

# BULLETIN

## SEMINARY EXTENSION

### DEPARTMENT

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#### ARE WE A MATURE DENOMINATION?

Such a question demands definition. What is required in denominational maturity? What criteria can be set up by which we may evaluate maturity on a denominational scope? Generally speaking maturity implies the capacity to do rational thinking, to control one's emotions, to know one's position and seek to fill it, to be tolerant both of the views of others and of their mistakes as well. It implies ample faculties for the fulfillment of purpose and design. It involves the capacity to make decisions carefully but promptly. These are some of the characteristics of maturity in an individual.

In a denomination the criteria will have to emerge from the framework of larger considerations. Mature denominations interpret individual maturity into social and collective expression. Just as rational interpretation of life characterizes individual maturity, just so does it characterize corporate maturity. Caprice does not displace reason in maturity. Blind committal to unsound leadership is not the mark of maturity in a denomination, neither does a mature denomination seek to reject sound leadership, but knows or seeks to know how to discriminate between sound and unsound leadership. A mature denomination makes big decisions carefully and leaves the door open for reconsideration at the proper time where there is room for doubt.

A mature church group can define its position theologically. While ancient formats are important in traditions, mature theology finds its expression in contemporary language and setting. It requires creative thinking in every age. It demands questions and answers at salient points. It cannot accept as settled age old questions and problems, yet it must not juggle trite issues always. A mature denomination answers contemporary questions, it cannot ignore them.

It is no small wonder that Southern Baptists appear to be theologically confused. Many popular voices among us have accepted the "answers" handed down to them, others have a reverent skepticism about the "answers". They see the towering intellects of the world confronting the positions of Baptists with sound exegesis. Some of their findings demand answers from the Baptists, but none are forthcoming.

The works of Barth, Cullmann, D. M. Baillie, along with a number of articles in various periodicals have opened the way for creative and constructive works by Baptist scholars. Yet what few attempts as have been made have been scorned as "different." This appears to be our answer to any young scholar who attempts to enter the door opened by the scholars of the world for free discussion on Christian issues. And I am confident that there is a sincere desire for this discussion.

Is this the attitude for maturity? The truth is that we have so shackled

the free activity of our scholars that there is little hope that they will do very much theological writing. Our theology is evidently to be crystallized about Mullins, Conner, Strong, and Stevens. A mature denomination would welcome the entrance of their theologians into the arena with Vincent Taylor, Sheldon Smith, Rudolph Bultmann, Martin Buber, Oscar Cullmann, the Barths, the Neibuhrs, Bruner, and Tillich.

### THE CONVENTION A Church?

If ten thousand messengers meet in Chicago, how many churches will be represented? It is hardly possible that more than five thousand of the 30 thousand churches affiliating with the Southern Baptist Convention will be represented. Some churches send the maximum number of messengers (twelve). The overwhelming majority of these messengers are preachers. This would make an ecclesiastical church of us if we become a *church*.

The main purpose of conventions should be stated often lest we get the idea that we are a church. There may be a need for some federated plan to express our corporate conscience, but all the vote of a convention can mean is that such and such was the opinion of those assembled. It is not a good representation either. For there is an overabundance of local folk, while those from a distance come in smaller numbers. In Chicago, for example, more from Illinois will attend than from Louisiana or Alabama. Yet there are more than one-half million Alabama Baptists but only 131,114 Baptists in Illinois. The character of Southern Baptists cannot be determined by preachers from churches of southern cities and towns plus the local folk in Illinois. The same would be true if we were meeting in Virginia, Florida, or southeast Texas. The character of the body of messengers would be

representative of the life of the denomination than one would imagine.

A convention is like a church in the sense that whatever corporate work is done is done through the convention. All churches co-operate with the convention to own property, do missionary work, and to promote. In this sense the convention is a church. All the super-structure of Boards, Committees, Commissions, and institutions, are built upon convenors and the power of their convention voice.

Yet frequently a vote on live issues fails to get the sentiment of the churches. What is achieved is the voice of the preachers plus the section of the country where the convention assembles.

### BOOK REVIEW

Oscar Cullmann, *EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP, STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY*, No. 10. Naperille, Illinois, Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1953-1956.

In this work, Cullmann carries forward some of the conclusions found in *BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT*, although this is not part of the former study. In his characteristic way the author picks up every bit of information from the sources (Johannine literature, other New Testament writings, especially Corinthian letters, Christian extra-biblical works, and heathen writings). The larger part of this work consists of a study of the Gospel of John pointing to liturgical interests in the Gospel and suggesting how such was used in services or what type of service it suggests.

Cullmann finds many more elements in the early services than protestant churches observe today. He especially notes the lack of emphasis on the Lord's Supper now as against the primitive community. He notes that a change has taken place

service. Whereas it originally was connected with the resurrection more intimately, now the death of Christ is the consuming interest and connection.

