

THE LOUISIANA BAPTIST CONVENTION AND
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, 1893-1956

By

GEORGE LEWIS HIGGINS, JR.

Bachelor of Arts
Louisiana College
Pineville, Louisiana
1951

Master of Arts
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado
1961

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Thesis Approved:

Theodore L. Agnew

Thesis Adviser

Homer L. Knight

Daniel Selph

D. Durham

Dean of the Graduate College

803900

PREFACE

This dissertation is concerned with an investigation of the activities of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in the area of Christian Education. The terminal dates of the study are 1893, when interest in a centrally-located Baptist college under control of the Convention first developed, and 1956, when Louisiana College completed its first half-century. Primarily a study of Louisiana College, which was the focal point of the Convention's educational enterprise, the project also includes consideration of Acadia Academy, a high school organized in 1917; Dodd College, a junior college for girls, which operated from 1927 to 1942; and two older institutions, Mount Lebanon Baptist College and Keachie Female College, both of which ceased to exist by 1912. No attempt is made to cover educational activities, such as Sunday School or training programs, which are operated directly by churches.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the assistance and guidance given me by the following members of my advisory committee: Dr. Theodore L. Agnew, who gave generously of his time, who was always available for counsel, and whose directions and suggestions were of constant value; Dr. Homer L. Knight, Dr. Daniel Selakovich, and Dr. John E. Susky, for their interest, encouragement, and effective assistance.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Baptists constitute one of the major religious bodies in the contemporary world, especially in the United States. Scholars generally believe that Baptists, as a self-conscious denominational group, emerged in the days of the Protestant Reformation. Others have upheld the theory of the historical succession of Baptist churches from the New Testament era to the present time.¹ Vedder contends that the history of Baptist churches cannot be traced further back than 1611, the date when an Englishman, John Smyth, founded an Anabaptist church at Amsterdam.² While the actual chain of Baptist churches is confined to the last three and one-half centuries, the principles which have distinguished the group may be observed throughout Christian history. A list of these criteria would include the following: an acceptance of the Bible as the sole norm for faith and practice; a restriction of church membership to baptized believers; an emphasis on the priesthood of the individual believer with a corresponding unwillingness to recognize any sacerdotal distinction between clergy and laity; a proclamation of the autonomy of the local congregation; and a commitment to the principles of religious

¹John T. Christian, A History of the Baptists: Together With Some Accounts of Their Principles and Practices (Nashville, 1922), pp. 21-22.

²Henry C. Vedder, A Short History of the Baptists (Rev. ed., Philadelphia, 1907), p. 4.

liberty and separation of church and state.³

The background of American Baptists is essentially British. Roger Williams and his adherents are commonly identified as the first Baptists in America.⁴ However, Baptists prospered most in the middle colonies, and the Philadelphia area became the center of Baptist strength in the early period. This development was probably attributable to the opposition presented by the Anglican Church in the southern colonies and the Congregational Church in New England.⁵ The "association," in which churches of an area voluntarily band together without forfeiting local church autonomy, has been an organizational unit among Baptists from earliest times. The Philadelphia Association, organized in 1707, is the oldest Baptist association in the United States.⁶

The first associations in the southern colonies were the Charleston Association in South Carolina, established in 1751, and the Sandy Creek Association in North Carolina, formed in 1758.⁷ Baptists increased rapidly in the South in the next two decades under the impetus of dynamic leadership by missionaries from the New England area; included in this group were such figures as Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall. The appeal of Baptists to the masses of the people was couched in their democratic congregationalism, their picturesque though unlettered ministers,

³Robert G. Torbet, A History of the Baptists (Philadelphia, 1950), pp. 16-34.

⁴Ibid., p. 219.

⁵Robert G. Torbet, A Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707-1940 (Philadelphia, 1944), pp. 11-13.

⁶Ibid., p. 15.

⁷Ibid., p. 20.

and their uncompromising opposition to every form of union of church and state. These and other characteristics paved the way for Baptists to eventually become the largest religious group in the South.⁸ During the next century, Baptists, along with Methodists, experienced phenomenal growth in numbers as they demonstrated a capacity to adapt to the needs of a frontier society.⁹ By 1850, there were approximately 700,000 Baptists in the United States; fifty years later, in 1900, the number had risen to nearly 4,200,000.¹⁰

Aspirations for a broader type of affiliation than that achieved at the associational level began as early as 1770.¹¹ These ambitions culminated in 1814 with the organization of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions; the name proved cumbersome and the organization came to be known as the Triennial Convention since it met once every three years.¹² Southern prominence in this body was apparent in the election of Richard Furman of South Carolina as its first president. This national organization proved short-lived, being sundered by the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention at Augusta, Georgia, in May, 1845. While the split developed primarily over division regarding the question of slavery, other factors, especially the preference in the

⁸Francis Butler Simkins, A History of the South (3d ed., New York, 1963), pp. 76-77.

⁹William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (Rev. ed., New York, 1950), pp. 215-229.

¹⁰Torbet, A History of the Baptists, p. 440.

¹¹Ibid., p. 251.

¹²William Wright Barnes, The Southern Baptist Convention, 1845-1953 (Nashville, 1954), p. 6.

South for a more highly-centralized denominational program, were moving the Baptists of the United States apart.¹³

Baptists lagged in the development of highly articulated programs of education. Because of their emphasis on simplicity in worship and their concept of the imperative leadership of the Spirit in preaching, they usually regarded enough education to read the Bible as the basic general requirement. Training beyond this level was desirable only in the case of preparing young men for the ministry.¹⁴ Even so, there has been a gradual evolution among Baptists toward greater concern for educational improvement as the general cultural level of the denomination has risen. Superior religious educational standards on the part of the Presbyterians and Episcopalians have also produced an impact on Baptist thought.¹⁵

As in other areas, the Philadelphia Association was the focal point for early Baptist education. By 1722, the Association was requesting recruits for the ministry who might be sent to school with funds provided by Thomas Hollis, a Baptist of London.¹⁶ Philadelphia Baptists also participated in the academy movement of the eighteenth century. The Association's endeavors culminated in the establishment of Rhode Island College in 1765; this school, now Brown University, was one of the first

¹³Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴Torbet, A Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707-1940, p. 65.

¹⁵Torbet, A History of the Baptists, p. 321.

¹⁶Torbet, A Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707-1940, p. 67.

nine colleges founded in the colonies.¹⁷ These achievements were the outgrowth of efforts by individual ministers who frequently opened schools upon their own initiative, by local churches, and by the Philadelphia Association.

Baptists in the South moved much more slowly in educational matters. Johnson notes several contributing factors.¹⁸ First, there were not enough Baptists with money to provide buildings and libraries for substantial colleges. Second, there was a shortage of scholarly Baptists to serve on faculties even had there been funds available for such schools. Third, Baptists were preponderantly a rural, agricultural folk, scarcely ready to demand or even to appreciate the values which might develop from Baptist colleges. Finally, the establishment of state universities exerted a strong influence, especially on those Baptists who were not convinced of the necessity of denominational institutions of higher education. Nevertheless, interest in education among some of the Baptists of the South was a consuming passion, dating as far back as the pre-Revolutionary era, when Oliver Hart was the pastor at Charleston. The earliest associational organizations were based upon the twin concepts of denominational extension and ministerial education.¹⁹

The period between the Revolution and the Civil War was a time of growing interest in Baptist education, dramatized by the organization of educational societies and the founding of many institutions of secondary

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁸ Charles D. Johnson, Higher Education of Southern Baptists: An Institutional History, 1826-1954 (Waco, Texas, 1955), pp. 17-18.

¹⁹ B. F. Riley, A History of the Baptists in the Southern States East of the Mississippi (Philadelphia, 1898), p. 134.

and higher learning. This movement emanated from the conviction of some Baptists that more substantial schools for ministerial students were essential.²⁰ Luther Rice, whose mind associated intellectual training with denominational growth, sparked educational interest among Baptists.²¹ In the South, the name of Richard Furman was inextricably connected with Baptist education. Largely because of the influence of a powerful sermon by Furman at the second Triennial Convention, plans were made for a national Baptist school, Columbian College, which later collapsed, at Washington, D. C.²² The institution which bears Furman's name and is the oldest of the Baptist colleges of the South was opened at Edgefield, South Carolina, in 1827.²³ Baptist colleges soon spread across the South. Grounded originally upon the idea of a better prepared ministry, Baptist schools were later forced to respond to the need for providing education for those who were anticipating vocations other than the ministry.²⁴ The first emphasis upon co-education occurred with the founding of the University of Lewisburg, now Bucknell University, in Pennsylvania in 1849.²⁵

A powerful force swept through Baptist ranks shortly after the heartening missionary and educational advances described above. Between

²⁰Torbet, A Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707-1940, pp. 75-76.

²¹Riley, p. 242.

²²Torbet, A History of the Baptists, p. 331.

²³James Pickett Wesberry, Baptists in South Carolina Before the War Between the States (Columbia, South Carolina, 1966), p. 35.

²⁴Riley, p. 242.

²⁵Torbet, A Social History of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707-1940, p. 76.

1820 and 1845, this movement, known as antimissionism, depleted Baptist membership by more than one-third. Triggered by powerful leaders such as John Taylor and Daniel Parker, the movement was a reaction against the centralizing tendencies inherent in the emerging missionary efforts; it also attacked ministerial education, charging that it was both unnecessary and presumptuous. Parker, Taylor, and others demonstrated a form of hyper-Calvinism which held that no amount of preaching would do any good for an individual destined by God to be lost; therefore, missionary efforts were futile.²⁶ Undoubtedly jealousy of the better educated ministers on the part of the frontier preachers was a decisive factor. The severest charge of these "Hardshells," and the one which found greatest acceptance in frontier areas, was the claim that human organizations such as missionary societies and educational institutions were contrary to the Scriptures.²⁷ The Baptists who resisted antimissionism formed the nucleus of the various state conventions; these conventions were sympathetic to missions and education.

One has described Louisiana as the first American "melting pot"-- its culture being formed by successive waves of French, Spanish, American, and various smaller groups of settlers.²⁸ The early Baptists in Mississippi and Louisiana came from South Carolina and Georgia. Religiously, Roman Catholicism held sway in Louisiana during the period

²⁶Lynn May, Jr., "Southern Baptist Crises," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists (Nashville, 1958), I, p. 333.

²⁷William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830 (New York, 1931), pp. 67-76.

²⁸Charles A. Dufour, Ten Flags in the Wind: The Story of Louisiana (New York, 1967), p. 2.

before the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.²⁹ Evangelical denominations considered the territory a mission field.³⁰ The first Baptists in Louisiana came from Mississippi. Sweet refers to a church at Bayou Chicot, in Central Louisiana, formed in 1812, as the first Baptist church in Louisiana.³¹ St. Amant, while identifying Bayou Chicot as the first permanent Baptist church in the state and as the first Baptist church west of the Mississippi River, describes Half-Moon Bluff Church, organized in Washington Parish on October 12, 1812, as the first church in the state.³² The period before 1818 has been described as the pioneer era of Louisiana Baptist history. The time from 1818, when the first association, Louisiana Association, was formed, to 1848, when the State Convention was organized, has been depicted as the organizational period.³³ A second association, Concord, was formed in 1832. This association was in North Louisiana whereas the Louisiana Association was in the central area. A period of rapid growth ensued as many Baptists emigrated from the older states to North Louisiana. In 1837, a group of families from the Edgefield district in South Carolina settled at Mount Lebanon in what is now Bienville Parish. This community was destined to be the center of

²⁹ Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, 1783-1830, p. 34.

³⁰ Garnie William McGinty, A History of Louisiana (3d ed., New York, 1951, p. 163.

³¹ Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier, The Baptists, 1783-1830, p. 35.

³² C. Penrose St. Amant, A Short History of Louisiana Baptists (Nashville, 1948), pp. 14-18.

³³ Leroy G. Cleverdon, "A History of Early Louisiana Baptists," (unpub. Th. M. thesis, Baptist Bible Institute, New Orleans, 1922), pp. 6-8.

Louisiana Baptist work until the end of the nineteenth century.³⁴ Baptists grew slowly before 1848. The antimission movement exacted a heavy toll, especially in the Louisiana Association.³⁵ By 1848, there were ninety-eight churches in the state with 3,500 members.³⁶ There was little sense of unity as the churches fell into three distinct geographical divisions--north, south, and east.

In spite of this lack of unity, the time had come for the formation of a body larger than the association. After a preliminary meeting in 1847, a group of thirteen Baptists met at Mount Lebanon on December 2, 1848, and organized what has come to be known as the Louisiana Baptist Convention. The lack of state wide Baptist unity was demonstrated when the group chose the name "Baptist State Convention of North Louisiana." This somewhat anomalous title persisted until 1853 when the word "North" was deleted.³⁷

William Paxton, pioneer Louisiana Baptist historian, stated that the promotion of education was one of the primary factors leading to the organization of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He described education as the main topic of the preliminary meeting in 1847 which set the stage for the Convention's formation in 1848. The guiding spirit in this endeavor was Dr. Bartholomew Egan, a distinguished Baptist physician

³⁴St. Amant, p. 22.

³⁵Ivan M. Wise, Footsteps of the Flock; or Origins of Louisiana Baptists (Crowley, Louisiana, 1910), p. 22.

³⁶Cleverdon, "A History of Early Louisiana Baptists," pp. 74-75.

³⁷William Edward Paxton, A History of the Baptists of Louisiana From the Earliest Times to the Present (Saint Louis, 1888), p. 426.

from Ireland.³⁸ This educational interest culminated in 1912 when a committee recommended to the Convention the establishment of Mount Lebanon University under the immediate control of the Convention. The preparatory department was initiated in the fall of 1853 with William Paxton as its first principal.³⁹ The collegiate department opened in 1856 with Dr. Bartholomew Egan as its acting president.⁴⁰ A Mount Lebanon Female College also started in this period. Attendance increased gradually and by 1859 Mount Lebanon University had 114 students.⁴¹

From 1857 to 1859, the distinguished and highly capable Dr. Jesse Hartwell, who had been a key figure in early Baptist educational endeavors in South Carolina, served as president. His tombstone, located prominently in the cemetery at Mount Lebanon, describes him as a leader who was "learned without ostentation, pious without austerity, genial in spirit yet uncompromising in principle."⁴²

Alluding to the impact of the Civil War on Mount Lebanon University in an essay written nearly thirty years later, one of its founders said the war almost crushed the life out of "this petted child of our State Convention."⁴³ The Mount Lebanon Female College did not survive the war years; the "University" appeared again in 1871 as a high school

³⁸Ibid., p. 476; J. Fair Hardin, Northwestern Louisiana: A History of the Watershed of the Red River, 1714-1937 (Louisville, 1939), II, p. 128.

³⁹Paxton, pp. 476-477.

⁴⁰Hardin, p. 128.

⁴¹Paxton, p. 479.

⁴²Tombstone Inscription, Mount Lebanon Cemetery; Mount Lebanon, Louisiana.

⁴³Franklin Courtney, The Relation of Mount Lebanon College to the Baptists of Louisiana (Ruston, Louisiana, 1887), p. 3.

operation. In the next decade, the school staggered along, disappearing briefly on several occasions.⁴⁴ The Convention severed relations in the post-Civil War era and Mount Lebanon became an independent-- and primarily a local-- enterprise.⁴⁵ By 1884, the college had regained its collegiate status and efforts had begun to re-establish ties with the Convention. A fire in 1886 destroyed all the buildings, but, by 1889, new buildings were erected.⁴⁶

Another Baptist educational institution was Keachie Female College, chartered in 1857 and located at the village of Keachie in the northwest part of the state, twenty miles south of Shreveport. It was only fifty miles west of Mount Lebanon, which was in north central Louisiana. Under the leadership of a minister named A. N. Backus and with financial support of the Baptists of the area, especially T. M. Gatlin, who contributed \$3,000, this school was launched under the patronage of the Grand Cane Association.⁴⁷ The war caused the college to close its doors, but it subsequently renewed operations and evidenced more vitality during the 1870's than the school at Mount Lebanon. The Keachie program was a coeducational effort during these years.⁴⁸

Other Baptist educational institutions of the 1870's and early 1880's proved to be short-lived. Some Baptists in Shreveport started

⁴⁴St. Amant, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁵Courtney, p. 4.

⁴⁶St. Amant, p. 44.

⁴⁷Rodney Cline, "Early Schools and Colleges of Louisiana," The Boardman, XIX (1965), p. 5; Maud Hearn O'Pry, Chronicles of Shreveport and Caddo Parish (Shreveport, Louisiana, 1928), p. 197.

⁴⁸St. Amant, pp. 42-43.

Shreveport University in 1871; the venture, which apparently posed a challenge to Keachie, collapsed in 1873 under the impact of a money panic and an epidemic of yellow fever.⁴⁹ Another school, opened at Shiloh in Union Parish in 1875 as Concord Institute and sometimes called Shiloh Academy, lasted nearly ten years; its buildings burned in 1884 and the institution did not continue.⁵⁰ Louisiana Baptists cooperated for several years with Mississippi College when collegiate facilities were so limited at home. R. S. Jackson, pastor of the progressive Oak Ridge Baptist Church in the northeastern part of the state, provided leadership for this arrangement.⁵¹

By the mid-1880's, Keachie and Mount Lebanon were exerting increasing pressure for official sponsorship and control by the Louisiana Baptist Convention.⁵² However, fierce opposition repudiated these desires to secure organic union. These schools fought against great obstacles, as both communities had been by-passed when railroads were built through the area. The Convention was becoming more effective as a focal point of Baptist efforts; its strength increased with the action of 1885 updating the entire program and putting all major areas of Baptist activity under a reorganized Executive Board domiciled at Shreveport. This group selected a Corresponding Secretary to implement the

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Edna Liggin, "History of Shiloh," (unpub. typescript in Mount Lebanon-Keachie Collection at Norton Memorial Library, Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, 1961), [p. 15].

⁵¹Glen Lee Greene, A History of the Baptists of Oak Ridge, Louisiana: 1797-1960 (Nashville, 1960), pp. 109-110.

⁵²St. Amant, p. 43.

Convention's program.⁵³ The Convention's apparent capacity for growth and stability appeared to be the answer to the needs of the struggling colleges.

Dr. F. Courtney, several times president of the Convention and one of the honored founders of Mount Lebanon, revealed the tension which surrounded the educational issue in the late 1880's:

It is not pretended that there is any organic relation. While such relation, in the incipiency of Mt. Lebanon University, was essential to getting it on foot, it often became a source of discord and [was] wisely abandoned. It served the purpose, however, of enlisting the affection of the denomination in its behalf and directing the attention of the Baptists of Louisiana to Mt. Lebanon as the domestic source of intellectual and ministerial training.

The relation cannot be other than intimate between the hand that sowed and cultivated and the fruit. Such is the relation between Baptists of the State and Mt. Lebanon College.⁵⁴

But Courtney went on to admit that the Baptists of the state might "take a different view" from his own. The editor of the Baptist Chronicle said in 1892, "We pray for the time when our educational question can be settled and our entire denomination shall be one . . . and we can work together . . . in love and harmony. . . ."⁵⁵ The time was at hand for the Convention to deal with its educational problems.

The purpose of this study is that of describing and analyzing endeavors of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in the field of Christian Education from 1893 to 1956. The controversy which eventually led to the establishment of Louisiana College at Pineville, Louisiana, in 1906, had its origin in 1893. Louisiana College completed its first half-

⁵³Ibid., p. 99.

⁵⁴Courtney, p. 5.

⁵⁵Baptist Chronicle, June 23, 1892, p. 2.

century in 1956.

The term "Convention" will be used to refer to the Louisiana Baptist Convention. In reference to "Christian Education," the study is restricted to academic institutions; it does not contemplate a consideration of educational efforts of a purely religious nature such as Sunday School or Baptist Training Union. The "Executive Board," unless otherwise indicated, is the body which functions as the Louisiana Baptist Convention ad interim. This group in turn selects an individual to be the chief executive officer of the Convention's enterprises; he has been called the "Corresponding Secretary" or, in recent years, the "Executive Secretary."

The study will reveal the relevance of Louisiana Baptist Convention educational ventures to the constituent group and to the larger society. It will endeavor to assess the level of commitment which the Convention has made to education.

