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SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND THE COST OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

A highly significant Associated Press article has been released which states that there is a rising interest in theological education all over this country. The Rockefeller Foundation has set the pace by setting aside \$20,000,000. Many other companies have done the same. In a recent report by one of our outstanding editors the question was asked, "How much of this money will Southern Baptists be able to get for their purposes"? The answer is obvious. Southern Baptists have not, generally, expected gifts from this sort of capital from the empires of the north.

But Southern Baptists need to know that the significance of such amounts being given for theological education cannot be overestimated. It costs money, lots of money, to carry on theological education properly. There is not an institution from Maine to California of any denomination that carries the heavy load that Southern Baptist seminaries carry. There is not another group of protestant people in America who train as many preachers. Many of these theological schools which will receive this money already have as high as \$10,000,000 endowment, and only a handful of students. Southern Baptists will do well to think carefully about theological education with the demands being made upon preachers now as never before, and with the challenge laid out for real constructive thinking, perhaps as never before, Southern Baptists cannot hope to have theological education that meets the need of these times without expenditure of vast sums of money. It may well be possible that all the load cannot be carried by the Co-operative

Program. Then we should give information to those agencies within our Southland that will help them make their gifts intelligently. The implications of these tremendous gifts in theological education say in substance that the hope of our world lies in theology, in our churches, and in a trained ministry.

Can Southern Baptists say less? We must say it not only to ourselves but to others, not only to our agencies, but to the membership in our churches lest they be sieged with opportunities to share their capital with those who are not contributing nearly so much toward the world of tomorrow as are our great theological institutions. Of course, we cannot think of theological education at the graduate level only. We must think of it in terms of the many hundreds of students who are now applying to our colleges for entrance. In order to have a thorough grounding in theological education, one must first have a solid grounding in liberal arts education. All of this should be presented to those who are in a position to do something more than what they do through the envelope on Sunday morning.

It is not the purpose of this writer to suggest that Southern Baptists go begging. Certainly it is not my intention to imply, or to say to those who have little interest in what Baptists are doing in the south, that they should share their capital with us. We need to speak to our own hearts and to our own folk so that they will intelligently see the needs in education and particularly in theological education

TOO OLD

"Too old for what?" one may ask. Too old to think? Too old to love? Too old to understand?

Too old to keep up? Too old to go? Too old to plan? Too old to accomplish? Too old to fit in? Too old to be profitable? Too old to stand criticism? Too old to take it? Some men refuse to be too old. They know they cannot exist on a basis of what they have done. They know that what counts now is their ability to fit into current life. They know that this takes continuous study; past study does not suffice for today's need. As long as one is alert, he is not really old. So long as one looks ahead and expects to do things he is not old. These men know that they can change because they have made a habit of changing as situations change. They know that so long as they can see opportunities growing out of problems that they are not old. They know that as long as they can add zest to maturity that there is a place for them. They know that as long as they are not frightened about their age that they are not old. They know that pity has no rewards, but security comes from being an upright, adjusted, capable working person. Some of the greatest minds we have in this country, some of the most active ministers are men past seventy. They refuse to be old. But fifty is old for one who wants to live on past learning and accomplishments. It is old for him whose learning has solidified into a mass of known facts but goes no farther. How old are you?

WORTHY SUGGESTION

Dr. Gregork's message at Miami on Baptist unity had a number of suggestions worthy of serious consideration. Among other things, Dr. Gregork recommended exchange of pulpits. A number of pastors in the south are in position to bring this about without fear or censure. Others for one reason or another may hesitate to attempt such a venture.

Southern people and preachers need to know more about our northern brethren, and they need to know us. Issues that separate us come and go like the pendulum on a clock. While the pendulum is in motion, we often misunderstand each other, and just as often we misunderstand the issues.

Baptists are a tremendous segment in Christianity. It is doubtful if they will ever be united on trite issues that separate them. They usually become defensive on trite issues to such an extent as to raise the importance to a degree beyond what reason dictates. Democratic people change by a process of conviction. At present some Baptists are shut off from large areas of information. This exchange of pulpits would afford a study of issues and personalities at close hand.

INVASION FEARS

It appears to me that the announced invasion of Southern Baptist territory by the Conservative Baptist Association of America has many good features in it. In fact, this Conservative Convention is in a position to become a very strong group if they "play their hand" properly. Why could not this group and the B. M. A.'s for example, combine with the Landmarks of the south and have a strong force. It goes without saying that Southern Baptists are not able to please all the Baptists of the south and the difference between these groups is so inconsiderable that they need only a period of preparation to unite with each other. There are independent tabernacle type of churches throughout the south which would be far better served by joining with such a group as this than by working independently through the so-called faith mission projects.

I do not take the dim view that many take with respect to this and other such movements. I think they have their place if for no other purpose than to show us that Baptist diversity cannot be avoided. We cannot set a pattern of one mould and expect the whole world to follow it. Not even those around us will follow such a mold. Of course, the closer this group gets to Southern Baptists, the more they will realize how unfounded some of their fears will be. There is very little we can do, one way or another, about the so-called invasion, but a good old time Baptist procedure would be to say, "The field is wide open. If there are people that you can reach that we have not been able to reach, by all means make every effort to win them to Christ."