

BULLETIN SEMINARY EXTENSION DEPARTMENT

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UNDERSTANDING

We are a great body of people in the Southern Baptist Convention. Our distances are great now and our people more heterogeneous than ever. Once we were small farmers and share croppers in a definite geographical section of this country. We were of one general cultural character. Our cities grew out of our own country-bred folk.

Now in every way we are different. The geographical situation has expanded until there are no lines of demarcation. We have become even in this original section an industrial folk as well as rural. In addition, we have embraced peoples of such different attitudes toward life and of such different patterns that we are no longer the same. Traditions which grew out of varying backgrounds confront us on several fronts.

Our leadership situation has greatly changed. The leader who has been called to a new environment is in a role different from the leader who is a part of his environment. Denominational affiliation and loyalties have a different meaning out of the old and deep south. Attitudes toward race vary from the church that fired its pastor for voting with the majority in St. Louis to an association that recently voted negro churches into their fellowship and to churches that received them into their fellowship on a local basis.

We cannot succeed unless we have understanding. We cannot change the traditions of people in new areas to fit the pattern of the old

southern culture. These new areas must also realize that they cannot re-mold the Southern Baptist Convention. Churches in Lowndes County, Alabama are not apt to open their church rolls to Negro Baptists and the churches in Illinois are not apt to boycott a meeting where a negro brother appears on the program.

We can understand each other if we try. Perhaps the most important factor in understanding is that of securing reliable information. Unfortunately our newspapers help us very little. Incidents are magnified all out of proportion toward the point of view of the various sections involved.

It is good practice to withhold judgment until more complete information is secured. While we were in another state recently, a good brother became quite a nuisance as he berated all the "cowardly preachers in Mississippi who for the sake of their jobs kept silent during the worst persecution ever heaped upon a race of people." It was useless to talk to him. He does not represent the thinking Baptists of his state, but all of his presuppositions were based on false information.

Another factor in understanding is that of placing oneself in the other person's place. We cannot do this very well, for we often imagine ourselves to be heroes in a different environment. Actually most of us would adjust to the conditions of our immediate community both in form and in content. I'm told that a mountain near the eastern seaboard divides the two

schools of thought on alien immersion. Preachers pass from one side to another changing polity as they cross the mountain. This may be an exaggeration, but it is characteristic of most of us. We adapt our convictions to our environment. We aren't so heroic; we are human.

We must try to understand the problems confronting new churches in new areas. They must also realize that the settled churches must live in the condition of their own situation. One brother looking at a new church building in an old Baptist community asked, "Why didn't they build with brick and concrete blocks and send the difference to us?" The zeal of workers in new communities is always inspiring. They will not advance without it. But we cannot overlook the value of stability in the established areas.

Perhaps it is too much to expect one who is on the cutting edge of missions to understand the calmness of the more settled churches who seem to be content while the whole world goes to the dogs, and perhaps it is too much to expect one who has not been on the cutting edge to place himself in such a position and understand problems that are so irrelevant to his life situation. But if this vast heterogeneous people called Southern Baptists adhere, they must find a way to do it.

We have many "isms" in our denomination. In fact we could justify the title for our convention as "The Confederation of Heterogeneous Types of Baptists in the United States, Canada, and Cuba." The future may give us an even greater variety of "isms," but if we desire a unity of spirit and fellowship in service, we must learn to understand.

BOOK REVIEW

INFORMAL TALKS ON SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING, Ray Rozelle, Tyler, Texas: Ray Rozelle and Company, 150 pages, \$2.00.

This is an excellent treatment on teaching. The language is simple and the pattern easy to follow. The author puts himself into the story and makes it, as the title implies, informal. The value of this book would have been increased in the author had added a bibliography and an index. The chapter on methods of teaching gives a good outline of the outstanding types. For adult teachers a new approach should be added Group Process (a good interpretation

of this new approach, not entirely new, may be found in TEACHING ADULTS, Frank A. Lundhorst, Abingdon Press). Perhaps this book will become more valuable to a new teacher who needs an introduction to the field of teaching.

NOW IS THE TIME

This is the time to plan for next semester's program. You can improve your center, get a larger enrolment, and do a better job by careful planning.

Evaluate your program for the past year. What were its values and strong points? Criticize its weaknesses. Study these in the light of THE PLAN BOOK and its suggestions.

Organize the Advisory Committee to work with and assist the director. This committee should designate one member to help the director with publicity and promotion. Another should be asked to assist in enlistment, and still another should be searching for good supply teachers. The committee should seek to build a greater program each year through a sound study program and opportunities.

Ask those who attend what they want for good centers seek to meet the needs of individuals themselves. Ask others who should be in the center to state their interests. Seek to fit the program into the local needs.

New centers opening this semester include Muskogee, Okla.; Atlanta, Texas; Crestview, Fla.; Vardaman, Miss.; Kosciusko, Miss.; Live Oak, Fla.; Albemarle, N.C.; Marion, Ill.; Vandalia, Ill.; Dongola, Ill.; Dry Prong, La.; Camden, S.C.; Sarasota, Fla.; Bakersfield, Calif.; North Hollywood, Calif.; and Wichita, Kansas. All the enrollments have not been turned in but we feel that a great many more people will have the opportunity to study the Bible and related subjects because the leadership in these associations are anxious to share their learning with their fellow workers.

STATISTICAL REPORT

Correspondence Students	1,683
Extension Students	3,017
Total	<u>4,700</u>
Number centers operating	72