

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

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First of all, let me say that I speak as an individual. I do not speak for the Southern Baptist Convention. I do not speak for your church. I think we need to emphasize this great truth every year of the Convention. Many of us, perhaps, forget that at every meeting of the Convention there is to be found a great group of young preachers who are here for the first time. Let me ask you the question, how many of you are here for the first time? You've never before attended a meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Will you raise your hand? Isn't that a sight! Isn't that a sight! Now some of these youngsters who are here and some of the oldsters as well, need to know that this Convention is composed of messengers from the co-operating churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

We do not assemble to tell the local churches what to do. We do not come to tell the rest of the world what to do. We come here to express our own thinking and our own judgment. The president of this Convention has no authority to speak for the Convention. The Executive Committee has no authority over any local church on the face of God's green earth, and neither does the Southern Baptist Convention. I think we need to emphasize that. There is always the danger of centralization. We live in a world where totalitarianism, both in the realm of religion and the field of politics, has almost taken over. And today Southern Baptists must preach this great truth that a Baptist church is a democracy within itself. Now let's not forget this essential conviction and don't you ever think for one moment that the Southern Baptist Convention is trying to tell you what to do back in Podunk, Mississippi, or in Georgia. We have no authority, we have no desire for such power, we ought never to try to obtain it, and I don't think we will.

I wish to say that I have had a perfectly wonderful time this first year as president of this Convention. A fellow preacher wrote me a letter not long ago and asked me two or three questions. In fact, I have received many letters, a lot of them. He asked the question, "I thought the Southern Baptist Convention adjourned at Louisville. I want to ask who gave you the authority to have stationery and envelopes printed." Well, I started thinking about it and I couldn't find any authority. Now, sometimes Baptists do a lot of things without much authority. But I think that young man, and I do not recall who he was, was simply emphasizing the truth that I am trying to bring to your heart anew and afresh this morning.

As I said, I have had an interesting time as president of this Convention. I wish it might be possible for many of you to have the joy. I've been up and down the length and breadth of our country, and all around the world preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let us look at the internal life of our Convention. Last year was the greatest year in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention. We baptized 429,000 people. We have nearly 32,000 churches with 9,500,000 members. May I pay special tribute to the fact that our Convention is growing. There is a spirit of co-operation, confidence, and love prevailing on every hand.

I point out to you that some of the great agencies we have sometimes overlooked deserve the best consideration that we can give them. I am thinking of our Baptist Foundations. These state secretaries and their co-workers are going into all of our states, and Dr. Storer from a Southwide position, seeking money that our institutions might be endowed and perpetuated. Southern Baptists are making a tragic mistake if we do not tap the great financial resources of our people for Jesus Christ and his church. They deserve the very best co-operation from every pastor and church in this Convention.

I thank God for our teletype system. Dr. W. C. Fields is our secretary in the vital department of public relations. This is a most significant and forward-looking step. It will undergird and strengthen our entire program.

We thank God for our Sunday School Board. I stand here today to tell you that the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is worthy of our utmost confidence and support. It has done more to strengthen our churches than any of us can ever know. We are grateful for the Sunday School Board and the dedicated staff which provides the finest literature to be found in all the world.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Relief and Annuity Board. Now, some of you hear that the Relief and Annuity Board has 72 or 75 million dollars piled up drawing interest. True. But it isn't their money. It belongs to you. We ought to be grateful that we have a group of men in Dallas, Texas, representing all of our state conventions, who are looking after our interests. The Relief and Annuity Board is doing a tremendous work and every preacher ought to have a part in that great program.

I want us to think for a moment about the external look. Consider the suspicion, the fear, and the turmoil in the world today. Now, I am not a pessimist, but I sat last evening with a group of men—men who have circled the globe many times. Billy Graham was one of them and he told us something of world conditions. We were moved by what he said even as you were moved by what he said yesterday afternoon in the Pastors' Conference. We do live in a day of turmoil and suspicion and fear. But, gentlemen, that does not change the message we have. I am still proclaiming, every opportunity I have, that the people called Baptists and the preachers of Baptist churches should magnify the Son of God and lift him up. If the world goes to pieces, if it blows up, God help us to have as many people ready to meet Jesus Christ as we possibly can. I am not here this morning to solve the problems of this world. I don't think this Convention can solve them. I cannot solve the racial question. I do not think this Convention can solve it. I think it must be done on a local basis. But I do want to say to you that Southern Baptists should never be a part of a group of law-breaking men and women who despise the law of our land. We should never do it.

