known as the social gospel movement. In 1903 the Presbyterian Church in the United States took action to establish a department for social work and study.<sup>1</sup> This step was soon followed by other groups and it was largely a mutual concern for cooperation in the field of social work that led in 1908 to the organization of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Charles Howard Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915, p. 281.

2

Ibid., p. 302.

Resolved, That a Committee on Social Progress be appointed to memorialize other religious bodies of the world to appoint similar committees who shall confer together and endeavor to secure such concerted action as shall destroy these evils and make the impact of Christendom upon the nations of the earth more helpful. This committee shall also study the further duty of the church to society and shall suggest ways whereby Jesus Christ may become a fact in the social life of the world.<sup>3</sup>

Following this action by the Baptist World Alliance, Baptist Conventions in the South appointed Social Service Committees or broadened the scope of existing Temperance Committees to include social service. The first states to take action were Virginia<sup>4</sup> and Georgia<sup>5</sup> in 1911, North Carolina<sup>6</sup> in 1912 and South Carolina<sup>7</sup> in 1914. In 1913 a resolution offered by J. N. Prestridge was adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention forming its first Social Service Committee.<sup>8</sup> So it was that in the second decade of the twentieth century a rising awareness of social concern among Southern Baptists was seen. This stirring within the denomination marks the starting point of this study.

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<sup>3</sup>Baptist World Alliance Minutes, 1911, p. 334.

<sup>4</sup>Virginia Baptist Convention Minutes, 1911, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup>Georgia Baptist Convention Minutes, 1911, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup>North Carolina Baptist Convention Minutes, 1912, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>South Carolina Baptist Convention Minutes, 1914, p. 102.

<sup>8</sup>Southern Baptist Convention Minutes, 1913, p. 76.

The study is limited to official pronouncements by the denomination. Though many statements made by individuals or churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention may be found, examination of all these would have made the scope of this study too large for practicality. Thus it was not the intent of this study to measure in any way the extent of the social consciousness of any individual or group of individuals but rather to measure the official social awareness of Southern Baptists as a denomination.

### Methods of Investigation

The primary method of investigation of data used in this study was the examination of the reports of the old Social Service Commission, which later came to be known as the Christian Life Commission, to the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention. Reports of this Commission or its counterpart or equivalent in various state conventions were also examined. Since this commission has been charged with the responsibility of working in the area of social concern, it was felt that the reports of this body, and the convention's subsequent official reaction, should constitute a valid area of investigation.

Various books, treatises, articles and pamphlets were studied to shed further light on the subject under consideration. Correspondence was carried on with men



both in the working field of social action and those who have given careful thought and study to similar areas or facets of the study. Conversation with Southern Baptist leaders has also been used in this investigation.

### Method of Presentation

The Christian Life Commission has divided its work into five general areas: family life, race relations, moral issues, economic problems, and Christian citizenship. One chapter is devoted to the social awareness of Southern Baptists in each of these fields. Since these divisions are rather general, it was felt that most, if not all, the pronouncements of the convention could be included under one of the headings. A final chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the study.

### Special Factors to be Considered in a Study of Social Awareness Among Southern Baptists

There are several factors in the Southern Baptist economy, doctrine, polity, and ecclesiology which have been present in the development of social attitudes within the denominational framework. It seems well to consider these underlying matters at the outset in order to understand the developmental pattern of social awareness.

Economic background: For many years Baptists in the United States, and especially in the South, have been

rural people. They lived either on farms or in small communities where agriculture was the economic backbone of their livelihood. Because of this a relatively high degree of rugged individualism and isolationism was characteristic of Southern Baptists. This isolationism was not conducive to the development of a concern for others, except in cases of emergency. Consequently, the necessity of learning to live with others was not demanded of them. This factor entered into the development of their social consciousness.

Educational background: Baptists have traditionally insisted upon a divine call to the ministry without interference on the part of man. This insistence has led to abuse of the privilege of preaching the gospel in that many men, testifying of a divine call, have felt no sense of obligation toward preparation for their ministry. As a result the educational level of the Southern Baptist ministry has remained rather low until recent years. Observation of this point leads one to feel that an uneducated ministry is more apt to dwell upon the things of the hereafter rather than the present except as sin in the present may affect one's eternal destiny. There seems to be little concern for the temporal. This fact must also be reckoned with in studying the rise of social awareness.

Local autonomy: Another Baptist distinctive has been the insistence upon local church autonomy. Participation in denominational enterprises has always been a purely

voluntary matter. Churches are united denominationally upon a basis of cooperation rather than any strong structural system. Centralization of authority has been strongly resisted among Southern Baptists, thus leaving each local congregation as the final authority in matters of polity and practice. One may readily see that in this type of church government no individual nor group of individuals may speak for nor enforce any opinion upon any local church. The only time that Southern Baptists officially speak as a body is in their annual meetings where messengers, elected by the churches, express their convictions and will as a group and even then the churches are not bound by such action. Therefore any pronouncement in the field of social action, though official in nature, may not reflect the total sympathy of the denomination.

Fundamentalism: A strong fundamentalism has also characterized Southern Baptist thought. This position, even when yielding to a conservative view, must be considered seriously as one views the rise of social concern among Baptists in the South. The history of the social gospel movement in the United States reveals that its first strong supporters were the radical or liberal groups. The Unitarians have been referred to as the "seed bed in which the ideological roots of social Christianity found them-



selves at home."<sup>9</sup> The theological positions of liberal leaders in various matters of doctrine made it impossible for Southern Baptists to accept their teachings and proposals, and, unfortunately, the basic good in their emphasis upon social responsibility was cast aside with their untenable views on other matters. The strong reaction of the fundamentalist or ultra-conservative Southern Baptist against theological radicalism must be recognized.

Eschatological views: Southern Baptists have historically been millenarians. They have categorically been classified as either pre-millennialists or post-millennialists. Though there have always been those whose theological views of last things and the nature of the Kingdom of God have been non-millenarian they have been counted as a minority group until the last few years. Pre-millenarians have held the majority among Baptists in the South. This group, insisting upon the advent of the Kingdom of God on earth in a catastrophic and cataclysmic fashion thereby correcting the world's ills, have had little or no interest in programs of social betterment.<sup>10</sup> They have contended that it was not the business of the church to transform the world, but only to

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<sup>9</sup>Charles Howard Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Eldred C. Vanderlaan, Fundamentalism vs. Modernism, p. 2.

proclaim the message of salvation.<sup>11</sup> From this group has come the severest criticism of social action on the part of the church. Here, then, is another consideration that must be acknowledged as one considers the rise of social concern within a group where such a viewpoint is strongly evident.

Church and state concept: The historical position of Baptists with regard to separation of church and state is well-known. Whenever an apparent violation of this principle has been brought to light either on the part of others or within their own group Southern Baptists have been quick to voice their objection. Consequently, Southern Baptists have been hesitant to enter into areas where the enactment of legislation was often essential unless they were able to interpret the matter in terms of a vital moral issue. If such an interpretation could be made then they entered to pursue their own interest. This is seen most clearly with regard to the problems that grew out of the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. It was not until the following statement was adopted by Texas Baptists that a delegation was sent to Austin to voice the concern of the state group:

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<sup>11</sup>

D. B. Estep, Bringing Back the King, p. 17.



When a matter becomes a problem of group concern and fundamentally anti-social, then the churches have a perfect right to speak out on such moral issues.<sup>12</sup>

The South Carolina Convention declared:

It is not necessarily a violation of our doctrine of religious liberty, for the churches to advocate compulsory education.<sup>13</sup>

So, when moral necessity seemed to dictate, Southern Baptists have felt that they could adjust their historic position on separation of church and state to permit intrusion into "the things of Caesar." Though this may be judged a limited and shifting concept of morality it must be reckoned with in the development of the social consciousness of this denomination.

#### Definition of Terms

social awareness - Involved in the idea of social awareness in this thesis is not only a recognition of a valid area of concern but a sense of obligation resulting in responsible action.

Baptist World Alliance - a voluntary fellowship of Baptist churches and conventions embracing the world.

Southern Baptist Convention - a voluntary fellowship of Baptist churches engaged in a cooperative ministry. This convention was organized in 1845 and was for many years operative almost exclusively in the southern regions of the United States. In recent years, with expansion into every state in the union, the term has come to assume certain connotations with regard to polity and ecclesiology rather than geography.

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<sup>12</sup>

Texas Baptist State Convention Minutes, 1934, p. 157.

<sup>13</sup>

South Carolina Baptist Convention Minutes, 1929, p. 90.

State Conventions - a voluntary fellowship of Baptist churches within the boundaries of a given state.

Baptist District or Associational Conventions - a voluntary fellowship of Baptist churches within a given area of a state, such as a county or combination of counties.

Messengers - elected representatives of the churches to the annual meetings of the conventions cited above. These representatives have no binding authority and actually speak only for themselves.

eschatology - having to do with events at the end of time and/or life hereafter.

millenarianism - having to do with a literal thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth.

### Related Studies

Several papers have been written in the general area of social action among Southern Baptists though none have come to light on the specific subject at hand. Dr. Hugh A. Brimm wrote a thesis entitled "The Social Consciousness of Southern Baptists, 1900-1935" but the paper deals with only four regional problems and does not attempt to measure social awareness in the sense that this work attempts. Dr. Brimm's work was done at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky. Other theses at Southern have dealt with facets of social concern, but none of these has approached the problem along the lines of this research. Three of these have dealt with the ethical emphases of state Baptist editors. Contributing to this research were Mr. Carl English, Mr. Pat Hill, and Mr. Roger Crook. A thesis on race

relations during the decade 1940-1950 was written by Mr. Davis Hill at Southern, also.

At Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, Dr. Charles Johnson wrote a thesis on "Southern Baptists and the Social Gospel" and Dr. Foy Valentine wrote on race relations during the period 1917-1940.

George Kelsey of Yale has done a thesis on "The Social Thought of Contemporary Southern Baptists." A student at the University of Missouri, John Lee Eighmy, worked on a problem similar to the emphasis of this project, but once again, the approaches made in these works are not the same as that taken in this present research.

### Importance of the Study

Since research has not revealed a specific effort to trace the social awareness of Southern Baptists through the development of the Christian Life Commission and then measure the effectiveness of the work of that body it seems to be a valid area of examination and study. With Southern Baptists becoming more urban, thereby being thrust into the scene of personal and group interaction, it is important to trace their responses through the years to areas of social responsibility. This denomination has been known for its achievements in the fields of missions, education, benevolences and evangelism and it seems important to trace its views in this area as well.

It is hoped that this study may reveal a growing awareness in the matter of social action on the part of Southern Baptists and, at the same time, lend encouragement for greater activity in the social application of Jesus' teachings.



CHAPTER II  
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN  
LIFE COMMISSION

The official voice of the Southern Baptist Convention on social issues has been, for half a century, the body known first as the Social Service Commission and currently as the Christian Life Commission. This study of the rise of social awareness among Southern Baptists takes into consideration the work of this agency. A brief resume of the origin and growth of this denominational body will be helpful.

The roots of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention reach into the first decade of the twentieth century. Prior to that time the work of the Convention was looked upon primarily as missionary education and endeavor. Other interests had not found a place in the plans of the body.<sup>1</sup> Even resolutions on temperance, an issue upon which Southern Baptists have been most vociferous, were not permitted in the 1888 meeting of the Convention.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the withdrawal of the Landmark followers of J. R. Graves in 1905 that the Convention came to interpret its mission apart from the purely missionary evangelism which, since its beginning in

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<sup>1</sup>W. W. Barnes, The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953, pp. 245-246.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

1845, had characterized it.<sup>3</sup>

### First Indications of Social Concern

At the 1907 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia, a resolution was passed authorizing the appointment of a committee of three to plan a mass-meeting for the Sunday afternoon session of the 1908 Convention. The committee was to program the meeting

. . . to consider and counsel together as to what may best be done by Christian men and ministers, especially Baptists, for creating a more wholesome public opinion; for making the criminal laws more certain, more prompt and more effective; so as to take away the reproach resting on civilization and religion by the prevalence of crime and lynching; and so as to make the law respected and effective in all parts of our common country.<sup>4</sup>

So far as the records reveal this was the first time the Convention took formal action in the realm of social problems. Subsequent events might lead one to question the validity of referring to this move as social action, but it does reveal the first noticeable awareness of social responsibility on the part of the Southern Convention.

Growing out of the 1908 meeting was Southern Baptist's first committee on a social problem. Although the instructions for the Sunday afternoon session had called for a rather broad approach to the program, the committee appointed

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 246. (The influence of Landmarkism will be discussed at the conclusion of this chapter)

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

as the result of this emphasis was charged only with the matter of temperance. The standing committee was headed by A. J. Barton,<sup>5</sup> whose personality and influence was to govern the social thought of Southern Baptists for the next thirty-seven years.

The appointment of the Committee on Temperance was not only an outgrowth of the mass-meeting on Sunday afternoon but was also the result of a ground-swell of public opinion demonstrated in the local churches and state conventions by the formation of various prohibition groups. Southern Baptists were strongly opposed to the use of alcoholic beverages on moral grounds and were eager and willing to join in the fight for "a dry nation." The committee headed by Barton was the official Convention pronouncement of concern and its stamp of approval on what was being done at the local level.<sup>6</sup> The committee was appointed annually, but beginning in 1910, the chairman, and most of the members, were reappointed each year.

Since no funds were appropriated for the committee, its official duties consisted mainly of annual reports on the progress of the dry forces against the liquor

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A. C. Miller, "The Christian Life Commission" Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, pp. 260-261.

6

Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1908, p. 36. (Henceforth references to the annuals of the Southern Baptist Convention will be designated SBC Annual.)



traffic. However, A. J. Barton, the aggressive chairman of the committee, did not let the lack of finances hinder his own personal role in the prohibition movement. In 1911 he served as chairman of the national conference of temperance organizations, which framed legislation giving dry states protection against interstate liquor traffic.<sup>7</sup> In 1915 he chaired the committee which drafted the congressional resolution which led to the constitutional amendment on prohibition.<sup>8</sup> Barton also attended the International Conference Against Alcoholism in Italy in 1913 as a representative of the United States government.<sup>9</sup> He was superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League in Texas from 1915-1918, during which time the state voted to outlaw liquor.<sup>10</sup> It was largely through the influence of Barton that the Southern Convention left a traditional policy of denominational isolationism in 1913 to participate cooperatively with other denominations in the Anti-Saloon League's plan for national prohibition.<sup>11</sup> This was a departure

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<sup>7</sup> SBC Annual, 1913, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> SBC Annual, 1915, pp. 79-80.

<sup>9</sup> SBC Annual, 1914, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> Henderson Barton, "Arthur James Barton" Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> SBC Annual, 1913, p. 75; SBC Annual, 1914, p. 33.



not only from the previous position of aloofness toward interdenominational activity, but also from the restricted view that the function of the Convention was purely missionary and benevolent. As has been related earlier, however, such a move was justified on grounds of morality.

### A Second Step Toward Social Awareness

Southern Baptists have never given any other social reform the enthusiastic support which they gave prohibition. However, they did show a greater interest in many social problems after participating in the campaign to make the United States dry. The committee appointed to deal with temperance both convention-wide and state-wide, paved the way for a second step forward in the movement to make Southern Baptists socially conscious. In the second decade of the twentieth century the Southern Baptist Convention and five state conventions broadened their interests to include social problems other than temperance, either by expanding the duties of their temperance committees or by creating new committees which later absorbed the older temperance committees.

The creation of committees with broadened responsibilities came as a direct influence of the social gospel movement in America. These committees were part of a trend in American Protestantism, in which the major denominations officially adopted the program of social Christianity.

Social action agencies set up between 1900 and 1910 included: the Department of Church and Labor (Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.); the Joint Committee on Social Service (Protestant Episcopal); the Labor Commission (Congregational); the Federation for Social Service (Methodist Episcopal); and the Social Service Commission (Northern Baptist).<sup>12</sup> Though Southern Baptists resisted the social gospel movement generally, the influence of the movement could not be held in abeyance.<sup>13</sup> By 1915 the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Conventions of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Texas established permanent committees to deal with social problems.

The Baptist World Alliance also added its voice to the growing demand for social awareness among the churches. As a cooperating body within the Alliance the Southern Convention could hardly ignore its plea. Samuel Zane Batten, a leader in the social gospel movement and chairman of the Social Service Commission of the Northern Convention, offered the resolution, adopted by the Baptist World Alliance in 1911, which set in motion the machinery for

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<sup>12</sup>

Charles Howard Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915, pp. 280-295.

<sup>13</sup>

Southern Baptist opposition to the social gospel movement is discussed later in this chapter.

action by Southern Baptists.<sup>14</sup> Batten was also on hand when the Alliance proposal received attention at the Southern Convention in 1913. The resolution was presented to the messengers by J. N. Prestridge, a leader in organizing the Baptist World Alliance and the respected editor of a religious paper called The Baptist Argus. Prestridge noted the victories being won in the fight for prohibition and declared that the churches should broaden their attack to include other social evils.<sup>15</sup> Thus it may be seen that the resolution was presented and acted upon in the light of a moral issue rather than a purely social move.

With the passing of the resolution to broaden the Convention's area of interest to social interests beyond prohibition, the president of the Convention was charged with the responsibility of naming the personnel to serve on a "Social Service Commission." E. C. Dargan was serving as president at the time. He had been strongly attracted by the social gospel movement and had been instrumental in 1911 in leading Georgia and Virginia Baptists to create such commissions.<sup>16</sup> Prior to his work as a pastor in Georgia, the position he held while serving as

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<sup>14</sup>Minutes of The Baptist World Alliance, Second Congress, 1911, pp. 333-334.

