

# BAPTISTS UNITED NEWS

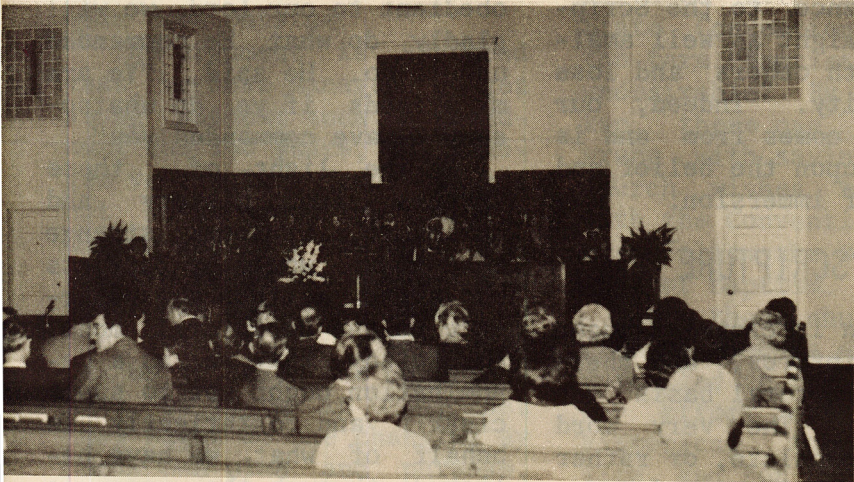
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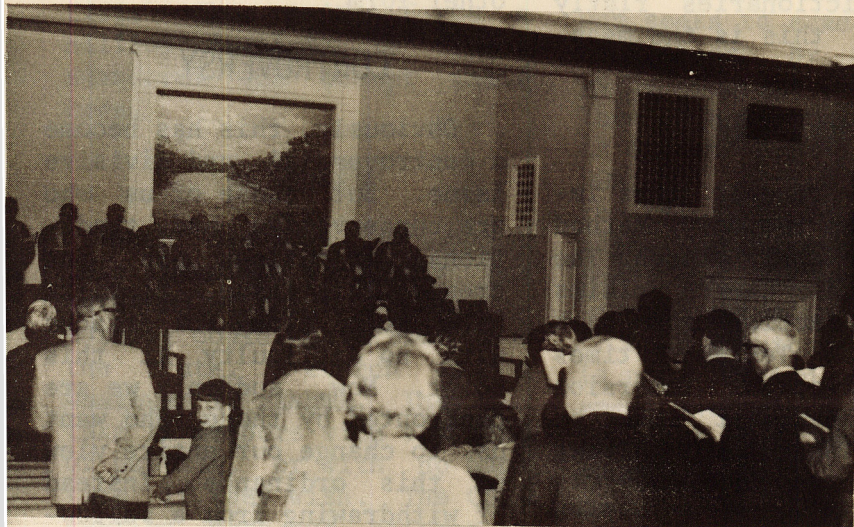
May 1, 1972

Number 2

## RALLIES SUCCESSFUL



AN EVENING SESSION, AT THE CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, ROCKY MOUNT



AN EVENING SESSION AT THE EAST LUMBERTON BAPTIST CHURCH, LUMBERTON



AFTERNOON PASTORS' CONFERENCE AT BURKEMONT BAPTIST CHURCH, MORGANTON

Success is the only word to describe our recent Baptists United Rallies across the State. One thing became clearly evident. Our people have grown weary of liberalism and there is a new optimism in our State that liberal trends in the North Carolina Convention can be reversed through the efforts of Baptists United. One of the most significant Rallies was the Rocky Mount Rally with the Calvary Baptist Church. The Rocky Mount area, located in the zenith of Southeastern Seminary's local influence, has been plagued with liberalism. A strong Baptisimal Amendment to the Association's Constitution failed to gain the required two-thirds majority (to amend the Constitution) by only thirteen votes in 1970. There was some doubt as to the strength of Conservatives in the area, but the size of the Rocky Mount Rally furnished dramatic and indisputable evidence that the majority of Baptists in the Rocky Mount area and, indeed, the Eastern part of the State are still Conservative, Bible believing people. Rev. Johnny Bradley, host pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church said, "The Rally was a tremendous encouragement to our people locally. It helped them to realize that they are not isolated in the struggle with liberalism. By meeting with and hearing the leaders of Baptists United our lay people realized that there is a positive effort being made within the framework of our Convention to bring about real spiritual revival."