We have some grave problems. And all of the problems in this world can be solved whenever God's people get right with God. Talk about a needed revival in Africa. Yes, it's needed, but a revival here in America that would shake the very foundations of our churches, our homes and our government would be felt to the ends of the earth. A revival in the South, a revival in New York City, a revival in Miami, Florida, with people turning from their sins and turning toward God in repentance—that's the kind of revival we need. It is hard to get. It is much easier to pass a lot of silly resolutions. It is much easier for us to go around with a pious look on our faces trying to solve the problems of this world. But my business and your business is to preach the gospel of the Son of God and let God's Spirit change the hearts of men. When that comes about, then other problems will vanish even as the dew vanishes before the sun. Keep that in mind—spiritual preaching, preaching that will get results.

And in the midst of all this talk about Russia, in the midst of all of the turmoil and unrest in the world today, I want to remind you that Almighty God is not dead. I've heard Dr. Truett tell of an old preacher in his church. Dr. Truett would say that sometimes when the spirit and morale of his church was low, maybe the building committee chairman was whining, the chairman of the finance committee was having nervous prostration, everything had gone wrong, this old man would sit there a while and finally he would say, "Pastor, I want to ask a question."

"All right, brother, go ahead," said Dr. Truett. And then the world-famous pastor said the old man would stand and say, "Dr. Truett, I want to ask just one question. Is God dead?" And the old gentleman would sit down. Dr. Truett said there would come over the church a feeling of victory. Now listen, Stalin is dead, Mussolini is dead, and Hitler is dead, but God still sits on his throne! We need to get back to God. We need a great revival meeting. We need, as some of the laymen in Miami are seeking to do, to start a great crusade of prayer and dedication. The world is black today, and it is black because of sin and disobedience. The world needs a worthy conception of God. The world needs the God they can know in Jesus Christ, and there is no other way to know God.

Southern Baptists need a purity of purpose and a purity of doctrine. It does matter what you believe. All the people in this world are not going to the same place and all the churches are not alike. The man who rejects Jesus Christ as his Saviour is not going to the same place as the believer in Jesus Christ. The unbeliever is going to hell and the believer is going to heaven. We are not to be ugly. We are not to be pugnacious. We are not to assume a holier-than-thou attitude in our hearts, and we are to co-operate with our fellow Christians at every opportunity unless we are called upon to sacrifice the great truths of God's Word. But, the church that teaches that salvation is by sacraments and good works, is not the same as the church which teaches that salvation is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Some of us have become so tolerant and wishy-washy in our doctrine that we are insipid and impotent. Unless we believe the great fundamental truths and stand by them, God has punishment in store for us.

We hear in this day and time from some of our educators a great deal about academic freedom. Well, I am in favor of academic freedom, but I don't want a man or a woman in our Baptist colleges, universities, and seminaries who feels that he or she has the right to teach that the Word of God is not true. I do not feel that anyone in any institution supported by Baptist money and whose salary is paid by Baptist money has the right to stand before a class of preachers, or anybody else, and intimate that the miracles in the Word of God are not true. I don't think that it is being done except possibly in one place and I'm not going to say where it is because I do not know the facts. I have been told that it does exist. When I know, for sure, I am going to the president of that institution and to the board of trustees. I don't want anybody teaching in our seminaries who says that this idea of God holding back the waters for the children of Israel is just a mirage—that there is no truth in it—they walked across on reeds. In my judgment, that is a lie. I believe that God held the waters back and the children of Israel marched on dry land. If you do not believe the miracles in the Word of God, get out of our seminaries! Get out of our churches! I'm not saying that because it is popular. I'm not saying it because it is trite. I'm saying it because Southern Baptists need to be on guard against false teachers within our own ranks.

Let me say this other word and I think the Convention will endorse it. I said I was speaking as an individual. I said this same thing in Nashville not long ago—and received five or six letters criticizing me for saying it—but I received a great many more saying, "You are right and I hope they will carry it out". I said to the presidents of our colleges, universities, and seminaries and to the boards of trustees, wherever they are, that if you have a man or a woman who is not teaching the truth, who is criticizing the Word of God and making light of the divine nature of Jesus Christ and of the power of the atoning blood; and if you have somebody on your faculty who is ridiculing the Southern Baptist Convention program and holding it up to scorn, then you are under a mandate from the Southern Baptist Convention to fire that man or woman before night. Your academic freedom stops at a certain point!