<sup>15</sup>SBC Annual, 1913, pp. 75-76.

<sup>16</sup>Virginia Baptist Convention Minutes, 1911, pp. 74, 91. Georgia Baptist Convention Minutes, 1911, p. 15.



president of the Convention, Dargan had benefitted the cause of social Christianity among Southern Baptists as a teacher at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He introduced the subject of sociology to the Seminary's curriculum. His views on the role of the church in society were expounded in a book he wrote in 1907, Society, Kingdom and Church. Dargan had declared his sympathy for social reform but, because of his conservative theology, refused to endorse fully the social gospel movement. He rejected the earthly nature of the kingdom of God, and criticized secular reform movements for neglecting individual conversion. Dargan did insist, however, that the church had broad social obligations and should support secular reforms, without sacrificing the priority of man's spiritual needs.<sup>17</sup> The social Christianity proponents were fortunate to have a man of Dargan's sympathies in the office which appointed Southern Baptist's first Social Service Commission.

W. L. Poteat, the unordained but highly respected president of Wake Forest College in North Carolina, was named chairman of the first Social Service Commission.<sup>18</sup> Poteat was known to have a strong attraction to the social gospel movement and was one of the first Southern Baptists to accept the doctrines and goals of social Christianity.

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<sup>17</sup>E. C. Dargan, Society, Kingdom and Church, pp. 15, 19-20.

<sup>18</sup>SBC Annual, 1913, p. 76.

As chairman of the Commission he played a key role in introducing these ideas to the denomination.

In his first report as chairman of the Social Service Commission, Poteat presented a classic statement on the basic ideas of social Christianity. He described the kingdom of God as the " . . . organic expression of the will of God in human relations, an all-embracing social ideal to be realized in the reign of righteousness in the earthly life of man."<sup>19</sup> The church was defined as a social institution responsible for the solution of social problems. In carrying out this mission, Poteat declared that the church must insist that the state be " . . . humane, democratic under the Christian law of fraternity and justice, and that its legislation suppress unrighteous practices, restrain evil men and give life its opportunity."<sup>20</sup> The most significant part of the report, however, spoke to the economic order, in which the chairman said that the church must

. . . check private greed and oppose class antagonisms. It must erect Christian standards in the market place, and insist that the labor of women and children be regulated . . . that the industrial system provide the minimum necessary working hours with maximum of wholesome life conditions, and that the workers have a fair share of the prosperity which they produce.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>SBC Annual, 1914, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

Poteat went further to say that the church must assume responsibility for other problems of society, including world peace, the use of intoxicants, crime, and public health.<sup>22</sup>

Though a disciple of social Christianity, W. L.

Poteat was not blind to the prevailing attitude of Southern Baptists toward the social gospel movement. Being sensitive to the general feeling of the Convention, he did not advocate any radical program of social action, but advised the churches to support welfare legislation; to arouse public opinion against social evils; and to sponsor programs for the care of the poor, the sick, and the defective. Poteat issued his challenge after having first declared that the transformation of the individual through personal regeneration remained the basic task of the church.<sup>23</sup> Having subscribed to this basic doctrinal concept, he could then insist that the church must also transform organized society, without being challenged by the opponents of the social gospel movement.

The first report of the Social Service Commission was adopted without incident, though it is doubtful that many of those who voted approval of Poteat's statement fully understood its origin and implications. The influence of the social gospel movement can readily be seen

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 38.



in the report, but it would be a mistake to conclude that the adoption of the report indicated full endorsement of the social gospel. Subsequent events testify to this as Southern Baptists failed to carry out the recommendations of the report in the years that followed.

### The Period of Single-Mindedness

The broad program of social concern outlined by W. L. Poteat was destined to be delayed for more than a quarter of a century. The same Convention that approved the report of the Social Service Commission also adopted a constitutional amendment which resulted in the loss of Poteat as the Commission chairman. The amendment approved at the 1914 Southern Baptist Convention took committee appointments out of the hands of the president and assigned them to a nominating committee. The nominating committee combined the Social Service Commission and the Committee on Temperance,<sup>24</sup> and appointed A. J. Barton, who had been chairman of the Temperance Committee, to the new post. Barton held the position until 1942. Thus the work of the Commission was directed for more than twenty-five years by a man who lacked the broad social concern, the intellectual prowess, and the liberal spirit of W. L. Poteat. Whether the nominating committee knew this or not is a moot question. The tragedy of the committee's

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

action was revealed in the slow development of social awareness among Southern Baptists.

A. J. Barton came to his new post as a veteran of the prohibition wars. No one would dispute his outstanding service in that field of Christian morality, but when he assumed the chairmanship of the Social Service Commission he brought into his new position an almost single-minded passion, the absolute overthrow of the liquor industry. For eleven years hardly anything was said about any social problem other than that posed by liquor.<sup>25</sup> As long as Barton remained chairman of the Commission temperance references occupied a prominent place in his annual reports. As cited earlier Barton was instrumental in securing passage of the eighteenth amendment to the national Constitution. During the decade when the sale of liquor was illegal in the United States, he referred to prohibition as "our greatest achievement" and the enforcement of it as "our greatest task."<sup>26</sup>

After repeal of prohibition the Commission continued to make temperance the most important issue. The reports of Barton and the Commission during the thirties ignored the grave social complexities prevalent in that era but continued to hammer away at the theme of the decline of

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<sup>25</sup>Miller, loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>SBC Annual, 1927, p. 115.



public morality which, it claimed, was brought about by repeal.<sup>27</sup> In one of Barton's last reports he reaffirmed his devotion to the ideals of total abstinence and "legal suppression by government."<sup>28</sup>

Barton, as had W. L. Poteat, affirmed his conviction that the "salvation of society must be approached through the salvation of the individual."<sup>29</sup> He boasted that the Commission, in showing an interest in various social issues, had always proclaimed personal regeneration as the church's principal method for improving society. Apparently, he saw no inconsistency in his avowal at this point with his all-out campaign to legislate personal morals in the prohibition endeavor. Nor did he manifest any thought of contradiction when he advocated government censorship of motion pictures,<sup>30</sup> or when he supported laws curtailing business and public entertainment on the Sabbath.<sup>31</sup> He did, however, justify his support of the Sabbath laws on grounds that the state should provide a "civil Sabbath; not as an aid to religion, but as a matter of public welfare."<sup>32</sup> Gambling, obscene literature, and divorce were other matters for which the Commission,

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<sup>27</sup>SBC Annual, 1934, pp. 106-112. SBC Annual, 1935, pp. 67-71. SBC Annual, 1936, pp. 28-34.

<sup>28</sup>SBC Annual, 1940, p. 98.

<sup>29</sup>The Biblical Recorder, October 24, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup>SBC Annual, 1935, p. 70.

<sup>31</sup>SBC Annual, 1921, p. 84.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

headed by Barton, advocated legal measures to protect public morals. We are not told just how the Commission's insistence upon personal regeneration, as the only solution to social evils, was to be reconciled with their demands for legislated morality.

The hostility of Barton toward repeal was manifested throughout the early years of the New Deal. Because the Roosevelt administration was successful in nullifying the prohibition amendment Barton closed his eyes to the progress made in many areas of social reform. His contempt for the claims that the New Deal had inaugurated much-needed social reform is seen in articles published in some of the Baptist papers.<sup>33</sup> He declared that no amount of social reform by the New Deal could make up for the social evils which would result from repeal. While the views expressed by the Commission, under Barton's leadership, were anti-New Deal, they were not representative of the prevalent Southern Baptist attitudes. Most of the state Baptist papers carried articles and editorials praising the Roosevelt administration for correcting what they termed some of the "anti-Christian" features in the capitalistic system.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Western Recorder, June 14, 1934, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Henry Hill, "The Ethical Emphasis of the Editors of Baptist Journals in the Southeastern Region of the United States, 1915-1940," pp. 274, 282.

When the Commission offered a resolution at the 1933 Convention condemning Congress for granting "excessive power" to the President, opposition developed quickly and Barton was forced to withdraw the resolution.<sup>35</sup> He was successful, however, at the 1938 Convention, in getting approval of a critical statement directed toward what he called a trend toward greater "centralization" and "regimentation" by the federal government. He also made a plea for resistance to government policies whenever they violated fundamental rights.<sup>36</sup> Barton's personal hostility toward the New Deal never did, however, find much support in the ranks of Southern Baptists.

Although Barton's over-all policy as Commission chairman seemed to meet with general approval among Southern Baptists, he failed completely in his efforts to secure favor for the establishment of the work as a regular, full-time agency of the Convention. Throughout his tenure the Commission functioned without a budget of any consequences--often without any funds--and without a permanent headquarters or staff. From 1918 until 1933, with two exceptions, Barton made an annual request for the elevation of the work to permanent agency status. When the Convention inaugurated its unified financial plan for all its agencies in 1924, he requested an allocation

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<sup>35</sup>SBC Annual, 1933, pp. 104, 117.

<sup>36</sup>SBC Annual, 1938, pp. 101-102, 113.



for the Commission of one-fourth to one-half of one per cent of the total Convention budget.<sup>37</sup> The Convention approved the idea in 1925, but the first "Cooperative Program" budget, issued later that year, did not carry out this action.<sup>38</sup> Later on, in 1926, when the Executive Committee of the Convention took over the administration of the new Cooperative Program, Barton was given a little over two hundred dollars for Commission expenses for one year, but this act set no precedent, and his over-all plea went unheeded as it had in the past.<sup>39</sup>

Eventually a means of support for the Commission was found in the Sunday School Board, which, through the sale of its literature, was financially independent of the Convention. The Sunday School Board and the Social Service Commission began their friendly relationship in 1929 when the Board contributed four hundred dollars for Commission expenses.<sup>40</sup> This relationship has continued through the years and, at the present, the commission uses office space provided by the Sunday School Board.

Barton's service as chairman of the Social Service Commission, though severely limited by a lack of funds, did represent some advance in the social awareness of

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<sup>37</sup>SBC Annual, 1924, p. 118.

<sup>38</sup>SBC Annual, 1925, p. 121.

<sup>39</sup>SBC Annual, 1926, pp. 35, 113.

<sup>40</sup>SBC Annual, 1929, p. 318.



Southern Baptists prior to the twentieth century, and even prior to World War I, with their social feelings in the thirties and early forties, reveals that at least the denomination recognized the existence of social problems and acknowledged some responsibility for correcting them. Even though social issues were viewed within the framework of personal morality almost exclusively, an awareness of their existence came into the conscience of Southern Baptists. Upon most occasions Barton seemed oblivious to any problems not directly associated with the liquor traffic, thereby giving service to the preservation of the status quo in economics, race relations, and matters of citizenship. While paying lip-service to a broad program of social service, the Commission, under Barton's leadership, restricted its interests almost entirely to the personal concern of the chairman, and thereby forfeited the opportunity to lead Southern Baptists into a significant ministry of social action. That opportunity was never afforded more clearly than in the decade of the thirties.

#### The Social Bureau Controversy

Efforts to establish a permanent office with a full-time director were not limited to Barton. In 1933, when the Social Service Committee report failed to request such action by the Convention, Edwin McNeill Poteat, Jr., nephew of W. L. Poteat, offered an amendment to the report,

calling for a committee to study the possibility of establishing an "Agency of Social Research." This agency was to be in addition to the Social Service Commission, and would be instructed to furnish guidance to the Convention on social questions.<sup>41</sup> Poteat's timing for his request was advantageous. It came immediately following the controversy over Barton's condemnation of the New Deal for giving the president excessive powers. Perhaps Poteat's amendment was interpreted by the messengers to the Convention as a rebuff and an attempt to curb the Social Service Commission.<sup>42</sup> Whatever their thinking, the amendment passed without debate.<sup>43</sup> Actually, Poteat had in mind the creation of a social action agency, functioning full-time, with powers for exceeding those of the Commission. This was made clear in the next two years.

McNeill Poteat was made chairman of the study committee he had requested. Throughout the ensuing year no plans of the committee were made known. Following the 1934 Convention, Poteat released a "tentative report" but it attracted little attention. The people who attended the 1935 Convention came with little information and little interest in the work of the study committee appointed two years

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<sup>41</sup>SBC Annual, 1933, p. 104.

<sup>42</sup>The Florida Baptist Witness, June 15, 1933, p. 5.

<sup>43</sup>SBC Annual, loc. cit.

earlier. About all they knew was the open distaste that McNeill Poteat had for fundamentalism, a dislike which he had proclaimed in expounding his liberal views in an address entitled "The Place of the Minister in the Modern World,"<sup>44</sup> delivered at Southern Seminary, his alma mater, in 1934. In his comments he said that if ministers desired to resume their position of intellectual and social leadership, they would have to speak out on current social problems such as war, race relations, and economic injustices. He also advised them to revamp their "antiquated" theology so as to accept the findings of science, by which he meant adopting the theory of evolution, and of Biblical scholarship, by which he meant admitting that the Bible was not infallible.

The reading public was also aware of the liberal social views of Poteat as expressed in his book published in 1934, Jesus and the Liberal Mind. In this volume he portrayed Jesus as a social liberal because He placed individual rights above property rights and judged human institutions by their effect upon individuals. Poteat also rebuked his fellow Baptists for fearing to preach a social gospel and for their refusal to participate in the ecumenical movement.

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<sup>44</sup>The Review and Expositor, XXXI, July, 1934, pp. 289-305.



By the time the report of the study committee was given in 1935, McNeill Poteat was well-known, even though the exact contents of the report were not. He was open to the charge of being a dangerous liberal, having questioned the infallibility of the Bible and having forsaken evangelism in favor of a social gospel program. His position on church unity also put him in the position of denominational disloyalty.<sup>45</sup> Because of Poteat's liberal sympathies, he was a marked man.

When the report of the committee was given to the 1935 Convention by Poteat the fundamentalists and ultra-conservative guardians of personal evangelism attacked it on every hand. Though the problems to be dealt with were essentially the same as those covered by the Social Service Commission, the method of dealing with them would be different. The proposed name for the new agency would be the "Bureau of Social Research." A full-time "Research Director" with an initial budget of five thousand dollars would be required. Later, the Bureau would be expanded and its annual reports would serve as a basis for an "aggressive and far-reaching denominational program." Finally, the Bureau would be privileged to function

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<sup>45</sup> John Lee Eighmy, "The Social Conscience of Southern Baptists from 1900 to the Present in Their Organized Life," p. 146.

independently of all other denominational agencies in order to guarantee the privilege of objective studies of the Convention's attitudes and activities.<sup>46</sup>

The report was assailed by a half dozen men who spoke out against it in heated fashion.<sup>47</sup> Among those vociferously opposing the report was A. J. Barton, chairman of the Social Service Commission. The proposal was saved only by a vote to postpone action until the next year.

During the year following the 1935 Convention the report received wide publicity in the state Baptist papers. Most of them carried editorials on the issue and either expressed approval, opposition, or neutrality. The strongest editorial opposition came from the Western Recorder, a Baptist journal published in Louisville, Kentucky; The Baptist and Reflector, a Nashville, Tennessee, publication; and The Baptist Standard, the Texas Baptist state paper. The strongest and most prevalent objection was that the proposal would lead the Convention away from the true mission of the church. Fundamentalist premillennialists supported this contention whole-heartedly. The charge was made that the Bureau was based on the assumption

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<sup>46</sup> SBC Annual, 1935, pp. 55-59.

<sup>47</sup> Op.cit., p. 57.  
The Christian Index, May 23, 1935, p. 6.

that the kingdom of God was a present reality which could be extended in society by human efforts. Premillennialists, with their emphasis upon the coming kingdom, could not accept such an assumption. Their concept of the kingdom made it possible to exclude social betterment completely from the ministry of the church.<sup>48</sup>

Another strong criticism against the Bureau was directed to the lack of authority in denominational bodies. This contention was promoted vigorously by F. M. McConnel, editor of The Baptist Standard. McConnel said, "The business of the Southern Baptist Convention is primarily and mainly religious rather than social."<sup>49</sup> It was his view that making inquiries into social conditions was the business of local churches and not that of the Convention.

The objection concerning denominational authority reflected clearly the lingering influence of the Landmark movement on Southern Baptist thought. Landmarkism was a movement fostered in the latter part of the nineteenth century and continued into the first years of the twentieth century. It was led by J. R. Graves and his followers. Graves was editor of The Tennessee Baptist. The basic

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<sup>48</sup> The Baptist and Reflector, April 30, 1936, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> The Baptist Standard, January 9, 1936, p. 3.



tenets of the movement fall into the category of ecclesiology. Graves preached the primacy of the local church; the "church-kingdom" idea, in which he declared that the kingdom of God was composed of all true Baptist churches, which had had a continuous existence since Christ established the church; closed communion; and opposition to boards on the grounds that they were extra-Biblical.<sup>50</sup> A great deal of support was garnered by Graves, especially in the Southwest. Graves boasted that by 1880 a majority of denominational papers had endorsed Landmarkism. Not all Baptists, however, entered into the Graves' camp. The divergence of opinion became so wide that complete separation occurred in 1905, with the Landmarkists leaving the Convention under the leadership of Ben M. Bogard of Arkansas. They formed the General Association of Landmark Baptists, later changing the name to the American Baptist Association, and continued to fight against the things they had opposed when they formerly cooperated with the Southern Convention.<sup>51</sup> Although the Landmarkists left the Convention, their ideas and influence remained, and the efforts to establish the Bureau of Social Research in the denominational organization met staunch opposition from Landmark sympathizers still in the Convention.