CHAPTER II

THE PERIOD OF CONTROVERSY, 1893-1897

DECISION FOR THE STATUS QUO

It was the mid-morning of October 3, 1906, on a pine-covered hill one and one-half miles north of Alexandria, Louisiana. Two tents had been pitched to serve as a makeshift kitchen and dining hall. Carpenters quit hammering and retired for about an hour in order that opening exercises could be held in a corner of the crude, box-like building they were rushing to complete before the onset of winter. A faculty of three and a student body of nineteen were thus launching Louisiana College as an institution of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.¹ This inauspicious beginning was the outgrowth of a struggle which had its origin over a dozen years previously. This chapter endeavors to describe the opening stages of the dispute which swirled about the proposal for a centrally-located college.

The emergence of Louisiana College should be viewed as one small development in the very slow progress experienced by Louisiana and most of the South between 1877 and 1920. The war years and the reconstruction period had made catastrophic inroads upon the Louisiana economy; the state did not recover in some aspects until after 1900.² Rich soil

¹C. Penrose St. Amant, A Short History of Louisiana Baptists (Nashville, 1948), p. 63.

²Edwin Adams Davis, Louisiana: A Narrative History (2d ed., Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 294.

facilitated the gradual return to a degree of prosperity with cotton as the main cash crop, but a vast number of small farmers eked out a meager existence on submarginal land. Life for these unfortunate people consisted of hunting, fishing, possessing a horse and a few hogs and cattle, and cultivating a humble patch of ground where they raised potatoes, onions, tomatoes, and a few other vegetables.³ Natural disasters in the form of floods compounded the hardships. A particularly devastating one occurred in 1893, breaking levees, inundating most of the alluvial area, and inflicting frightful losses of livestock and crops.⁴ The flood of 1897, controlled effectively by an improved levee, wrought comparatively light damage; however, it set the stage for an epidemic of yellow fever which descended upon New Orleans in the late summer. This disease had plagued the city constantly for over a century.⁵

Banking services and industrial development were gradually expanded to meet the needs of a growing population. Louisiana's population increased from 940,000 in 1880 to nearly 1,120,000 in 1900. Aside from New Orleans, only Shreveport and Baton Rouge had populations exceeding 10,000 by 1900.⁶ Industrial development was very slight until after the turn of the century. The panic of 1893 produced considerable unrest in Louisiana by 1894 and the next several years were a time of depression.⁷

³Ibid., p. 297.

⁴Garnie William McGinty, A History of Louisiana (3d ed., New York, 1951), p. 236.

⁵Charles A. Dufour, Ten Flags in the Wind: The Story of Louisiana (New York, 1967), p. 255.

⁶McGinty, p. 274.

⁷Ibid., p. 236.

Banking facilities were limited; however, the number of banks rose from less than twenty in 1881 to approximately seventy-five by 1898.⁸ The disinclination of city laborers and rural workers to entrust their money to the banks was reinforced by events such as the 1896 failures of two large banks in New Orleans due to embezzlement of funds by their officers.⁹

Politically, "safe" governors, dedicated to preservation of the status quo, were the rule in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. The demise of the Republican Party in Louisiana was essentially completed by 1890; thenceforth, factionalism developed within the Democratic Party with various candidates proclaiming themselves "conservative" or "liberal." Such overhauling of government as occurred was occasioned more by economic and social patterns than by candidates for office dedicated to reform progress.¹⁰ The most notable political and moral achievement of the 1890's was the defeat of the Louisiana Lottery which had been established during the reconstruction era. Though the Lottery continued to operate until its charter expired in December, 1893, its doom was effectively insured by the victory of Murphy J. Foster in the election of 1892.¹¹ The people of the state rejected the Lottery offer of \$1,200,000 per year for an extension of its charter.¹² Religious, civic, and other groups closed ranks to insure its

⁸Davis, p. 304.

⁹McGinty, p. 239.

¹⁰Davis, p. 283.

¹¹Dufour, p. 226.

¹²William O. Scroggs, The Story of Louisiana (4th ed., Indianapolis, 1953), p. 293.

destruction.

The area of education, influenced by the political and economic forces described above, has perennially presented the South's greatest challenge.¹³ Illiteracy and competitive standards of other parts of the nation have forced the issue. The present system of free public schools in Louisiana had its beginning when the constitution of 1845 was adopted.¹⁴ Public schools replaced some of the old academies, but wealthy southerners continued to favor lower taxation and private schools, desiring to insure a social elitism and to avoid paying for education for the masses. The poorer element opted for private education, primarily for religious reasons. After reconstruction government was overthrown in Louisiana, a special tax was made available for public schools and police juries were empowered to levy parish taxes for public education if they so preferred. On the whole, little was done before 1898 aside from planning and campaigning for better schools. The spirit of the period was expressed years later as a prominent Louisiana educator, Edwin Lewis Stephens, described the days of his boyhood:

Nobody was rich in our part of the State, or our part of the whole country, at the time in which my lot was cast-- save in the heritage and tradition of the curiosity to know, appreciation of culture, and aspiration toward better things. . . . The people were all poor.¹⁵

Stephens, who attended Keachie College, compared the small schools favorably with the inadequate public schools in communities like his

¹³Thomas D. Clark, The Emerging South (New York, 1961), pp. 149-150.

¹⁴Scroggs, p. 310.

¹⁵Edwin Lewis Stephens, "Education in Louisiana in the Closing Decades of the Nineteenth Century," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XVI (January, 1933), p. 38.

native Natchitoches. He described them as being "conducted by local scholars of talent with ability to teach." While admitting "deficiencies in organization," he remembered that "a flame of culture was on the altar."¹⁶ Yet he depicted the period as a time of rising concern about educational development, stressing gradual growth after the adoption of the constitution of 1879 and noting the organization in December, 1892, of the Louisiana State Public School Teachers' Association.¹⁷

The establishment of Louisiana College was an outgrowth of Louisiana Baptist Convention developments. The Convention grew steadily between 1885, the year of the organization of the Executive Board, and 1895. Membership in churches affiliated with the Convention rose from 18,461 to 30,509 during this decade, an increase of approximately two-thirds.¹⁸ Under the leadership of C. W. Tomkies, J. T. Barrett, and E. O. Ware, financial improvements were apparent, thus proving the wisdom of the consolidation action of 1885. Total gifts to all causes for the decade were \$94,779.65 with the largest proportionate increase in the area of State Missions.¹⁹ Fifty-nine new churches had been organized; yet the challenge was great and the Convention faced formidable tasks. The State Missions Report of 1893 told of twenty parishes in Louisiana without a Baptist church.²⁰ In 1894, only five of approximately four

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 39-40.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 47-48.

¹⁸John T. Christian, A History of the Baptists of Louisiana (Shreveport, 1923), pp. 200-201.

¹⁹St. Amant, p. 99.

²⁰Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Forty-Fifth Annual Session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1893, p. 8. (Hereinafter referred to as L. B. C., Minutes).

hundred and fifty churches in the state supported preaching every Sunday. Three more were able to have weekly services only with the help of the Executive Board; only twenty-three others had preaching services twice each month.²¹

There was no systematic financial plan through which the Louisiana Baptist Convention effected its program; while occasional efforts were made for special causes, the motivation and concern of the individual church was the ultimate factor in determining contributions. Corresponding Secretary E. O. Ware sought to alter this state of affairs in 1895 by suggesting that all money for all the objects fostered by the Convention be sent by the churches to the treasurer of the Executive Board; that the associations of the state be organized into four districts; that each district contribute to the four basic objects sponsored by the Convention during the four quarters of the year, respectively. This was designed to insure consideration of all emphases in each area and to afford some definite income for each object every quarter. A committee reported favorably upon these recommendations, opining that this approach would foster cooperation and systematic giving. The action was a milestone in Convention development, representing the first effort at truly cooperative financial endeavor. By 1898, Ware could report steady growth of what had come to be called the "Plan of Systematic Benificence," yet over half of the churches were not giving to any one of the four objects fostered by the Convention.²² These included state missions, home missions, foreign missions, and ministerial education.

²¹Ibid., 1894, p. 39.

²²St. Amant, p. 100.

The Louisiana Baptist Convention developed in other ways as the nineteenth century drew to a close. The Baptist Chronicle, though under private proprietorship, served as a vehicle of communication which tended to pull the Baptists of the state closer together. The editor throughout the 1890's was R. M. Boone.²³ The Woman's Missionary Union, composed of Woman's Missionary Societies of the local churches and destined to play an important role in educational as well as missionary endeavors, was organized in July, 1899.²⁴ Secretary Ware sought to achieve a more effective denominational thrust by encouraging the associational representatives on the Executive Board to make themselves a real part of the Board's work.²⁵ Baptists interested themselves mightily in the anti-Lottery campaign, many of the associations as well as the Convention adopting official resolutions endorsing the campaign and censuring those few Baptists, especially Baptist legislators, who favored the Lottery.²⁶ The "Whitsitt Controversy," which stirred the entire Southern Baptist Convention in the late 1890's, created considerable interest among Louisiana Baptists. In 1897, the Louisiana Baptist Convention passed a resolution calling for the removal of President William H. Whitsitt from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville; Whitsitt, who was eventually released, had stirred a tempest by denying the historical succession theory of Baptist origins.²⁷

²³Ibid., p. 134.

²⁴Ibid., p. 111.

²⁵Ibid., p. 100.

²⁶Christian, pp. 187-190.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 198-199.

Educational matters occupied the Convention's attention increasingly during the 1890's. Baptists were interested in public education, as manifested by this statement from the 1893 report of the Committee on Education:

The constituency of this convention is Baptist, to be sure, but we are citizens as well; and AS SUCH, we dare not disregard the relation we sustain to our public educational institutions, but should insist that these schools should be manned by teachers not only eminently qualified to do efficient INTELLECTUAL training, but also to impress those great moral principles which underlie all true civilization; for any worthy education includes the training of the body to act, the mind to think, and the heart to feel! We, therefore, recommend a closer attention on the part of our people to the importance of our public school work.²⁸

The records indicate that Baptists saw in education a utilitarian value in spreading the benefits of spiritual faith. The Committee on Education in its 1896 report to the Louisiana Baptist Convention was highly impressed with the implications of the educational awakening:

It may not be disputed that the claims of the Gospel--so just, so reasonable, appear so to the enlightened more forcibly than to those whose disabilities prevent clear and appreciative concern of them; it is certainly true that the educated convert. . . is a more valuable acquisition in the qualifications he brings for usefulness than is another not so favored, other things being equal.²⁹

Nevertheless, the sentiment of the period among Baptists saw superior values in denominational education. The 1896 report mentioned above went on to assert:

If we are correct in our opinion thus expressed as to the worth of general public education, and as to the good results hitherto achieved by the methods in operation to this end, how much more impressive should be the argument in favor of our denominational schools, which have all the elements of power of the secular schools, none of their

²⁸L. B. C. Minutes, 1893, p. 21.

²⁹Ibid., 1896, pp. 22-23.

objectionable features and all the additional mighty value[s] of championing moral truth, enforcing Christian principles, and heralding the doctrines of our Savior. . . .³⁰

The Louisiana Baptist Convention always commended the programs at Mount Lebanon and Keachie, frequently providing free pages in its annual minutes for advertisements by the schools.³¹ The only financial support given the schools by the Convention was in the form of limited amounts contributed to support the cause of ministerial education. Receipts to support this program were distributed in ratio to the number of ministerial candidates in attendance.³² The amounts thus given were small, usually running under five hundred dollars, whereas the needs were generally described as requiring twice that sum. In 1898, gifts for ministerial education totaled \$418.24 in comparison to an estimated requirement of \$1,200.00 to support approximately fifteen students.³³ Screening committees were set up at each school to insure that recipients met the twin criteria of need and merit.³⁴ Offerings for this cause were taken during the annual meetings of the Convention.

Yet there were constant signs of increasing awareness of the growing significance of education. The report on education at the 1894 session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, delivered by a future governor of the state, observed that "rapidly increasing interest" in the cause of education required that Louisiana Baptists "give earnest attention"

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 1894, pp. 47, 52-53.

³²Ibid., p. 26.

³³Ibid., 1898, Appendix A; p. vi.

³⁴Ibid., 1897, p. 25.

to the subject. W. W. Heard went on to observe that the time was fast approaching when Baptists would have to unite in support of "our own schools" or "surrender and turn the education of our children over to other people."³⁵ The report lamented the fact that many were turning to the public schools because they were cheaper:

It is very difficult for them to see that cheap things are not always the best, and that quantity in some directions does not make up for quality in other directions. With free education on one side, and the lowering of that standard on the other, we can readily see that our colleges are in the midst of a great struggle.³⁶

Corresponding Secretary E. O. Ware triggered a dispute which was destined to permanently alter the Louisiana Baptist Convention's educational program when he introduced the following resolution during the annual meeting of the Convention at Mount Lebanon in August, 1893. The memorable resolution said:

Whereas the Baptists of the State of Louisiana have no school or College which is in any true sense their own and

Whereas. It seems evident that the State has begun an era of development unparalleled in the past and

Whereas. It is always the part of wisdom for one to prepare for the future though HE may not live IN that future, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED. That the President of this Convention be and is hereby instructed to appoint a special committee of fifteen brethren representing the different parts of the State whose duty it shall be to canvass the educational situation among the Baptists of the State and at the next (1894) session of the Convention, make [a] report as to the advisability and feasibility of establishing a College ³⁷ which shall have organic connection with this Convention.

The setting was dramatic with the meeting being conducted in the shadow of one of the old institutions, for the venerable convention President,

³⁵Ibid., 1894, p. 24.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 1893, p. 13.

Dr. F. Courtney, had been associated with Mount Lebanon from its origin. The excitement heightened as the pastor of the most prominent church in the Convention, First Baptist of Shreveport, led the counterattack. This man, Dr. W. S. Penick, had served as President of the Executive Board from its beginning in 1885.

Penick offered a substitute resolution which ultimately prevailed. The resolution took cognizance of developing educational needs but suggested that efforts should be directed toward bringing about organic connection between Mount Lebanon and Keachie and the Convention itself. Penick asserted that such union would "promote greater harmony of feeling and concord of action . . . and conserve more fully the educational idea and spirit" of Louisiana Baptists.³⁸ The resolution provided for a committee of five which would approach the management of the two colleges, proposing a transfer of their property and full rights of control to the Louisiana Baptist Convention and promising in return to assume their indebtedness and to guarantee their maintenance in their present locations.

An editorial in the Baptist Chronicle a week before the meeting probably caused an air of expectancy. The article is important for the insight it gives regarding the extent to which the educational issue had become divisive. Significantly, Editor R. M. Boone said, "The denomination, from the present condition of things, is suffering, and this will continue so long as we remain thus divided."³⁹ He speaks of "two conflicting elements, aggravated and increased yearly." Boone asserted that election of officers, mission programs, the Corresponding

³⁸Ibid., p. 14.

³⁹Baptist Chronicle, August 10, 1893, p. 2.

Secretary's work, and the Chronicle's efforts were all limited by bitter argument. The almost total absence of information about the school issue in the Chronicle's columns is probably explained by his observation that the paper "must remain silent."⁴⁰

Secretary Ware renewed his efforts at the 1894 Convention when J. B. Searcy, chairman of the committee appointed as a result of the Penick resolution, reported that the committee had not been able to meet during the year. Searcy did relate private contacts on his part with the administrators and trustees of Mount Lebanon and Keachie; he was convinced they were in harmony with each other and the Convention.⁴¹ Evidently, the special committee had not been aggressive in pursuing its work, for the trustees of Mount Lebanon had acted to set up a committee from their group to meet with Keachie and Convention representatives.⁴² Ware succeeded in securing appointment of a fifteen-member committee which would examine the educational situation among Baptists and report at the 1895 meeting of the Convention. The language varied somewhat from his original 1893 motion in that it contained no reference to the establishment of a college; this committee was to indicate "whether it is advisable... to take any steps looking to the providing for better educational facilities for our people in the State."⁴³

The issue had subsided for several months when a bitter educational

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹L. B. C., Minutes, 1894, pp. 23-24.

⁴²"Minutes of Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," September 6, 1893, p. 137.

⁴³L. B. C., Minutes, 1894, p. 39.

dispute erupted in the columns of the Baptist Chronicle in the spring of 1895 as the special committee prepared to hold meetings in connection with its assignment. An article by an individual who signed himself as "Uno" predicted that whatever the committee recommended would be accepted. Asserting that many felt the old schools were "private enterprises," the writer expressed a strong feeling that Baptists should have a first class college in a central location. "Uno" said it would be unwise to attempt to take two colleges especially when both were in a section "inaccessible to a large number of Baptists," and he felt it would be impossible to choose between the existing schools without giving offense. He also felt that a central college "would promote [sic] the prosperity" of both Keachie and Mount Lebanon. The article further observed that Keachie should be coeducational but that Mount Lebanon, which the writer said had a "strong and growing feeling in favor of a strictly female school," should be converted to a female college.⁴⁴

A bitter reply came two weeks later from W. X. Moseley, secretary of the Board of Trustees of Keachie. His censure was directed primarily at Editor Boone for printing "Uno's" article at a time when the committee was at work. He deemed Boone's action as "unwise, untimely and prejudicial to the best interests of the Baptist of Louisiana." Moseley especially resented the statement that Keachie was a private enterprise, asserting that Boone knew this was untrue because he had been present at the 1893 meeting of Grand Cane Association, at which time the Keachie charter had been read throughout the meeting to verify that it was Grand

⁴⁴Baptist Chronicle, February 21, 1895, p. 1.

Cane's property.⁴⁵

"Uno" replied quickly to the Moseley article and emphasized that Editor Boone should not be held responsible for his, "Uno's," views, observing that "the millennium has not yet arrived for all Christians to be on the same side of every question." Claiming that "calm, unbiased and fraternal discussion" would stimulate thorough consideration, he insisted on the need "to ventilate this subject before the meeting... is held." The article pointedly charged the Keachie trustees with excessive sensitivity and narrow-mindedness and it inferred that they wanted to keep the matter locked in a committee. "Uno" said the dispute at the Grand Cane Association meeting in 1893 had been occasioned when some of those at the meeting expressed doubt that the school was actually the property of the association; anyway, he asserted that being the property of Grand Cane Association would not make the school the property of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.⁴⁶ Moseley replied heatedly and attacked his opponent for "hiding under a 'non-de-plume' which has its parallel only in anonymous letters and comic valentines." He said a church should be built up at Alexandria before attempting to found a great college; and he warned that the Keachie alumni would fight against all insinuations.⁴⁷ A third article by "Uno" revealed, somewhat surprisingly, that he lived in North Louisiana. It declared that a college at Alexandria would be a sure way to develop a great church there.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid., March 7, 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid., March 14, 1895, p. 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid., March 21, 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., March 28, 1895, p. 2.

Another notable exchange had developed at the same time between "Theophilus" and W. R. Carroll of Keachie. It was initiated when "Theophilus," describing himself as one who had lived in Louisiana for a quarter of a century, wrote that Baptists "are not making any real progress, are barely holding our own, if... not actually retrograding." He went on to argue passionately for Alexandria as a center of Baptist programs in order to aid in conquering the southern part of the state, observing that North Louisiana was already Baptist territory.⁴⁹ His views were continued in a second article which castigated the Keachie group and plainly indicated that his plan would not include the old schools. "Theophilus" saw them as isolated by the facts of history and pushed into a "life and death struggle" with each other; he doubted that changing Mount Lebanon to a female school would solve the problem. The article charged that the level of education at the existing schools was sub-par, and it insisted that Baptists in the southern area would never be attracted to them. Support would never be forthcoming from men of wealth who saw the hopelessness of the situation. Insisting on one great central college, "Theophilus" discounted the older ones, saying "we can pass resolutions highly commending them to the patronage and liberality of the denomination" and then leave them "to fight their own battles and work out their own destinies!"⁵⁰

W. R. Carroll reacted to "Theophilus" with a personal attack which said, "From his style of writing, I take him to be a zealous good man, but visionary, and for this reason I guess he has been what is called a

⁴⁹Ibid., March 14, 1895, p. 1.