We believe in the person of Christ. We believe he is the only begotten Son of God. We believe that we are not saved by his life. We are saved by his death and by the power of the atoning blood and because of repentance in our hearts and faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour. Not only did Christ die for our sins, he went down into the borrowed tomb of Joseph, and he broke the bonds after Communism is dead and buried, there will be men standing up and down preaching the glorious truths of the Son of Almighty God!

I wish to pay tribute to the Home Mission Board. The Home Mission Board has a tremendous task. I heard Dr. Billy Graham say last evening that the greatest mission field in the world is the United States of America, and he is right. What we do here in the field of evangelism will touch the whole world. I think that all of us are happy that the Home Mission Board is seeking to go out into new territories and do the work God wants them to do. I don't think there

is good judgment in spending too much money in Memphis, Nashville, and Atlanta. I think we need to go West and North where they need the money to buy property and erect church buildings. The Home Mission Board in its program of evangelism has done more to make Southern Baptists what we are today than any other force or power we have. Evangelism is our hope. I said at the Pastors' Conference—I repeat it. Don't let any of us who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ get so dainty, finicky, sweet, and gentle that we lose the spirit of John the Baptist, the spirit of the great preachers of the days gone by.

Some of you have gotten coldness mixed up with scholarship. Some preachers think because they never work up a little bit of enthusiasm that they are automatically great scholars. No—you are not a scholar. You're just cold, that's all. I am a little tired of hearing some pseudoscholars say that if you preach with enthusiasm and vigor, if you raise your voice and work up a little bit of perspiration, that you are not a scholar. Paul was a scholar. Lee R. Scarborough was a scholar. Billy Sunday was a scholar. Robert Greene Lee is a scholar, and Billy Graham is a scholar. There are many other preachers in the Southern Baptist Convention this day who are scholars in the highest sense of the word, but their hearts are moved with compassion, zeal, and fervor. Lift up your voices, and when you lift up your voices, have something to say!

I'm in favor of the Annie Armstrong Offering. I think that we are piddling around about it, and we ought to do five times as much for the Annie Armstrong Offering as we now do. Thank God for the Home Mission Board! Let us rally to its needs. Let us co-operate in winning the homeland.

I want to mention a very serious problem—religious and political freedom. You say this is trite. I say that even as we must talk about the relationship of the Southern Baptist Convention to the churches of the Convention and the relationship of these churches to the Convention—and keep in mind what that relationship really is—so we must keep on preaching and teaching the doctrine of separation of church and state. You know the reason we lost the fight against the liquor forces? We thought we had won it and we sat down and didn't teach the oncoming generations. We lose when we fail to teach every generation. Now I am not going into an attack on any body or any thing. I want to be just as sweet and calm as I can be. I am also a little tired of hearing certain groups in this country fold their hands and piously cry out against bigotry and persecution in America. I have been to Spain and South America and Italy and Portugal and I have seen our Baptist churches and Protestant churches with their doors closed and sealed by the government because of an agreement—an alliance between Roman Catholicism and the government of that nation. Yet, you raise your voice and some of these editors, who evidently do not know anything about world events and who do not know anything about the history of churches, will scream to the top of their voices and cry bigotry and narrowness and persecution! That is a lie. I dare you, I dare you to read the pages of history.

One of the most pathetic things I saw on my mission trip was in Spain—thirty churches with their doors securely closed, locked, and sealed. In Madrid I saw one of our churches trying to hold services in a little room, just about the size of this platform, over their locked auditorium. I declare that Roman Catholicism must repent of its sins. They must come with clean hands and a confession of their own sin in the field of religious persecution and bigotry before they can dare raise their finger at us who proclaim that religious liberty is not only for Baptists and Protestants but for all men everywhere.