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<sup>50</sup> W. Morgan Patterson, "Landmarkism," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, p. 757.

<sup>51</sup> Loc. Cit.

The Bureau was also kept under suspicion by charges that some underlying association existed between it and radical political and theological ideas. O. W. Taylor, editor of the Tennessee Baptist paper, warned that a "few rationalists" might gain control of the Bureau and "steer Southern Baptists into modernistic, radical ventures."<sup>52</sup> The editor of the Kentucky paper, Victor Masters, who was perhaps the most vocal opponent of the proposal, warned that the Bureau carried with it the "hidden assumption" that the world could be saved by social reform.<sup>53</sup>

Those editors who approved the proposal pointed out that it simply extended the work of the Social Service Commission. They tried to explain that the Bureau would enable the Convention to aid in correcting social evils where the Commission had only been condemning them.<sup>54</sup> The editor of the Virginia paper expressed surprise that so much "hysteria" was being displayed over proposed work so closely akin to that of the Social Service Commission.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>The Baptist and Reflector, March 19, 1936, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup>The Western Recorder, May 23, 1935, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup>The Christian Index, June 13, 1935, pp. 8-9.  
The Baptist Message, June 20, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup>The Religious Herald, August 15, 1935, p. 20.

The opposition of A. J. Barton seemed strange in many respects. He had called for almost the same thing for a number of years, asking for agency status for the Commission, a budget, and a full-time director. His support for Poteat's proposal might have been expected, but instead the Bureau suggestion met with his opposition. Barton declared that he was opposed to the move because it would be an unwise expenditure of funds. An expanded Commission program would have been better in his thinking.<sup>56</sup> However, it was well-known that Barton's conservative theological views clashed with the liberal ideology of McNeill Poteat, and that the amendment to the Commission report offered by Poteat at the 1933 Convention was offered without Barton's prior knowledge. When Barton was asked to serve on the committee to study the Bureau proposal he refused to do so. His opposition, like that of the editors, may have been directed more toward Poteat than the proposal itself.

Throughout the months between the 1935 and 1936 Conventions, the controversy raged. An enlarged committee, appointed during the 1935 Convention,<sup>57</sup> studied the report, revised it and returned to the 1936 Convention prepared to present a compromise recommendation. The compromise

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<sup>56</sup>The Baptist Standard, May 2, 1935, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. 260.



was to no effect. Before debate on the issue had an opportunity to develop, a motion was made to lay the report on the table. The motion passed by a slight majority.<sup>58</sup> This action spelled permanent defeat for the committee's report. It was never taken off the table. The boldest plan for social action ever presented to Southern Baptists was rejected, probably because of the strong liberal sympathies of its author, Edwin McNeill Poteat, Jr.

### Revitalization of the Commission and Its Work

After leading the Social Service Commission for twenty-seven years, A. J. Barton died. In 1942, upon the death of Barton, J. B. Weatherspoon was named chairman of the Commission. He had been a member of the Commission since 1930, and had revealed a keen insight into social problems affecting the nation. He was professor of preaching at Southern Seminary, a position affording him an opportunity to greatly influence the thinking of young ministers.<sup>59</sup>

The ascendancy of Weatherspoon to the Commission's chairmanship opened the way for the pursuance of a different course. He began with a fresh appraisal of the work of the Social Service Commission. His analysis of the work

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<sup>58</sup>SBC Annual, 1936, pp. 37-38.

<sup>59</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. 260.

and purpose of the body was given to the 1944 Convention.<sup>60</sup> The report carried an analysis of the role of the Commission in denominational life and outlined a working philosophy which would enable the group to deal with controversial social problems without violating the basic elements in Southern Baptist theology.

Weatherspoon declared that the work of the Commission rested on the conviction that Christian ethics should determine man's personal conduct, and his social relationships as well.<sup>61</sup> On this basis, he justified the need for a Convention agency to collect facts about social conditions, to make moral judgments concerning them, and to suggest measures for their improvement. He avoided charges of substituting social reform for personal evangelism by stating that the basic task of the Convention was changing persons rather than changing society.<sup>62</sup> He did insist, however, that Southern Baptists should make a ". . . direct approach to the powerful economic and political bodies that . . . control in our common life."<sup>63</sup> In this manner, Weatherspoon added to the denomination's

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<sup>60</sup> SBC Annual, 1944, pp. 129-131.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

traditional concern for personal morality the obligation to criticize social institutions and conditions.

The broad social mission of Christianity, as spelled out to the Convention by Weatherspoon, included attention to such problems as race relations, farm tenancy, and labor-management relationships. He readily admitted that these and other problems had no easy nor final solutions. He maintained, nevertheless, that Christianity had a moral obligation to judge, explore, and pioneer in the search for social justice.<sup>64</sup> Weatherspoon thus contributed to Southern Baptists' social awareness by leading them to see that the traditional method of viewing social problems always in terms of personal reform was an inadequate approach. He brought social institutions, as well as individuals, under Christian judgment.

During the five years of Weatherspoon's leadership, the Social Service Commission reported on a wide variety of issues.<sup>65</sup> His most outstanding contribution was in the field of race relations. Perhaps no other man in Southern Baptist life has done more to make Southern Baptists more aware of the social problems of the Negro in the South than did Weatherspoon.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>These issues will be discussed in the ensuing chapters of this study.



Although Weatherspoon's contribution to the Commission's philosophy and methodology was outstanding, his greatest service to it was securing its status as a full-time agency of the Convention, with operating funds and staff. As the result of stepped-up activity on the part of the Commission--furnishing Baptist papers with social data, conducting summer conferences on social issues, projecting plans for publishing handbooks on marriage, industrial relations, beverage alcohol, the race problem, and Christian citizenship--Southern Baptists began to feel the impact that could be made by an active program promoted by the Commission.<sup>66</sup> In the 1946 Convention Weatherspoon openly criticized the denomination for its past failures to give adequate financial support to the Commission. He said that the time had come "to move forward in a genuine and forthright concern for the social, political and economic areas of man's life."<sup>67</sup> He presented a recommendation that the Executive Committee of the Convention reexamine the work of the Commission with a view toward expanding its activities.<sup>68</sup>

The next year the Executive Committee recommended

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<sup>66</sup>SBC Annual, 1946, pp. 120-121.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

to the Convention that the Social Service Commission's future work cover the area of marriage, crime, industrial relations, race relations, beverage alcohol, and "other matters of social morality."<sup>69</sup> It further suggested that an effective program along the lines proposed required full-time leadership and operational funds. The committee then recommended an allocation of ten thousand dollars for the agency for the following year.<sup>70</sup> The Convention adopted the recommendation of the Executive Committee without debate from the floor. Not one objection was raised at the Convention nor in the Baptist press. The action of the 1947 Convention, though not adequate in terms of financial outlay, revealed an amazing rise of social interest and concern over the prevalent attitude of the 1936 Convention, which turned down a similar proposal. Perhaps J. B. Weatherspoon was the difference.

#### From 1948 to the Present

The first full-time executive secretary of the Commission was Hugh A. Brimm, selected by the Commission because of his recent graduate studies at Southern Baptist Seminary in the field of social ethics.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>SBC Annual, 1947, p. 34.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>71</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. 260.

His interests, both as a student at Southern and as a teacher at Mercer University, had been focused on the social views of Southern Baptists.<sup>72</sup>

In the official statement, adopted by the Convention in 1947, setting forth the work of the Commission, nothing was said concerning methodology. Therefore, the Commission, headed now by a full-time secretary, was faced with the task of discovering an effective method which would harmonize with Southern Baptist theology and its democratic structure. Practically all of Brimm's service to the Commission was directed along these lines.

Brimm resigned his post in 1952 and A. C. Miller was selected to fill the vacancy.<sup>73</sup> Miller had inaugurated a similar program of work in Texas and had met with good success. He had served as a pastor, then as head of the state mission program ministering to minority groups. While serving in this latter position he joined with T. B. Maston, professor of Social Ethics at Southwestern Seminary, in a move to establish a "Christian Life Commission" as a part of the Texas Baptist Convention's work.

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<sup>72</sup>Hugh Alexander Brimm, "The Social Consciousness of Southern Baptists in Relation to Some Regional Problems," p. 138.

<sup>73</sup>Miller, op. cit., p. 260.



The stated purpose of the Commission was that of seeking to interpret the Christian approach to man's social relationships.<sup>74</sup> With the establishment of this work in Texas, Miller was selected to head it and began his service in 1950 as the only employed leader in this field in a state Baptist Convention.

With Miller's move from the Texas office to the leadership of the Southern Convention's Social Service Commission, the decision was made to move the office of the Commission to Nashville in order that it might be more clearly at the center of denominational operations. The move from Louisville, where Brimm had maintained an office, was enhanced by the Sunday School Board's offer to provide space for the Commission's office.<sup>75</sup> This move was advantageous in that it put the Commission headquarters in the same locale of the administrative offices of the Executive Committee and the publishing facilities of the Sunday School Board. At the time of the move the name of the Social Service Commission was changed to the Christian Life Commission, following the example set by the Texas convention.

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<sup>74</sup> Baptist General Convention of Texas Annual, 1949, pp. 27, 174.  
<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 1950, pp. 180-188.

<sup>75</sup> Miller, op. cit., p. 260.

This change in location symbolized a new approach in the Commission's work. Miller began to integrate its work into the program of other Convention agencies, thereby partially offsetting the limitations imposed by a small budget.<sup>76</sup> He worked through the Convention's existing activities to reach the churches directly. In Nashville he participated in top-echelon conferences affecting the total program of the Convention. In 1958 the Commission gained representation on the Interagency Council, the body which correlates the plans of all denominational agencies.<sup>77</sup> Miller's strategy of integrating the work of the Commission with that of established agencies was a significant one. It provided the Commission with a sense of belonging and a position of security within the denominational framework not previously enjoyed.

The service of A. C. Miller lasted until 1960. Upon his retirement the Commission turned again to Texas and secured the leadership of Foy Valentine, successor to Miller in the Texas office. Valentine had been trained in the field of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Seminary.<sup>78</sup> His social sympathies were well known through

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SBC Annual, 1953, pp. 426-427, 429-430.

<sup>77</sup>SBC Annual, 1958, pp. 57-58.

<sup>78</sup>SBC Annual, 1960, p. 274.

his published articles<sup>79</sup> and his work in the Texas office. In Valentine the Commission secured a leader with broad social perspectives, intellectual depth, and the ability to articulate the message. At the same time, he fulfilled the qualifications for theological soundness, as set forth by Southern Baptists.

Valentine, as the present executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission, has described the work of the Commission, as seeking:

1. To help Southern Baptists to understand what it means to be a Christian with regard to such important aspects of daily living as family life, race relations, moral issues, economic problems, and Christian citizenship;
2. To help Southern Baptists to create with God's help and by his grace the kind of social climate in which our Christian witness will be most effective;
3. To lead Southern Baptists to a better understanding of the nature of the high calling we have as Christians to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth.<sup>80</sup>

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Foy Valentine, "The Court, the Church, and the Community," The Review and Expositor, LII, October, 1956, pp. 536-550.

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Foy Valentine, "A Look at the Christian Life Commission's Job," The Baptist Program, February, 1961, p. 6.



The Biblically-based social awareness of Valentine is further seen in another statement in which he said: "Christian bodies have been thrust invariably, by the nature of the gospel, into social action of some kind."<sup>81</sup>

The history of the Christian Life Commission in its organizational life alone reflects an over-all awakening of Southern Baptists to social problems about them. The pronouncements of the Commission on these problems reflect the extent of that awareness.

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### MORAL ISSUES

Southern Baptists have been noted for their sensitive conscience on moral issues. When there appeared to be little awareness of other significant social problems, Southern Baptists gave strong evidence of their hyper-sensitivity to such social issues as the liquor problem, drug addiction, obscene literature, gambling, and crime. Other issues, such as dancing, card playing, and the theatre entered into pronouncements of the Southern Baptist Convention early in its history of social awareness.

The relationship of morality to religion, as viewed by Southern Baptists, was classically stated in the 1956 Christian Life Commission report, in the section entitled, "The Crusade for Christian Morality".

- - - Much has been written in a philosophical way on the relation of religion and morality. It seems that so many people think of morality as a noble word and that it should be developed in a vacuum. Some seem to feel that religion is what we know and do about the work and worship of God while morality is concerned with the rules of right conduct based on custom and practice in human society. This distinction has often trapped us into the error of thinking of religion and morality as separate spheres of responsibility. The New Testament teaches that they are one as the tree and its fruit are one.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
SBC Annual, 1956, p. 334.

This understanding of the intertwined relationship of religion and moral issues helps explain why Southern Baptists have been so vocal on what they have viewed as moral issues.

### The Problem of Beverage Alcohol

The liquor problem has long been the greatest of all social issues for Southern Baptists. The first official action taken by Southern Baptists against the liquor traffic was in the Convention of 1886. In 1888 the president ruled out of order a temperance resolution on the grounds that such an action was not in keeping with the purpose of the Convention, but every year since that time, with few exceptions, the Convention has approved statements opposing the traffic in beverage alcohol.<sup>2</sup>

In 1908 the Convention appointed a standing committee on temperance, which was merged in 1915 with the Social Service Commission through which the opposition to the liquor traffic has been continued.<sup>3</sup> The committee appointed

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<sup>2</sup> A. C. Miller, "Prohibition," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, p. 1116.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



in 1908 was headed by A. J. Barton, whose contributions to the prohibition movement were outstanding. Although social Christianity and prohibition were two separate movements, they had much in common and were often inter-related,<sup>4</sup> thereby giving Southern Baptists their first major contact with the social Christianity movement. Thus the appointment of the temperance committee played an important role in the life of Southern Baptists.

A study of the Southern Convention's campaign against the sale of alcoholic beverages cannot be divorced from the strong personality of A. J. Barton. His chairmanship of the temperance committee, and the Social Service Commission later, was marked by his passionate crusades against legalization of liquor. His efforts were not confined to the territory of the Southern Baptist Convention; he became a national figure in the prohibition movement. In 1911 he served as chairman of the national conference of temperance organizations, the body which framed legislation to protect dry states against interstate liquor traffic.<sup>5</sup> In 1915 he worked as chairman of the committee which drafted the congressional resolution that led to the national prohibition amendment.<sup>6</sup> He attended the 1913

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<sup>4</sup>Aaron Ignatius Abell, The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865-1900, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>SBC Annual, 1913, p. 74.

<sup>6</sup>SBC Annual, 1915, pp. 79-80.

International Conference Against Alcoholism in Italy as the representative of the United States government.<sup>7</sup> From 1915 to 1918, Barton served in Texas as superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League, and was instrumental in leading that state to vote dry during that time.<sup>8</sup>

Through his reports to the Convention, and the resolutions he sponsored as chairman of the Social Service Commission, Barton kept Southern Baptists closely connected to the prohibition forces. In 1913 he lead the Convention to be the first denominational body to endorse the Anti-Saloon League's plan for national prohibition.<sup>9</sup> This move, away from the traditional denominational isolationism of Southern Baptists, was justified on the grounds that this was a moral issue, therefore interdenominational participation was not only in order but was necessary.<sup>10</sup> With the support of Southern Baptists, the Anti-Saloon League was able to create a dry stronghold by 1914 in the Southern states.<sup>11</sup> A by-product of Southern Baptist participation

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<sup>7</sup> SBC Annual, 1914, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Henderson Barton, "Arthur James Barton," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> SBC Annual, 1913, p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Asbury, The Great Illusion, An Informal History of Prohibition, pp. 99-100, 121-123.

in the Anti-Saloon League was the discovery on their part that cooperation with other church bodies in such endeavors, where no semblance of organic union was manifest, was a wholesome activity.

By joining the prohibition movement Southern Baptists openly declared their recognition of social responsibility. Although they were led into participation on moral grounds, prohibition did not depend on moral persuasion and individual reform to achieve its goal. Political action was the ultimate instrument employed to effect the dry status the movement desired. This opened the door for Southern Baptists to actively support or oppose legislation on other social issues, which will be discussed in succeeding pages.

Following the passage and ratification of the eighteenth amendment, A. J. Barton launched a campaign for the enforcement of the prohibition laws. Exultant over the victory of prohibition, Barton called it "our greatest achievement," but he also declared that its enforcement was "our greatest task". Barton knew that vigilance must be the watchword, and he led the Convention to give full endorsement to political action against repeal. This political action took the form of urging Southern Baptists to support only political



candidates pledged to uphold prohibition.<sup>13</sup> Prior to the 1928 Presidential election, in repudiating the Democratic party for its stand, the Commission, under Barton's leadership, declared that loyalties to any political party should be set-aside if necessary, to maintain prohibition.<sup>14</sup>

When repeal came with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the wrath of Barton was directed toward the New Deal. He claimed that the decline in public morality, which came in the thirties, was the direct result of repeal.<sup>15</sup> The Commission continued to make temperance the most important social issue after repeal. Barton led the Commission to affiliate with the National Temperance and Prohibition Council, an organization which united temperance forces after

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SBC Annual, 1926, p. 112.

SBC Annual, 1927, p. 117

SBC Annual, 1928, p. 88

SBC Annual, 1929, p. 89.

SBC Annual, 1930, p. 77.

SBC Annual, 1931, p. 128.

SBC Annual, 1932, p. 96.

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SBC Annual, 1928, p. 86.

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SBC Annual, 1934, pp. 106-112.