Cullmann makes nine conclusions. The first is that John shows the center of worship had moved from the Temple to the person of Jesus Christ. The other conclusions are worthy of note, also.

### READING HABITS

One does not get an education in the colleges or in the seminaries. He gets training that will help him become a self-educator throughout his life. He does not get all the answers, he only learns where to get them. Book-reading may not educate one. He can get an education only if he learns to choose his reading well.

The proper way to choose a book is not to choose one that fits an accepted position. The conflict of ideas is indispensable to learning. A book that reiterates one's faith and conviction is not one which helps one to learn. A book should disturb one and cause him to re-think and research. "Whose ideas are right?" one must ask. The preacher or worker who clutters up his book shelf with works that reinforce his beliefs is wasting money. Such a preacher could well read the two or three books from which most authors get their ideas. One needs to learn how to choose good books.

### ACTIVITIES OF DIRECTOR AND ASSOCIATES

Since our last Bulletin, the director, Lee Gallman, has attended the State Retreat for Associational Missionaries in Arkansas, preached at the Toulminville Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama, and visited the Preacher's Assembly for Mississippi at Kittiwake near Pass Christian, Mississippi. At the time of this writing,

he is in North Carolina for a brief visit to Southeastern Seminary. Contacts and plans will be discussed with Dr. Stewart A. Newman, Chairman of the Extension Commission.

Rev. W. A. Hodge, associate in North Carolina has been in a revival meeting and made an extended trip into South Carolina.

Rev. W. A. Whitten, associate, has preached at the Broadmoor Baptist Church, Jackson, Mississippi and at the Tunica Baptist Church, Tunica, Mississippi. He has made two trips to Kentucky and Tennessee making definite plans for fall openings of centers in new sections of these states.

Dr. Albert H. Fauth, has been in two revival meetings and also attended the Associational Missionaries' Retreat in Lonsdale, Arkansas. Good contacts were made and he plans to follow these up with an itinerary through Arkansas soon.

### TWO UNPUBLISHED PAPERS ON BAPTISM

Now that Baptism is a subject of much discussion in the protestant world, a few studies have been made that would demand attention. Everyone knows that Karl Barth wrote BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT and that Oscar Cullmann answered him (or made the attempt) in the STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY Series under the same title. D. M. Baillie wrote THE THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENT and Neville Clark, wrote AN APPROACH TO THE THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS in the same Series as did Oscar Cullmann. Implications of these writings have been answered in Scotland, England, and in Germany in theological journals. Infant Baptism and Baptism by Im

mersion exclusively is under attack as a result of these works.

Meanwhile Dr. Frank Stagg has produced an excellent paper that is in mimeograph form entitled, "Baptism in the New Testament" which may be expanded at a later date. Mr. W. A. Whitten, associate in the Seminary Extension Department, has prepared an excellent treatment of Baptism from the view of the pastoral ministry. Either of these can be secured through the Seminary Extension Department.

### "JUST SO"

This was an expression of one of the most precise women I knew in my upbringing. She wanted everything done properly and orderly. This is what she meant by her overworked expression.

In Baptist life we have been growing in our tendency toward order and orderliness. A program demands plan. Our leaders are doing a good job. Yet sometimes we may do well to note that prim, precise, exact plans may not always answer needs. For example, we are developing precise methods of constituting churches. But not all churches can be constituted according to the plan. Sponsoring churches help, but some churches block the move to constitute new churches. There is no reason why a group cannot declare themselves to be a Baptist church when this tendency exists.

Any body of Baptist believers declaring itself to be a Baptist church having a like faith with other regular churches would have their messengers seated at a Convention. This is not to argue against orderly constitution services, but it does argue that a group of Baptists are not at the mercy of a large selfish church that desires to control things. As a matter of fact, First churches no longer control Baptist life in large communities. Too many "second" and "third"

churches to accept this control. There are at least eight ways to start Baptist church. Any one of the eight methods may prove to be the best way in some situation.

### THINK ON THESE THINGS

- You can't control the length of your life, but you can control its width and depth.
- You can't control the contour of your countenance, but you can control its expression.
- You can't control the other fellow's opportunities, but you can grasp your own.
- You can't control the weather, but you can control the moral atmosphere which surrounds you.
- You can't control the distance that your head shall be above the ground, but you can control the height of the contents on your head.
- You can't control the other fellow's annoying faults, but you can see to it that you do not develop any harbor provoking propensities.
- You can't control hard times or rainy days, but you can bank money now to boost you through.
- Why worry about things you can't control? Get busy controlling the things that depend on YOU.

—Copie

I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other and that the taller we grow in Christian character the more easily we should reach them. I find now that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other, and that it is not a question of growing taller, but of stooping lower, and that we have to go down always down, to get his best gifts.

—Selecte

### STATISTICAL REPORT

Correspondence Students	2,19
Extension Center Students	5,19