⁵⁰Ibid., March 21, 1895, p. 1.

financial failure. . . ." He insisted that geography was not as vital as freedom from malaria, one of the perennial claims of Keachie and Mount Lebanon.⁵¹ In a later article addressed to Editor Boone, Carroll professed to be undaunted by "Uno" and "Theophilus" as he said, "I see that I am in the middle of a bad fix, between two fires. Two big guns playing on me at the same time.... I am neither wounded nor scared, even if they did exhaust nearly five columns to annihilate me."⁵²

"Uno" returned to the dispute in an article upholding the idea of converting Mount Lebanon to a female college, insisting that the change should be made immediately even if no new school were to be organized.⁵³ His comment that the trustees of that institution were so inclined is borne out by minutes of that board which indicate a decision to alter the school to an exclusively female operation; however, this action was subsequently reversed before it could take effect. A writer calling himself "Udontno" supported "Theophilus" and scorned the Keachie group, proclaiming that they would never be ready for a change. "Udontno" complimented the calm manner in which Mount Lebanon was reacting to the dispute.⁵⁶

The educational issue faded from the Chronicle's pages a few months before the Convention met at Monroe in August, 1895. But excitement ran

⁵¹Ibid., April 4, 1895, p. 1.

⁵²Ibid., April 25, 1895, p. 2.

⁵³Ibid., April 11, 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁴"Minutes of Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," March 2, 1895, p. 149.

⁵⁵Ibid., June 10, 1895, p. 154.

⁵⁶Baptist Chronicle, April 18, 1895, p. 1.

high as revealed in the following report, "Then the fight of the giants began and the entire day was consumed in the discussion of this report."⁵⁷ The special committee had split; two reports were made to the Convention. Signed by eight members, largely a Mount Lebanon and Keachie group, the majority report advised against agitation for a third school, opining that such an effort was not practicable and that it could weaken the other schools. It went on to recommend that a committee of fifteen be assigned to confer with the trustees of the existing schools in an attempt to effect a satisfactory relation between each of them and the Convention.⁵⁸ A minority report was offered by E. O. Ware and three other members, all representing central or southern areas of the state.⁵⁹ Though there is no record of its content, one can assume that it probably urged the necessity or desirability of a central college.

It should be observed that three members did not sign either report and that the accepted report represented a bare absolute majority of the entire committee. The fact that the 1895 session met at Monroe in North Louisiana was regarded as a factor which "made Ware's ideas difficult to pass." The Baptist Chronicle reported the failure of an attempt, apparently unsuccessful, to make the vote unanimous after the minority report was defeated by a 70-34 vote with many messengers abstaining.⁶⁰

In 1896, the special committee reported that conditions were not opportune for assuming control of Mount Lebanon and Keachie. A financial

⁵⁷ Ibid., August 22, 1895, p. 2.

⁵⁸ L. B. C., Minutes, 1895, p. 10.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁶⁰ Baptist Chronicle, August 22, 1895, p. 2.

depression was taking a heavy toll and, more importantly, it had been learned that Keachie had a pressing indebtedness of \$3,000. Thus, the committee recommended that the churches be urged to receive President G. W. Tomkies of Keachie in his efforts to relieve the indebtedness and that another committee of fifteen be instructed to consider all educational matters. This 1896 report noted that both schools had tendered their property to the Convention.⁶¹ The recommendations were approved, and the committee which reported in 1897, while reporting that Tomkies had raised \$2,000, found "the causes which influenced the committee in their report at the last session of the Convention to some extent existing at this time." Thus it urged that Tomkies be aided again by the churches in his campaign to clear the Keachie debt. The special committee of 1897 commended both schools, pointing out that each had been able to pay all current expenses of the 1896-1897 session without incurring additional debt. Mount Lebanon was reported to be virtually free of debt "owing to the lavished generosity of Bro. J. L. Baker," a prominent layman of the local area.⁶² No plans were made for another special committee.

The closing decade of the nineteenth century was a time of slow but perceptible progress in Louisiana. Educational development was one of the phenomena of the era. But the Louisiana Baptist Convention, four years after the introduction of the Ware Resolution, had apparently reached a decision in favor of the status quo. The Convention had not followed through on suggestions for a new college, and it had not acted

⁶¹L. B. C., Minutes, 1896, p. 13.

⁶²Ibid., 1897, p. 16.

decisively to effect control of the existing schools at Mount Lebanon and Keachie. No improvements had been achieved in the programs of these institutions. An impasse had been reached, although a superficial glance might appear to indicate a victory for the conservative proponents of Mount Lebanon and Keachie. The campaign for a new college had been halted, but conservative ambitions for organic affiliation of the existing schools with the Convention were thwarted. Indeed, when the 1897 meeting ended without appointment of another special committee on education, one senses conservative frustration.

Powerful factors contributed to the controversy. Loyalty to Mount Lebanon and Keachie compelled some to oppose the bid for a new school. Sectionalism was a factor as the Baptists in the northern area of the state sought to maintain the primacy of that region in Baptist life. It is not possible to verify conclusively the impression that this struggle may have pitted an entrenched native leadership against enterprising, progressive newcomers; for example, E. O. Ware, a native Kentuckian, arrived in Louisiana in 1888.

Mount Lebanon and Keachie suffered because of economic and geographical isolation. Their grim efforts for survival were intensified by the fear of a new school blessed with the very advantages fate had denied to them. Added to the natural reluctance of the established institutions to facilitate the emergence of a potential rival was the specter of antagonism between themselves.

Such an impasse could not last. Within two years, dramatic developments would highlight the continuing controversy.

CHAPTER III

THE PERIOD OF CONTROVERSY, 1897-1905

DECISION FOR CHANGE

The educational issue refused to subside in the aftermath of the decision of the 1897 session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. This action had returned the Convention to the posture it held before the Ware Resolution was introduced in 1893. However, educational matters had been highlighted, and the question was destined to remain a primary topic in the years to follow. The contending viewpoints had come into sharper focus. Soon the Convention would take a sharp turn regarding education.

Conditions were unstable at Mount Lebanon and Keachie in the decade before the turn of the century. Their survival derived from a combination of generally capable leadership, consistent local support, and the sentimental attachment of alumni and former students.

Keachie Male and Female College was fortunate to have the esteemed C. W. Tomkies as its president from 1889 to 1899. This man, highly regarded among Louisiana Baptists for his ability and dedication, provided a quality of leadership which earned respect for the Keachie operation. He came to the presidency of the school from a tenure of approximately four years as the first Corresponding Secretary of the reorganized Executive Board of the Convention. Described as "a builder whose ministry was a veritable blaze of enthusiasm," he was especially

remembered for his efforts to relieve Keachie's pressing financial burdens and for his ability to inspire and cultivate young ministers.¹

Mount Lebanon Baptist College experienced frequent changes of leadership during these years. Professor W. C. Robinson, who had led the school effectively for three years, was elected for a new term of five years in February, 1894.² The Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon had great confidence in President Robinson, allowing him to hire teachers, fix salaries, and make repairs upon the property as he saw fit.³ Robinson resigned in May, 1895, and was succeeded by M. O. Keller, a native of Illinois. Records indicate that he was only the third choice for the position.⁴ Keller left after serving one session; the trustees' dissatisfaction with his service was revealed by a refusal to grant him a certificate of recommendation.⁵ The next president was J. W. Robinson, who served for the 1896-1897 session and until Christmas of 1897. Conflicts between Robinson and the faculty, accentuated by an unhealthy financial condition, apparently triggered his decision to leave. The tenseness of the situation was revealed by the fact that his resignation occurred at an unusual meeting of the trustees on Christmas day.⁶ The Reverend H. C. Joyner acted as president for the remainder of that

¹John Pinckney Durham and John S. Ramond (eds.), Baptist Builders in Louisiana (Shreveport, 1934), p. 45.

²"Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," February 5, 1894, p. 140.

³Ibid., March 5, 1894, p. 141.

⁴Ibid., June 1, 1895, p. 151.

⁵Ibid., July 4, 1896, p. 164.

⁶Ibid., December 25, 1897, pp. 173-174.

session.⁷ He was succeeded by Professor J. Wolf Carter, who was commended for being "firm, energetic, and talented."⁸

The trustees of both colleges were staunch Baptists who gave generously of their time and means. No matter was too trivial to receive their attention; reports of irregular student behavior, especially episodes involving both sexes, were frequently referred to the trustees.⁹ These men responded materially to the needs of the schools, varying from the proportionately large contributions of T. H. Gatlin to Keachie and Jesse L. Baker to Mount Lebanon to those of men who offered fifty pounds of paint or a day's labor.¹⁰

Both colleges were coeducational throughout the 1890's, and they were similar in the liberal arts programs they offered. Each school provided primary and secondary work in addition to the courses which were collegiate in quality. Mount Lebanon officially forsook the pretentious name of "Mount Lebanon University" and became more appropriately "Mount Lebanon College" in early 1894.¹¹

Catalogs of the period reveal faculties which ranged between seven and ten members. One or two of these individuals worked below the collegiate level. The presidents or administrators usually carried heavy instructional loads. Graduates of the colleges tended to receive

⁷Baptist Chronicle, March 3, 1898, p. 8.

⁸Ibid., January 26, 1899, p. 4.

⁹"Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," March 19, 1894, p. 142.

¹⁰Ibid., June 11, 1894, p. 143.

¹¹Ibid., February 5, 1894, p. 140.

preferential consideration for faculty positions.¹² Advertisements stressed the orthodoxy of instructors and promised that "no skeptical or agnostic teachers [were] employed."¹³

A typical list of courses offered by the institutions was outlined in the 1893-1894 Keachie catalog. Eleven "schools" were enumerated as follows: Latin, Greek, English, history, philosophy, mathematics, geology and biology, natural philosophy and chemistry, modern language, music, art, and a special "school" for teachers designed for individuals who did not have time to take a full college course.¹⁴ Both colleges emphasized teacher preparation, and the administrators were agitated because the State Board of Education discriminated against private school graduates in assigning public school teachers. The Convention of 1899 assigned a committee to cooperate with committees from other religious bodies in seeking legislative redress in this matter.¹⁵

Attendance at the two colleges was comparable. For example, Keachie reported a total of 172 students including seventeen candidates for the ministry in 1893 while Mount Lebanon listed a total of 152 with eight ministerial students.¹⁶ The next year Keachie enrolled a total of 185 including nineteen ministerial students while Mount Lebanon claimed

¹²Baptist Chronicle, February 9, 1899, p. 3.

¹³Ibid., March 30, 1899, p. 7.

¹⁴Annual Catalogue of Keachie Male and Female College, Keachie, La., 1894-'95 (Shreveport, 1895), p. 15.

¹⁵Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Fifty-First Annual Session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1899, p. 25. (Hereinafter referred to as L.B.C., Minutes.)

¹⁶Ibid., 1893, pp. 20-21.

163 pupils with seven prospective ministers.¹⁷ Numbers of ministerial students constituted the only genuine basis for appealing to Louisiana Baptists. But this support was perennially sporadic and usually insufficient. The 1894 report on education proclaimed that the schools "need our support, and we must either come to their . . . assistance or see them struggle in vain . . ."¹⁸ Yet the report stated that over \$600 was past due to Keachie and nearly \$200 to Mount Lebanon even for the popular ministerial aid.

Perhaps because Mount Lebanon usually had fewer ministerial students during this era, an interest developed in converting the operation there into a completely female one.¹⁹ The minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon indicate that this group and the governing body of Keachie exchanged several communications relating to "Bro. Wares intentions" [sic].²⁰ Apparently, they were attempting to differentiate between themselves regarding the clientele each would serve, thus avoiding any possible effort to close one of them in order to implement Ware's hope for a centrally located institution. These maneuvers collapsed with Mount Lebanon's decision to remain coeducational in 1895.²¹ The Mount Lebanon trustees also adopted a resolution declaring that "it is the Sense of this Board that Any Movement looking to the Establishment of a Central School by the baptist [sic] of La. that would in any wise

¹⁷ Ibid., 1894, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," March 2, 1895, p. 149.

²⁰ Ibid., July 2, 1894, p. 145.

²¹ Ibid., June 10, 1895, p. 154.

Conflict With the Interest of the already Established Schools Should Be discouraged."²²

Both schools extolled the virtues of their isolated locations, emphasizing the health benefits with accompanying low incidences of malaria and the moral advantages of locations away from urban evils. Each school trumpeted the fact that the sale of "spirituous liquors" was forbidden within five miles of the campus.²³ They prided themselves on high academic standards, explaining that the shortage of high grades was due to teachers' insistence on well-prepared lessons.²⁴ Supremely, they sought to uphold a high spiritual and moral tone. Relations between the sexes came in for special attention as evidenced by the following description of life at Keachie:

One more item from the catalog of discoveries must be mentioned. The unqualified and thorough discipline of the school as to the separation of boys and girls. As we observed the strict separation in the dining halls, about the college premises, and the wide separation of the dormitories, we concluded that discipline in this direction could not be excelled anywhere.²⁵

Mount Lebanon officials revealed an equally vigorous mode of conduct in this comment about Thanksgiving in 1898:

The young ladies and young gentlemen of the school and town spent the afternoon in pleasant conversation. This was the first 'suspension' or 'soiree' that we have had during the session. We believe in coeducation, but this does not mean the mixing of the sexes promiscuously, for we feel strongly

²²Ibid.

²³Annual Catalogue of Keachie Male and Female College, 1894-'95, p. 27.

²⁴Baptist Chronicle, October 27, 1898, p. 4.

²⁵Ibid., June 13, 1898, p. 4.

that one of the blighting curses of this age is the mixing of the sexes in the infamous waltz, the mid-night pic-nic and buggy ride. We would draw the sex line broad, clear, and impassable, but not prudishly, hence, after three months of diligent study, we thought it prudent to give . . . an opportunity to enjoy each other's company.²⁶

Occasional respites from financial duress developed, but both institutions were usually engaged in gallant attempts to cope with monetary dilemmas. It has been stated previously that efforts to annex the schools to the Convention in 1896 and 1897 were unsuccessful because of the debts being faced by C. W. Tomkies and his associates at Keachie. By 1899, it was reported with deep satisfaction that the Keachie mortgage debt had been reduced from \$16,000 to \$2,400.²⁷ While most gifts were apparently received from individual donors, a few churches, such as First Baptist of Shreveport, had begun to contribute effectively.²⁸ Mount Lebanon faced similar financial strains, although her debts were never as large in this period.

The only organized Convention effort was channeled toward ministerial aid. This project was so feebly implemented that Corresponding Secretary E. O. Ware castigated Louisiana Baptists, pastors in particular, for not emphasizing the effort sufficiently.²⁹ Various individuals criticized the ministerial aid program, pointing to the low quality and inferior capacity of some ministerial students to substantiate their position. For example, at the 1899 Convention, the pastor of the First

²⁶Ibid., December 1, 1898, p. 4.

²⁷Ibid., December 15, 1898, p. 8.

²⁸"Minutes of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport," November 27, 1898.

²⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1897, p. 11.

Baptist Church of Shreveport, Dr. J. S. Felix, castigated some ministerial students as being "so unworthy . . . as to be really detrimental to the cause of Christ." He reluctantly withdrew a motion to divert ministerial aid money to a building fund for a new college when other prominent leaders demurred.³⁰

Following the decision of 1897 which commended Keachie and Mount Lebanon without accepting the invitations to assume control of them, the controlling boards of the schools renewed the offers before the 1898 meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Details of the Keachie offer are no longer available, but the Mount Lebanon records indicate that an official committee of trustees was delegated to present a formal petition to Corresponding Secretary Ware and the Executive Board prior to the Convention.³¹ The Executive Board then recommended in its annual report to the Convention that the body "take some positive and decided steps by and through which it may take control of the institutions . . . making them not only Baptist colleges in name but in reality."³²

Accordingly, the special committee, with only five members signing the report, proposed that the offers by the two schools be accepted and that the Convention immediately proceed to appoint trustees to assume control of Keachie and Mount Lebanon. This 1899 meeting at Alexandria must have been a memorable one. Though the official minutes simply describe it as the "largest and most enthusiastic Convention the Louisiana Baptists have ever held," feelings ran high as powerful men of opposing

³⁰Baptist Chronicle, July 20, 1899, p. 4.

³¹"Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," October 15, 1898, p. 180.

³²L.B.C., Minutes, 1898, Appendix H, p. xix.

convictions strove for victory.³³ The committee specified in its recommendation that one school should become a male college and one a female school. While willing to allow the Convention to determine the character of each school, the committee suggested that Mount Lebanon become a male operation and that female students be taken at Keachie. Mount Lebanon had operated the previous session with two-thirds of its students as boys while Keachie had girls for over one-half of its enrollment. Keachie's debts were slightly over \$2,000 and Mount Lebanon was officially debt-free, once again because of the generosity of Jesse L. Baker.³⁵

The Convention accepted the committee's recommendation but not before it had been decisively amended. A resume of the proceedings printed in the Baptist Chronicle referred to an attack upon "Ware's ideas" by Dr. J. S. Felix of Shreveport. Felix appeared to favor the establishment of another school, but he vowed that he was "for postponement of the question for a century if necessary to settle it peacefully and satisfactorily."³⁶ What the minutes and the news article emphasize is an amendment to the committee's report after a recess of the proceedings. This amendment, offered by Baptist Chronicle Editor R. M. Boone was as follows:

RESOLVED. That a commission of thirteen brethren, representing different sections of the State, be appointed by the chair to consider the establishment of a college of

³³ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁴ Ibid., 1899, p. 35.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³⁶ Baptist Chronicle, July 20, 1899, p. 6.

high grade in the State, and that said commission advertise for bids from different sections of the State for the establishment of said college, and that they consider its geographical location, as well as the amounts tendered, and report to the next session of the convention.³⁷

The Boone resolution was an amendment to a "Ware amendment" according to the news article mentioned above. Yet it received support from L. E. Thomas and J. S. Felix, both of Shreveport, while apparently being acceptable to E. O. Ware.³⁸ Thus, it may be conjectured that "Ware's ideas" related to the demand for a third school, centrally-located, to be opened at the same time as the others were taken under Convention patronage. While "Ware's ideas" for a new college immediately could not be carried, the messengers from North Louisiana, with the Convention meeting away from their stronghold, could not effect the acceptance of the old institutions without setting up machinery to prepare for a future new one. Thus the decisions of 1899 amounted to another compromise.

One messenger, A. G. Mosely, describing himself as a newcomer to Louisiana, commented that people were "very much pleased at the settlement of the long pending school question." He spoke of the "many sighs of relief" as sure indications of "no small tensions in the years . . . past."³⁹ Looked upon in perspective, the actions of the 1899 Convention had a totally different impact. The Boone Amendment achieved what the Ware Resolution of 1893 had been unable to do. A distinguished committee had been set up to work upon the concept of a new school and it proceeded, with R. M. Boone as its chairman, to push the project vigorously in anticipation of having something to report at the 1900 session of

³⁷ L.B.C., Minutes, 1899, pp. 10-11.

³⁸ Baptist Chronicle, July 20, 1899, p. 6.

³⁹ Ibid., July 27, 1899, p. 1.

Louisiana Baptists.⁴⁰ Advertisements were placed in the newspapers of the state requesting interested communities to make official proposals spelling out details of location, accessibility, potential patronage, and financial bonus.⁴¹

As the Boone committee, sometimes referred to as the Educational Commission, pursued its efforts to expedite its assignment, bids were received from the cities of Lake Charles, located in the southwest corner of the state, and Shreveport, situated near Keachie in the northwestern area. When the Convention met at Shreveport in July, 1900, only five of the thirteen committee members were in attendance, a figure so low as to indicate a desire on the part of some to evade a controversial assignment. Boone presented a brief majority report which he attributed to the other four members who were present. This report simply acknowledged receipt of bids from Lake Charles and Shreveport and referred the matter of choosing between the offers to the Convention. Boone then gave a minority report for himself, suggesting that the Shreveport offer was the better of the two which had been received but advising another year's study while "a wise committee of thirteen . . . should take these matters under advisement and settle upon something definite and report at our next annual session."⁴² The two reports were referred to the regular Committee on Education; this was a committee appointed from those in actual attendance at the session.

The Committee on Education, again demonstrating the deep

⁴⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1899, pp. 30-31.

⁴¹Baptist Chronicle, October 26, 1899, p. 3.