SBC Annual, 1935, pp. 67-71.

SBC Annual, 1936, pp. 28-34.

repeal.<sup>16</sup> As long as Barton lived he was a staunch foe of the liquor traffic, and continued to reaffirm his devotion to the ideals of total abstinence and government suppression.<sup>17</sup>

The opposition of Southern Baptists to beverage alcohol did not end with the death of A. J. Barton. Each committee chairman and executive secretary since Barton, with the Commission's approval, has presented anti-alcohol resolutions to the Southern Baptist Convention repeatedly. Without fail the Convention has declared its position on liquor, to be "total abstinence for the individual and total riddance of its manufacture and sale by the state."<sup>18</sup> In its annual session of 1955 the Convention adopted a program for alcohol education to be promoted by the educational facilities of the Sunday School Board, by seminars for leadership training, by wide distribution of effective literature, and by cooperation with the state and national temperance organizations for necessary political action.<sup>19</sup> This move on the part of the Convention was a broad attack upon the entire problem and incorporated educational features into the program of protest which heretofore had not been employed by the Commission.

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<sup>16</sup>SBC Annual, 1935, p. 61.

<sup>17</sup>SBC Annual, 1940, p. 98.

<sup>18</sup>Miller, loc. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

Political action has been the primary weapon against the liquor forces even though education campaigns have continued in use. In 1947 the Convention adopted the Social Service Commission's report, as given by J. B. Weatherspoon, calling for support of legislation in the national congress to "close the channels of radio and of interstate commerce" to beverage alcohol advertisements.<sup>20</sup> An amendment to the report, calling for support of a constitutional amendment "making drunkenness a constitutional outlaw" and penalizing the maker, the seller, the buyer, and the drinker of intoxicating liquor, failed to gain passage, however.<sup>21</sup> Other political action moves have been made toward highway and traffic laws related to drinking,<sup>22</sup> and the use of local option as a means of both controlling and eliminating the liquor industry,<sup>23</sup> and support of legislation to ban the serving of alcoholic beverages aboard commercial aircraft.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> SBC Annual, 1947, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

<sup>22</sup> SBC Annual, 1947, p. 64.

<sup>23</sup> SBC Annual, 1951, p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> SBC Annual, 1957, p. 365.



Apart from efforts to educate its constituency concerning the evils of beverage alcohol, and the use of political action to control and ultimately eliminate the menace, the Convention's pronouncements have always taken the form of a recitation of facts concerning the industry and reiteration of the moral necessity of waging war against liquor.<sup>25</sup> All of these efforts have combined to make Southern Baptists conscious of a social issue, in a moral setting, that has occupied much of the time and industry of its Christian Life Commission and its predecessors.

#### Narcotics and Drug Addiction

The past decade has found Southern Baptists expressing themselves on the relatively recent social problem of the non-medicinal use of narcotics and drugs. The report of the Commission to the 1951 Convention included a resolution asking the cooperating churches to study carefully the problem of drug addiction, especially among teenagers.<sup>26</sup> The recommendation also called for an educational campaign in the schools and churches concerning the effects of narcotics, and support of legislation imposing heavier penalties upon those con-

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See SBC Annual, 1950, pp. 373-374 for typical report.

<sup>26</sup>SBC Annual, 1951, pp. 52-53.

victed of narcotic violations.<sup>27</sup> The following year the Commissions' report contained a rather lengthy dissertation on drug addiction, once again pointing directly to the problem faced by teenagers, spelling out in factual data the severity of the problem in America. The drugs used were also described and named as an effort to help those working with young people to understand the situation and recognize the symptoms of drug addiction.<sup>28</sup>

In 1957 the report of the Christian Life Commission combined its statements on the illegal use of narcotics with those pertaining to liquor under the heading, "The Beverage Narcotic Warfare".<sup>29</sup> Though the word "narcotic" appeared in the heading of this phase of the report, nothing is mentioned concerning the problem as separate and distinct from the beverage alcohol issue. In the ensuing reports no reference is made to the matter. It would appear that the Commission felt that its statements on beverage alcohol sufficed for any word that might be given on drug addiction.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> SBC Annual, 1952, p. 416.

<sup>29</sup> SBC Annual, 1957, pp. 364-365.

### Gambling

While A. J. Barton was chairman of the Social Service Commission, regular complaints against gambling and related vices were registered as a part of the annual report, but it was not until the Commission broadened its area of concern from the one field of prohibition that any other social problem received much attention. This widening of perspective came as the result of the 1947 statement of philosophy, which defined the work of the Commission as covering the fields of crime, industrial relations, race relations, beverage alcohol, and "other matters of social morality."<sup>30</sup> Since that time, such matters as gambling have been dealt with in the annual reports of the Christian Life Commission.

The 1947 report to the Convention levelled an attack at gambling sponsored and promoted by religious and charitable organizations.<sup>31</sup> The Commission declared that gambling had been extended and encouraged by the fact that some such organizations had resorted to raffles, bingo parties and the like to raise money, often using children to solicit the purchase of chances. City governments were also criticized for "winking at gambling, raiding the book-makers and others only often enough to silence

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<sup>30</sup> SBC Annual, 1947, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 301.



protest and collect revenue through fines, but permitting the business to continue".<sup>32</sup> The report condemns gambling on the grounds that:

Gambling has no moral defense. It has no justification in economics. It is exchange without production; it is distribution of wealth, gaining or losing, by irrational chance rather than by honest toil and reasonable recompense; it unjustly enriches one through impoverishment of another; it is parasitic and sterile, costly and destructive. It is condemned by its effect upon personality. . . . The exhilaration of anticipated gains easily banishes all moral sensibility. . . . destroys honesty and truthfulness and the creative spirit of industry. It breeds suspicion and greed and unbrotherliness that regard others as the legitimate prey of one's own cunning and power. It is anti-social. The private gambler cannot be a safe social leader or public servant, whether in finance, education or politics. He is the carrier of those selfish and exploitative mental patterns which are the basis of conflict everywhere.<sup>33</sup>

An interesting part of this report was the declaration that gambling is detrimental to human personality and is anti-social. Though set in a moral framework, the Commission recognized gambling as a social issue as well as a problem of personal morality.

Subsequent reports on gambling have carried out the same basic theme presented in the 1947 statement. In 1950 Southern Baptists were urged by the Commission to secure local, state, and federal legislation to break

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<sup>32</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Quoted from Baptist World Alliance Reports (n.d.)

up gambling syndicates.<sup>34</sup> The 1951 recommendation asked churches to oppose efforts to legalize gambling as a supposed solution to the problem.<sup>35</sup> These two reports called upon Southern Baptists to request political action, as had been done in the fight against liquor. The 1954 report called for an educational campaign to be conducted in the homes and the churches against games of chance.<sup>36</sup> Gambling as a specific vice has not received special attention in the Christian Life Commission reports since 1954.

### Obscene Literature

The Southern Baptist campaign against obscene literature dates back to at least 1940. The report of the Social Service Commission in that year declared the belief of the Convention in the freedom of the press, but at the same time voiced the conviction that the constant flow of salacious and smutty books and periodicals from the presses was a serious menace to the ideals

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<sup>34</sup> SBC Annual, 1950, p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> SBC Annual, 1951, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> SBC Annual, 1954, p. 406.

of the nation.<sup>37</sup> A two-fold course of action was suggested by the Commission as a solution to the problem. The first approach should be that of "cleaning up the newsstands, but, the second, and most effective way to destroy obscene literature, is to place good, wholesome literature in the hands of the masses".<sup>38</sup>

The 1953 report came at a time when a special congressional committee was engaged in an investigation of obscene literature. The Convention's action that year was in the form of a vote of commendation for the committee's endeavor.<sup>39</sup> The 1958 report relates the promotion of a conference at Glorieta Baptist Assembly on the subject "The Traffic in Obscene Literature."<sup>40</sup> This conference resulted in a representative of the Commission being invited to appear before the Congressional Post Office and Civil Service Committees at a public hearing on legislation designed to control the distribution of pornographic and other obscene literature through the mails.<sup>41</sup> Once again Southern Baptists looked to legal suppression

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<sup>37</sup> SBC Annual, 1940, p. 97.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> SBC Annual, 1953, p. 56.

<sup>40</sup> SBC Annual, 1958, p. 390.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.



as the means of control of a social problem. The 1959 statement on obscene literature called upon Christian citizens to help in four ways: (1) By encouraging their local law enforcement agencies and other authorities to contest the legality of questionable materials and make necessary prosecutions; (2) By sending obscene literature received through the mail to the Post Office Department with a request for action; (3) By persuading people not to purchase such publications through appeals to conscience; and, (4) By promoting the best quality of marriage and family life and thereby preventing the emotional and mental weaknesses which make people vulnerable to immoral appeals in literature.<sup>42</sup> Thus the last report dealing with salacious literature returned to the appeal for personal action against the traffic rather than political action.

### Crime

The first call for an awareness, on the part of Southern Baptists, of the problem of crime in the land, was issued by W. L. Poteat in his message to the Convention in 1914 outlining his views on the work of the newly-established Social Service Commission.<sup>43</sup> Poteat's statement simply cited crime as one area in which the

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<sup>42</sup>SBC Annual, 1959, p. 391.

<sup>43</sup>SBC Annual, 1914, p. 36.

group should work. With the reorganization of the Commission and the ascendancy of A. J. Barton to the chairmanship, little serious consideration of the crime problem, apart from its connection with liquor, was revealed in the Commission reports. Barton did lead the Convention to adopt a resolution in 1939 deploring the laxity in law enforcement and the general spirit of apathy toward crime. The resolution concluded, however, that through the preaching of the gospel a moral consciousness against crime could be developed.<sup>44</sup> In this statement, as in all of Barton's declarations not dealing with prohibition, the emphasis is upon personal regeneration rather than social reform.

Another call for personal commitment came in a resolution passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1941. The resolution presented by the Barton-led Commission stated that in spite of the claim that the United States was the most Christianized nation in the world, it was also the most criminal nation in the world.<sup>45</sup> The resolution declared that this "humiliating and mortifying fact" presented "a need that we pledge our-

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<sup>44</sup> SBC Annual, 1914, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> SBC Annual, 1941, p. 134.

selves to the cultivation of the spirit of law observance in all matters."<sup>46</sup>

In 1948 the problem of juvenile delinquency came into focus in the Commission's report. A recitation of statistical information relating the participation of young people under eighteen in criminal activity prompted the Commission to declare that "this alarming problem is a screaming symptom of the breakdown of the basic institutions of society . . . ."<sup>47</sup> The recommendation attached to the report, and accepted by the Convention, called upon the churches to inaugurate community action by sponsoring forums, panel discussions and fact-finding committees to study the local situation.<sup>48</sup> This report reflected not only an interest in crime as a social problem, but also spelled out a course of action to be followed on the social plane.

The Senate Crime Committee received the accolades of the Convention in 1951 as it accepted the recommendation of the Commission to "extend its grateful support" to the committee for the "fearless and thorough job which they are

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<sup>46</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>

SBC Annual, 1948, p. 335.

<sup>48</sup>

Ibid., p. 53.



doing to expose the crime and gambling syndicates of this country."<sup>49</sup> Two members of the committee, Senators Kefauver and Tobey, both Baptists, were singled out for particular praise. Beyond praise for the work of the Senate group, the Commission simply encouraged the churches to support efforts locally and nationally to curb crime, and urged the Senate Crime Committee to pursue its work diligently.

The 1953 report called upon Christian people to get into action as responsible citizens of the community. Church members were described as belonging to one of three categories with regard to community responsibility: (1) helpless victims or willing conformists to society as they find it; (2) those who either withdraw into the exclusive fellowship of their churches, not having anything to do with people or interests outside their group, or, those who leave the community in search of a better one; or (3) those who accept their duty as responsible citizens and work for the spiritual, moral, social, and civic betterment of their community.<sup>50</sup> Crime conditions, the Commission asserted, can be alleviated only by the latter group.

The last official statement on crime came from the

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<sup>49</sup> SBC Annual, 1951, p. 53.

<sup>50</sup> SBC Annual, 1953, p. 349.

Commission in its report to the 1954 Convention. This report returned to the juvenile problem to point out two primary phases of juvenile delinquency. One phase of the problem deals with the rehabilitation of young people who have experienced difficulty with law enforcement officers, and the other phase is that of prevention of crime among youth. Baptists were urged to cooperate with community agencies and organizations working in these areas to offer themselves as counselors for boys and girls in difficulty, and to win people to Christ and enlist them in active participation in Christian service, thereby building and fortifying "strong Christian character which will safeguard our boys and girls and keep them from becoming delinquent."<sup>51</sup> A recommendation attached to the report was adopted by the Convention, also. The recommendation urged the churches to find ways and means to work with law enforcement and other agencies concerned with stemming the tide of juvenile crime. It also called for cooperation of the pastors and churches in the development of an overall denominational program designed to cope with the problem.<sup>52</sup>

An interesting facet of the Commission's reports on crime is the absence of any reference to capital

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<sup>51</sup>SBC Annual, 1954, pp. 404-405.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, p. 56.

punishment or penology. On this issue some of the state conventions have been ahead of the Southern Convention in speaking out on these issues and in promoting action toward prison reform. The most notable instance of activity in the area of penology was the work of the Virginia Social Service Committee. Work with prisoners was established early in the history of that state commission and continued for many years.<sup>53</sup> With reference to capital punishment, the Texas Christian Life Commission has called for a re-examination of the Christian conscience on the death penalty, stating that:

. . . . . the attitude of Christ toward the woman taken in adultery and toward the thief on the cross indicates that punishment should be redemptive rather than vindictive. The serious doubts as to the effectiveness of capital punishment as a deterrent to crime combine with the irrevocable nature of any possible miscarriage of justice to encourage an awakening conscience on the subject.<sup>54</sup>

The report was adopted by the Texas Convention. It remains to be seen what action will be taken by the Texas body in following through on the implications of the report, or what, if any, effect this action will have on the conscience of Southern Baptists as a whole.

### Other Moral Issues

From time to time the voice of Southern Baptists

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<sup>53</sup>John Lee Eighmy, "The Social Conscience of Southern Baptists from 1900 to the Present as Reflected in Their Organized Life", p. 157, citing Virginia Baptist Annuals.

<sup>54</sup>Texas Baptist Annual, 1960, p. 109.



was raised with regard to moral issues of a social nature other than those discussed above. These problems have varied all the way from purely personal behavior to matters involving the nation. Among the former were objections raised early in the life of the Social Service Commission toward dancing and card playing. The Commission registered its disapproval of such practices as being inherently immoral.<sup>55</sup>

Sabbath desecration received the attention of the Commission for a number of years. Support was voiced for laws curtailing business and public entertainment on the Sabbath in a number of reports.<sup>56</sup> Sabbath laws were justified on grounds that the state should provide a "Civil Sabbath," not as an aid to religion, but as a matter of public welfare.<sup>57</sup> Because motion pictures were held responsible for secularization of the Sabbath to a large extent, the Commission was especially critical

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<sup>55</sup>

SBC Annual, 1921, p. 84.  
SBC Annual, 1922, p. 98.

<sup>56</sup>

SBC Annual, 1921, p. 84.  
SBC Annual, 1922, p. 98.  
SBC Annual, 1934, p. 102.  
SBC Annual, 1936, pp. 35-36.

<sup>57</sup>

SBC Annual, 1921, p. 84.

of the motion picture industry. Movies were rebuked for offering unwholesome displays of immorality and the industry was admonished to reform or submit to state control.<sup>58</sup> In a later report the Commission openly advocated government censorship of motion pictures.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-83.

<sup>59</sup> SBC Annual, 1935, p. 70.

## CHAPTER IV

### RACE RELATIONS

The most critical social problem ever faced by Southern Baptists is that of the relationship of the white man to the Negro. The geographical location of the cooperating churches comprising the Southern Convention thrust it into the midst of a problem that had to be dealt with eventually. The social mores of the South, the deep-rooted tradition of white supremacy, and the rural economy of the region all combined to make the problem a difficult one with which to cope. Even so, Southern Baptists have made more progress in the field of race relations in a shorter period of time than they have made in any other area of social awareness.

#### The Traditional Racial Pattern in the South

The Baptist in the South, as well as other Southern whites, is both the perpetrator and victim of a social system that places him in the position of wanting to preserve a tradition which is his heritage, while experiencing the demands of his conscience to abandon those sub-Christian aspects of his background with regard to racial relationships. It is this "American Dilemma," referred to by Gunnar Myrdal, that has posed such a problem for



## Southern Baptists.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional racial pattern in the South has been segregation in Negro-white relationships. This pattern of segregation has also taken the form of discrimination against the Negro in every phase of his dealings with whites, and has developed into a caste system which has become especially pronounced in the South.<sup>2</sup> It has been charged that the church in the South has been a silent but powerful partner to the segregation pattern, and that with Southern Baptists "caste stands in a position of priority to Christ." It has been charged also "that the racial ethic of Southern Baptists is fundamentally the ethic of southern caste culture."<sup>3</sup>

A rigid policy of segregation was not followed with regard to church membership prior to the Civil War. In slavery days the slaves were usually accepted as members in the white churches. The Circular Church of Charleston, South Carolina, had four hundred Negro members by 1804, and the First Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama, reported six hundred Negro and three hundred white members

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<sup>1</sup> Gunnar Myrdal and others, An American Dilemma, I, xliii.

<sup>2</sup> T. B. Maston, "Race Relations," The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, p. 1128.