### OTHER RALLIES

The same healthy response and warm fellowship which prevailed at the Rocky Mount Rally also prevailed at the Lumberton and Morganton rallies. The host Choir of the East Lumberton Baptist Church provided moving music under the direction of the pastor, Rev. John Haas. Brother Haas said, "This Rally is one of the best moves we have made."

### PRAYER

The Burkemont Rally was characterized by two very spiritual periods of prayer. The response of pastors at the Burkemont meeting was larger than some had expected. A Youth Group and the Burkemont Trio provided special music and the Congregational music at the Evening Session was under the able direction of Mr. Lanny Smith of the East Taylorsville Baptist Church.

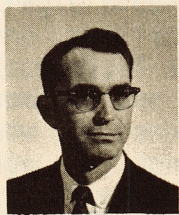
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# CRISIS & THE

BY M.O. OWENS JR.



Baptists in North Carolina, and thus in fact, in the Southern Baptist Convention, are faced with a crisis and a question. The crisis is brought about by the question. That question is: Shall we join the ranks of those who hold that the mode of baptism is immaterial, and thus turn from our time-honored and Scripture-based position that immersion is the only form which is obedient to Scripture?

## AMENDMENT

At the last meeting of the Baptist State Convention, I proposed an amendment to the Constitution which would have required all churches affiliating with the Convention to accept as members only those who have been immersed. When the proposal was submitted to the Biblical Recorder for the required publication, it immediately stirred a hornet's nest of anxiety and activity. Mr. Grant apparently conferred with Dr. Crouch and Dr. Carl Bates and others. The battle was joined. These three and other leaders bombarded the Baptists of the State with their pleas that the amendment not be passed. As a result, it lost, technically, A majority of 54% of those voting voted for the amendment, but it did not receive the required two-thirds majority necessary for it to become a part of the constitution.

## OBJECTIONS

There seemed to be five objections offered against the amendment. (1) That it is controversial and divisive; (2) That it will isolate and separate some good churches and some good men; (3) That we have managed without it for some 140 years, and it is unnecessary; (4) That it invades the autonomy of the local church; and (5) That it sets up a creedal requirement for Convention affiliation.

But there are some good

reasons for having such an amendment.

Historically, immersion has been an identifying mark of Baptists. There was a time, to be sure, when some Anabaptists sprinkled, but since Baptists became a clear-cut totally identified denomination, there has been virtually no diversion from the Scriptural position until the last few years. Without this open obedience to the Scriptures, we might as well amalgamate with others and lose our identity. Indeed, our very name comes from and is dependent upon the belief and practice of immersion.

## SCRIPTURE

Immersion is clearly taught in the Scriptures, and there is no Scriptural basis for sprinkling. The very word which we translate, or rather transliterate 'baptize' means 'immerse'. All the Greek lexicons, the encyclopedias, and the dictionaries flatly state that this is the meaning.

## HISTORY

History reveals that immersion was the only method used by the early church. The Greek Orthodox Church claims that its practice goes back to the New Testament times and it practices immersion only. The earliest case of sprinkling on record is that of Novatian in 250 A.D.

Immersion is the only form which makes sense of the instruction and information Paul gives in Romans and in Colossians. In two passages Paul clearly sets forth the truth that baptism is a picture of death, burial and resurrection.

## CHRIST

Christ was baptized, and it was said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew, Mark and Luke give an account of the baptism of Jesus. He has set an example for us. Should we do less than our Lord? Should we seek any kind of shortcut

to escape what he Himself felt was important? For when John remonstrated with Him, he said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

Jesus clearly commanded his disciples to "baptize". He said, "Going into all the world, make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." If we are obedient to our Lord, we will gladly do what He commanded us to do. He said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you".

In the light of these truths from history and Scripture, it seems strange that there would be Baptists who argue against our adherence to the Scriptural mode. For to say that we as a denomination ought not to speak clearly and forthrightly in behalf of what we have believed through the years is simply to say that we are perfectly willing to accept any other form.

## CONTROVERSY

Obviously, this has become a controversial and divisive issue. But those of us who are conservative and traditional in outlook did not create this issue. Baptists have gone along for decades with no difficulty at this point. Now, suddenly we are confronted by those who want us to change our entire view of this ordinance. Instead of withdrawing from a fellowship they no longer cherish, a group belief they no longer honor, they ask all the rest of us to lower our standards and change our practice to the very thing we have stood against as Baptists for these many years. It is they who are creating the division and stirring the controversy, and to what end - that they may remain in affiliation with the rest of us, yet not be a true Baptist.