⁴²L.B.C., Minutes, 1900, pp. 17-18.

differences which surrounded the matter of education, proceeded to split and to offer majority and minority reports. A majority of six advised acceptance of the Lake Charles offer and urged that the new school be coeducational. The minority report, signed by three members, urged acceptance of the Shreveport bid. Interestingly, the majority included Dr. T. J. Fouts, long-time chairman of the trustees of Mount Lebanon, while the minority group included G. W. Thigpen, newly-elected president of Keachie.⁴³ After a lengthy and dramatic debate, Judge Don E. So Relle of Many offered a resolution proposing yet another year's delay while the same committee of thirteen sought to arrive at a satisfactory solution. The resolution was carried by a vote of 102-64.⁴⁴ Before the Convention adjourned, five additional members, most of whom were affiliated with the older institutions, were added to the "Educational Commission."⁴⁵ One of these was L. E. Thomas of Shreveport who, along with R. M. Boone, had led the argument against the majority recommendation favoring the Lake Charles bid.⁴⁶

A series of exchanges between a writer calling himself "Erastus" and Editor R. M. Boone highlighted the weeks following the 1900 Convention. "Erastus" questioned the fairness and validity of the Convention's actions in its last three sessions. He declared that the Convention had taken Mount Lebanon and Keachie, altered them radically, and was planning to kill them by emphasizing another school. Expressing sentiments

⁴³Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Baptist Chronicle, July 26, 1900, p. 5.

which probably were held by many Baptists, he said:

This must inevitably produce dissension, alienation and conflict, as the directors and patrons of an institution cannot brook such public assaults--such reckless efforts--on the part of others to tear down and utterly to demolish their cherished institutions that another may be reared on its [sic] ruins.⁴⁷

Editor Boone proclaimed "Erastus'" arguments "ill-considered, conflicting and futile." He denied any attempt to hurt the old schools, stressing that Keachie and Mount Lebanon were desperate and that the amendment for a new school was in the nature of a compromise which had made possible the Convention's affiliation with Keachie and Mount Lebanon.⁴⁸

Boone emphasized in a second article that "Erastus'" dread of the location advantage of the new school was actually an argument in favor of the project.⁴⁹ This "Erastus" denied, insisting that all the old schools needed was what was proposed for the new one. Boone concluded the exchange by declaring that "Erastus" was two conventions behind the times; he stated that the question was not whether to have a new school but where to establish it. Confidently, he observed that "the whole matter . . . awaits the offer of a suitable bid for its location."⁵⁰

Invitation for bids were advertised again in the spring of 1901.⁵¹ No new ones were received, and it is not clear whether the Lake Charles and Shreveport offers were renewed. Thus the "Educational Commission" was forced to report to the 1901 session that no propositions had been

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., August 2, 1900, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Ibid., August 23, 1900, p. 4.

⁵¹ Ibid., May 31, 1901, p. 4.

made. The "Commission" could only recommend "our earnest and hearty support" for Mount Lebanon and Keachie.⁵² Proclaiming that the only wise course was to build up the old schools, Editor Boone ruefully stated that "whatever may be said of these colleges, they constitute all that we have in Louisiana educationally."⁵³ Seemingly, a new standoff had been achieved with the Convention sponsoring two colleges and contemplating a third one. However, an increasingly defensive note had appeared in the arguments of the proponents of Mount Lebanon and Keachie. Though delayed by lack of a suitable invitation, adherents of the new college venture were biding their time.

Boards of trustees of twenty-seven members each were elected for Keachie and Mount Lebanon at the 1899 session in Alexandria. The wariness with which each area guarded its interests was revealed in the insistence upon separate governing boards. Though state-wide representation was technically achieved, the local members continued to assume the major burden of directing the destinies of the schools. The name of "Mount Lebanon College" was changed to "Mount Lebanon Baptist Male College" while "Keachie Male and Female College" became "Louisiana Baptist Female College." An arrangement was effected which allowed local boys to attend Keachie and local girls to enroll at Mount Lebanon; thus the institutions were not absolutely male or female.⁵⁴

The Convention had anticipated and mandated an official, organic assumption of control of the two colleges. However, in spite of

⁵²L.B.C., Minutes, 1901, p. 12.

⁵³Baptist Chronicle, August 15, 1901, p. 4.

⁵⁴"Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," August 11, 1899, p. 187.

immediate and seemingly fraternal meetings at which resolutions of transfer were adopted, the properties were not transferred.⁵⁵ The secretary of the old board of Mount Lebanon revealed his feeling that it was "not necessary to give reasons for not turning over Mt. Lebanon College to trustees appointed by [the] state Convention."⁵⁶ As required by the action of 1899, each school made annual reports to the Convention.

Both Mount Lebanon and Keachie were fortunate in the new leaders they received at the turn of the century. G. W. Thigpen, succeeding the highly respected C. W. Tomkies at Keachie, proceeded to earn the confidence of the Baptists of Louisiana as he guided the college until 1908.⁵⁷ Mount Lebanon secured the services of Dr. J. R. Edwards in early 1900 after the brief but effective tenure of J. Wolf Carter. Edwards, one of the most highly regarded ministers in the state, did much to promote the school at Mount Lebanon in the five years that he served. He appears to have been an inspirational leader whose judgment and humility earned him the respect of Louisiana Baptists. At the time he accepted the leadership of the school, Edwards was serving as President of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Assuming the work at Mount Lebanon, he wrote, "If they [Louisiana Baptists] help me, we will succeed--if they do not, I will fail."⁵⁸

The records of the Louisiana Baptist Convention do not reveal anti-education sentiment, but the individuals who served on education

⁵⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1899, p. 30; "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," August 11, 1899, pp. 186-187.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Baptist Chronicle, April 12, 1900, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid., June 21, 1900, p. 1.

committees during this era had to exert yeoman efforts to arouse their constituents. A report in 1903 described the alternatives thus:

It [the situation] is this, shall our two denominational schools be maintained or shall we permit them to languish by inattention and non-patronage? The heart as well as the head must be cultivated, and we must not permit the seed of skepticism and infidelity to be planted in the breasts of the coming generation.⁵⁹

The committee, recommending all possible means of abetting the programs at Mount Lebanon and Louisiana Baptist Female College, admitted that Baptists could not compete with the free tuition and other financial advantages of state colleges. Parents would have to choose the type of training they desired for their children. The report urged, "Send your boys and girls and receive back young men and young ladies educated, refined, cultivated and well-prepared to act their part in guiding the destinies of the State as the years go by."⁶⁰ Without condemning or opposing the concept of public education, Baptist leaders extolled the significance of a "sanctified educational system" as one of the keys to the accomplishment of the missionary responsibility of the Christian faith.⁶¹

Both colleges sought to develop and to guide all aspects of student personality, not exclusively the intellectual one. Thus students could expect regulations along many lines. A Louisiana Baptist Female College catalog required names of all correspondents, other than family members,

⁵⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1903, p. 17.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 18.

⁶¹Ibid., 1902, p. 16.

who were to receive letters from the girls.⁶² Bruce Benton, who replaced R. M. Boone as editor of the Baptist Chronicle in 1903, visited the school at Keachie and extolled the virtues of that community:

No better people can be found in the world than those living at Keachie. It is a cultured community. We have a much better college with much better equipment than most people realize. The instruction is thorough. The discipline is vigorous, and yet the college is made as much like home as possible.⁶³

Unlike President Edwards at Mount Lebanon, who left the operation of his school to an assistant while he served as financial agent, Thigpen concerned himself with every aspect of student life and conduct. One of the pastors of the church at Keachie was impressed by Thigpen's attention to detail and he said, "If Bro. Thigpen can be charged with any fault--it is being too superciliously careful of his students."⁶⁴

A departing teacher, Miss Lillian C. Didier, provided a vivid description of Keachie, where one senses that a "finishing school" atmosphere was emerging. She sought to stir Louisiana Baptists to appreciate their female college:

The location is very desirable. The large white building with its wide halls and many galleries, presents a very imposing appearance surrounded by giant oaks, cedars and beautiful flower beds. The rooms are comfortable and well furnished, the dining room is well appointed.

The halls, stairways, double parlors and library are carpeted.

There are fine parlors, a splendid library of about 1,500 books and a well equipped laboratory.

⁶²Catalogue of Louisiana Female College, Keachie, Louisiana, 1901-1902, p. 7.

⁶³Baptist Chronicle, October 8, 1903, p. 8.

⁶⁴Ibid., August 27, 1903, p. 8.

One feature of the building deserves especial mention, the chapel. It is beautiful and I do not hesitate to say that I believe it is the prettiest in the State of Louisiana with its stained windows, chandeliers, opera chairs and carpeted rostrum.⁶⁵

Music and other fine arts were emphasized increasingly at Louisiana Female College. The officials there were generally silent on the educational controversy in comparison to a much more voluble attitude at Mount Lebanon. Probably, they felt somewhat more security because of their proximity to the urban center of Shreveport. Also, since the Convention had determined to provide separate schools for men and women, they might have inferred that the suggested new college posed only an indirect threat to Keachie.

The work at Mount Lebanon Baptist Male College was kept before the Baptists of the state through a constant flow of human interest reports by the respected President Edwards. One article would report a wonderful Thanksgiving turkey dinner and a school composed of healthy pupils.⁶⁶ Another commented somewhat despondently that administration and staff were "moving on doing the best we can do," and it expressed the hope that students would refrain from dropping out of school before the end of the term, thus missing the "cream" of the year's work.⁶⁷ There was a constant inflow and exodus of students.⁶⁸

Mount Lebanon was in a favorable position after 1900 since it was the only center for ministerial education. Louisiana Baptists had still

⁶⁵Ibid., June 13, 1901, p. 7.

⁶⁶Ibid., December 13, 1900, p. 6.

⁶⁷Ibid., April 4, 1901, p. 2.

⁶⁸Forty-Ninth Annual Catalogue of Mt. Lebanon Male College (Alexandria, 1901), p. 11.

not begun to respond financially beyond the level of aid to ministerial students. Though the gifts were seldom equal to the needs, whatever contributions were made to implement this cause tended to keep Mount Lebanon in the denominational eye. Offerings occasionally approximated a measure of satisfactory support as in the spring of 1901, when President Edwards proclaimed that the "churches have been doing well for Ministerial Education this year."⁶⁹ The Executive Board had suggested eight dollars per month per student as a maximum support for that year. A screening committee had to approve students for such aid on the criteria of worthiness and need. Produce such as corn, syrup, and meat comprised an important part of this aid to the ministerial candidates, most of whom were of limited circumstances and many of whom were married men with families. President Edwards sometimes published letters from some of these men expressing gratitude for the ministerial aid program.⁷⁰ Such articles were helpful in promotional work.

Nevertheless, gifts for ministerial aid were usually quite inadequate. The annual reports of the Executive Board frequently pointed out deficiencies in the program. Secretary Ware commented in the 1902 report on ministerial education:

True it is that argument is no longer needed in most places for an educated ministry, but the fact remains that many of our churches--churches which would least think of calling an uneducated man to the pastorate--neglect this object throughout the year.⁷¹

Only \$621.35 had come through Ware's office for such purposes during the

⁶⁹ Baptist Chronicle, March 7, 1901, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Ibid., August 1, 1901, p. 4.

⁷¹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1902, Appendix A, p. 41.

year just ended. This was only two-thirds of the minimal need. Ware could not understand this failure to aid young ministers, and he wondered if some might really be opposed to the concept of an educated ministry; but he also observed that the lapse might be due to the fact that this cause needed less money than any other of the major emphases.⁷²

Enrollment at both colleges declined between 1899 and 1905, especially after the advent of public schools in each community which tended to undercut the primary and academy departments. Mount Lebanon's student body was consistently larger than Keachie's though it was more transient, possibly because of the ministerial element. The trustees of Mount Lebanon reported 145 pupils in 1900, fifteen of whom were ministerial students.⁷³ Without specifying the number of boarding students in the group, the report stated that most of them would return for the next session and bring friends with them. The Keachie report told of 44 students for 1899-1900, of whom three had received degrees at the recent commencement. Acknowledging that the attendance had been small, the trustees stressed one favorable factor, "No new financial obligation was incurred by the college."⁷⁴ The way that students enrolled intermittently at Mount Lebanon is reflected in the 1901 report of the trustees to the Convention. From an original group of 68, the enrollment had grown to include 156 regular and 44 special pupils.⁷⁵ The extremely low attendance at Louisiana Female College, particularly in the boarding

⁷²Baptist Chronicle, February 18, 1904, p. 2.

⁷³L.B.C., Minutes, 1900, p. 12.

⁷⁴Ibid., 1901, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 17-18.

group, was revealed in a 1902 claim of a 50 per cent increase in boarding students from 18 to 27.⁷⁶ From a 1902-1903 session with a total of 175, Mount Lebanon declined in one year to 110 students.⁷⁷ Because of the inroads of a district school, the faculty had been reduced and every effort was being exerted to effect economy. Only one degree was granted in 1903 and again in 1904. Keachie reported 46 boarders and 20 day pupils in 1904.⁷⁸

The struggling institutions sought vainly to achieve financial solvency as each year produced a new story of monetary difficulties. Frequently, efforts which appeared to alleviate the pressing burdens proved ineffectual or insufficient. A case in point was the Keachie report of 1900 which told glowingly of solicitation efforts which, with sale of a piece of the college's property, had cleared the entire debt of the school. The report went on to claim an estimated value of \$30,000 for Louisiana Female College, citing its advantages of healthfulness and proximity to Shreveport.⁷⁹ The following year, though no new obligation had been incurred, the old debt was reported as slightly over \$800.⁸⁰ The schools were sometimes favored by the indulgence of prominent local friends.⁸¹ In describing repairs and improvements on the property, it was not unusual to report that "the board and friends" had provided

⁷⁶Ibid., 1902, p. 8.

⁷⁷Ibid., 1904, p. 13.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁹Ibid., 1900, p. 16.

⁸⁰Ibid., 1901, p. 16.

⁸¹"Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," December 6, 1901, p. 201.

these needs.⁸²

Continually plagued by financial adversity, the trustees of Mount Lebanon voted in May, 1902, to launch an endowment campaign for \$25,000.⁸³ The following month, a Minister's Institute was held at Mount Lebanon. This type of gathering offered a satisfying combination of fellowship and study, with prominent guests brought in to serve as leaders. Obviously, such a meeting at Mount Lebanon focused Baptist eyes on the college. It gave the school's leaders an opportunity to present their cause in a favorable light. Before the Institute of 1902 ended, a resolution endorsing the endowment campaign was approved.⁸⁴ The effort received official sanction by the 1902 session of the Convention, and a distinguished committee was organized to lead the campaign. The group included E. O. Ware and G. W. Bolton, both of whom were identified with the desire for a new school.⁸⁵

Enthusiasm ran high as the endowment campaign unfolded; it is difficult to define the motivation which impelled various individuals and groups to participate. Undoubtedly, some viewed it as an opportunity to return Mount Lebanon to the denominational limelight; others must have taken it to be a means of quickening reconsideration of the third school idea. Still others might have acted pragmatically without any particular speculation about the ramifications of the project.

President Edwards worked feverishly to further the endowment

⁸²L.B.C., Minutes, 1901, p. 18.

⁸³"Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," May 27, 1902, p. 203.

⁸⁴Baptist Chronicle, June 19, 1902, p. 9.

⁸⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1902, pp. 17-18, 27.

project. He was able to devote major attention to the effort because of capable associates at Mount Lebanon, among them I. M. McGee, who directed the program in his absence; L. W. Moore, a veteran professor who was also an effective newswriter for the school; and Claybrook Cottingham, a young Virginian who came to Mount Lebanon in 1902 and was destined for a remarkable future in Louisiana Baptist education. Professor Moore wrote profusely and convincingly in support of the endowment, seizing upon opportunities to warn against discussion of a third school while the campaign was in progress--and perhaps hoping to keep attention on Mount Lebanon afterward. One of his articles said pointedly:

I am fully convinced . . . that to raise . . . the question of a permanent location of our college, can have no other effect than so to hamper, perplex, and divide the Baptists of the State as utterly to thwart the proposed scheme for . . . endowment To create a diversion by throwing into our midst this apple of discord is to force upon us inevitable failure and defeat.⁸⁶

Edwards secured the services of the Reverend Mark Price, who had left a high-paying job in the business world to enter the ministry. In twenty-one weeks, Price obtained over \$25,000 in bonds and cash.⁸⁷ Elatedly, the 1903 Convention voted to keep him in the field, hoping to reach an ultimate goal of \$100,000 since he had covered only one-third of the state in his initial efforts. He was authorized to campaign outside the state at his discretion. Hopes were expressed that aid might be forthcoming from philanthropic agencies in other parts of the nation.⁸⁸

Suddenly the campaign cooled. Price was unable to push the total

⁸⁶Baptist Chronicle, June 19, 1902, p. 5.

⁸⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1903, p. 16.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 16-17.

collections much higher. Outside aid failed to materialize as had been hoped. Promotional articles faded from the denominational press. A curtain of silence fell over the educational horizon as Baptists prepared for the 1904 Convention at Natchitoches. The inertia and frustration of more than a decade solidified into bold resolve when the Committee on Education reported the depressing news that Mount Lebanon's deficit in operating expenses had mounted to \$4,000.⁸⁹

L. W. Moore's articles betrayed an increasing defensiveness. Seeking to explain the lack of news from Mount Lebanon, he stated:

The Baptists of Louisiana must not conclude that because . . . Mt. Lebanon is seldom heard from, it has a feeble existence and is doing but little. Some of the most potent agencies in nature are silent and unseen, and are known only by the effects they produce.⁹⁰

Describing the 1904 commencement season, always the climactic event of the year, Moore noted:

. . . quite a number of our leading brethren [,] whose influence and co-operation we have a right to expect, were conspicuously absent. We shall be charitable enough to conclude that, though absent in body, they were present in spirit⁹¹

However, Secretary E. O. Ware had attended, and his presence was noted with satisfaction. Visits by denominational dignitaries had always comprised an important part of life at Mount Lebanon and Keachie.

A pivotal point in Louisiana Baptist educational history occurred at the 1904 session of the Convention. The Committee on Education, noting the deficit of \$4,000 in operating expenses which had been accumulated

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1904, pp. 30-31.

⁹⁰ Baptist Chronicle, May 12, 1904, p. 9.

⁹¹ Ibid., June 9, 1904, p. 9.

by Mount Lebanon, expressed its opinion that the delay in determining a "permanent location for our college" was hindering the entire educational cause among Louisiana Baptists. The committee recommended:

. . . laying aside all narrowness and selfishness, all consideration of a purely personal character and of local interests--we unhesitatingly commit ourselves to any location for the college that the finger of Providence may seem to point out to us as likely to subserve the best interest of the denomination⁹²

The report, adopted by the Convention, urged acceptance of an offer from "any place, suitably located in this State" provided it include a satisfactory campus and a bonus of at least \$30,000 in cash. Wishing to see the thorny question settled quickly, a committee was appointed with "full power to receive bids, decide upon a permanent location, and arrange for the erection of the necessary buildings."⁹³ Members of the soon-to-be famous committee were: G. W. Bolton, Chairman, W. A. West, J. L. Love, M. E. Weaver, Ben Stagg, A. L. Ponder, M. A. Price, P. B. Wright, E. O. Ware, W. H. Dodson, J. R. Edwards, J. F. Madison, W. C. Beall, and W. J. Bolin.

The report included a proposal that "Mount Lebanon College be changed into a preparatory school of high grade, with a course of study adapted to the college curriculum, to be controlled and fostered by the denomination"⁹⁴ It observed that, with such modification, "Mt. Lebanon should enjoy a degree of prosperity never known." Finally, the committee recommended that a similar preparatory school "be established east of the Mississippi river."

⁹²L.B.C., Minutes, 1904, pp. 30-31.

⁹³Ibid., p. 31.

⁹⁴Ibid.

On November 30, 1904, the committee of thirteen met and drew up a letter of advertisement inviting interested communities to bid for the new college.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, the gloomy situation at Mount Lebanon continued as support, even for ministerial education, became more and more sporadic. The first article by the young professor Claybrook Cottingham to appear in the Baptist Chronicle was entitled, "Do We Grasp the Situation?"⁹⁶ It was an appeal which declared that the denomination could not afford to neglect to provide funds for insuring an educated ministry. Another meeting of the special committee, held in February, 1905, kept the educational issue uppermost in the denominational mind. News articles extolling the virtues of Mount Lebanon and Keachie appeared with increasing frequency in the spring of 1905. Editor Bruce Benton of the Baptist Chronicle urged patience and emphasized his belief that the committee's work would produce a settlement of the thorny problem.⁹⁷ J. R. Edwards resigned as president of Mount Lebanon Male College in May, 1905, as interest was developing in an important meeting of the committee of thirteen.⁹⁸

The tension and sensitivity of the time was reflected by L. W. Moore's explosive comment in a Baptist Chronicle article. Some thought that requests for support for his school were really a covert plea for Mount Lebanon as the place for the college. Moore replied, "This betrays a narrow, stupid and suspicious spirit that is truly appalling,

⁹⁵Ibid., 1905, p. 9.