<sup>3</sup> George D. Kelsey, "The Social Thought of Contemporary Southern Baptists," cited by T. B. Maston in "Race Relations," The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, p. 1128.

at the end of the Civil War. By 1863, however, separate churches were becoming the order of the day, and such has been the pattern for almost a century.<sup>4</sup> Thus the social caste system of discrimination and segregation encompassed the churches of the South as it did every other phase of Negro-white relationships.

### From Paternalism and Preservation to Transition

Southern Baptists cannot be charged with having no interest in the Negro. That interest was expressed in the initial report of the Domestic Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention<sup>5</sup> after the organizational meeting in 1845. The interest expressed, however, was in the form of a paternalistic attitude within the segregation-caste pattern. The concern was always expressed in terms of helping the Negro within the existing framework, rather than giving him assistance in breaking through the barriers of caste.

The Convention gave but little thought to any of the Negro's social problems prior to World War I. The traditional policy of Southern Baptists focused on the moral and spirit-

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<sup>4</sup>  
Op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>W. W. Barnes, The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953, p. 40.

ual welfare of the individual Negro, while assuming little responsibility for the social needs of the race.<sup>6</sup> They interpreted their responsibility to the Negro in terms of aid to his religious life, which took the form of mission work and religious training.<sup>7</sup> Occasionally, in connection with mission work, there was some recognition of his social needs,<sup>8</sup> but the sustained thought of the Convention seemed always to be that the Negro needed better moral character, and that could only be acquired through evangelism and religious education.<sup>9</sup>

After World War I it appeared that the Social Service Commission was beginning to see the Negro in terms of social obligation to him. In 1920, after first declaring allegiance to the traditional pattern of segregation of the races, the Commission related the need for improvement in the Negro's social conditions. The report specifically noted the need for betterment in public education, housing,

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Foy Valentine, "A Historical Study of Southern Baptists and Race Relations, 1917-1940," pp. 14ff.

Hugh A. Brimm, "The Social Consciousness of Southern Baptists in Relation to Some Regional Problems, 1910-1935," p. 50.

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SBC Annual, 1914, pp. 25-26; SBC Annual, 1919, p. 65.

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SBC Annual, 1914, pp. 25-26; SBC Annual, 1915, pp. 48-51.

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SBC Annual, 1914, pp. 277-298; SBC Annual, 1915, p. 50.



economic conditions, industrial opportunity, and justice before the law.<sup>10</sup> Without explanation, however, the reports for the next twenty years hardly mentioned these problems, except mob violence, which was cited almost annually in statistics relating the decline in the number of lynchings.

The prevailing attitude of Southern Baptists toward those of other races was well-stated by Z. T. Cody in the commentary for a Sunday School lesson in 1932. He said:

It is an undeniable fact that Christianity is superior to any other religion, and it is nearly as true that some races are superior to others . . . The trouble is not in a consciousness of superiority, but in the way this consciousness is shown . . . It is pride rather than superiority that does the evil work . . . That which is really superior in this world is that which is a gift of God and not of man; and a man who has the gift ought always to be humble, even while genuinely prizing the gift.<sup>11</sup>

So, Southern Baptists "prized the gift" of white supremacy in "humility."

In spite of this attitude, however, certain injustices "riled" the conscience of Baptists in the South from time to time, causing them to speak out. The Social Service

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<sup>10</sup> SBC Annual, 1920, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Z. T. Cody, "Living with People of Other Races," The Baptist Courier, LXIV, Dec. 1, 1932, p. 10.

Commission report in 1940 decried what it called "inequalities and injustices" before the courts and in the business world. The Commission called upon its constituents to provide equal and impartial justice in the courts of law and to give the Negro equal opportunities in the market place.<sup>12</sup> Lynching was the primary target of Commission reports in 1931 and 1936, when the terms "mob murders" and "mob violence" were used to describe the feeling of the brethren toward those who took the law into their own hands.<sup>13</sup> Unequivocal opposition to such action was voiced in resolutions passed by the 1936 Convention, wherein such behavior was assailed vehemently.

So ingrained in Southern Baptist thought was the doctrine of white supremacy that the Commission report actually tried to justify unequal educational facilities and wage differentials because of the "difference in social position and living requirements."<sup>14</sup> Without seeing any contradiction in their action, the messengers to the Convention then approved a resolution calling for the elimination of

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<sup>12</sup> SBC Annual, 1940, p. 95.

<sup>13</sup> SBC Annual, 1931, p. 122; SBC Annual, 1936, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> SBC Annual, 1940, p. 85.

injustices suffered by the Negro before the law, in the laboring world, and in public education.<sup>15</sup> The feeling was that improvement within the social caste structure was needed, but abolition of the system was not to be considered.

A resolution passed in Birmingham, Alabama, during the 1941 meeting of the Southern Convention, served as the point of reference for Baptists of the South for half a decade when they were confronted with questions concerning their position on the race issue. The resolution was a simple statement of the Convention's "deep and abiding interest" in the welfare and advancement of the Negro race.<sup>16</sup> The Convention, when confronted with the race issue in its 1944 meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, reaffirmed its 1941 resolution.<sup>17</sup> It was in the 1944 session, however, that the Social Service Commission, then led by J. B. Weather-spoon, began calling Southern Baptists to a realistic appraisal of the racial problem. As chairman of the Commission, he openly criticized race patterns in the South

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>16</sup> SBC Annual, 1941, p. 134.

<sup>17</sup> SBC Annual, 1944, p. 135.



which permitted the denial of the vote to the Negro, discriminatory legislation, unfair economic conditions, and unequal educational facilities. Weatherspoon, as a realist, confessed that no easy nor final solution to the South's racial problems was forthcoming, but, he argued, the difficulty of the task did not justify withdrawal from it. He declared the role of the Commission to be that of seeking a "modus operandi that will diminish friction, eliminate injustice, and promote friendly cooperation."<sup>18</sup>

Weatherspoon continued focusing the attention of his fellow Southern Baptists upon the problem of the races. In calling for leaders of both races in the South to take creative steps toward harmonious relationships, he said:

. . . a major claim is laid upon Baptist thought and action. Of the Negro Christians in the South three and one half million are Baptists and of white Christians five and one half million are Baptists . . . If brotherhood in a common faith, and that a faith that loves freedom and champions individual liberty and democratic government, means anything, then Baptists of both races should seek together an answer to this problem of racial adjustment that will liberate both races for a fuller service to God.<sup>19</sup>

In calling for active participation in seeking a way of "adjustment," Weatherspoon was sounding a note which was to be repeated even more strongly in the days ahead.

The 1946 Commission report to the Convention may

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>19</sup> SBC Annual, 1945, p. 97.

be described as a statement preparing Southern Baptists for a transition in thought and official action. After restating the conviction that relations between the white and colored races constituted a social issue for which there was no final solution, and calling upon the people to face the issue realistically, constructively, and patiently, Weatherspoon admonished the churches to refrain from association with any and all groups seeking to create strife and division on the basis of religious, cultural, or racial differences.<sup>20</sup> In order for Southern Baptists to be informed accurately concerning the race problem, Weatherspoon requested the appointment of a special committee to study the question. Its duties were to include a survey of the religious services being rendered by Southern Baptists to the Negroes, an analysis of the responsibilities of the Convention on the race problem, and recommendation of ways to fulfill those obligations.<sup>21</sup> The request was granted and Weatherspoon was made chairman. This action proved to be the most significant step taken to that time by Southern Baptists in coping with a problem that was becoming increasingly severe.

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<sup>20</sup> SBC Annual, 1946, pp. 124, 142.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

### A Declaration of Principles

The report of the special committee to study the race problem was presented to the Convention meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1947. The committee cited its findings in the area of Southern Baptist ministries to the Negro, relating the increased work of the Home Mission Board, the Sunday School Board's policy of furnishing literature to Negro churches, and the service of the Baptist Student Union through its conferences and its extension to Negro schools. Assistance to theological education for Negro ministers was also cited. Mention was made of other efforts being made by Convention agencies but, for the most part, all that was being done was simply a further manifestation of the paternalism which had characterized Southern Baptist relations to their Negro friends through the years.

The most important section of the report was the section dealing with race relations. The committee followed Weatherspoon's philosophy that difficulty surrounding a problem does not alleviate responsibility for dealing with the problem. All minority groups in the nation-- principally Jews, Japanese, Indians, and Negroes--



find themselves at the center of strained relationships with the rest of the nation, the report stated. However, since the Negro constituted the largest minority group in the South, the committee focused its attention upon Negro-white relationships.

The committee placed the burden of dealing with the problem squarely upon the people of the South, with Baptists pointed out in particular. Reiterating the statistical majority of Baptists in the South, and the convictions of Baptists with regard to liberty and democracy in church and state, the report declared that Baptists could not consider the race question as a side issue, but must shoulder the task of doing something about it. The problem, said the committee chairman, "is primarily a moral and religious problem."<sup>23</sup> Because political action can only create restraint against injustices, it cannot banish prejudices which spring from fallacious thinking. "These things require the strong inward grip of religious faith and the inward demand of moral understanding and conviction."<sup>24</sup>

Following the call for Southern Baptists to accept

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

their responsibility regarding the problem of racial tension, the committee recited six basic doctrinal concepts held by Baptists, all of which spoke to the area under discussion. These doctrines were: the Lordship of Christ; the Person and work of the Holy Spirit; the Bible as the word of God; the dignity and worth of the individual; the fellowship of believers; and, the principle of democracy in government. These doctrines were well-known, but, when drawn together and directed toward a single issue like race relations, they became a strong foundation for the strongest statement made to that time by Southern Baptists on the race problem.

Using these six doctrines as the basis for their next statement, the committee proceeded to list eight principles of conduct which, the report declared, every conscience was impelled to observe. These principles were as follows:

1. We shall think of the Negro as a person and treat him accordingly.
2. We shall continually strive as individuals to conquer all prejudice and eliminate from our speech terms of contempt and from our conduct actions of ill-will.
3. We shall teach our children that prejudice is un-Christian and that good-will and helpful deeds are the duty of every Christian toward all men of all races.
4. We shall protest against injustice and indignities against Negroes; as we do in the case of people of our own race, whenever and wherever we meet them.

5. We shall be willing for the Negro to enjoy the rights granted to him under the Constitution of the United States, including the right to vote, to serve on juries, to receive justice in the courts, to be free from mob-violence, to secure a just share of the benefits of educational and other funds, and to receive equal service for equal payments on public carriers and conveniences.
6. We shall be just in our dealing with the Negro as an individual. Whenever he is in our employ we shall pay him an adequate wage and provide for him healthful working conditions.
7. We shall strive to promote community good-will between the races in every way possible.
8. We shall actively cooperate with Negro Baptists in building up of their churches, the education of their ministers, and the promotion of their missions and evangelistic programs.<sup>25</sup>

This declaration of principles set Southern Baptists on the road to bolder and more creative activity in the field of race relations. One student of the subject said that the "with Negro Baptists" in the last principle "represents the new approach of Southern Baptists to the Negro. They recognize, in the contemporary period, that their work must be with him and not for him. He must be accepted as a full partner."<sup>26</sup> If this analysis is correct, it means that Southern Baptists are moving away from their traditional paternalistic attitude toward the Negro.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 342-343.

<sup>26</sup> Maston, op. cit. p. 1129.



### Putting Principles into Action

The 1948 Social Service Commission, under the leadership of Hugh Brimm, its first executive secretary, reported on progress in the area of race relations, particularly in the fields of employment and education. Commendation was given to cities, companies, professional societies, fellowship groups, and institutions of higher learning in the South which had admitted Negroes. The report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights was also lauded, with the declaration that its recommendations were in keeping with the guarantee in the Bill of Rights. All of these advances were hailed as being in keeping with the spirit of the principles enunciated by the Convention the year before.<sup>27</sup> It was not until 1950 that real movement toward the implementation of the 1947 declaration of principles was manifest by the Convention itself. In that year the Home Mission Board invited Negro churches to participate in simultaneous revival plans. The Convention also adopted a recommendation calling for churches and individuals to study seriously the 1947 statement and use those principles as a basis of activity. The most significant recommendation adopted by the messengers, however, was one calling upon the governing bodies of denominational institutions, both educational and social

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<sup>27</sup>SBC Annual, 1948, pp. 336-337.

service, to consider opening their doors to those of other races.<sup>28</sup>

The 1952 report of the Social Service Commission related the fact that the seminaries sponsored and supported by the Convention, as well as some Baptist colleges, had opened their doors to all qualified persons.<sup>29</sup> This action was viewed as evidence of a maturing Christian concern for minority groups. The convention went on record as commending this action.<sup>30</sup>

The action of the Supreme Court in 1954, striking down public school segregation, came under the consideration of the Christian Life Commission in that year. The Commission, then directed by A. C. Miller, spoke bluntly and clearly in its report to the Convention. The messengers gathered in St. Louis, once again, read and heard Miller's admonition not to blame the Supreme Court for what had happened. He proclaimed that Baptists

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<sup>28</sup>

SBC Annual, 1950, p. 45.

<sup>29</sup>

SBC Annual, 1952, p. 55.

<sup>30</sup>

The Southern Baptist Convention operates six seminaries at the present. The policy commended by the 1952 Convention is operative in all six schools. Colleges are operated by state conventions or smaller entities and are not controlled by the Southern Convention. Two Baptist institutions in Texas are fully integrated: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, and Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Texas.

. . . became greatly aroused over the proposals of Catholics to weaken the First Amendment to our Constitution that guarantees religious freedom . . . infuriated when a Communist or fellow-traveller hides behind the Fifth Amendment . . . impatient with publishers who feed us printed trash from behind the constitutional provision for freedom of the press. But we continue to ignore the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments which were enacted to give the Negro both his civic and social freedom. It is time for Baptists and the other citizens of our country to restore to our thirteen million Negro people their rights and privileges as guaranteed to them by our Constitution.<sup>31</sup>

This bold declaration of Baptist responsibility was an outgrowth of a growing conviction that basic Christian principles were relevant to race relations but were not being applied consistently.

Attached to the Commission's report was a recommendation that the Convention recognize the decision of the Supreme Court as being "in harmony with the constitutional guarantee of equal freedom to all citizens, and with the Christian principles of equal justice and love for all men."<sup>32</sup> The recommendation also called for commendation of the Court in recognizing that time would be required to effect the change, and called upon Christian people to conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion during the

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<sup>31</sup> SBC Annual, 1954, pp. 403-404.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 56.



period of adjustment. The recommendation then called for the Convention to go on record as expressing its belief in the public school system of the land with the hope that its status in the nation's educational program would not be impaired. The concluding note sounded in the recommendation, called upon statesmen and church leaders to lead the way in creative thought and action to prevent the implementation of the Supreme Court's decision becoming ground for new and bitter prejudice.<sup>33</sup>

Debate on the adoption of the report developed as soon as the motion and second for its acceptance were made. A motion was made to eliminate the recommendation pertaining to the Supreme Court decision. This motion to amend the report failed. A motion to vote upon the various recommendations seriatim failed, also. Upon the expiration of the time allotted for debate, with one extension of five minutes, the report with its recommendations were adopted.<sup>34</sup> The vote was an overwhelming victory for the Commission. Out of more than eight thousand present, less than one hundred voiced objection.<sup>35</sup> This was a long stride forward

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Dallas Morning News, June 5, 1954, Part I, p. 5.

for Southern Baptists in their understanding of and dealing with the race problem.

With this victory Miller led the Commission to begin an educational campaign aimed to stem the rising tide of hostility to the Supreme Court decision. Literature was produced by the Commission declaring that segregation was un-Christian and contrary to principles laid down in Scripture.<sup>36</sup> The Commission secured thirty thousand dollars in grants from the Fund for the Republic, a subsidiary of the Ford Foundation, to print literature on the race question. Efforts on the part of a dissident group to force the Commission to return the grants failed because of a lack of support.<sup>37</sup> The literature continued to be published, and Miller and the Commission continued to speak out against segregation.

Although the vote at the 1954 Convention was almost unanimous, there was strong opposition to integration among Southern Baptists. Pastors of some of the leading churches voiced their disapproval, with some of them reacting quite vehemently to the action of Miller and authors of pro-

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See T. B. Maston, Integration, Nashville, 1956, pp. 15.

R. Lofton Hudson, Is Segregation Christian? Nashville, n. d., p. 4.

37 SBC Annual, 1958, p. 53.

integration literature published by the Commission.<sup>39</sup> Two state Baptist papers took the Commission to task, with one advocating its abolition.<sup>40</sup> The opposition worked toward a show-down in the 1958 Convention, but, as cited above, found little support among the messengers.

While opposition to the pronouncements of the Commission was in evidence, it was more than offset by the main leadership of the Convention standing solidly behind Miller and the Commission personnel. The Convention president, the heads of the Foreign and Home Mission Boards, and every other major official of the Convention applauded the Supreme Court ruling. The head of the Christian Life Commission of the Texas Baptist Convention, Foy Valentine, openly campaigned for the peaceful integration of the public schools in Dallas.<sup>41</sup>

Pastors also supported integration in a number of

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See Miller's personal files and files of Christian Life Commission.

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The Baptist Message, Louisiana, August 8, 1957, p. 2.  
The Religious Herald, Virginia, June 6, 1957,  
 p. 14; September 26, 1957, p. 10.