Consider the Foreign Mission Board. I believe in it and its challenging program. Oh, I wish all of you could have gone on this trip. It would have been rather crowded, but we would have had a good time. I came back convinced that instead of raising seven or eight million dollars through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, we are guilty of playing it if we do not go after twenty-five million dollars. Somebody says it is hurting the Cooperative Program. I don't think so. I think one of the things we must guard against is that the Cooperative Program, unless we are very, very careful, will lose personality. And people, unless they understand what the Cooperative Program really is and

what it represents, are apt to begin thinking of a mere mechanical program; but if you put William Wallace in that Program, if you put Theron Rankin and Baker James Cauthen in it, and if you can let them see the missionaries on the foreign fields, they will give more than ever before to the Cooperative Program for it is the heart of all that we do. I don't know whether you women want us or not, but you are missing the boat trying to take your Lottie Moon Offering through your circles. If you are wise you will enlist the men of your church at Christmas time and you will make such offering a churchwide effort and raise twenty times as much as you can through your W.M.U. circles.

I believe in our missionaries. People have asked me many times, "Brother Pollard, what impressed you most on your trip?" I can look back and see the huge and seething crowds of Tokyo. I see the squalor and poverty of Calcutta, Bangkok, and Singapore—I can see all of that. What impressed me? Not the beautiful sights nature had provided. I tell you the thing that thrilled my heart more than anything else was when I looked into the faces of hundreds of the finest people I have ever seen in my life—young and old alike. My fellow Baptists, if you could only see our missionaries, you would throw your shoulders back and lift your chins and sing, "Hallelujah, I'm a child of the King, I am a Southern Baptist, and we have the finest group of missionaries in the world." They are wonderful! I saw the homes our missionaries live in. In my judgment, Baker James Cauthen is one of the greatest Christian statesmen Southern Baptists have every known and I commend him and the Foreign Mission Board for providing adequate housing facilities for our missionaries." They are not living in tents or run-down, second-rate houses. I am happy and proud to stand here as president of this Convention and tell you that the Foreign Mission Board is taking adequate care of our missionaries. They deserve the best. Thank God that they are receiving it.

I am for missions. I've always been. But I am now for our mission program more than ever before in my life. I am for evangelism here in the land in which we live. I am for it around the world. We went to Japan and preached to the people in that strategic land. We went to Korea. You talk about poverty, sin, ignorance, and squalor—you will find it there. I preached in the mountains deep in Korea. It was bitter cold. There wasn't a window pane in the little building in which we were meeting. It wasn't even a church building. The huge crowds sat on the cold ground for hours to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh, how they sang! Somebody loaned them a little old broken down reed organ. Mrs. Pollard and the Broadway Baptist Church of Knoxville sent them a new one.

I am not against large and beautiful buildings. We have one. I didn't build it. Dr. Robert Greene Lee and the Bellevue Baptist Church built it. Thank God they did. I'm not against air-conditioning. We had it at Broadway—we have it at Bellevue. I'm not against these things. I believe in them. I believe that if Baptist people are going to reach America, we must have the very best facilities to do it. But listen. I think of all we have. Then, I see again those broken window panes and the buildings where we preached. There wasn't a floor, there wasn't a chair, there wasn't a bench. I see those dear people sitting, twisting and moving their bodies to keep warm. I tell you that Southern Baptists need to redouble their gifts to missions. We must do more for a lost world or God will send judgment upon us.

One other thing I want to impress upon you and then we shall go. Let's not lose the spirit of conquest. I have used that word a good many times. A newspaper reporter asked me, "What do you mean by conquest? You have used it up and down the Southern Baptist Convention." I mean that Christianity is conquest. If we ever lose this spirit of conquest in our local churches, in our denomination, on our foreign mission fields of our home mission fields, then we are through.

My good friend, the president of the American Baptist Convention, is here. Some of the friends up here have talked about the invasion of the Southern Baptist Convention in the North. You call it what you will. We did it in love. We did it because we were needed. Our Bible tells us and our constitution

tells us to go to the ends of the earth and preach the gospel. If there are places in New York City where we ought to have a church, we ought to put it there with no apology. If there are places in the Southland, right here in Florida, Alabama, or Georgia where the American Baptist Convention feels that it should have a church, they have a perfect right to put it there. And we ought to thank God for their interest. There isn't any place among Baptists for littleness or narrowness toward each other. I believe that American Baptists, Southern Baptists, National Baptists, and all the rest of us who hold so much in common ought to join hands in every possible way to capture America for Christ and go on out to the ends of the earth.

Let's not forget that the world is dying for the lack of love. We need to love a lost world. We need to love Jesus Christ and we need to love the people Jesus died to save. Let's have warm, compassionate hearts. Let's be true to the Word of God. Let's keep the fires of evangelism burning in our hearts and win as many as we can to Jesus Christ. Thank you. God bless you.