⁹⁶Baptist Chronicle, January 26, 1905, p. 2.

⁹⁷Ibid., May 11, 1905, p. 8.

⁹⁸Ibid.

and that presents a gloomy prospect for the cause of education in our State."⁹⁹ As the time drew near for the crucial meeting of the special committee on June 7, 1905, Professor Moore pronounced himself ready to abide gladly by the recommendation of the special group, declaring, "Too long, much too long, we have been airing our views upon the subject."¹⁰⁰

The mayor of Alexandria, H. B. Chase, and the Secretary of the Progressive League of that city appeared before the committee and stated that the Alexandria-Pineville area would comply with the stipulations outlined by the committee. Several possible locations for the new college, some in Alexandria and others on the Pineville side of the Red River, were available. The Alexandria-Pineville cash offer was \$26,500. No other bids were received though the city of Shreveport had been expected to seek the college. Thus, the committee accepted the Alexandria-Pineville proposition and announced the location of the school in that area, provided the additional \$3,500 of the cash bonus be secured.¹⁰¹ General satisfaction greeted the decision, but soon a discordant note was sounded.¹⁰²

L. E. Thomas, prominent Shreveport layman, President of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1904-1906, and a member of the committee of thirteen who had missed the crucial meeting of June 7, 1905, filed a withering dissent against the decision to award the college to the Alexandria-Pineville area. Explaining that official duties had prevented

⁹⁹ Ibid., May 18, 1905, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., May 25, 1905, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1905, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰² Baptist Chronicle, June 15, 1905, p. 8.

his attendance and warning against the dire consequences of favoritism in so important an undertaking, he expressed astonishment that the committee had presumed to act with finality on the college matter. Asserting his conviction that "a serious mistake has been made and one which . . . the Denomination when it meets in Convention assembled will rectify," he vowed that a minority and protesting report would be presented. Particularly, Thomas was offended that Shreveport had not been given a fair chance to bid; he seemed to place the onus of responsibility for avoiding a Shreveport bid upon E. O. Ware. Ware was blamed for leading opposition to a Shreveport offer of 1900 and Thomas charged that he had endeavored for years to get the college to Central Louisiana. Thomas closed by promising to "most vigorously protest and violently oppose all efforts to build up a purely local and sectional school" unless the Convention had the final vote.¹⁰³

An immediate reply came from Secretary Ware as "An Open Letter to Bro. L. E. Thomas" was spread upon the entire front page of the Baptist Chronicle.¹⁰⁴ Expressing a hope that Thomas could be converted on the college question, Ware said that Thomas' talk about making the school sectional or local was "an attempt on your part to be 'funny.'" Admitting forthrightly his preference for a central location, Ware disclaimed any attempt to influence the committee. He noted that the motion and the second to accept the Alexandria-Pineville bid had been made by men who lived over one hundred miles from Alexandria.

Other powerful voices joined Ware's. Men of such stature as Editor

¹⁰³Ibid., June 29, 1905, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., July 6, 1905, p. 1.

Bruce Benton, who had always been friendly to the old colleges, and J. R. Edwards, who enjoyed great prestige among Louisiana Baptists, spoke in no uncertain tones their convictions on this matter. Benton charged that Thomas was "letting zeal for Shreveport get the better of his good judgment"; he also noted that Thomas had longed for a Shreveport location as long as Ware had desired an Alexandria one. Further, he insisted that Shreveport had not made an official offer though M. A. Price had made three trips to Shreveport to secure such a bid. Benton declared that Ware was ready to see Shreveport get the Baptist college. He pointed out that five of the nine members of the committee of thirteen who participated in the decision of June 7, 1905, were from extreme North Louisiana or extreme South Louisiana.¹⁰⁵ Edwards expressed surprise that Thomas would seek to stir a new controversy, asserting that as President of the Convention, Thomas knew all about what was happening. Edwards said, "I know the mind of our people. They want this question settled. It is settled. For God's sake let it stay settled."¹⁰⁶

The curtain began to drop upon the controversy as Thomas reconsidered in the face of such potent criticism. He wrote an article subsequently indicating that he was taking the advice of his brethren and "falling in line" on the college question; moreover, Thomas promised to aid the new school as much as he could.¹⁰⁷ When the Convention met at Shreveport in December, 1905, the committee report, indicating that one

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., June 29, 1905, p. 8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., July 13, 1905, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., July 20, 1905, p. 9.

of several sites in the Alexandria-Pineville vicinity would be the location for the college, was accepted enthusiastically, and plans were made to open in the fall of 1906.¹⁰⁸

In summary, the period from 1897 to 1905 encompassed an important transitional stage in Louisiana Baptist educational history. The earlier decision to remain with the status quo on the school question proved unsatisfactory; thus the Convention by the end of 1905 was officially responsible for three institutions, two actually in existence, but precariously, and a third one which appeared to be moving slowly from a dream to a reality. Economic conditions were favorable to progress in Louisiana after 1900. Agricultural losses suffered in the period between 1861 and 1877 were recovered by 1900.¹⁰⁹ The state began a period of industrial development at the turn of the century which would increase its gross wealth fourfold by 1925.¹¹⁰

The schools at Mount Lebanon and Keachie came under Convention control in 1899. Mount Lebanon was changed to a male college and Keachie, renamed Louisiana Baptist Female College, catered to girls. The hope that the schools could develop state-wide support and patronage did not materialize. Only the loyal efforts of local constituents enabled the institutions to survive. A promising endowment effort at Mount Lebanon in 1902-1904 was deflated when the deficit in current expenses continued to increase.

¹⁰⁸ L.B.C., Minutes, 1905, pp. 10, 21-24.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Adam Davis, Louisiana: A Narrative History (2d ed., Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 295.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 297; Francis Butler Simkins, A History of the South (3d ed., New York, 1963), p. 485.

Friends and supporters of the old schools had to acquiesce to the Boone Amendment in 1899 in order to secure approval of the action providing Convention control of Keachie and Mount Lebanon. Encouraged by the passage of the Boone Amendment, proponents of the third school idea sought to bring this plan to fruition in 1900 and again in 1901, only to be thwarted on each occasion. After a lapse of three years, this group, apparently an increasingly large one, moved decisively to implement the establishment of a new college in the Alexandria-Pineville area. Participants in this endeavor came from all parts of the state; but they were opposed by the powerful influence of some, most notably L. E. Thomas, who were loath to see Baptist educational efforts moved away from North Louisiana.

Louisiana Baptists had thus voted for progress and change in educational matters in 1899 and had decided by 1904-1905 that such progress could not be adequately achieved solely through the old schools. However, the concept of a new, centrally-located college was a fragile idea, the fate of which the future would tell. The educational issue was still unsettled.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD OF ORIGINS, 1906-1910

Realizing that it was committing itself to an educational program more deeply than at any previous time, the Louisiana Baptist Convention moved to arrange this enterprise under a single supervisory agency. The regular Education Committee at the Convention of 1905 recommended that the Special Committee of Thirteen, which had been instrumental in effecting the action providing for a central college, be made permanent as the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.¹ Membership was increased from thirteen to twenty-one, and the Commission was located at Alexandria. Responsibilities were to include supervision of all schools, adjustment of curricula, control of finances, employment of personnel, and appointment of local boards of trustees.² The appointment of this Education Commission indicated a fear of strife and friction among proponents of the several institutions as well as recognition that an expanding educational venture would have to be more tightly organized. Unfortunately, the events of the next several years brought the fears to realization, and the Education Commission succeeded ultimately only to the extent that it successfully pushed ahead with the establishment of

¹Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Fifty-Seventh Annual Session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1905, pp. 21-22. (Hereinafter referred to as L. B. C., Minutes.)

²Ibid.

the new college.

In the aftermath of the Convention of 1905, many Louisiana Baptists longed for a spirit of unity in educational matters. A Baptist Chronicle article reviewing the recent session expressed such hopes in the following comment: "Within a few more years, the great body of our people will stand strongly for a well-equipped College of Alexandria."³ A Chronicle editorial urged, "Let unity prevail; let enthusiasm grow; and let the college be builded."⁴

Considerable interest, and considerable friction, surrounded the Education Commission's selection of an exact site for the new school. The report of the Committee of Thirteen at the 1905 session of the Convention had specified a central Louisiana location, and it had mentioned that several locations in the Alexandria-Pineville area were under consideration.⁵ What appeared to be only a matter of routine, determining the precise spot for the new college, assumed ominous proportions as it became evident that the Commission was divided, some members favoring an Alexandria location and others preferring a site in Pineville, a small village directly across the Red River from Alexandria. The matter came to a head at a meeting on January 17, 1906, when the Commission voted ten to five in favor of Pineville, after a marathon session which lasted over ten hours.⁶ Members visited two locations, one on each side of the

³Baptist Chronicle, January 4, 1906, p. 5.

⁴Ibid., February 22, 1906, p. 8.

⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1905, pp. 10-11.

⁶"Minutes of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," January 17, 1906. (Hereinafter referred to as Education Commission, "Minutes.")

river, in the morning; they reassembled in the afternoon for discussion "as to the merits of the two sites offered."⁷ Apparently, something resembling a straw vote took place because M. J. Hoover, president of the Education Commission and pastor of the Emmanuel Baptist Church of Alexandria, offered his resignation from the Commission and departed before the group adjourned for supper. Hoover's action was subsequently described as being against his personal wishes; he desired to stay on the Commission but felt that his position would be untenable with so many of his friends and congregation preferring an Alexandria location.⁸ The remaining members returned at 8:00 p.m. and eventually arrived at the Pineville decision. Ironically, L. E. Thomas, who had vehemently opposed the action favoring the central location for the college in the summer of 1905, was the presiding officer when the final choice of exact location was reached, having been elected as temporary presiding officer after Hoover's departure.⁹

The disappointment of the members who had voted for an Alexandria site was only part of the whole picture; the frustration experienced by the Alexandria community was another dimension. In June, 1905, when bids from various areas were being considered, a news article expressed a sentiment which probably reflected a community attitude:

The great Baptist college will wonderfully increase our population and help to bring Alexandria to that 'greatness' in population and prosperity, for which her best

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Baptist Chronicle, January 18, 1906, p. 4.

⁹ Education Commission, "Minutes," January 17, 1906.

people have striven for so many years. Nail the Baptist college flag to Alexandria's masthead and pull it down for no other city of the State.¹⁰

Most of the cash bonus used to attempt to secure the new college had apparently been provided by Alexandria citizens and interests. Aside from finances, there was the matter of injured pride, for the selection of the Pineville site was a blow at Alexandria prestige. The transportation problem, with a toll bridge and the frequent threat of flooding, limited educational services to the Alexandria community. Finally, there were undoubtedly those individuals who were disappointed when personal hopes for economic gain were thwarted by the decision to locate in Pineville.¹¹ For all these reasons, the new school could expect to receive less than a full measure of support from the Alexandria area as it proceeded to implement its program. That a simmering discontent continued to exist was to be demonstrated several years later when an unexpected event placed the matter of location in doubt once again.

Much speculation about an appropriate name for the new college was evident in the spring of 1906. Among the numerous suggestions were Louisiana Baptist College, Hartwell College, Carey College, The New College of St. John, The Loyal Baptist College of Louisiana, The Louisiana Central Baptist College, Paxton College, Red River College, Louisiana College, The E. O. Ware Central Baptist College, Tichenor Memorial College, and, strangely, Alexandria College or Mount Lebanon College.¹² A particular dispute erupted regarding the wisdom of using "Baptist" in

¹⁰Alexandria Daily Town Talk, June 5, 1905, p. 1.

¹¹Baptist Chronicle, March 9, 1911, p. 8.

¹²Ibid., March 8, 1906, p. 8.

the name, some preferring it and others pronouncing it superfluous or provincial.¹³ At length the name "Louisiana College" was settled upon by the Commission. Editor Bruce Benton spoke for many Baptists when he said, "We had hoped the college would have a different name, but now.... we are satisfied."¹⁴ The problem of settling upon a name did not produce lasting scars similar to the dispute over location.

The Education Commission pushed ahead with the project, appointing committees to arrange curricula, to supervise the erection of buildings, and to direct finances.¹⁵ Having failed to secure M. A. Price as financial agent, the Commission turned to E. O. Ware, then closing out fourteen consecutive years as Corresponding Secretary of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. He worked part-time at forty dollars per month until July 31st; then he left his convention post and became full-time financial agent for the Commission at \$1,500 per year, plus traveling expenses.¹⁶ Ware, being wonderfully versatile and totally committed to the new school, became active in all phases of the groundwork, including faculty selection and erection of buildings. It was probably best that he assumed these responsibilities since no one of prominence among Louisiana Baptists had so long and so completely promoted the new venture. At the same time, his efforts in this connection had doubtless limited his capacity to lead in the total program of the Convention.

The building program was pushed, but it became apparent that

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., May 3, 1906.

¹⁵Education Commission, "Minutes," January 17, 1906.

¹⁶Ibid., March 22, 1906.

temporary buildings offered the only hope of operating the school for the 1906-1907 session. Accordingly, a humble beginning, described previously herein, was made on October 3, 1906, with three faculty members and a student body of only nineteen. A month later, the Education Commission said in its annual report to the Convention, "There are now between twenty-five and thirty students in attendance; others have been requested to wait until later to enter."¹⁷ Eventually, a total of fifty-two students enrolled during the 1906-1907 session.¹⁸ Though there were only two candidates for graduation, elaborate commencement exercises were conducted, with dignitaries present from several prominent Baptist colleges. Describing the program as "an intellectual and spiritual treat," a news article observed, "The first session of Louisiana College has passed into history. And while there were obstacles to be surmounted and some discouragement, we may look back upon it as a successful beginning--an earnest of greater things."¹⁹

The selection of a faculty for Louisiana College was a matter requiring careful attention; a few mistakes in this area might easily have undermined the whole venture. Two members of the original faculty of three were chosen in the early spring of 1906.²⁰ Professor W. E. Taylor was named "Chairman of the Faculty" at an annual salary of \$1,600. Claybrook Cottingham, erstwhile president of Mount Lebanon Baptist Male College, was elected to a chair in Greek and philosophy. Taylor, a graduate

¹⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1906, p. 41.

¹⁸Baptist Chronicle, September 19, 1907, p. 1.

¹⁹Ibid., July 4, 1907, p. 1.

²⁰Education Commission, "Minutes," March 22, 1906.

of Clinton College in Kentucky and Purdue University, taught biology and geology in addition to handling his administrative responsibilities. The final member of the original faculty was Editor Bruce Benton of the Baptist Chronicle, who was also a former Keachie instructor. A graduate of Wake Forest College, Benton was named professor of Latin.²¹ His had been a voice of moderation and hopefulness during the period of the great educational debate. Aside from the stature and ability of the men, one is impelled to note a certain balancing of the faculty. One professor had a Keachie background; one was from Mount Lebanon; and one came from a public educational institution. All three seemed satisfactory to the Baptists in northern Louisiana, Taylor having been president of Louisiana Industrial Institute at Ruston.

Two modifications regarding the faculty occurred in a short while. Increased enrollment, with seventy-five students in attendance by November, 1907, and an expectation of one hundred by January, 1908, led to an increase in faculty members from three to five.²² Early in 1908, the faculty presented a memorial to the Education Commission which led to a second change. The prevailing plan of administration was brought into question as revealed by this excerpt from the Commission's records: "The memorial from the faculty of Louisiana College was... referred to a committee of five who were to, in consultation with the faculty, recommend a suitable man for president."²³ The nature of the faculty memorial is not stated; it may have criticized Chairman Taylor, or, on the other hand, it may have recommended that he be made president. However, the

²¹Baptist Chronicle, July 11, 1907, p. 8.

²²L.B.C., Minutes, 1907, pp. 21-22.

²³Education Commission, "Minutes," January 2, 1908.

Commission ultimately settled on E. O. Ware to serve as president.²⁴

Though materials are inadequate at this point, one might conjecture that Taylor's weakness was lack of contacts within the Convention and lack of experience in its procedures. Ware could be expected to excel in these areas.

The promising trend toward increased enrollment at Louisiana College during its first two sessions was severely interrupted when only forty students appeared to start the 1908-1909 session.²⁵ Despite the completion of Alexandria Hall, a three-story brick structure containing offices, classrooms, and living accommodations for one hundred students, other factors mitigated against the enterprise.²⁶ A national financial depression was especially devastating in the South. One writer said, "Boll weevils, overflows, [and] cyclones have joined league with the money panic to make this a time to try the mettle of our people."²⁷ The Committee on Education at the 1908 session of the Convention, noting the sharp decline in attendance, sounded a warning, "This attendance is not sufficient to meet the running expenses."²⁸ A year later, the 1909 Convention received a more encouraging report. Sixty-five students, nine of them candidates for the ministry, had enrolled, and the new president, W. G. Friley, who had succeeded Ware at the close of the previous

²⁴ Ibid., June 4, 1908.

²⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1908, pp. 22-23

²⁶ Louisiana College, Louisiana College, Second Annual Catalogue and Announcements for the Session 1908-1909, p. 13. (Hereinafter referred to as L.C., Catalogue.)

²⁷ Baptist Chronicle, July 2, 1908, p. 3.

²⁸ L.B.C., Minutes, 1908, pp. 29-30.

session, was quoted as feeling "that the future of the college is assured...."²⁹

The trend continued in 1910 as the enrollment increased from ninety-nine in September to one hundred fifteen when the Convention met in November. Messengers to the Convention were informed that all but two rooms in the dormitory were full and that additional space would have to be provided for further increases.³⁰ Alexandria Hall was the only major building at that time. A smaller structure housed the kitchen and dining facilities. The struggle to maintain and increase attendance had been long and tedious, requiring the combined efforts of administration, faculty, and students, and also depending heavily upon ministers and churches to point their young people to the new school. The original faculty was rehired for a second session in the spring of 1907 and directed "to make an active canvass for students during the vacation...."³¹ Faculty members received only their actual expenses for such endeavors. A record of 1910 indicated a plan to pay ten dollars per student for every enrollee secured by non-faculty canvassers, this amount to be taken from the first semester tuition.³²

The new school was constantly plagued with financial difficulties. E. O. Ware once declared that denominational education was the "single most important subject in front of Louisiana Baptists" as he stressed

²⁹Ibid., 1909, p. 37.

³⁰Baptist Chronicle, September 22, 1910, p. 6; L.B.C., Minutes, 1910, p. 26.

³¹"Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," March 7, 1907. (Hereinafter referred to as Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes.")

³²Ibid., April 26, 1910.

the imperative need for support of the Convention's educational endeavors.³³ Similar assertions abound in the Convention records of the period. Yet the truth was that Louisiana Baptists did not provide material support in a degree commensurate with the needs and obligations of a new college. As mentioned previously, the building program was severely limited, with only a single structure of collegiate proportions erected by the end of 1910. The facilities that were provided came only after heroic efforts involving personal sacrifice, incessant financial campaigns, and frequent borrowing of funds for both capital improvements and the operating expenses of the school. By the time of the 1910 session of the Convention, Louisiana College was able to report a property value of slightly over \$50,000, but this was offset by an indebtedness of \$40,000.³⁴ Additionally, despite a near capacity enrollment, the report revealed a small deficit in current operations. An endowment fund in excess of \$17,000, which was yielding about \$1,250 a year, had been accumulated at this point.³⁵ Faculty salaries could not always be met, as evidenced by a 1907 vote to "give certificates of indebtedness to the teachers at the end of every month."³⁶ The needs were great, almost too great, and the difficulties were numerous. These difficulties resulted from a combination of circumstances including economic adversity, limited denominational enthusiasm for the new school because of the long educational dispute, and apathy in the Alexandria area because of the

³³ Baptist Chronicle, June 25, 1908, p. 3.

³⁴ L.B.C., Minutes, 1910, pp. 23-24.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," November 12, 1907.

Pineville location.