Admittedly, this amendment may exclude some churches and some men. We may even lose some Cooperative Program money. But if this trend is not stopped; if it continues



# THE QUESTION

to spread; in the long run we will lose many more churches and a great deal more money. If this amendment is passed, the churches which separate from the Convention because of their unwillingness to practice immersion only and to receive only members who have been immersed, will be making the decision. It will not be the Convention which drives them out; they will be making a free choice, with no coercion from outside.

The argument is advanced that we have managed to get along without such an amendment for 140 years, and managed very well. True. It has not been necessary before. But we are in a new day. Now we have those who would force their own doctrinal stance on the rest of us. They would ask us to leave the constitution as it is in order that they might do the changing by their own plan and purpose. Here are people who want to be members of Baptist churches without being Baptists. They would force a million Baptists to lower standards and accept their creed.

## AUTONOMY

Much has been said about this amendment violating the autonomy of the local church. Nothing could be further from the truth. A church can do whatever it wishes. They can take in members with any kind of baptism, or with no baptism, if they wish. The Convention does not attempt to tell a church what it must do about baptism. But the Convention also has autonomy in its own sphere. It has a right to say on what basis churches shall send messengers to the Convention. Dr. E.C. Routh, in an article in the Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, writes: "A Baptist association in the matter of polity is free to determine what churches it will admit to its fellowship and whether it will continue to receive the messengers of those who have already been admitted. Our state Convention already exercises the right to say

what a church must do in order to send messengers. The requirement is almost nil, for we say that all a church has to do to be affiliated and send messengers is to contribute as little as \$1.00 to some cause connected with the Convention. It does not even have to be a Baptist Church. Can there be anything wrong with saying that only Baptist churches shall be affiliated with the Baptist State Convention? When did the term "Baptist" become so undesirable? By the same token, there can be nothing wrong with saying that if a church wishes to affiliate with the Convention, then it must follow the New Testament mode of baptism.

For these churches which receive members who have been sprinkled to cry out against any effort to safeguard our historical, Scriptural practice, and for our leaders to support them, is really somewhat like a boy on a football team with the ball in his arms who seeks to evade his would-be tacklers by running five yards outside the sideline. Then when the referee says he is out of bounds, he cries, "Oh, no! I just decided that the field is ten yards wider than the markers indicate. Don't be narrow-minded and hard-to-get-along-with".

No, the autonomy of a church is not violated by this amendment. The church is completely free to take whatever course it will.

## CREEDAL?

Now as to the creedal claim there may be a measure of truth. But when did we become afraid of truth? And when did it become a heinous thing to set forth one's belief? If by "creed" we mean a written statement, then certainly there are many "creeds". Baptists have long boasted that the Bible is our sole rule for "faith and practice". As Dr. Bulman puts it our "creed" is really our interpretation of the Bible. Surely, it is not sin to pin down clearly and unequivocally what we believe about and

how we interpret a plain command of our Lord. In voting to accept as of equal value a different mode of baptism we have voted ourselves a "creed" at this point. We have taken a doctrinal position, and one that is in direct opposition to and contrary to our historic position. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in "No Rusty Swords", "We may not play with truth, or else it will destroy us".

## "PEACE"

There is much talk of "Peace, peace" and the urge to avoid conflict and disagreement. I ask, Who has changed? It is not those of us who support this amendment. We believe just exactly as we have believed through the years. We still hold to the New Testament as our sole rule of faith and 'practice'. And we believe that our Convention ought to set forth a clearcut requirement that churches who wish to affiliate with the Convention will be obedient to the command of Christ, at least at this point if no other.

----- M.O. Owens

## RALLIES

(Continued from Page One)

A total of 664 Baptist Pastors and Lay Leaders from local churches attended the Rallies. The leadership of Baptists United was gratified by the fact that 183 active pastors attended the Rallies. The moving messages of Dr. Julian Hopkins, Rev. James Delocah, and Rev. M.O. Owens are still topics of discussion across the State. More rallies are ahead. Watch Baptists United News for the details.

## SUPPORT

Support for the work of Baptists United is coming in well. Let's keep up the good work. We don't need much but we do need some. Please send your contributions to Baptists United in care of Rev. J. Harvey Clark, 610 Berkshire Dr., Statesville, N.C. 28677.

