

BULLETIN

SEMINARY EXTENSION

DEPARTMENT

LEE GALLMAN, DIRECTOR

P. O. BOX 530

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

VOLUME IV

SEPTEMBER 1956

NUMBER 9

CHURCH AUTONOMY

There are some things that should be said for a study of Baptist autonomy. The idea of the autonomy of various bodies within Baptist life, including the church, is something that must be thought out very carefully. For Baptists are not immune to the characteristic move of democracies to centralize everything. There is a general tendency in all democratic thinking to expedite through centralization. When anything begins of a co-operative nature, the first thing we think of is how it can be channeled. This channeling process is dangerously close to centralization; and centralization inevitably leads toward a loss of the autonomy of the local, whether it is in church or in other groups.

To many it seems superflous to be thinking about the autonomy of the local church when in every relationship that Baptists know, the local church is autonomous. I seriously doubt that anyone could upset the notion now that the church is its own autonomy. But we do need to be alert at every indication of change and trend. The power and influence of super-organizations with a wealth of funds to promote and influence people bespeaks of a regimentation by pressure. We often feel that we extricate weaknesses from Baptist churches through a process of education. But this word, "education" at times needs to be placed in quotation marks, for often we really mean pressure. Courageous Southern Baptist preachers can maintain or help their churches maintain their autonomy, freedom, and independence by alertness. But if the loss of autonomy is a peril we face, the move in the other extreme is also a danger. Co-operation is required and to a large degree keeps the churches in the New Testament pattern.

The answer to the problem of autonomy, therefore, does not lie in seeking a directive from the Southern Baptist Convention as if that body held the key to the situation, for the Convention holds no such key. The autonomy of the local church can best be guarded by the churches themselves. It is not required of Southern Baptists that they answer the Supreme Court of the state of North Carolina in the Rocky Mountain Decision, a decision fraught with many side issues and problems. It is required of every Southern Baptist church that it stand on its own feet as a church under the leadership of Jesus Christ who is its head, and that in that relationship of autonomy it give co-operation to the whole body of Christ and to the Christian movement in concentric circles, for the church is larger than the local unit, and the Kingdom is larger than the denomination.

Lee Gallman, Director

EDUCATION DOES NOT MAKE PREACHERS

There may be some person left who thinks that formal education produces preachers. This isn't true.

Note a homespun parable at this point. Notice any type of living plant or tree. It possesses the "germ of life." Who gave this life? "God, of course," you answer; and this is true. Only God can give the germ of life. But look at that plant again. It is perhaps in a bad location or too crowded. Dig it up, prepare a new place of setting, cultivate it, water it, fertilize it, and it will grow rapidly and bring greater fruitage. God gives life, but he allows us to work with that life to bring more fruit.

Now there is an application of this principle to preachers. A truly called preacher (one with the "germ of life") is God-called. Most of us have known men who were called to preach by churches, parents, friends, and even pastors, and this usually produced disaster for all concerned. God must lay His call upon the heart if it is to be genuine. But there is more to it than this. We can take these "called" men and treat them as we would a plant with life, namely cultivate them, etc., so that they will produce far more in the kingdom service. Men who are truly called will desire this preparation and training (cultivation) which will allow them to be of greater service for our Lord.

This training is available in our Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries and in their extension and correspondence courses. We must avail ourselves of these advantages for Christian growth. Education does not make preachers, but Christian education can take a God-called servant and equip him to do a better job.

Ray K. Hodge, Associate

CENTRAL SEMINARY AND THE SEMINARY EXTENSION DEPARTMENT

For some time there has been a co-operative approach to promoting extension work in Missouri in view of Central Seminary's position and in view of their fine extension program. Some centers in Missouri, which had been promoted by Central are joining our Department since the move of that seminary to become an American Baptist school. There are other areas that feel that such a move might be misunderstood.

Let us make the record clear. We are not trying to wean any centers away from Central. It is our hope that there will always be fraternal relations between us. We shall do all we can to further good relations. Tensions help no one. We trust that they will disappear soon.

EXTRA-CURRICULA READING

No learning process is adequate which expects the student to learn from the text only. The text is a guide to learning. It is a set of basic ideas and such ideas should be investigated. A good

way to do this is to find other reading material that is, to some degree, parallel with the text. It is good to find books that are in disagreement with some vital points so that the student may have a chance to choose for himself as a learner. Some centers have set up a small library facility. Various preachers bring their books to the library and assignments in outside readings are made. When such a library was begun in Murphy, North Carolina, for example, a gentleman gave the director a little money to add to it. If the center is near a public library, it may be possible to have a shelf set aside for books to be used by students of the center.

Another source might be the libraries of older ministers. Many men have retired leaving good libraries in a state of inactivity. Such books could be put to use, and there are some men who are anxious to see their books read.

Some schools have circulating libraries. The student may write to the Southern Baptist Seminary, the Southwestern Baptist Seminary, or the Vanderbilt School of Religion Library for parallel reading books. A \$2.00 fee to the seminaries mentioned will enable the student to use the circulating library for a year. Find a way to add to your reading.

BOOK REVIEW

THE CUP OF FURY, Upton Sinclair, Channel Press Inc. Great Neck, N. Y. 1956. 185 pp. \$3.00.

Every person in America should read this stimulating book on the overwhelming problems of drinking and alcoholism. The author is a very prominent writer of our times with some eighty books to his credit. In this book he shows the cruel effects of alcohol on many of his brilliant associates, some of whom were led to suicide. He does not in any way tolerate drinking, but denounces all forms, knowing first hand what it can do. He delivers a scathing attack on the liquor industry for advertising beverage alcohol as needed and trying to picture it in the home, college, and in business. The book is very readable, interesting, and challenging.

Ray K. Hodge

Statistical Report
Total enrollment

5,453