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Foy Valentine, "The Court, the Church, and the Community," The Review and Expositor, LII, October, 1956, pp. 536-550.



instances. The Baptist pastor in Clinton, Tennessee, suffered physical attack while escorting Negro children to school.<sup>42</sup> Others, many of them in areas of rabid tension, spoke their minds on the issue. Among these were two Little Rock pastors, Dale Cowling and W. O. Vaught, Jr. Both of these men preached from their pulpits on the subject during the crisis in Little Rock.<sup>43</sup> Vaught cried out against the leaders of organized resistance, referring to them as "unscrupulous fomentors of racial prejudice and strife."<sup>44</sup>

The contribution of Congressman Brooks Hays of Arkansas was especially significant during the crisis in Little Rock. Hays, a Baptist and racial moderate, was chairman of the Christian Life Commission in 1955 and president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1957 and 1958. He served as arbitrator between those in Congress holding liberal views and those taking the conservative position. He also served as mediator between President Eisenhower and Governor Faubus of Arkansas. Though

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<sup>42</sup> New York Times, December 5, 1956, Part I, p. 44.

<sup>43</sup> See Dale Cowling, "A Pastor Looks at Integration in Little Rock." Copy of sermon in personal files.

<sup>44</sup> New York Times, October 7, 1956, Part II, pp. 1, 12.

Hays personally considered the Supreme Court ruling unwise, he looked upon it as the law of the land and urged his constituents to comply with it.<sup>45</sup> This position cost him his seat in Congress in the 1958 election, but it earned him the respect of his fellow Baptists. When a small group tried to oppose his election to a customary second term as president of the Convention, they were soundly defeated, and Hays went into the Convention office in 1958 with a sweeping victory.<sup>46</sup> Southern Baptists were so impressed with Brooks Hays' role as a Christian statesman, that five state conventions voted their commendation of him after his political defeat in the fall of 1958.<sup>47</sup> Hays demonstrated clearly the practice of the principles declared by Southern Baptists in 1947 as their modus operandi in dealing in the area of racial tensions.

A. C. Miller's last report on race relations echoed the note sounded in 1958. Both reports urged Southern Baptists to meet the period of adjustment in the South

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<sup>45</sup>

Brooks Hays, This World: A Christian's Workshop, 136 pp.

<sup>46</sup>

SBC Annual, 1958, pp. 50-51.

<sup>47</sup>

The Christian Century, LXXV, December 3, 1958, p. 1390.

with wisdom, sincerity, and courage. He admonished the people to face the problem realistically, constructively, and patiently, avoiding radical extremism on either side. He reminded his fellow-Baptists that:

. . . the church is the body of which Christ is the Head. It is to be governed by his laws, motivated by his love, and guided by his mind and Spirit. The church is not the state, but its voice must be heard in state affairs. It is not a law enforcement agency, but it must call for respect of the law and cultivate public opinion which demands the enforcement of the law.<sup>48</sup>

The progress in Southern Baptist thought, attitude, and activity in the field of Negro-white relations reflected in the reports of the Christian Life Commission since 1940 is evidence of a definite rise in social awareness.

#### Factors Which Produced Change

A number of factors entered into the awakening of the Southern Baptist conscience on race relations. The impact of education was one causative factor. Southern Baptists have not been left out in the emphasis upon higher education during the past half century. They have increased their own schools and expanded their curricula to include courses in sociology and race relations in particular. Their seminaries have offered courses in Christian ethics for a number of years, educating the Southern Baptist

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<sup>48</sup>

SBC Annual, 1958, p. 394.



ministry along the lines of the Christian ethic in race relations.<sup>49</sup> As college and seminary graduates took their places in church and denominational life, they began to speak out on issues on which their ancestors had either remained silent or had no conviction.

Another factor influencing the radical change was the expansion of the Convention territory. Following World War II, the Southern Baptist Convention began extending its territorial boundaries at a rapid pace. The entire nation is now encompassed by Southern Baptist work. With the entering into new territory came a loss of Southern provincialism. New people with different ideas began attending Southern Baptist Conventions, speaking their minds and exercising their vote. Most of these people brought with them far more liberal views than had been held by their brethren in the deep South.

The progressive urbanization of the land added to the rise of awareness of Southern Baptists in race relations. The move from the country to the cities and suburbs has been a Southern as well as a national phenomenon. For years Southern Baptist churches were essentially rural. In 1950 eighty-three percent of the churches affiliated with the

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See Baptist college and seminary catalogues over past twenty-five years.

Southern Convention were in rural areas. These rural churches claimed fifty-five percent of the total membership in the Convention churches. By 1960 the percentage of rural churches had fallen to seventy-four per cent, and the drop in rural church membership brought that figure to forty-five per cent of the total.<sup>50</sup> These figures reflect the shift in Southern Baptist population, which has been going on for several years. While the urbanization move was in progress, the denomination was experiencing a rapid growth in membership, showing a 1960 total of 9,731,591 compared to 7,079,889 in the 1950 tally.<sup>51</sup> The vast majority of this growth was in the city and suburban churches, where the old isolationism of the farm gave way to the social amalgamation of city life. This factor alone was enough to break down the denominational isolationism that characterized Southern Baptists for a century.

Still another factor contributing to the change in ideology was World War II. Southern white men, most of

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<sup>50</sup>

Southern Baptist Handbook, 1961, "Location of Churches and Membership, 1950-1960," p. 14.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

them young, served in integrated military outfits. They were thrown into integrated housing, eating places, medical facilities, and educational programs, and discovered that the Negro man, beyond the color of his skin, was not so different as they had thought him to be. Those who were in fighting contingents with Negroes found the survival instinct and the love of life to be emotions shared by both races, and they were drawn together in strong bonds of camaraderie. When the war was over, and those who survived returned to their homes, old prejudices and fallacies were left, in many instances, on battlefields to die.

A final social factor that must be acknowledged as related to a change in racial attitudes of Southern Baptists was the industrialization of the Southern states. More about this will be said in another chapter, but the influx of Northern workmen, the rise of labor unions, and the changing economic status of Negro and white alike took the toll of many false judgments characteristic of the rural Southland.

The foregoing factors, when added to the specific efforts of Southern Baptist pioneers in the area of race relations, combined to produce the greatest awakening of Southern Baptists in any phase of social responsibility.



## CHAPTER V

### MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

The promotion of morality in the area of marriage and family life was the first assignment given the Social Service Commission by the Southern Baptist Convention.<sup>1</sup> However, less has been said by the Commission on this social problem than any other cited in the definition of its work. Crime, industrial relations, and other matters have received far greater emphasis than marriage and home life. This has been excused on the grounds that the Convention has a department of home life, sponsored by the Sunday School Board, and that other agencies, such as the Student Department and Home Mission Board, have rendered services in this area. The Commission confessed that there was too much work in the field to be fully accomplished by one agency, but has done little to aid in the work itself.<sup>2</sup>

#### Early References

Marriage, home life, family relationships, and divorce were the objects of Southern Baptists' attention as early as 1918, when a committee on marriage and divorce

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<sup>1</sup> SBC Book of Reports, 1953, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

reported to the Convention.<sup>3</sup> In 1920 the Committee on Temperance and Social Service presented a report on the subject.<sup>4</sup> Again, in 1932, the Convention heard a report on marriage and divorce from the Social Service Commission.<sup>5</sup> Each of these reports presented the philosophy of marriage as held by Southern Baptists, that being that marriage is both a civil and divine contract, involving two people in a life-long relationship. Beyond the mutual fulfillment of husband and wife, the most fundamental purpose of marriage is the propagation and perpetuation of the human race. Divorce is contrary to the ideal God established in marriage. Man may put marriage asunder by infidelity to the marriage vows, but only in violation of the will of God.<sup>6</sup>

The early reports on marriage failures always looked upon them as personal failures of a moral nature rather than as problems of society. When the Commission did view marriage in terms of a social problem, it offered only a few suggestions for dealing with it. The special report given to the 1920 Convention called for tighter

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<sup>3</sup>SBC Annual, 1918, pp. 107, 108.

<sup>4</sup>SBC Annual, 1920, pp. 127-128.

<sup>5</sup>SBC Annual, 1932, pp. 92, 93.

<sup>6</sup>C. W. Scudder, "Marriage and the Family," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, pp. 821-822.

legal regulations for marriage as a deterrent for divorce. It advocated uniform regulations through federal legislation which would standardize the legal age for marriage, provide a thirty-day waiting period between the issuing of the license and the marriage ceremony, require medical examinations, and strictly limit the grounds for divorce.<sup>7</sup> Nothing was said about the social responsibilities incurred in marriage, nor was any suggestion made, apart from the legal course, for the effecting of good marriages, the preservation of established homes, or aid for those experiencing the dissolution of their family life.

#### Viewing the Home as a Social Unit

The first official notice of the tensions faced by married people was given in the report of the Social Service Commission to the 1944 Convention. That year the Commission called attention to the fact that the American family was a "family on the move" and needed the stability that the church could give it.<sup>8</sup> An awareness of the family as a unit subject to the tensions and pressures of society was reflected again in the 1946 report. At this time the Commission recognized that the war

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<sup>7</sup> SBC Annual, 1920, pp. 127-128.

<sup>8</sup> SBC Annual, 1944, p. 131.



had created strains and special problems for the family, and called upon the churches to provide moral strength and spiritual foundations for family life.<sup>9</sup>

By far the most extensive report on marriage and home life was made to the 1947 Convention. Under the heading "The Rapidly Spreading Defiance of the Sanctity of the Home with the Consequent Delinquencies and Tragedies," the Commission spelled out some of the problems of the mid-twentieth century home and declared that it "appears, very definitely, to be the prerogative of the church to protect this God ordained unit of society against the hostile influences that press upon her."<sup>10</sup> The Commission mentioned seven problems plaguing the American home: professional and industrial employment of women, which separates mother and child; relaxed home discipline, resulting in incorrigibleness and delinquency; an all-time high in the divorce rate; an alarmingly high peak of juvenile delinquency; a failure of the Sunday Schools to keep teen-agers actively enlisted; a paganistic philosophy, characterized by trial marriages, a go-easy pleasure complex supported by fatalism, and the prostitution of art and beauty to indecency; and finally, views of child-training without moral discipline, leading to a disregard for authority and a confusion of right with might.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> SBC Annual, 1946, p. 124.

<sup>10</sup> SBC Annual, 1947, p. 299.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

In this instance, the Commission presented a course of action for Southern Baptists to follow in the campaign to save the home. The report suggested that the churches use the following means: declare, as never before, the message of personal purity, Christian moral standards, and ideals of marriage; provide literature for training in preparation for marriage; work for more unified divorce laws, for more care in the issuance of marriage licenses, and in the performance of ceremonies; agitate for enforcement of statutes concerning minors, and new legislation prohibiting their presence in road houses; urge the inclusion of courses on marriage and family life and Christian ideals in schools and colleges; and secure a wide distribution for the new magazine, Home Life, issued by the Sunday School Board.<sup>12</sup> This program, calling for personal and legal action, was a long step forward for Southern Baptists, especially in its emphasis upon education for marriage. Such courses had been frowned upon by Baptists in the past. In 1948, the Commission made reference to the Kinsey reports in supporting its statement concerning the dissolution of American family life.<sup>13</sup> A recommendation was adopted by the Convention calling upon pastors to study methods and techniques

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>13</sup>SBC Annual, 1948, p. 335.

of dealing with marital problems with a view to establishing a regular service in the church and community "for instruction in domestic and marriage problems." A second recommendation called for a special series of studies in the Christian ideals of courtship and marriage to be made available to young people through the regular church program.<sup>14</sup> This program of action was also approved by the Convention. In these two recommendations may be seen the continued emphasis upon education as a means of coping with marital problems. Marriage and divorce were finally being recognized as more than moral issues.

### Later Considerations

In 1951 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a recommendation, offered by Hugh Brimm, the executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission, which condemned the Roman Catholic nuptial agreement required of non-Catholics when marrying one of the Roman faith. This condemnation was made on the grounds that a fundamental tenet of the Baptist faith, the freedom of every individual to choose his own religious life, was violated when persons of other faiths were required to rear their children as Roman Catholics.<sup>15</sup> The recommendation urged Baptist young people to refuse to enter into such an

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> SBC Annual, 1951, p. 53.



agreement, and "steadfastly maintain their own religious freedom and guarantee the religious freedom of their children." This statement has become the point of reference for Southern Baptists in relating their position on mixed marriages where religion is the issue.<sup>16</sup> This policy is said to operate "within the principle of individual soul freedom and on the ground that each person is competent to make his own approach to God without going through any intermediary." Therefore, any change in his religious affiliation should be based on personal conviction rather than ecclesiastical requirement or family expediency.<sup>17</sup> Thus Southern Baptists have declared themselves on an issue that is both religious and social in its potentiality for disruption of the marriage relationship.

The last statement made by the Christian Life Commission on family life was linked to the report on juvenile delinquency. The 1954 Convention passed a recommendation calling upon Christian forces within the church to find ways and means of working with law enforcement and community agencies to halt the increase in juvenile crime.<sup>18</sup> As the deterioration of the home was

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<sup>16</sup>The Southern Baptist Convention has not made any official pronouncements on other forms of mixed marriages.

<sup>17</sup>Joe W. Burton, "Mixed Marriage", The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, p. 921.

<sup>18</sup>SBC Annual, 1954, p. 54.

cited as a cause of delinquency in the 1947 report, so it must share the responsibility for the continuation of the problem.

The Christian Life Commission has been silent in its annual reports and recommendations on the subject of marriage and family life since 1954. They have distributed literature on the subject but have made no further pronouncements. That responsibility has been left to other agencies of the denomination, even though the Commission is still charged with the responsibility of study and leadership in the field.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP

Christian citizenship has been defined as "a distinctive quality that pervades the human relationships of the child of God. It is the participation of the loyal subject of God in the affairs of group life here on earth."<sup>1</sup> The Christian Life Commission has recognized social implications in this phase of its work more readily and clearly than in any other area of concern. The pronouncements of the Commission have been made primarily in two fields -- church-state relationships and war and peace. Southern Baptist interest in these two areas has been manifested in several reports of the Commission, and by recommendations and resolutions approved by the Convention.

#### I. Separation of Church and State

Throughout their history Baptists have contended for the separation of the church and the state. They have held that the state is ordained of God, and was established to restrain and punish evildoers and to protect human rights. The state is also obligated to

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<sup>1</sup>J. M. Dawson and C. Emanuel Carlson, "Baptist Christian Citizenship," The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, p. 290.



safeguard the personal, economic, civic and religious rights of all of its citizens. But Baptists have likewise insisted that the state has no right or competency to interfere with the religious persuasions of men. Thus the doctrine of a free church within a free state, each competent within its own sphere and each bound to respect the other. Baptists have insisted, however, that man's supreme loyalty belongs to God. Therefore, the state is denied the right or duty of protecting or showing preference to the doctrines of any one church.<sup>2</sup>

This historic position has been declared by Southern Baptists as well as by other Baptist bodies around the world. In recent years this issue has threatened to become the basic social concern of Southern Baptists. With the increased demands of the Roman Catholic church for government aid in various forms, particularly in the field of education, Southern Baptists have lifted their voices almost daily to protest any alliance between the government and any ecclesiastical organization. Most of the pronouncements of the Christian Life Commission have been occasioned by an actual or threatened violation of the separation principle. This principle has helped

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<sup>2</sup>William A. Mueller, "Church and State", The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, I, pp. 280-282; SBC Annual, 1939, pp. 114-116.

to account for the hesitancy of Southern Baptists to enter into campaigns for legislative action in the field of social reform, unless, as they saw it, a moral issue was at stake. If the latter was true, they entered into the fray without any hesitancy. Southern Baptist's relationships to the state where moral issues were concerned have already been discussed.<sup>3</sup> Other areas of relation have also entered into the work of the Convention.

#### Conflict with the Roman Catholic View

The conflict between the Baptist and Roman Catholic views of church and state relations centered on the use of public funds for sectarian purposes. The Baptist view, based upon the first amendment to the federal constitution, has been that such practices constituted state aid to religion. Their argument has been that money collected by the government and used for sectarian causes amounted to forcing people to support religious institutions through taxation. This issue has presented itself repeatedly and has been the occasion for many public statements by the Christian Life Commission.

One of the first instances of conflict with Roman

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<sup>3</sup>  
See Chapter II, "Moral Issues."

Catholics and government connections came in 1912. In that year the Southern Baptist Convention condemned the practice of Catholic nuns teaching in government-operated Indian schools.<sup>4</sup> Not only was the religious garb of the nuns in the classroom a violation of the principle enunciated, but the fact that the salaries paid the nuns went to the Roman church was offensive, also. According to the Baptist mind, this amounted to government support of the Catholic church. The next year the Convention adopted a resolution against the use of municipal funds for parochial schools,<sup>5</sup> and in 1920 the Convention approved a proposed amendment to the federal constitution which would have forbidden such practices.<sup>6</sup> On the state level, the Commission opposed grants to parochial schools in the form of textbooks and bus transportation.<sup>7</sup> The infiltration of Catholic nuns into the public schools was viewed

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<sup>4</sup>SBC Annual, 1912, p. 85.

<sup>5</sup>SBC Annual, 1913, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup>SBC Annual, 1920, p. 116.

<sup>7</sup>SBC Annual, 1940, pp. 87, 97.



with alarm again in 1954,<sup>8</sup> the difference in this situation and the Indian school issue in 1912 being the type school involved. The Indian schools served a special group; the public school included the total school-age population of an open community. Both cases were viewed as violations of the principle of absolute separation, a principle which forbade any and all subsidies to religion.