The program projected by Louisiana College was obviously designed to supplement the denominational program, but it also contemplated the responsibility of projecting a Christian influence upon society at large. An early catalog denied that the college was a theological school and expressed the hope that prominent doctors, lawyers, farmers, and engineers would go forth from its halls. It said, "The aim shall be to develop Men. Effort shall be [made] to give a thorough college course, in addition to the course in Bible Study, which any student may take. . . and ministerial students must take."³⁷ Baptists were concerned because state colleges were employing professors who were devoid of commitment to religious and moral concepts. An early statement of purpose for Louisiana College included the following: "It especially holds the State schools to [a] high standard of scholarship and to a wise discipline The denominational college is needed . . . to qualify ministers to defend the faith and [to] equip scholars whose sanctified learning will be used for the glory of God."³⁸

Louisiana College offered only one degree, the bachelor of arts; graduates were few in number as only three degrees were conferred in the first two sessions.³⁹ The curriculum emphasized the liberal arts. Two literary societies, the Athenians and the Cadmians, appeared in these formative years, and one of the requirements for graduation was the

³⁷ L.C., Catalogue, 1909-1910, p. 15.

³⁸ Ibid., 1908-1909, p. 7.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 16; Baptist Chronicle, July 11, 1907, p. 8; Ibid., June 11, 1908, p. 3.

presentation of an original essay or oration.⁴⁰ The erection of a Carnegie Library in Alexandria helped to offset the handicap which was presented by the inadequate library at the College.⁴¹ Worthy standards were projected as the young institution planned in 1910 to implement admissions requirements as set forth by the Southern Association of Colleges.⁴² The College included an academic department for those not prepared for regular collegiate work.⁴³ Exercising a paternal control over all phases of student life, the new school provided a program of athletics for physical development.⁴⁴ Football and baseball teams appeared by 1907. Moral and spiritual guidance were attempted through compulsory chapel services and church attendance.⁴⁵ Sunday School classes were held on the campus.

An emphasis on the preparation of teachers for the public school system developed at Louisiana College in this earliest period. A 1910 news article indicated an intention "to improve [the] pedagogy course so graduates can get certificates without examination."⁴⁶ Graduates were already exempt from public school examination except in the theory and art of teaching.⁴⁷ The public school system was experiencing rapid

⁴⁰L.C., Catalogue, 1909-1910, p. 16; Ibid., 1910-1911, p. 33.

⁴¹Ibid., 1908-1909, p. 13.

⁴²Ibid., 1910-1911, p. 24.

⁴³Ibid., 1908-1909, p. 7.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1909-1910, p. 16.

⁴⁵L.C., Catalogue, 1908-1909, p. 13.

⁴⁶Baptist Chronicle, July 28, 1910, p. 9.

⁴⁷Ibid.

development by 1910, and it would continue to need qualified personnel in years to come.⁴⁸ The new college was gearing its program accordingly.

Three administrators served Louisiana College in its first four sessions, and the tenure of one of them involved a divisive experiment. After W. E. Taylor departed at the end of the second session, E. O. Ware became the first president of Louisiana College, serving only for the 1908-1909 session. In the spring of 1909, when Ware indicated a desire to be relieved of administrative responsibilities, the position was offered to Dr. W. C. Friley of Texas. Ware then became a professor of English and Bible, combining these duties with his perennial ministerial functions.⁴⁹ Friley indicated that he would accept the presidency if Louisiana College were made a coeducational school.⁵⁰ The Education Commission, after considerable reflection, voted in favor of coeducation.⁵¹ However, the Commission's report to the 1909 session of the Convention stated, "It is proper to submit in this place that there are members of the Board [Commission] who do not prefer coeducation, and their agreement to its adoption was yielded because it was declared to be a necessary measure in view of the peculiar emergencies of our educational situation."⁵² The coeducation policy was offensive to Louisiana

⁴⁸ Edwin Adams Davis, Louisiana: A Narrative History (2d ed.; Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 306.

⁴⁹ Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," April 15, 1909.

⁵⁰ Ibid., May 6, 1909.

⁵¹ Education Commission, "Minutes," May 31, 1909.

⁵² L.B.C., Minutes, 1909, p. 31.

Baptist Female College, and it did not result in a great increase in attendance. Dr. Friley submitted his resignation in April, 1910, having been informed that his services would "no longer be needed after this session."⁵³ The coeducation policy was rescinded in June, 1910; the college continued to accept local girls for its classes while directing boarders to Louisiana Baptist Female College.⁵⁴

As the young college struggled to surmount its difficulties, other aspects of the Louisiana Baptist educational venture were being worked out in North Louisiana. The enabling action for the establishment of the new college contained a provision that Mount Lebanon Baptist Male College would be converted into "a preparatory school of high grade" with a course of study intended to articulate with the curriculum of Louisiana College.⁵⁵ Subsequently, the Education Commission was authorized to exercise general supervision over the Mount Lebanon enterprise, including the function of appointing trustees to the local board.⁵⁶ Mount Lebanon Baptist Male College was terminated at the end of the 1905-1906 session, and the school was operated for the next several years as Mount Lebanon Academy of Louisiana College. Expressing a willingness to cooperate with the new college but reflecting a sense of wounded pride, the Mount Lebanon community made a genuine attempt to adapt to its new role.⁵⁷ Records of the era reveal occasional instances

⁵³Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," April 26, 1910; Education Commission, "Minutes," April 7, 1910.

⁵⁴L.B.C., Minutes, 1910, p. 24; Baptist Chronicle, July 7, 1910, p. 9.

⁵⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1904, pp. 30-31.

⁵⁶Ibid., 1905, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁷Baptist Chronicle, June 21, 1906, p. 3.

in which individuals expressed regret that the college at Mount Lebanon had never received the decree of support that was coming to the new school. However, extant materials do not reveal overt efforts on the part of the Mount Lebanon group to re-establish the college there during the 1906-1910 period.

The role of the Education Commission as the controlling body of Mount Lebanon Academy was generally accepted. The records which have survived depict a conciliatory relationship between the Commission and Mount Lebanon. In particular, the local board of trustees acquiesced in the Commission's authority and functioned at its direction. Decisions regarding personnel, curricula, and programs were made with active participation by the Commission.⁵⁸ Financial matters were more frequently left in the hands of the local board, a seven-member group appointed by the Commission.⁵⁹ The Academy made its annual reports to the Convention through the Commission.⁶⁰ Withal, one senses a nostalgic longing for a better role than fate had decreed. One important exception to the policy of cooperation between Mount Lebanon and the Commission was the failure of the local board to relinquish Mount Lebanon Academy property to the Commission.

The departure of Claybook Cottingham, who had been president of Mount Lebanon Baptist Male College during the 1905-1906 session, left the school without an administrator as it prepared to shift into its new

⁵⁸ Ibid., June 28, 1906, p. 8; L.B.C., Minutes, 1907, p. 20; Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," August 9, 1909.

⁵⁹ Education Commission, "Minutes," May 6, 1908.

⁶⁰ L.B.C., Minutes, 1909, p. 37.

status. F. L. Cox, a relative newcomer to Louisiana, was subsequently elected principal of the Academy.⁶¹ He proved adequate to the challenge as he directed the implementation of the new program. His brother, J. C. Cox, became a faculty member and, in a rather unusual action, the two of them were elected to serve as co-principals for the 1908-1909 session.⁶² Both were talented ministers, traveling frequently to fill speaking engagements. Possibly the co-principalship was designed to insure that someone in authority would be present at the school most of the time. In the spring of 1909, F. L. Cox resigned, leaving his brother as sole principal of Mount Lebanon. Another change of leadership occurred after two months of the 1909-1910 session had passed. Professor Charles Friley was designated to act as principal for the remainder of that session.⁶³ When school opened in the fall of 1910, John P. Durham occupied the administrative role.⁶⁴ One cannot evaluate the abilities of these administrators with any degree of precision since the materials which have survived are extremely sketchy. It can be asserted, however, that such short tenures in the executive position deprived the school of an aura of stability.

The problem of enrollment was less acute at Mount Lebanon than at Louisiana College, but the Mount Lebanon institution encountered more desperate financial circumstances than the new school. Attendance climbed to one hundred thirty-five during the 1907-1908 session, an

⁶¹Baptist Chronicle, June 28, 1906, p. 8.

⁶²Education Commission, "Minutes," May 6, 1908.

⁶³Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," October 26, 1909.

⁶⁴Baptist Chronicle, June 30, 1910, p. 13.

increase of fifty over the previous term.⁶⁵ A year later, an enrollment of one hundred seventy-two was achieved at the Academy.⁶⁶ A considerable percentage of Mount Lebanon's students were candidates for the ministry; for example, sixteen of one hundred twelve students reported at the beginning of the 1909-1910 session planned to enter the ministry.⁶⁷ The financial dilemma continued unabated throughout this period. Student fees were inadequate to provide funds for current expenses. Outside gifts were not sufficient to provide equipment and repairs to implement a sound educational program. Pleas for aid were frequently accompanied by proud claims about the high caliber of work which was being achieved in spite of adverse circumstances. Doubtless there were many sacrificial efforts to surmount the obstacles, particularly by local board members who constantly contributed of their private means, but the needs were so great and the resources so depleted that the gap between what was needed and what could be provided remained formidable. Even occasions of rejoicing were set in relief by awareness of somber circumstances. Principal J. C. Cox told of a holiday which had been declared when the enrollment reached one hundred. He related, "The principal had said something about turkey for dinner. We had the holiday. . .but on account of the money stringency . . . we had fried chicken instead of turkey."⁶⁸

He went on to say:

⁶⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1908, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1909, p. 31.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Baptist Chronicle, January 30, 1908, p. 4.

The Academy is not self-supporting as is intimated in the minutes of the Convention. It never will be self-supporting. It will take help by annual gifts of a sufficient endowment to keep it going. I call attention to the report, however, and say that nowhere in the land are the Baptists or any other denomination getting as much for as many students with as little help as Louisiana Baptists are getting at Mt. Lebanon.⁶⁹

The program at Mount Lebanon Academy in these years was much the same as it had been during the past decade. Some had questioned the caliber of its program in those years, declaring its collegiate work to be inferior. Aside from handicaps imposed by inadequate facilities, the college was limited in that few of its students had been prepared for collegiate study. As an academy, it functioned more successfully. Its graduates were accepted at Louisiana College without question.⁷⁰ Some of them were accepted with advanced standing at older schools in other states such as Baylor in Texas and Judson in Alabama.⁷¹ A small dedicated corps of instructors supervised academic, spiritual, and social development of the young people who came to their care. Seeking to maintain its role in the evolving Louisiana Baptist educational picture, Mount Lebanon through news articles of the period extolled the importance of academies in facilitating effective collegiate programs. The men of Mount Lebanon urged the need for additional academies to serve as feeders for the new college, and they anticipated the friendly competition that might ensue.⁷² The Education Commission appeared to envision such additional academies at one time, although this interest

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., September 13, 1906, p. 1.

⁷¹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1908, p. 37.

⁷² Baptist Chronicle, April 19, 1906, p. 2.

faded as the financial problems for the established schools mounted alarmingly.⁷³ The school at Mount Lebanon repudiated the suggestion of some that its program be expanded to include manual and industrial training, preferring to remain with a strictly academic curriculum with heavy emphasis upon ministerial training.⁷⁴

Mount Lebanon Academy was violently criticized by the Louisiana Baptist Female College when it began to accept girls. The Mount Lebanon administration upheld its practice, pointing out that Louisiana College had succeeded Mount Lebanon in the collegiate role and that the Convention of 1904 had put no bounds on the anticipated academy at Mount Lebanon. An article said, "It will be time enough for [them] to remonstrate when Louisiana College begins to make an effort to get the girls."⁷⁵ Capable supervision of all its students, but especially the girls, was a Mount Lebanon hallmark as reflected by the following comment:

Had I a daughter to send off from home to school, I know of no lady to whom I would so willingly intrust her as to the wife of our Principal. Of rare culture and refinement, of unerring discretion, of consistent piety and of wonderful magnetism, she is eminently fitted for the position that she holds. In discharging the duties that she has assumed, she is as gentle as a zephyr, as bright as a sunbeam, but as firm as Gibraltar [sic].⁷⁶

Mrs. J. C. Cox was serving as matron of girls at the time. The "she graduates" of Mount Lebanon, perhaps with fond memories of days at the

⁷³L.B.C., Minutes, 1906, p. 39.

⁷⁴Baptist Chronicle, January 10, 1907, p. 10; *Ibid.*, January 24, 1907, p. 5.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, September 26, 1907, p. 3.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, January 3, 1907, p. 3.

old school, formed an alumni association.⁷⁷

Louisiana Baptist Female College made little attempt to adapt to the Convention's new educational program in 1906 and afterward. In particular, the school refused to acknowledge the authority of the Education Commission, always choosing to bypass the Commission and make its report directly to the Convention. This belligerence may have developed because of a fear that the Commission would oppose a contemplated transfer of the college from Keachie to the city of Shreveport. The Commission's report to the 1906 Convention was not approved until it had been amended. The amendment, offered by a prominent Shreveport minister, H. A. Sumrell, authorized the trustees of Louisiana Baptist Female College "to seek and consider any advantageous proposition which may be secured toward moving the institution to Shreveport...."⁷⁸ Five members of the Commission signed a statement indicating disagreement with the Commission's action during 1906. These individuals had opposed the Pineville location for the new college, and they may also have favored a Shreveport location for the girls' college.

The trustees of Louisiana Baptist Female College were unable to carry out the contemplated move to Shreveport. Other factors, such as the general economic adversity of the time, probably contributed to this situation, but the continued wrangle over authority between the trustees of this college and the Education Commission played a very prominent part. Various informal meetings were held between the two groups. The Commission said to the college trustees, "The male college at Mt.

⁷⁷"Minutes of Alumni Meeting of Mount Lebanon Academy," May 31, 1909.

⁷⁸L.B.C., Minutes, 1906, p. 42.

Lebanon took the necessary steps and turned over all its affairs to the Commission [We] expected . . . that you would do the same thing. . . ." ⁷⁹ Strained feelings continued until the trustees of Louisiana Baptist Female College asked the 1907 Convention "to make clear the whole matter and settle, once for all, the relation Louisiana Baptist Female College sustains to the Education Commission." ⁸⁰ The Convention adopted a statement that "this school should sustain the same relation as that sustained by the other schools." ⁸¹ Since the college had not -- and seemingly would not -- accept such a relationship, the same instrument made several other provisions. First, a move to Shreveport was specifically authorized. Second, the board of trustees was given sole management of all the school's affairs. Third, its trustees would be selected primarily from the Shreveport area. Fourth, the report of the board would be made each year through the Education Commission. ⁸² In effect, the Commission was almost completely removed from control of Louisiana Baptist Female College because of its unwillingness to accept such control. Annual reports to the Convention were made, but they were never made through the Commission. The move to Shreveport never materialized.

Under the respected G. W. Thigpen, the college at Keachie struggled onward. Enrollment was woefully low, with fifty-one students reported

⁷⁹ Education Commission, "Minutes," January 1, 1907.

⁸⁰ L.B.C., Minutes, 1907, p. 20.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 33.

⁸² Ibid.

in 1906, forty-one in 1907, and only thirty-four in 1908.⁸³ Most of the students were boarders. Thigpen bemoaned the low enrollment, which he attributed to Louisiana Baptist indifference to their own schools, noting that "they send their children to other schools to get no better than our schools supply."⁸⁴ The debt increased alarmingly from \$1,500 to \$1,900 and finally to \$3,700.⁸⁵ News items from Keachie were few and far between as the grim fight for survival was waged to no avail. The 1908 report to the Convention stated, "In view of the fact that for the past two years our school has not paid expenses, and as the educational outlook was not encouraging, to avoid an increase of debt, we have not resumed exercises for the current session."⁸⁶

The paucity of information makes it difficult to reconstruct the crisis of 1908-1909 at Keachie. Seemingly, all or part of the indebtedness was in the form of obligations to Thigpen, who apparently resigned at the end of the 1907-1908 session. The trustees proceeded to transfer the college property to him, thereupon precipitating a wave of excitement in the Keachie community as supporters of the school sought to rescind the transfer by raising funds to meet the crisis.⁸⁷ At length, the school was back in the trustees' hands, but its future was as clouded as ever.⁸⁸ One can only speculate at the chain of events which

⁸³ Ibid., 1906, p. 15; Ibid., 1907, p. 19; Ibid., 1908, p. 33.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1906, p. 16.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 1908, p. 32.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

⁸⁷ Baptist Chronicle, January 28, 1909, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., April 29, 1909, p. 7.

may have precipitated this crisis. Though Thigpen departed the scene, there were no visible inferences of financial culpability on his part.

Excitement ran high as the effort to revive the college continued. One writer declared, "It was there, for I have been to Keachie today, and though I did not see the fire, I felt it."⁸⁹ Another article expressed a plan to secure a new administrator and to request the Convention to transfer the college to the Grand Cane Association.⁹⁰ A rejoinder quickly insisted that the trustees wanted Louisiana Baptist Female College to remain denominational property and to remain at Keachie.⁹¹

Professor O. J. Peterson assumed the presidency and proved to be an enthusiastic though controversial leader. He was an outspoken partisan, as revealed in this statement:

A clear field, fair treatment by those who come in touch with the people, no poisoning of the atmosphere with the venom of old days of dissension -- these are the boons I would crave of those who would see the old College succeed. Are there others? If so, I trust their antagonism will be manly. Snakes in the grass are the most dangerous -- and the human ones the most despicable. The foregoing is merely of general application I know no one so disposed; yet I know that if anything deters us from success[,] it is going to be indifference, or sneaking hostility. May there be nothing of the kind, but if there shall be, verily the offenders shall have their rewards.⁹²

Thirty-four girls had enrolled by November, 1909, and Peterson was expecting others.⁹³ He especially hoped to popularize the college as a

⁸⁹ Ibid., June 10, 1909, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid., May 13, 1909, p. 4.

⁹¹ Ibid., May 20, 1909, p. 13.

⁹² Ibid., April 28, 1910, p. 11.

⁹³ L.B.C., Minutes, 1909, pp. 28-29.

training school for young women desiring to enter the teaching profession.⁹⁴ Peterson admitted that his school lacked satisfactory apparatus for teaching the sciences, but he suggested that "only one woman in a hundred wants such a course . . . or would be materially benefitted by it."⁹⁵

A notable development of the 1909-1910 period was a tendency, perhaps fostered by Peterson, for the college at Keachie to work with the Education Commission. Perhaps there was a genuine feeling that this was the proper procedure; it may also have been intended to accomplish particular goals. Louisiana College had begun admitting girls while the college at Keachie was closed, Peterson reminded the 1909 Convention of the arrangement whereby his school was designated as the girls' college for Louisiana Baptists.⁹⁶ The Education Commission revoked its coeducational policy six months later. The Reverend C. B. Hollis, financial agent of the revived school at Keachie, attended a meeting of the Education Commission in December, 1909, stating that he had been "directed to cooperate with this Commission."⁹⁷ Main interest at the meeting centered upon plans for a state-wide financial campaign scheduled for January, 1910. Hollis stated that Louisiana Baptist Female College would request one-fourth of the proceeds of the campaign.⁹⁸ Several months later, a

⁹⁴Baptist Chronicle, December 23, 1909, p. 3.

⁹⁵Catalogue of Louisiana Female College, Keachie, Louisiana, 1909-1910 (Alexandria, 1909), p. 7.

⁹⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1909, p. 29.

⁹⁷Education Commission, "Minutes," December 3, 1909.

⁹⁸Ibid.

check for fourteen dollars was mailed to Keachie with a tart explanation this was all the money which had come from that area.⁹⁹

As 1910 drew to a close, President Peterson reported an enrollment equal to that of the previous year.¹⁰⁰ The conciliatory policy continued as he noted that the Louisiana Baptist Female College had "funded the debt remaining from the old regime" in order to leave the field clear for the Commission, which was about to launch a campaign for \$100,000.¹⁰¹ Peterson indicated that the notes on the funded debt would be due in 1913 and that Louisiana Baptists would be expected to help liquidate them. He expressed a hope that the school would be full by that time, little realizing that it would pass into oblivion before 1913.

Louisiana Baptists grew numerically between 1906 and 1910, but they were impeded by financial adversity and frequent changes of leadership. Receipts for denominational programs suffered in the aftermath of the money panic of 1907-1908 and constant incursions upon the cotton economy by the boll weevil. Floods posed an additional handicap. The departure of E. O. Ware to work in various capacities to further the development of the embryonic Louisiana College left a vacuum of leadership in the important position of Corresponding Secretary for the Convention. Faithful dedicated men followed Ware, but their tenures of service were so brief as to limit their effectiveness.¹⁰² By 1910, A. L. Johnston,

⁹⁹Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," June 15, 1910.