Let's continue to support the Co-operative Program!



# EDITORIALS

The real issue among North Carolina and Southern Baptists today is Ecumenism. The tragic problem of Baptism among us is only one ramification of this greater problem. Ecumenical advocates have had free rein in some of our Seminaries in recent years, and now we reap the harvest. More than a year ago Mr. John Jeter Hurt, editor of the Baptist Standard of Texas, which is the largest of the Southern Baptist State Papers, chided North Carolina Baptists for not taking action at the 1970 Convention to correct the problem of Baptism among us and perhaps avert a Convention wide controversy over this issue. Mr. Hurt and others need to realize that the issue of Baptism is not altogether a problem of the North Carolina Convention. The Seminaries attended by the majority of the students from North Carolina and the Eastern States, where Liberalism is instilled in them, are not North Carolina Institutions but they are Southern Baptist Institutions. If we are to avert even greater crises in the future, something must be done at the Southern Baptist Convention level. We have hidden our heads in the sand for too long about this problem. We say that we don't believe in the infallibility of persons and yet Seminary Profs and Convention Officials are often treated as if they cannot err. When Seminaries, steeped in Liberalism, are instilling the Ecumenical Philosophy in the young men who will be Pastors, Missionaries, Education Workers, Musicians, Denominational Workers, and Writers of Curriculum Materials; it is only a matter of time until the whole cause is lost to the liberal, ecumenical Philosophy.

This is no suggestion that we abridge Academic Freedom but that we rightly interpret Academic Freedom. We do not believe that Academic Freedom presupposes the responsibility of our Denomination to maintain men on the payrolls of our institutions who are teaching things that are diametrically opposed to the basic teachings of the Baptist Faith and the Scriptures. While teachers should be accorded Academic Freedom it should also be recognized that Baptists have some Academic Rights. We are not obligated, in the name of Academic Freedom, to support men in our institutions who are undermining the very basic foundations of the Baptist Faith. Academic Freedom means that a person has the right to teach and advocate his beliefs and philosophies in America without fear of incrimination. It does not obligate someone to support him or even hear him in his advocacy. A proper view of Academic Freedom will also recognize the right of Baptist people in the Southern Baptist Convention to maintain Seminaries that

propagate the basic tenets of the Baptist Faith as they are set forth in the New Testament and have been historically adhered to by Southern Baptist people. This right, however, is now being abridged in our institutions under the pretense of Academic Freedom. We are being led down the path of Ecumenism at a frighteningly rapid rate by Convention Officials and Institutional Employees who propose to be "serving" us.

How do churches and denominations fare when they adopt the Ecumenical Philosophy? One of the first large American denominations to get on the Ecumenical Bandwagon was the Methodists. This writer graduated from a Methodist College back in the 50's when the Ecumenical Philosophy was being expounded on that campus as though it were another "Gospel". It was the thing! Only the backward and the stupid would resist the Ecumenical trends! But how are the Methodists faring today?

At a recent meeting of the Quadrennial Governing Convention of the United Methodist Church in Atlanta the 1,000 Delegates heard a plea from the Church's 98 Bishops for an intensified struggle against modern trends which they saw as threatening the life of Christianity and of the Methodist Church. They stated that the "slow attrition" of the faith had permeated the Church itself, turning many members into "wistful skeptics". The Bishops lamented that "not for centuries has the witness of Christian people on ultimate questions been so hesitant and uncertain. In the face of a 25% drop in church school enrollment over the past ten years the Bishops called for redoubled education efforts, stepped up Scripture Study and greater emphasis on Evangelism. The Bishops warned that unless the Church regains its lost educational ground, the minds of the new generation will be shaped by movies, television and paper back fiction.

This is where Liberal Ecumenism has brought the Methodist Church and there are many in top echelons of our Denomination who are advocating that we travel the same road.

Ecumenism is a system of religious merger that calls upon its adherents to abandon any conviction they hold that might be "offensive" to those of other communions. It seeks the lowest common denominator of participating religious bodies under the pretense of "common grounds of agreement". The first thing that we Southern Baptists are being called upon to abandon is our historical fidelity to the Scriptures and our conviction that Baptism is for believers only by immersion only. This Baptist believes that it is time to blow the whistle on such religious insanity in our ranks.

**A.M.T.**

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