Southern Baptists became quite vocal in their opposition to the New Deal appointment of Myron C. Taylor as the President's special representative to the Vatican. This opposition was consistently voiced as long as the Roosevelt administration continued the appointment. With the change of administration Baptists have re-stated their opposition even though the appointive policy was changed several years ago.

#### Federal Aid to Non-Catholic Religious Institutions

Baptists have not only been opposed to federal and state aid to Catholic institutions, they have been just as vocal concerning violation of the principle of separation when committed by others or by those within the Southern Baptist Convention. They have been exceedingly scrupulous in their own activities lest they violate

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<sup>8</sup>  
SBC Annual, 1954, p. 421.

their own position. The Southern Convention opposed New Deal measures which made federal funds available in the form of church building loans.<sup>9</sup> Though the funds made available were to be repaid, and were not grants, the arrangement was looked upon as an alliance that was not consistent with the Baptist position. The same philosophy prevailed with regard to the Roosevelt administration's offer of assistance to ministerial students, the assistance to come from the public coffers.<sup>10</sup> In 1947 the Convention warned all Baptist schools, hospitals, and other institutions of the danger of accepting grants of money or equipment from the government for buildings or any other purpose. In accepting such grants, the Baptist position on separation would be weakened.<sup>11</sup> The Convention also approved the report of the Social Service Commission opposing federal plans to extend social security coverage to ministers and lay employees of the church, on the grounds that such an arrangement would involve cooperation between the government and the churches.<sup>12</sup> This position has, of course, been altered,

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<sup>9</sup>SBC Annual, 1935, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>SBC Annual, 1947, pp. 41-42.

<sup>12</sup>SBC Annual, 1939, pp. 136, 142; SBC Annual, 1941, p. 129.

of necessity. When the coverage was extended many ministers and their churches started participating in the plan and the Convention, having no control over the autonomous churches, could do nothing to prevent such action.

The Christian Life Commission was joined by another denominational agency in the mid-thirties to keep Southern Baptists informed as to governmental procedures influencing Baptist life. With the various moves of the New Deal came a fear on the part of Southern Baptists that the traditional pattern of church-state relations might be abandoned. This fear resulted in the appointment of a special committee to keep the Convention posted on the national scene. This committee, now known as the Public Affairs Committee, has cooperated with like bodies of other Baptist groups, and has been active also in the organization in Washington known as Protestants and Other Americans United. In the past few years this committee, long-since given the status of a standing committee, has voiced most of the concern of Southern Baptists in the area of church and state relationships. The Christian Life Commission has focused its attention more specifically on other facets of Christian citizenship.



### Law Observance and Political Action

The Southern Baptist Convention has always deplored lawlessness. In various reports of the Social Service and Christian Life Commissions the churches and Baptists as individuals have been urged to comply with, support and uphold the law and the agencies charged with enforcing it. The Baptist position at this point was stated as early as 1644 in the London (Particular Baptist) Confession of Faith, which declared:

And concerning the worship of God, there is but one Law giver, which is . . . Jesus Christ . . . . So it is the magistrate's duty to tender the liberty of men's consciences . . . and to protect all under them from all wrong, injury, oppression, and molestation . . . . And as we cannot do anything contrary to our understandings and consciences, so neither can we forbear the doing of that which our understandings and consciences bind us to do; and if the magistrate should require us to do otherwise, we are to yield our persons in a passive way to their power, as the saints of old have done.<sup>13</sup>

The old covenant thus upheld the right of the individual to disagree with the law, but it also commended the right of civil authorities to enforce the law. The one disagreeing with the law must also be prepared to face the penalty of the law.

The Christian Life Commission, and its predecessor,

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<sup>13</sup>Cited by William A. Mueller, "Church and State," The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, p. 281.

the Social Service Commission, has called for cooperation with law enforcement in the fields of liquor laws, both prohibitive and controlling; laws dealing with mob violence, particularly lynching; measures designed to cope with crime, especially juvenile delinquency; and those regarding moral issues such as gambling and drug addiction. A great many of the pleas for law enforcement centered around the eighteenth amendment. Typical of the statements on law enforcement during the prohibition era was that of the Social Service Commission in 1921:

. . . The dignity of the law and the necessity for the equal and impartial enforcement of all law, must constantly be impressed upon the minds and hearts of the people. We suggest and recommend that our pastors preach frequently upon some phase of civic duty and law enforcement . . . There ought to be Citizen's Leagues, or law enforcement organizations, in every city of any considerable size and in every county. We recommend that our pastors and people see to it that such organizations are formed, and that they take such lead and responsibility in their formation as may be necessary.<sup>14</sup>

It would not be correct, however, to say that Southern Baptists have only been concerned with the enforcement of liquor laws. They have manifested a concern for law observance as a matter of principle. That principle has been stated in the Scriptural injunction, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is

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SBC Annual, 1921, p. 81.

no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God."<sup>15</sup>

Southern Baptists, as a denomination, have entered into and encouraged political action, but primarily only when they could interpret the action as being morally necessary. They actively engaged in the prohibition movement and were instrumental in securing legislation in that area. They have voiced their approval or opposition of other legislative matters, once again primarily in the area of Christian morality.

The Southern Convention has never entered into politics as a party, nor has it ever been completely aligned with one of the national political parties. Various Southern Baptist leaders, as individuals, have spoken their mind on political candidates and campaign issues. Individual Baptists have frequently been appointed to various stations in government, have been elected to public office, or have led in political movements, but never as official representatives of their churches.<sup>16</sup> Pat M. Neff, twice governor of Texas, later president of Baylor University, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention expressed the Convention's attitude toward politics when he said:

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<sup>15</sup> Romans 13:1

<sup>16</sup> Dawson and Carlson, loc. cit.



. . . While the state should not oppress religion and religion should not coerce the state, it is unquestionably true that every Christian should be a politician to the extent of taking an active interest in every public question that touches the moral and material welfare of the people.<sup>17</sup>

This view has been advanced by Jimmy R. Allen, the director of the Christian Life Commission of the Texas Baptist Convention. Allen, in urging Christian young people to enter the field of politics, has declared that "the Christian touch should be the cleansing touch" in "dirty" politics.<sup>18</sup>

## II. War and Peace

Southern Baptists began to talk about war, peace, and militarism in 1861, the beginning of the Civil War, and have continued to discuss the issue up to the present. The resolutions adopted in the various annual meetings over the past century have always condemned war in principle, and have held up peace as the Christian ideal, but during periods of national crisis, Southern Baptists have reluctantly admitted defensive warfare as a last resort of practical necessity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Statement made in an address to the Baptist Student Union of Texas Technological College in February, 1961.

<sup>19</sup> Howard P. Colson, "War and Peace," The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, pp. 1476-1477.

### Early Statements on War

The pre-World War I statements on war and peace were focused upon the Civil War and upon efforts to establish international peace machinery in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twenties. While declaring that the Civil War was just and necessary, the Convention also viewed it as a punishment from God sent upon them because of their sins. There was a call for repentance and a return to God, and a plea for Baptists not to fall victim to the un-Christian attitudes of malice and vindictiveness.<sup>20</sup> The efforts to establish peace machinery on an international scale were initiated thirty years after the Civil War. In 1895 a resolution was adopted "petitioning the governments of the world to resort to arbitration instead of war for the settlement of all disputes." This action favored the establishment of a world court. The Convention in 1911 commended President Taft for his proposal made to England concerning arbitration. When World War I began in 1914, the Convention commended President Wilson for his "firm stand . . . for the ideals of peace."<sup>21</sup> But when the nation was thrust

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<sup>20</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>  
Ibid.

into the conflict in 1917, the Convention declared its support of the Allied cause. A resolution, passed at the annual meeting that year, said:

It is of special significance to Baptists that the issues involved in the great war concern fundamental human rights and liberties. The cause of democracy is at stake . . . Deeply as we deplore war, ardently as we longed and labored to avert or avoid it, we may be cheered and heartened in remembering that we are moved in entering it, neither<sup>22</sup> by lust nor hate, but by the love of humanity.

In this manner, then, Southern Baptists declared their support of the United States entry into the conflict. By 1919, the feeling of rightness in the matter was so keen that the president of the Convention, in his address to the messengers, described the war as a struggle to preserve Baptist principles.<sup>23</sup>

### The Search for Peace

The years between World War I and World War II have been referred to as the "great era of pacifism."<sup>24</sup> During this period the Social Service Commission began to speak on the issue of war and peace. Almost every report of the Commission condemned war, supported disarmament, favored arbitration, approved the World Court,

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<sup>22</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> SBC Annual, 1919, p. 17.

<sup>24</sup> Colson, loc. cit.



and urged the United States to enter into it. On one occasion the Commission participated in an interdenominational meeting on world peace, sending five members of the body to the National Study Conference on the Churches and World Peace.<sup>25</sup> While peace was the theme of the twenties one effort to achieve that goal among nations is significantly absent from the list of measures approved by the Convention. The League of Nations never did draw the official support of Southern Baptists. They, as did the nation as a whole, fell under the influence of isolationism and failed to see the merit of the League. It was not until 1937, when the nation was faced with an international arms build-up, that the Social Service Commission expressed a belated confidence in the League of Nations as an instrument for world peace. Even with this expression of trust, there was no criticism of the United States for its failure to join the organization.<sup>26</sup>

The failure to support the League of Nations did not mean that the Commission and Convention as a whole refused to support other measures aimed at establishing peace in the world. In 1921 the Commission encouraged the President and Congress to sponsor the Washington Confer-

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<sup>25</sup> SBC Annual, 1926, p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> SBC Annual, 1937, p. 73.

ence, which, in 1921-22, brought about disarmament agreements among the naval powers of the Pacific.<sup>27</sup> Favor was expressed toward the Senate ratification of the arms agreement, worked out between the United States and Britain at the 1930 London naval conference.<sup>28</sup> The Briand-Kellogg peace treaty of 1928 and the 1936 Pan-American Peace Conference were also approved by the Commission.<sup>29</sup> More energy was expounded by the Commission, however, on its support of the Court of International Justice. The Commission urged the United States to join the World Court in nearly every report from 1924 to 1936. The effort was finally culminated with direct appeal to the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>30</sup>

The efforts of the Convention to secure peace were genuine and sincere. They came during a time when others were seeking the same goal. Whether Southern Baptists were simply caught up in a mass movement, or whether they acted out of a firm conviction that would prevail whatever

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<sup>27</sup> SBC Annual, 1921, p. 84.

<sup>28</sup> SBC Annual, 1930, p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> SBC Annual, 1929, p. 92; SBC Annual, 1937, pp. 73-74.

<sup>30</sup> SBC Annual, 1924, p. 114; SBC Annual, 1925, pp. 103-104; SBC Annual, 1931, p. 128; SBC Annual, 1932, pp. 97-98; SBC Annual, 1933, p. 107; SBC Annual, 1934, p. 106; SBC Annual, 1935, p. 66; SBC Annual, 1936, pp. 24, 34-35.

the conditions might be, may have been revealed in the era which followed.

### World War II and the Years that Followed

If the years between the two great wars were years of pacifism, Southern Baptists did not enter into the spirit of the times. Though they did actively join into the search for peace, they never did commit themselves on the subject of pacifism as such. Consequently, when the clouds of war gathered in the late thirties, the Social Service Commission experienced no embarrassment at all in justifying a defensive war against dictatorial powers. This position was clearly related in the report of the Commission in 1940 which, while declaring that war was not the Christian ideal, expressed the belief that the Christian Spirit did not forbid purely defensive war.<sup>31</sup> The report then defended the right of military preparedness and proudly declared that there were no pacifists among Southern Baptists.<sup>32</sup> Caution was urged in a warning to churches not to become agents of war propaganda,<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> SBC Annual, 1940, pp. 87, 98.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 96.



and a slight reversal of the previous position was seen in 1941, when the Commission offered a resolution, which the Convention adopted, declaring the loyalty of Southern Baptists to the government, but specifying that in no way did it commit the Convention to an approval of war.<sup>34</sup>

By the time the 1942 Convention met, the Commission had left all caution behind. In its report to the Convention a note of super patriotism was sounded. The report declared that "truth had to have defenders," and "as a great religious organization, let us not sit idly by and expect God to win this war or rebuild our civilization at its triumphant end."<sup>35</sup> The report went further to declare that this was an all-out war, and though "we did not start this war . . . now it is ours. We will end it."<sup>36</sup> One sentence was stricken from the report before its adoption. That sentence read, "All our religious, educational, commercial, and political gatherings should have now but one program and that program should be, win the war and establish peace."<sup>37</sup> There was a prayer for a "just and righteous peace" along with a call for penitence

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<sup>34</sup> SBC Annual, 1941, p. 119.

<sup>35</sup> SBC Annual, 1942, p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

and for divine forgiveness with regard to war.<sup>38</sup> The report, the removal of that portion calling for concentration of all programs on the war and peace issue, and the prayer seemed to reveal mixed emotions on the part of those attending the Convention.

The 1943 report of the Commission challenged Christians to become the conscience of the nation and the guardians of its moral and spiritual stewardship.<sup>39</sup> There was a return to the moral and spiritual tone characteristic of previous reports.

A change in the attitude of Southern Baptists was revealed in 1944. The isolationist doctrine, which had prevented the Convention's approval of the League of Nations, gave way completely to the philosophy that there should be no isolation on the part of any nation, and that police power should restrain aggression.<sup>40</sup> This philosophy was reiterated in 1950 when the Social Service Commission called upon Baptists to support the United Nations as an agency of peace.<sup>41</sup> The 1959 report went farther, however, and pointed out some of the specific agencies of the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>39</sup> SBC Annual, 1943, pp. 104-105.

<sup>40</sup> SBC Annual, 1944, p. 149.

<sup>41</sup> SBC Annual, 1950, p. 45.

United Nations, with emphasis placed upon those of a humanitarian nature. . the Relief and Works Agency, the International Bank For Reconstruction and Development and the World Health Organization, to name a few.

This work was cited as a means to the end of securing peace throughout the world and of bettering the lives of men wherever they might be.<sup>42</sup>

Opposition to war, on the grounds that it is contrary to the will of God, found expression again in 1955. This report focused its attention primarily upon preventive war, declaring that Christians, believing that God is the God of peace, should be peacemakers. In carrying out the ideals of peace the resolution adopted by the Convention called for agreements eliminating atomic weapons and a general arms reduction. Christians were urged to think and talk peace, and to become "the active instruments of God" for peace "by living and walking in the Spirit of God."<sup>43</sup> Once again, however, pacifism, as an official position of the Commission or Convention, was not advanced.

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<sup>42</sup> SBC Annual, 1959, pp. 394-396.

<sup>43</sup> SBC Annual, 1955, pp. 56-57.



### The Problem of Conscientious Objectors

While Southern Baptists have never gone on record favoring pacifism, they have recognized the rights of conscientious objectors. As World War II approached, the Social Service Commission said that the most vital question for Christians in such times was "whether a Christian may ever at any time and under any condition give his approval to war or take part in war."<sup>44</sup> It was stated that Baptists believed in liberty of conscience and have upheld those who did have conscientious scruples against the bearing of arms. In that year the Convention instructed its executive committee to provide for the registration of conscientious objectors with the denomination, that they in turn might be certified to the government. Later, the executive committee was authorized by the Convention to receive and transmit funds to the National Service Board for the support of Baptists who were suffering the consequences of their objection.<sup>45</sup> Statistics revealed that a total of one hundred fifty-two men registered with the committee, and forty-five of these were in conscientious objector camps by the end of the war.<sup>46</sup> Contributions

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<sup>44</sup>SBC Annual, 1940, p. 97.

<sup>45</sup>T. B. Maston, "Pacifism," The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, pp. 1067-1068.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 1068.

for the support of these men were meager, however. The gap between the support of the rights of the objectors and the support of the objectors themselves was wide.<sup>47</sup>

### The Problem of Universal Military Training

One issue on which Southern Baptists as a denomination have never varied is the problem of universal military training. While recognizing the necessity of preparation for national defense, the Southern Baptist Convention has urged citizens to concentrate on economic, social, political, and moral counter-measures against the threat of war rather than military measures. Continuous opposition to universal military training has been voiced since 1946. This opposition has been based on the conviction that such a policy would weaken the principle of freedom and increase the danger of the development of a military civilization.<sup>48</sup>

Not only have Southern Baptists urged the United States to oppose such a policy in our own land, but in all nations. A resolution adopted in 1946 urged the President, the Congress, and the United States representatives in the United Nations to "support with determination

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<sup>47</sup>  
Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Adiel J. Moncrief, Jr. "Universal Military Training," The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, II, p. 1436.

the movement to abolish peacetime military conscriptions in all the nations of the world."<sup>49</sup>

The 1952 report of the Social Service Commission declared that universal military training had been outmoded by modern warfare. Quoting General Eisenhower as saying that the first several days of the next war would be decisive, and citing statistics on the devastation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the Commission declared, "The type of training under U. M. T. will not meet the demands which General Eisenhower has here set forth. The U. M. T. type of warfare went out with Hiroshima."<sup>50</sup> The report closed with the warning that world peace could not be established by re-establishing in America what had so recently been destroyed in Germany.

The Southern Baptist position on this issue was last stated in a Commission report in 1955. Rehearsing the reasons for opposition to universal military training, the Convention adopted the resolution expressing the feeling that the current selective service law was sufficient for national defense, and urged the federal government not to take steps toward the establishment of a universal requirement for military service.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>SBC Annual, 1946, p. 127.

<sup>50</sup>SBC Annual, 1952, p. 413.

<sup>51</sup>SBC Annual, 1955, p. 57.