¹⁰⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1910, p. 30.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²C. Penrose St. Amant, A Short History of Louisiana Baptists (Nashville, 1948), pp. 101-102.

W. N. Johnson, and J. Benjamin Lawrence had occupied the position.

Lawrence, who was destined to fill a large role in Southern Baptist Convention affairs during a lengthy career, vacated the Secretary's office after only a year. The Executive Board then turned to Ware, who assumed his old responsibilities in 1910.¹⁰³

Difficult times had also hit the Baptist Chronicle, which had experienced a precarious existence from 1903 onward. The capable Bruce Benton, who departed to become a faculty member at the new college, served until 1906. A variety of editorial arrangements ensued, culminating in 1909, when Corresponding Secretary Lawrence, a man of prodigious energy and ability, doubled as editor.¹⁰⁴ After the Convention failed in an effort to assume control of the paper, former editor R. M. Boone was allowed to return to his old role in 1910.¹⁰⁵ Thus two principal figures in the unfolding educational controversy were once more in the limelight.

Louisiana College found herself without an administrator for the third time in as many years at the end of the 1909-1910 session. The Education Commission, perhaps impressed with the versatility and vigor of the man, now turned to Claybrook Gottingham to become the third president.¹⁰⁶ Gottingham, aged twenty-nine, was already a veteran of the Louisiana Baptist educational scene. Four years at Mount Lebanon, culminating in service as the last president before that school was reduced

¹⁰³ L.B.C., Minutes, 1910, p. 78.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Education Commission, "Minutes," June 2, 1910.

to an academy, had been followed by four years, 1906-1910, as professor at Louisiana College. He had also been employed as bookkeeper for the Education Commission.¹⁰⁷

When the Convention of 1910 met, hopes for the future were measurably brighter. The financial horizon was promising, and experienced men were in responsible positions. Louisiana College had a new and enthusiastic president. Though the special educational campaign of the previous January had received mediocre response, the Education Commission, flushed with a sense of urgency because of its obligations and an attitude of confidence because of signs of educational harmony, requested permission to launch a campaign to raise \$100,000.¹⁰⁸ The request was approved, and, after seeking several prominent Baptists to serve in the new position of Educational Secretary, the Commission settled upon the young president Cottingham to fill this additional role.¹⁰⁹ A new era appeared to be dawning, but Louisiana Baptists scarcely realized the form it would take.

In summary, a backward look reveals progress because a new college had been founded and nurtured through difficult years. The Convention's commitment to a new school, never approaching unanimity, had been limited by the conflicts over location and the selection of a specific site. This made the work of the Commission more difficult. Adverse economic factors developed in 1907 and afterward, further increasing the handicap under which the new enterprise was promoted. Frequent changes of

¹⁰⁷Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," August 6, 1907.

¹⁰⁸L.B.C., Minutes, 1910, pp. 29-30.

¹⁰⁹Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," June 15, 1910; L.B.C., Minutes, 1910, p. 25.

executive responsibility, in the Convention itself and at the new college, contributed to the dilemma. But, against all odds, men of faith and vision launched the new school.

Mount Lebanon Academy waged a heroic struggle to retain its position in Louisiana Baptist educational endeavors. Handicapped by its isolated location and antiquated facilities, this school sought to cooperate with the Education Commission, an agency created to coordinate all educational efforts of the Convention. Expressing confidence that the preparatory function was a strategic one if a strong collegiate program was to be developed by Baptists, the Mount Lebanon personnel hoped to see other Baptist academies founded around the state. As always, the faithfulness of the local area stood the school in good stead. Attendance remained fairly good, but persistent deficits in operating expenses clouded the future of Mount Lebanon.

Louisiana Baptist Female College responded defensively and belligerently to the changes of 1905 and afterward. In particular, the school at Keachie was offended when Mount Lebanon Academy began to accept girls for enrollment. It refused to recognize the Education Commission and continued to deal directly with the Convention, thus forcing the Convention to accommodate its ruffled feelings to some extent. Enrollment was pitifully low and the debt increased, provoking the college to suspend operations in 1908. After nearly losing the property, the area people rallied to Keachie's support. Under a new president, O. J. Peterson, some efforts to cooperate with the Commission were evident, but one is doubtful of the purpose of the new approach. Though Louisiana College forsook its policy of coeducation, the future of the school at Keachie, which had failed in its hope of relocating in the population

center of Shreveport, hung by a slender thread.

Suddenly, on January 3, 1911, fire destroyed the buildings at Louisiana College, and a crisis of epic proportions quickly developed within the Convention.

CHAPTER V

THE PERIOD OF GROWTH, 1911-1920

The fragile unity and guarded optimism which had prompted the Louisiana Baptist Convention to launch the \$100,000 Campaign for Education in November, 1910, were shattered on the freezing night of January 3, 1911. A \$40,000 fire destroyed the handsome three-story main building, Norman in architectural style, and the small dining hall structure which comprised the only permanent facilities of Louisiana College.¹ A subsequent report commented:

. . . the College building was destroyed by fire, originating from the furnace of the heating plant. The intense cold, freezing the hydrants, there was no water available. But for this unfortunate fact there probably would have been no loss, since when the blaze was discovered a small quantity of water would have been sufficient to extinguish it.²

The Baptist Chronicle carried a black-bordered, front page article with a picture of the burned hull of the main building which had become a prominent landmark in the village of Pineville. Sounding a hopeful note, the writer commented, "This providential occurrence may afford a great opportunity . . . to rise and launch a great educational

¹Alexandria Daily Town Talk, January 3, 1911, p. 1.

²Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Called Meeting, April 5, 1911, p. 14. (Hereinafter referred to as L.B.C., Minutes of Called Meeting.)

enterprise . . . in which all our Baptists will rally with an even greater enthusiasm."³

President Claybrook Cottingham held the program together as students and citizens of the Pineville area rallied to the support of Louisiana College. Only a few students had to withdraw from school; these had lost all their possessions in the blaze. Some furniture for classrooms and offices had been salvaged, and most of the dining room equipment was saved. With a single wood-frame building the courageous Cottingham continued; only one day of school was missed.⁴

The Education Commission was called for a special meeting on January 5, but the meeting failed to produce a quorum. However, the Board of Directors of the Commission were present to hear Cottingham's report of the misfortune and his plans for continuing the operation.⁵ These men engaged in a "good deal of informal talk . . . as to [the] question of change of location" ⁶ Such discussion was ruled out of order when the point was raised, probably indicating a conflict of sentiment.

Editor R. M. Boone urged that the Convention meet in special session to deal with educational matters, noting that such a gathering "would be something new under the sun, and would give emphasis to education as nothing else would."⁷ When the Education Commission met in

³Baptist Chronicle, January 5, 1911, p. 1.

⁴Ibid., January 12, 1911, p. 8.

⁵"Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," January 5, 1911. (Hereinafter referred to as Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes.")

⁶Ibid.

⁷Baptist Chronicle, January 26, 1911, p. 8.

February, 1911, the question of location was projected anew.⁸ President J. R. Edwards declared the subject out of order, but some objected to the ruling. At this point, the Commission decided to request Convention President J. W. Parsons and the Executive Board to consider calling a special session. Subsequently, Parsons issued an official letter proclaiming a called meeting of the Convention at the Emmanuel Baptist Church of Alexandria on April 5, 1911.⁹ Cottingham sought to resign as Educational Secretary of the Commission at the February meeting, but his attempt was rejected. The Commission also agreed at this time to submit its resignation when the called session convened. One other important action of the February meeting was the appointment of Cottingham and J. L. Baker to secure a deed to the Mount Lebanon property in order that this document might be available when the special session met.¹⁰

The controversy over the location of the Baptist college was renewed during the two months that elapsed before the called meeting of the Convention. Three possible sites for the school were suggested-- Pineville, Alexandria, and Mount Lebanon. The adherents of each community worked diligently to prevail upon Louisiana Baptists to accept their view. Pineville's claim was buttressed by the loyalty of students and townspeople in the aftermath of the fire.¹¹ Although he apparently did not play a pivotal role, President Cottingham favored the Pineville

⁸"Minutes of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," February 2, 1911. (Hereinafter referred to as Education Commission, "Minutes.")

⁹L.B.C., Minutes of Called Meeting, p. 2.

¹⁰Education Commission, "Minutes," February 2, 1911.

¹¹Ibid.

alternative. The champion of the Pineville cause was E. O. Ware.¹² President J. R. Edwards of the Education Commission leaned in this direction.¹³

The simmering discontent of the Alexandria community with the Pineville location erupted after the fire in a concerted effort to transfer the location. Unnamed Alexandria representatives appeared before the Education Commission at its meeting of February 2. They expressed a wish to have an opportunity to make propositions in view of relocating the school.¹⁴ By the time the called meeting of the Convention convened on April 5, five proposals had been offered by various Alexandria individuals and groups.¹⁵ The chief spokesman for Alexandria was Editor R. M. Boone of the Baptist Chronicle.

The Mount Lebanon bid for the college developed after the friction between Pineville and Alexandria had dominated the denominational scene for several weeks. Its leading proponents were the Cox brothers, who had been prominently associated with the program of Mount Lebanon Academy for several years. Other voices, almost exclusively from North Louisiana, urged a return to Mount Lebanon. One of the main arguments of this group was the contention that the facilities available at Mount Lebanon would enable Louisiana Baptists to continue their educational program without immediately incurring staggering debts for new

¹²Alexandria Daily Town Talk, April 6, 1911, p. 1.

¹³Baptist Chronicle, March 2, 1911, p. 8.

¹⁴L.B.C., Minutes of Called Meeting, p. 14.

¹⁵Alexandria Daily Town Talk, April 5, 1911, p. 1.

buildings.¹⁶ Recognizing that the Convention was divided on the location issue, F. L. Cox argued that the buildings at the old school would make an excellent temporary site while sentiment crystallized as to the future course the Convention should take.¹⁷ Obviously, such a course of action would enhance the chances of Mount Lebanon's becoming the permanent choice. J. C. Cox emphasized the older advantages of tradition, healthfulness, and rural location. He stressed the idea that students could live inexpensively at Mount Lebanon.¹⁸

Editor R. M. Boone offered the Baptist Chronicle's columns to the Education Commission as soon as the decision to call the Convention into special session had been reached. After several weeks passed without controversy over the college issue, Boone wrote an editorial which was severely critical of a circular which had been distributed widely among Baptists.¹⁹ He charged that the Commission had declined his invitation to use the Chronicle as a medium of discussion of the school problem, seemingly preferring to avoid public agitation of the dispute. Boone was particularly disturbed that the circular had come from some members of the Commission. He censured President J. R. Edwards, apparently feeling that Edwards was the prime force behind the circular. The circular had stressed the financial investments which had been made at Pineville, including those of faculty members who had erected residences;

¹⁶ Baptist Chronicle, March 16, 1911, p. 16; Ibid., March 23, 1911, p. 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., March 9, 1911, p. 2.

¹⁹ Ibid., March 2, 1911, p. 8.

it attacked what it described as narrow, local Alexandria interests which were promoting a change of location.²⁰

When no public responses were made to his editorials, Boone proceeded with a frontal assault on the Pineville location. He urged that Pineville would never grow into the kind of thriving population center associated with a quality college. The absence of a great denominational church, for Pineville was only a mission station, was depicted as a liability. Boone also declared that men of large means would never be attracted to the support of an obscure college. He commented:

Unless these high positions shall sweep our Convention away from the little petty, antiquated theories, we can never hope as Louisiana Baptists to have a standing in the educational progress of this age; nor can we ever hope to enlist as leaders men of educational reputation. . .because they can not risk their reputations by identifying themselves with efforts to build up isolated schools that are doomed to failure.²¹

President Cottingham concentrated his attention on the problem of keeping Louisiana College in operation, feeling this to be his major responsibility. He urged the need for unity and good will in the unfolding controversy over location. The young administrator was too busy to write many articles during these dark weeks. There was also a dearth of material on Mount Lebanon Academy and Louisiana Baptist Female College. At length, President O. J. Peterson of Keachie spoke through the Chronicle, declaring he would not attend the special session and complaining bitterly at the small amount of cooperation he had received in his efforts to lead Louisiana Baptist Female College.²² Sensing the futility

²⁰Ibid., March 9, 1911, p. 8.

²¹Ibid., March 16, 1911, p. 8.

²²Ibid., March 30, 1911, p. 2.

of the Keachie program, he argued for a junior college for girls, asserting that its graduates could be admitted to men's colleges "since the most critical age would have passed, and, indeed, the monomaniacs, that portion of the girl tribe that would wade a creek at midnight to meet a man, would have been automatically sifted out."²³

Seemingly, the Pineville faction operated quietly, avoiding public agitation of the sensitive question. However, they worked feverishly to insure the continuance of the college in their community. On the eve of the called meeting of the Convention, the Alexandria Daily Town Talk carried an article entitled "Pineville is Hustling."²⁴ Printed invitations to the messengers to inspect the Pineville campus promised free lunches and a special train for their convenience. The elevation of College Hill, 134 feet above sea level in comparison to Alexandria's 77 feet, was highly emphasized. The fact that three railroads passed near the campus was offered as proof of accessibility.²⁵

Unable to engage the Pineville adherents in open discussion, Editor Boone exchanged barbs with F. L. Cox as the called meeting drew near. Cox scorned the central location and the Education Commission; he proclaimed that Baptists did not know what heavy debt was "until we got a Commission."²⁶ Cox said that the Convention never had so few students and so much debt at Mount Lebanon as at Louisiana College. Boone directed his comments to the "remoteness" of Mount Lebanon.²⁷

²³Ibid.

²⁴Alexandria Daily Town Talk, April 4, 1911, p. 1.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Baptist Chronicle, March 30, 1911, p. 8.

²⁷Ibid.

The educational crisis reached its climax during the called meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention on April 5, 1911. President J. W. Parsons called the Convention to order in the auditorium of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Alexandria, requesting President J. R. Edwards of the Education Commission to provide background information. Edwards spoke briefly of events following the fire, stressing that the location of the college had been a prominent item of discussion. Feeling itself unable to act upon the matter of possible relocation, the Commission had decided to request a special session of the Convention.²⁸ Acting as a committee of the whole on order of business, the messengers requested that the Commission provide a written report. They then voted to accept invitations from the Pineville and Alexandria groups to inspect suggested sites.²⁹ E. O. Ware spoke for the Pineville faction, offering the special train and free lunches; J. A. White, a prominent Alexandria physician who was also treasurer of the Commission, told of a special trolley which would take messengers to various suggested sites in Alexandria. After spending four hours touring the two communities, the Convention reassembled in the late afternoon to hear the Commission's official report and to allow Mayor J. P. Turregano and others to file several official offers on behalf of the Alexandria community.³⁰

Following a brief recess, the third and final session started in the early evening; it lasted until well past midnight.³¹ The local

²⁸ L.B.C., Minutes of Called Meeting, p. 10.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

³¹ Alexandria Daily Town Talk, April 6, 1911, p. 1.

newspaper of that date had predicted that a final decision would not be reached. It had learned from J. Benjamin Lawrence, who was then pastor of the First Baptist Church of New Orleans, that an attempt would be made to secure the appointment of a special committee to take the educational issue under advisement and to make appropriate recommendations at the subsequent regular session of the Convention in November, 1911.³² Lawrence's effort came to naught when he withdrew his resolution in the face of the messengers' apparent determination to settle the issue.³³ With the introduction of a proposal from the First Baptist Church of Homer, which called for returning the college to Mount Lebanon, temporarily, the messengers were faced with three alternatives.³⁴

In a dramatic series of roll-call votes, recorded in permanent records by messengers' names, the Convention made its decision. A newspaper account described the church "crowded to the doors until long past midnight with an interested and enthusiastic crowd," and it mentioned "loud applause following a rousing speech by E. O. Ware."³⁵ The article told how remarks by R. M. Boone and T. A. Carter "brought out storms of applause at times and denunciations at other times." Cottingham repudiated inferences by Boone that a lack of harmony existed between the Emmanuel Baptist Church and the faculty and students of Louisiana College.³⁶ Mount Lebanon was rejected by a vote of 50 to 131. Alexandria's

³²Ibid., April 5, 1911, p. 1.

³³L.B.C., Minutes of Called Meeting, p. 20.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 19-20.

³⁵Alexandria Daily Town Talk, April 6, 1911, p. 1.

³⁶Ibid.

offer was refused in a much closer decision, 66 to 100. The college remained at Pineville when its bid was accepted, 132 to 32.³⁷ Describing the called meeting, R. M. Boone subsequently referred to "a number of heated talks on [various] propositions" and "a divided Convention." He said, "Time will tell whether majorities are to be merely counted, or whether they are to be weighed."³⁸ Doubtless, many left the meeting with a sense of disappointment and frustration. Some probably went away with a determination to continue the fight. Most of the messengers apparently departed with a sense of commitment, for Louisiana College was destined to grow, and no serious thought would ever be given to relocation again. April 5, 1911, had been a memorable day.

One can only speculate about the reasoning which produced the Pineville choice. Possibly, in addition to the advantage which obtained because the school was already established in Pineville, there was a sympathetic reaction to Pineville on the part of the Mount Lebanon adherents. Failing to carry their viewpoint, because of Mount Lebanon's geographic isolation and the woeful inadequacy of its facilities, numbers of them may have supported a choice which would tend to preserve the prized advantages of elevation, healthfulness, and rural location. Messengers from urban areas generally favored Alexandria. E. O. Ware's stature and influence probably contributed to the choice of Pineville. That some were primarily interested in reaching a decision, perhaps any decision, is indicated by the fact that only thirty-two opposed Pineville after sixty-six had voted for Alexandria. Mount Lebanon was

³⁷ L.B.C., Minutes of Called Meeting, pp. 20-24.

³⁸ Baptist Chronicle, April 13, 1911, p. 8.

soundly repudiated, the vote perhaps being influenced by the revelation that the local trustees had never given a deed to the Convention.³⁹ It would have appeared strange for the Convention to concentrate its educational effort in such a community. Alexandria had been close to approval, for a switch of only eighteen votes would have produced a favorable result. Pineville won resoundingly but only when no alternative remained except that of further delay and indecision.

The crisis of early 1911 proved to be the prelude to a decade of progress for the educational enterprise of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Within a few months, evidence of a new unity appeared; strong passions were submerged in a concerted effort to implement the decision to rebuild at Pineville. The Education Report at the regular session of the Convention in November, 1911, stated: "At Pineville, we have Louisiana College coming out of the ashes from the awful fire of last January, when the buildings were burned. We . . . have another nice building and this year have enrolled 121 students."⁴⁰ The momentary hesitancy of Cottingham, which had prompted him to attempt to resign as president in the aftermath of the special session, evaporated in months of unrelenting exertion to afford a quality of leadership that would inspire Baptists to rally to the support of the young school. While there were some setbacks and every success had its price the years 1911 to 1920 were generally an era of growth.

Saddest of the developments of these years was the failure of the

³⁹ L.B.C., Minutes of Called Meeting, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Sixty-Third Annual Session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1911, p. 36. (Hereinafter referred to as L.B.C., Minutes.)

old schools to survive. The 1911-1912 session sounded the death knell for both of these institutions. Louisiana Baptist Female College closed in the midst of its academic session.⁴¹ Mount Lebanon Baptist Academy, weakened by the death of President H. B. McFarran in November, 1911, struggled through the year because of the devoted service of faithful faculty members, especially L. U. Comalander.⁴² The probability of discontinuance cast a pall over baccalaureate exercises at Mount Lebanon led by President Cottingham of Louisiana College, who reported that he "found the minds of many of the people saddened because of the fear that this institution might not reopen. . . ."⁴³ J. W. Carter, superintendent of education in LaSalle Parish and a former president of Mount Lebanon, wrote in the Baptist Chronicle:

At first I thought of the rumor as only talk, but last Sunday night, as I passed the old campus there was a deep silence, and everything was hushed. Commencement was over and the students had departed [,] as some think, forever. I have stood by the death bed, and even that of near relatives, but alas, I was standing gazing on an institution that had meant more to Louisiana and yes, the world, than any of Louisiana's sons. . . . I must confess that the death of such an institution forced upon me the saddest moments of my life. . . .⁴⁴

Many factors contributed to the demise of these schools, particularly Baptist determination to support the new venture at Pineville and the competition to Mount Lebanon and Keachie posed by state colleges at

⁴¹Baptist Chronicle, January 11, 1912, p. 2.