With respect to war and peace, Southern Baptists have not revealed a fixed position. They have condemned war in principle and have worked for peace, but when war has come upon the nation they have contributed to the efforts to win. They have upheld the rights of those who could not conscientiously enter into the wars, but have failed to provide for their needs. They have declared their recognition of the necessity of military preparedness for defense, but have opposed universal military training. They have preached peace in peacetime and supported war in wartime.

## CHAPTER VII

### ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

For several decades the Southern Baptist Convention was comprised of churches in states largely rural. The only industry affecting Southern Baptist life was the cotton industry, and, in general, only those churches related to mill situations were affected directly. With the growth of labor unions came an awareness of the problems involved in labor-management relations. The Social Service Commission was created at a time when these problems were coming to the light.

#### Changing Attitudes Toward the Role of Labor and the Place of Management

Studies of Southern Baptist attitude toward labor and capital early in the twentieth century, reveal a general lack of sympathy for and understanding of the problems of labor. The rural economy of the Southern regions, along with the erroneous belief that foreign ideologies controlled the labor movement, made Southerners blind to injustices obvious to the objective viewer.<sup>1</sup> The economic background of slavery and the lorded role of the landholder was also still ingrained in Southern Baptist thought at the turn of the century. When they did

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<sup>1</sup>Hugh A. Brimm, "The Social Consciousness of Southern Baptists in Relation to Some Regional Problems, 1910-1935," pp. 118-119.

discuss the difficulties experienced by labor and management, they usually did so in broad generalities, using terms of individual morality as the means of solution instead of specific ways of alleviating the problems.<sup>2</sup> An unawareness of the complexities of economic issues characterized Southern Baptists throughout the first decade of the twentieth century.

The first official recognition of economic issues came in the initial report of W. L. Poteat, the first chairman of the Social Service Commission. The most significant part of the report dealt with the economic order. Poteat said that the church must

- - - check private greed and oppose class antagonisms. It must erect Christian standards in the market place, and insist that the labor of women and children be regulated . . . that the industrial system provide the minimum of necessary working hours with a maximum of wholesome life conditions, and that the workers have a fair share of the prosperity which they produce.<sup>3</sup>

Although the Convention adopted Poteat's report, his keen insight into the labor situation around him was not shared by many of those attending the Convention meeting. And with the replacement of Poteat as the Commission's chairman, Southern Baptists were not made aware of an economic issue

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<sup>2</sup>Patrick Henry Hill, "The Ethical Emphasis of Editors of Baptist Journals in the Southeastern Region of the United States, 1915-1940," pp. 216-217, 220-221.

<sup>3</sup>SBC Annual, 1914, p. 36.



very often.

The Commission's first important statement on labor disputes came in 1921. In reporting to the Convention that year, the Commission recorded its concern for the needs of labor but gave no evidence of real awareness as to what those concerns were, or what the basic problems were that faced the labor movement. The report began on the safe ground that both labor and capital had their rights and ended on the moralistic note by saying that there were no problems that could not be reconciled if both sides were "permeated with the Christian spirit."<sup>4</sup> The important note in the report was its pro-labor tone. It acknowledged the unequal struggle labor was having with management, and declared that the "odds" were against labor. Although the report reflected a shallow understanding of the total problem, it did present the most advanced position that had been taken by the Convention up to that time. The only other reference in the twenties to an economic issue came in 1924, and it was a rather nebulous reference to child-labor legislation.<sup>5</sup> The Commission actually took no firm stand on the matter.

The series of labor-management disputes in the textile industry in Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina

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<sup>4</sup>SBC Annual, 1921, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup>SBC Annual, 1924, p. 116.

evoked the first comprehensive statement on the subject from the Social Service Commission. The issue involved was the attempt by organized labor to unionize Southern mill workers. The Commission's position, reflected in its 1930 report, was a significant exception to its usual stand. The report supported the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively to gain a "fair and living wage." It also endorsed a nine hour day and a forty-nine and one half hour work week. It voiced its opposition to the employment of children under the age of fifteen, as well as night work for women. The report also called for substantial improvements in housing in the mill villages.<sup>6</sup>

The advanced views reflected in the 1930 report were, apparently, a temporary departure from the previous position of the Commission. With the inauguration of the New Deal's program for economic recovery, many of the conditions deplored by the Commission in its 1930 statement were alleviated. But the hostility of the Commission chairman toward the Roosevelt administration, because of the repeal of prohibition, seemed to blind him and the Commission members to the reforms taking place. In-

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<sup>6</sup>  
SBC Annual, 1930, pp. 68-69.

stead of recognizing the benefits bestowed by many of the New Deal policies, the Commission filled its reports with criticisms of the "trend toward centralization" and "regimentation" by federal government.<sup>7</sup>

The Commission's view of the New Deal was not shared by Southern Baptists generally, however. The state Baptist papers, almost without exception, praised the New Deal for correcting some of the "anti-Christian" features in the capitalistic system.<sup>8</sup> The Convention rebuked the Social Service Commission in 1933 by forcing the chairman, A. J. Barton, to withdraw a resolution condemning Congress for granting excessive power to the President.<sup>9</sup> Commission reports made by Barton rarely mentioned the economic order from that date on.

#### Attitudes Reflected Since World War II

Much more emphasis has been given to problems of economics since World War II. The rapid industrialization of the South, with the attendant growth of organized labor,

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<sup>7</sup> SBC Annual, 1938, pp. 101-102, 113.

<sup>8</sup> Hill, op. cit., pp. 274, 282.

<sup>9</sup> SBC Annual, 1933, pp. 104, 117.



made Southern Baptists more aware of their social responsibility in this area.<sup>10</sup> A denominational emphasis upon stewardship also called the attention of the people in the churches to their economic status. The doctrine of tithing, along with the philosophy that secular work should be pursued as a Christian calling, made individual church members more conscious of the application of the Bible to the economic structure.<sup>11</sup> However, the official proclamations of the Social Service and the Christian Life Commissions did not reflect any basic changes in economic philosophy.

The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 evoked a statement by the Commission in its 1948 report. Churches were advised not to take the side of either labor or management, but to take the side of justice and to help break down the "middle wall" which separated labor from management. The report urged the churches to create opportunities for leaders on both sides to meet in an atmosphere of Christian ideals. A resolution embodying this recommendation, as well as a recommendation for increased course offerings in the field of economics by Baptist colleges, was adopted by the

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<sup>10</sup> SBC Annual, 1952, p. 417.

<sup>11</sup> SBC Annual, 1955, p. 331; SBC Annual, 1956, p. 333.

Convention.<sup>12</sup>

The 1952 Christian Life Commission report contained a lengthy section on capital and labor.<sup>13</sup> In it the Commission said that all economic activity was subject to Christian judgment, whether it be the activity of labor or of management. Faith in the collective bargaining process as the key to the solution of problems in industrial relationships was expressed, if the parties involved were not guilty of unworthy motives and objectives. The role of the church in economics should be that of producing individuals, both in labor and management, who would embody the ideals of the Christian life and thereby carry them into their "economic professions."<sup>14</sup> This report reflected the traditional moral emphasis of the Commission, applied in this instance to economics.

Only three other reports mention the economic order. The 1953 report reiterates the position stated the year before.<sup>15</sup> The 1955 statement called for vocational guidance and training of young people in their choice of work. It also called attention to the leisure time en-

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<sup>12</sup> SBC Annual, 1948, pp. 53, 336.

<sup>13</sup> SBC Annual, 1952, pp. 416-418.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 418.

<sup>15</sup> Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 1953, p. 349.

joyed by Americans, the product of mechanization and the resultant shorter work-day. This was viewed as a situation demanding alertness and creativity on the part of the churches.<sup>16</sup> In 1957 the Commission announced plans for two summer conferences on the subject, "The Christian Faith and Economic Life." The purpose of these conferences was to acquaint those attending with the problems to be met in an industrialized South. A special class on "The Christian Answer to Communism" was also a part of the conference program.<sup>17</sup> Since 1957, the Christian Life Commission report has not dealt with economic relationships.

#### Special Problems in Economics

The Christian Life Commission has dealt with two special problems in the field of economics. Both were called to the attention of the 1952 Southern Baptist Convention.

Migratory workers became the special interest of the Commission in its 1952 report. Opposition toward unscrupulous employers who took unfair economic advantage

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<sup>16</sup> SBC Annual, 1955, p. 331.

<sup>17</sup> SBC Annual, 1957, p. 365.



of the migrants was expressed in the form of a resolution adopted by the Convention. The resolution pointed out the poor living conditions and virtual impossibility of educating migrant children, and called upon Baptists, living in areas where migrant laborers worked, to "study carefully the problems of their human, social, and economic needs as well as their spiritual welfare," and to move to meet those needs.<sup>18</sup>

The second special problem with which the Commission dealt was that of the aged. This group, leaving the working force and entering into retirement, was viewed as a special problem in 1952 and again in the 1956 report to the Convention. Their economic needs, as well as their spiritual needs, were pointed out by the Commission. Statistics were related which revealed the inadequacy of government pensions, and a figure of eight million was cited as representing those with no income or only a meager subsistence. The Commission declared "We have no moral right to deal lightly with our personal responsibility by assuming that the government can and should perform our work of love, our debt of devotion to the aged."<sup>19</sup> Commendation was then given those Baptist institutions caring for the aged, and others were encouraged to make

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<sup>18</sup>SBC Annual, 1952, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

provisions. Churches were reminded again in 1956 of the challenge presented by the changing age structure in America and were urged to act creatively.<sup>20</sup>

Southern Baptists have chosen a role of mediation in industrial relationships. Early in the life of the Social Service Commission an awareness of economic problems was professed, but a suspicion of labor organizations and hostility toward the New Deal kept the Commission silent on basic economic problems. When the Commission did alter its course and began to speak out on the subject, it pointed out the rights of both sides and committed itself to neither. The moral tone prevalent in other social problems, has been revealed extensively with regard to economics, also. With the change in the economic structure of the South, Southern Baptists have been made more conscious of their social responsibility in this area, but as of 1960 they had made no significant move toward becoming an influential factor in industrial relationships.

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SBC Annual, 1956, p. 334.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

It was the purpose of this study to determine the extent to which Southern Baptists, as a denomination, expressed an awareness of various social issues affecting their lives between 1910 and 1960. This study also purposed to reveal and evaluate the official attitudes assumed and the action taken in facing those problems. The primary sources for this research were the reports and resolutions of the Social Service Commission, later known as the Christian Life Commission, as recorded in the minutes of the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention. Other sources were consulted regularly, including The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists and various state, district, and associational minutes. Some Baptist publications were also scanned. The bibliography reveals other sources used in this research.

Southern Baptists have been made socially aware primarily through the pronouncements of the Christian Life Commission, a denominational agency created for that purpose. The Christian Life Commission has its roots in two other denominational agencies - - the old Committee on Temperance, created in 1908, and its successor, the Social Service Commission, established in 1913. The name - - Christian Life Commission - - was taken in 1952



when the location of the Commission's office was changed from Louisville, Kentucky, to Nashville, Tennessee.

The Social Service Commission began its work under the leadership of W. L. Poteat, president of Wake Forest College in North Carolina. He was a man of keen insight and social vision. After serving only one year as chairman, Poteat was replaced by A. J. Barton, chairman of the Committee on Temperance. This move was made when the two agencies were incorporated into one. Barton brought into his new assignment all the zeal for prohibition that he had manifested as chairman of the temperance committee. He devoted practically all of his time as Commission chairman to the fight against the liquor traffic. Other social issues were hardly touched in his twenty-seven years of leadership.

Barton died in 1942 and was succeeded by J. B. Weatherspoon, a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The contributions of Weatherspoon were basically two: an aroused conscience on race relations, and the elevation of the work of the Commission to a full-time status. Throughout the tenure of Barton and Weatherspoon, the Commission operated with little or no financial support from the Convention. The chairmanship of the agency was a part-time relationship for which no remuneration was received. When Weatherspoon turned over the administration of the Commission to Hugh A.

Brimm in 1947, he turned it over to the first full-time executive secretary the Commission had known. Brimm worked on a limited budget but was successful in attracting attention to the work of the Commission through the publication of a periodical entitled Light, which was sent to pastors and church leaders over the territory of the Convention. This marked the serious entrance of the Commission into the publishing field.

Hugh Brimm was succeeded as executive secretary of the Commission by A. C. Miller in 1952. Miller had held a similar post in the Texas Baptist Convention. The offices of the Commission were moved from Louisville to Nashville where space was provided by the Sunday School Board. This placed the offices in the midst of denominational planning and publishing facilities. The new location symbolized a new approach to the Commission's work. Miller began to integrate the work with that of other denominational agencies and was thereby able to get the message out to Southern Baptists through the budgets of the cooperating agencies.

The current executive secretary is Foy Valentine, who succeeded Miller in 1960. Upon Miller's retirement the Commission went to Texas again to find their leadership. Valentine had succeeded Miller in the Texas office and was chosen to head the work for the Southern Baptist Convention, following Miller once again.

The theological and social conservatism of Barton was challenged seriously only once during his tenure. That challenge came in 1933 in the form of a motion to establish a Bureau of Social Research. The move was headed by Edwin McNeill Poteat, Jr., nephew of the first chairman of the Commission. The proposal was studied and debated in the Baptist press and in the Convention meetings briefly until 1936 when it was defeated by tabling procedures. The proposal was objected to on grounds that it substituted social reform for personal regeneration; that denominational agencies were not to be empowered with the kind of authority the Bureau requested; and, that Poteat was a dangerous liberal who sought to loose the Convention from its conservative theological moorings. The opposition was led by fundamentalist pre-millennialists and Landmarkers who remained in the Convention after the split in 1905. With the demise of the effort to establish the Bureau of Social Research, Southern Baptists returned to a relative unawareness concerning social issues.

Moral issues have concerned Southern Baptists more than any others with the possible exception of a rather belated interest in race relations. The prohibition campaigns, both before and after the eighteenth amendment, and after its repeal, have found avid support from Southern Baptists. The personal efforts of A. J. Barton, while chairman of the Social Service Commission, are a



part of the history of the prohibition movement in the United States. Southern Baptists through the pronouncements and resolutions of the Commission, have opposed other vices such as gambling, drug addiction, and crime in its various manifestations. But no social issue has aroused Southern Baptists quite so strongly as the liquor traffic.

Southern Baptists were made to realize their social responsibility in race relations primarily through the efforts of J. B. Weatherspoon. His request for a special committee to study the problem led to the adoption of a set of principles to be used in Negro-white relationships. The principles enunciated by the special committee were revolutionary for Southerners, but were clearly Biblical. Those principles were cited as the basis for support of the Supreme Court decision of 1954 outlawing public school segregation. A strong statement of commendation was given the Court by the Convention that year, with less than one hundred votes being registered against it. More than eight thousand messengers voted their approval. Progress along lines of interracial cooperation has continued, and the segregation-caste system in the South seemed to be weakening in the minds of Southern Baptists.

Little has been said about marriage and family life by the Social Service and Christian Life Commissions. Although this area of social involvement was assigned to

the Commission for study and pronouncements, it has been left largely to other agencies of the denomination, such as the Home Life Department of the Sunday School Board.

Christian citizenship has interested the Christian Life Commission and the Convention, especially in the matters of church-state relations and war and peace. Baptists have been staunch advocates of religious liberty and have preached the doctrine of complete separation. Southern Baptist ire has been aroused most frequently by what they have viewed as violations of this principle, particularly where Roman Catholics have been involved. They have been scrupulous in their own dealings with the government and stand as watchguards in this area. They have not been so steadfast in their stand on the issue of war and peace, however. They have preached peace in peacetime and war in wartime. While never advocating pacifism, they have been sympathetic toward those who conscientiously objected to participation in war. The only phase of the war-peace issue in which Southern Baptists have been absolutely consistent has been in their opposition to universal military training. Their adamancy at this point has never wavered.

An awareness of economic issues was late in coming to Southern Baptists. The rural economy of the Southland did not pose the problems faced by more industrialized regions. Since World War II, however, Southern Baptists have been made to realize that the Christian

ethic is applicable to economic issues, also. As industry has moved south, and labor has organized, the Christian Life Commission has made a few pronouncements on economic issues. The prevailing attitude, however, was that of not taking sides but playing the role of the mediator.

The fact that the Christian ethic, as interpreted by Southern Baptists, is a moral ethic was in evidence throughout this research. The Baptist emphasis upon personal regeneration rather than social reform as the method of transforming the world was seen as the basis for any action taken by Southern Baptists. Their theological conservatism was reflected in their social conservatism. Southern Baptists were a part of the Southern culture, and the breaking of those bonds has not been easy, but it has been attempted with some degree of success.

### Conclusions

The evidence presented in this study gives validity to the following conclusions:

1. Southern Baptists have become more socially aware during the past fifty years.
2. They have learned that social issues fall under the judgment of the Christian gospel as do personal matters.



3. The changing cultural and social patterns of the South, coupled with the expansion of the Southern Baptist Convention, have worked to produce social situations to which Southern Baptists have responded in a progressively more liberal way.

4. The advance in social awareness among Southern Baptists has come primarily in the past twenty years.

5. Southern Baptists have become more socially aware without departing from their conservative theological position.

6. The Christian Life Commission, and its predecessor, the Social Service Commission, has usually taken on the character and personality of its leadership. Progressive leadership has produced wider social concern and action.

7. The gap between pronouncements and performance is still wide, but Southern Baptists have narrowed the gap measurably in the past half century. There is ground for hope that the gap will continue to be narrowed.

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