⁴²Ibid., November 23, 1911, p. 8; Ibid., August 17, 1911, p. 7.

⁴³Ibid., April 25, 1912, p. 7.

⁴⁴Ibid., May 2, 1912, p. 6.

Natchitoches and Ruston.⁴⁵ However, their collapse cannot be regarded exclusively as a reflection upon the Convention's educational endeavors. Neither school ever delivered its property to the Convention; thus they refused to become Convention enterprises in a full sense, preferring to perpetuate provincial interests.⁴⁶ Wholehearted identification with the Convention might have led to a different fate for Mount Lebanon and Keachie.

The restoration of Louisiana College moved forward as President Claybrook Cottingham proved adequate to the challenge thrust upon him by the fire at the outset of his administration. His indefatigable efforts to rally Louisiana Baptists around the young college were successful. Cottingham's talents as administrator, professor, denominational worker, and writer enabled him to accomplish a task which might have been insurmountable to one endowed with less versatility or to one lacking his prodigious energy. His stature grew steadily, and the Convention waived one of its by-laws in 1915 to elect him to a third successive term as Convention president, an honor rarely bestowed.⁴⁷ Cottingham was described as "the peer of any other denominational college president in the South. . . ."⁴⁸ Strong in many areas, he sought especially to secure support of Louisiana College by those who had been affiliated with the older schools. J. L. Baker's offer to fund the equipping of a science

⁴⁵Grand Cane Baptist Association, Minutes of Grand Cane Baptist Association, 1911, pp. 17-18; Baptist Chronicle, August 3, 1911, p. 2.

⁴⁶Education Commission, "Minutes," December 2, 1913.

⁴⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1915, p. 15.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 27.

laboratory at the new college--Baker having been Mount Lebanon's most prominent supporter for many years--was a benevolent gesture, revealing the new spirit of harmony and encouraging Cottingham as he sought to create a denominational conscience about Christian education.⁴⁹ Another example occurred when the widow of H. A. Sumrell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport, donated his personal library to Louisiana College following his sudden death in December, 1911.⁵⁰ Sumrell had been interested in moving the college from Pineville after the fire. He was succeeded by M. E. Dodd, one of the truly remarkable figures in Louisiana Baptist history; Dodd would play a pivotal role in Convention affairs for the next forty years.

Cottingham's labors were ably abetted by those of Edgar Godbold, a young Mississippian who came to work in early 1912 as professor of science at Louisiana College and as educational secretary for the Education Commission.⁵¹ A man of sterling personality, he quickly demonstrated his ability to work with people and, perhaps more importantly, to encourage others to involve themselves in the work.⁵² His talent for fund-raising was demonstrated when a \$100,000 Campaign for education was

⁴⁹Baptist Chronicle, November 21, 1912, p. 6.

⁵⁰Ibid., January 25, 1912, p. 10; Louisiana College, Louisiana College, Sixth Annual Catalogue with Announcements for the Session 1912-1913, pp. 33-34. (Hereinafter referred to as L.C., Catalogue.)

⁵¹Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," March 18, 1912; Baptist Chronicle, April 17, 1913, p. 9; L.C., Catalogue, 1914-1915, p. 9.

⁵²Baptist Chronicle, September 17, 1914, p. 1; Ibid., November 5, 1914, p. 1; "Minutes of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport, Louisiana," October 12, 1913. (Hereinafter referred to as First Baptist Church, Shreveport, "Minutes.")

brought to a successful climax in November, 1914.⁵³ Godbold was fiercely loyal to every part of the Convention program, contributing his energy to efforts which were not related to education; others reciprocated by according to the educational campaign a degree of support which it had not experienced previously.

Enrollment at Louisiana College continued to increase. In February, 1914, the two hundred mark was reached, and President Cottingham took "the whole family" to see moving pictures to celebrate.⁵⁴ A two-story building, costing over \$40,000, was erected upon the foundation of the building which had burned in 1911.⁵⁵ Used primarily as a girls' dormitory, it also provided some offices and classrooms. Boys were housed in several cottages on the campus until a dormitory was provided for them with proceeds from a \$40,000 Campaign which was successfully engineered by Edgar Godbold in January and February, 1917.⁵⁶ Most of the proceeds of the \$100,000 Campaign, aside from \$40,000 to \$50,000 which provided the girls' dormitory, went for current and accrued deficits in operations.⁵⁷

Graduates of Louisiana College entered various vocations. Education, business, medicine, law, and especially the ministry received

⁵³ Baptist Chronicle, November 26, 1914, p. 5; L.B.C., Minutes, 1914, Appendix--Education Commission Report, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁴ Baptist Chronicle, February 12, 1914, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Education Committee, "Minutes," May 28, 1913; Baptist Chronicle, June 19, 1913, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., August 28, 1913, p. 8; First Baptist Church, Shreveport, "Minutes," January, 1917; Education Commission, "Minutes," January 9, 1917; L.B.C., Minutes, 1917, p. 42; Baptist Chronicle, October 11, 1917, p. 5.

⁵⁷ L.B.C., Minutes, 1913, p. 108.

products of the young college.⁵⁸ Some of these, such as Simon W. Tudor, class of 1913, and W. H. Knight, class of 1914, were destined to play large roles in the college's future.⁵⁹ The sub-academy was omitted after the 1916-1917 session, and the number of students doing work of collegiate quality constantly increased.⁶⁰ Ministerial students were the recipients of most of the funds which came directly from contributions by the churches.⁶¹ The Ministerial Association and the Volunteer Band were two of the most prominent campus organizations; they encouraged and coordinated the efforts of young ministers and mission volunteers who worked in churches and missions throughout the area.⁶²

The educational progress of 1911 to 1920 did not come easily. Many individuals sacrificed or gave generously to see the new college through its infancy. One is reluctant to identify a few names, cognizant that there were many; nevertheless, Education Commission members such as W. C. Beall and Dr. J. A. White frequently contributed to Louisiana College.⁶³ Commission members endorsed bank notes pledging personal

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 111; Education Commission of Louisiana Baptist Convention, Bulletin Concerning Ministerial Department, Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, no date, p. 1; Baptist Chronicle, April 19, 1917, p. 9; Ibid., June 25, 1914, p. 16.

⁵⁹Ibid., June 5, 1913, p. 12; Ibid., June 11, 1914, p. 1; Education Commission, "Minutes," June 2, 1914.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. June 5, 1917; Baptist Chronicle, June 21, 1917, p. 2; L.B.C., Minutes, 1917, p. 51.

⁶¹Education Commission of Louisiana Baptist Convention, Bulletin Concerning Ministerial Department, Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, no date, p. 2; First Baptist Church, Shreveport, "Minutes," January 8, 1919.

⁶²Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1913, p. 29; Ibid., 1914, p. 38; Ibid., 1915, p. 44.

⁶³Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes," September 12, 1911; Baptist Chronicle, June 5, 1913, p. 5.

property as security for the funds needed to enable the school to operate. None endured more than the faculty, which included such individuals as H. M. Weathersby and W. P. Carson.⁶⁴ These and others accepted short salaries and tardy salaries uncomplainingly; their commitment to Louisiana College was beyond reproach.⁶⁵ Professors borrowed money, sometimes with Cottingham's endorsement, to see them through troubled days.

Various factors contributed to the success of the Louisiana College venture. Developments within the Convention itself aided the new school. The domicile of the Executive Board of the Convention was returned to Shreveport in 1912; this placed Baptist headquarters in the area where Baptists were strongest numerically and financially.⁶⁶ The Convention prospered, and the educational endeavor shared in this prosperity.⁶⁷ One wonders whether the return to Shreveport might have been a conciliatory gesture toward North Louisiana Baptists after the Pineville location had appeared to shift the denominational center of gravity toward Central Louisiana. George H. Crutcher of Jackson, Tennessee, succeeded E. O. Ware as Corresponding Secretary of the Convention upon the removal of Baptist headquarters to Shreveport.⁶⁸ Ware, generously

⁶⁴ Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1917, p. 4; Baptist Chronicle, June 21, 1917, p. 2.

⁶⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1914, Appendix--Education Commission Report, p. 9.

⁶⁶ C. Penrose St. Amant, A Short History of Louisiana Baptists (Nashville, 1948), p. 103.

⁶⁷ L.B.C., Minutes, 1916, p. 33.

⁶⁸ Baptist Chronicle, January 2, 1913, p. 8; John Christian, A History of the Baptists in Louisiana (Shreveport, 1923), p. 220.

removing himself from consideration, received the hearty appreciation of Louisiana Baptists for his twenty years of service to the Convention.⁶⁹ Crutcher proved to be a talented administrator who built wisely upon the organizational framework created by Ware. As a result, the Convention continued to grow stronger during this decade.

Ware quickly surfaced in another role, having purchased control of the Baptist Chronicle in 1913.⁷⁰ He acted as editor until July, 1919, at which time the Convention officially attained control of the Chronicle, publishing it thereafter as the Baptist Message.⁷¹ Ware was generous to Louisiana College, as to other educational institutions; he wrote constantly about the need for a strong college.⁷² Examples of what Baptists were doing for their colleges in other states were published frequently. Appropriately, the first volume of The Pine Knot, yearbook of Louisiana College, was dedicated to this man whose faith, vision, and energy had helped to make the institution a reality.⁷³

Churches gave increasing support to the cause of education as evidenced by the amounts reported from year to year.⁷⁴ It was noted at the Convention of 1918 that property value at Louisiana College had increased from \$50,000 to nearly \$108,000 in ten years while debts had

⁶⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1912, pp. 50-51.

⁷⁰Ibid., 1913, p. 60.

⁷¹The Baptist Message, July 24, 1919, p. 1.

⁷²Baptist Chronicle, June 19, 1913, p. 1; Ibid., September 17, 1914, p. 8.

⁷³Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1913, p. 2.

⁷⁴L.B.C., Minutes, 1911, p. 17; Ibid., 1913, p. 109; Ibid., 1917, p. 42.

decreased from \$50,000 to \$27,000, all of this in spite of the calamity of the fire.⁷⁵ Louisiana Baptists were characterized as "rapidly awakening to the splendid opportunities for investments afforded by our Christian schools."⁷⁶ The month of June came to be recognized as "Education Month," with particular emphasis placed on the fourth Sunday, at which time special lessons were taught in Sunday School and offerings were taken for "running expenses."⁷⁷

Favorable economic conditions facilitated the educational progress of this era.⁷⁸ Though lagging far behind the national level, the South was making headway in the matters of increasing production of wealth and equalizing its distribution. Industry expanded as the South's share of the industrial output of the United States rose from twelve to fourteen percent between 1909 and 1929; this represented an increase in the value of the section's manufactures from \$2,637,100,000 in 1909 to \$9,993,600,000 in 1929. War prosperity brought a degree of affluence not previously experienced as workers, including sharecroppers, became acquainted with the feeling of folding money. In 1919, cotton reached its highest price since 1866. Economic expectations reached levels from which they would never completely recede. Public education, under the

⁷⁵ Ibid., Minutes, 1918, p. 40.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 239.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 1917, p. 43; Baptist Chronicle, June 7, 1917, p. 9.

⁷⁸ C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913, Vol. IX of A History of the South, eds. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge, 1951), p. 318; George Brown Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945, Vol. X of A History of the New South, eds. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge, 1967), p. 56; Francis Butler Simkins, A History of the South (3d ed., New York, 1963), pp. 470, 493.

able leadership of T. H. Harris as state superintendent, moved steadily forward in these years.⁷⁹ A compulsory attendance law was one of the milestones of the era; other important developments included increased provisions for school support by the state and use of the parish unit as the basis of school administration.

To return to Baptist educational efforts, the Education Commission in 1917 reported more evidence of progress in these quaint words:

Two new educational babies have been born in Louisiana this year. The Acadia Baptist Academy for French people located at Pilgrims Rest and the New Orleans Baptist Bible Institute. Would any man dare say that is not doing well--even though both of these school babies had to have outside help to assist them to see the light.⁸⁰

The theological school, Baptist Bible Institute, was the outgrowth of a century of interest in the missionary challenge afforded by the city of New Orleans.⁸¹ Louisiana Baptist Convention appointees G. H. Crutcher, F. C. Flowers, and R. P. Mahon, along with appointees from the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, constituted a committee which charted the establishment of the training school at New Orleans. M. E. Dodd of Shreveport, one of the Home Mission Board representatives on the joint committee, presented the recommendation which was approved by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1917.⁸² Louisiana Baptists generally supported financial campaigns

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 364; William O. Scroggs, The Story of Louisiana (4th ed., Indianapolis, 1953), pp. 311-312; Garnie William McGinty, A History of Louisiana (3d ed., New York, 1951), p. 278.

⁸⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1917, p. 95.

⁸¹Christian, pp. 248-249.

⁸²Southern Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Annual Session of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1918, pp. 35-36.

in behalf of the new school.⁸³ However, control of the Baptist Bible Institute passed quickly to the Southern Baptist Convention and has remained there.

The other school which originated in this era was Acadia Baptist Academy. The minutes of the 1917 session of the Convention noted the presence of the Reverend W. J. Westberry from Acadia Academy, which was described as "a new Home Board Institution for the French speaking people of south Louisiana."⁸⁴ The establishment of this school was the outgrowth of efforts which began in 1913 when the Southern Baptist Convention instructed its Home Mission Board "to look into establishing a school in South Louisiana for our French-speaking people."⁸⁵ The Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, upon learning of this development, offered a campus of twenty acres for the proposed school.⁸⁶ The project languished for four years, though records of the period speak of a "French School" at Faquetaique, a small community about ten miles from Pilgrims Rest Church.⁸⁷ The Pilgrims Rest Church, established in a rural community of Acadia Parish in 1870, included many French-speaking people in its congregation.⁸⁸ Under the leadership of the Reverend Westberry, an interest in education was cultivated. As a result, the Church

⁸³ L.B.C., Minutes, 1918, p. 80.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1917, p. 93.

⁸⁵ Baptist Chronicle, May 29, 1913, p. 9.

⁸⁶ "Minutes of the Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, Eunice, Louisiana," June 18, 1913. (Hereinafter referred to as Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, "Minutes.")

⁸⁷ L.B.C., Minutes, 1915, p. 27.

⁸⁸ Baptist Message, November 13, 1919, p. 10.

established the Acadia Baptist Academy, which opened on October 1, 1917.⁸⁹ Control of the school was vested in a board of directors or trustees elected from the church membership.⁹⁰ Interestingly, the school was not named until several weeks after it opened.⁹¹

Support for Acadia Academy came from various directions because of its missionary aspect. The Pilgrims Rest Church gave twenty acres of land and more than \$10,000 for facilities.⁹² The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention provided funds for salaries; a faculty of two, the Reverend J. H. Strother, principal, and Miss Neah Leet, was doubled before the end of the first session.⁹³ Though the initial opening occurred in a public school building, facilities were provided shortly. A total of 166 enrolled in all grades during the 1917-1918 session; four were ministerial students and about one-fourth were of Catholic parentage.⁹⁴ Enrollment was somewhat lower in 1918-1919 because of the draft and a severe epidemic of influenza; the Home Mission Board provided salaries for a faculty of five.⁹⁵ By 1919, the administration building, a girls' dormitory, and a cottage for ministerial students made possible by a gift from Mrs. G. W. Bottoms of Arkansas, had been

⁸⁹ Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, "Minutes," September 13, 1917.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., October 22, 1917.

⁹² Baptist Chronicle, January 30, 1919, p. 3.

⁹³ Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, "Minutes," September 17, 1917; L.B.C., Minutes, 1918, p. 37.

⁹⁴ Baptist Chronicle, June 13, 1918, p. 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid., October 31, 1918, p. 7.

completed.⁹⁶ Baptist leaders Crutcher, Cottingham, and Ware attended the Academy's first commencement exercises in 1919, and they came away impressed by both the program and the opportunities.⁹⁷

Already fears were being expressed that the enterprise could not be supported by Home Mission Board allocations if it continued to prosper.⁹⁸ Thus the directors of the Academy offered the property to the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1919; and it was operated thereafter by a board of trustees elected by the Convention.⁹⁹ Professor Strother and his associates labored to meet the challenges of the new endeavor. Explaining his infrequent contributions to the Baptist Chronicle, Strother wrote:

Possibly these notes should appear oftener, but when the principal serves sometimes as telephone lineman, as chauffeur and carpenter, it is a question of what must be left undone if he is to rest any. You see we know that the war is on away out here in the country, and even though we have French, Germans and Americans all in school, we are trying to do our little part to help.¹⁰⁰

An excerpt from the memoirs of the Academy's first graduate reflects the spartan character of the school's early years:

There were no press notices. There could have [sic] been so many but the school is in its youth [,] and we who are helping to build it cannot have all. Everyone was so busy that even a line for the press was not thought of. The distance from towns was a handicap too. There are many things that the first girl grad. of A. B. A. has not in her book that she hopes will be in every other Graduate's book after her.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶Ibid., January 30, 1919, p. 3; L.B.C., Minutes, 1918, p. 20.

⁹⁷Baptist Chronicle, June 12, 1919, p. 3.

⁹⁸Ibid., January 3, 1918, p. 8.

⁹⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1919, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰Baptist Chronicle, February 28, 1918, p. 7.

¹⁰¹Jessie LeDoux, Handwritten note in Scrapbook, Acadia Baptist Academy, Eunice, Louisiana, 1920, p. 115.

Louisiana College felt the impact of World War I. Of its male enrollment, all seniors and all except one junior went into the armed forces by December, 1917.¹⁰² Several faculty members departed for military duty.¹⁰³ Edgar Godbold's acceptance of an overseas position with the Young Men's Christian Association was a grievous blow to Baptist education.¹⁰⁴ Louisiana College facilities were offered to the government as indicated by the following:

. . . military training will be incorporated as a regular department of the college work. A regular United States Army instructor will be secured . . . and the department will be maintained on such a basis that the work done will be given credit by the war department.¹⁰⁵

Louisiana Baptists were patriotic supporters of the war effort; denominational literature urged cooperation with the government's program at both military and civilian levels.¹⁰⁶ However, the offer of the College's plant was more than a demonstration of national loyalty; it was a means of meeting an enrollment emergency and of continuing the program.¹⁰⁷ Louisiana College also installed a department of domestic science, subsequently called home economics; this was intended to attract a larger number of female students.¹⁰⁸ As a result of these two programs, the College experienced a record attendance in 1918-1919,

¹⁰²Baptist Chronicle, February 7, 1918, p. 8.

¹⁰³L.C., Catalogue, 1917-1918, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴Baptist Chronicle, September 12, 1918, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵L.C., Catalogue, 1917-1918, pp. 31-32.

¹⁰⁶Baptist Chronicle, November 28, 1918, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., June 20, 1918, p. 7; Ibid., August 22, 1918, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸Education Commission, "Minutes," June 4, 1918.

although the disbanding of the Student Army Training Corps unit in December, 1918, caused misgivings about the spring semester.¹⁰⁹ In June, 1919, commencement exercises "brought to a conclusion one of the most successful and . . . one of the most exceptional years in the history of the college."¹¹⁰ War disruption of normal academic pursuits, influenza, and the fear of meningitis had not prevented a sense of achievement during these days of emergency.

Louisiana Baptists were flushed with optimism in the aftermath of a victorious war. A sense of anticipation and a feeling of destiny permeated their ranks as they contemplated the post-war period. The necessity of increased educational facilities for exploiting the developing opportunities was reflected in these words:

With our enlarged program for world conquest, with 5,000 recruits for service, many of whom are untrained, and with many more foreordained and predestined to volunteer in the near future, all of our training camps have become increasingly important and must be enlarged in teaching force and equipment if we are to get this host ready for the strenuous conflict that awaits them.¹¹¹

Louisiana College was overflowing with students in the fall of 1919, the dormitories filled to capacity and some classes "being conducted in bedrooms."¹¹² A swimming pool, funded mainly by student efforts, was ready, and President Cottingham urged newcomers to "be ready for a cool dip."¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Baptist Chronicle, September 26, 1918, p. 1; Ibid., January 9, 1919, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., June 12, 1919, p. 2.

¹¹¹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1919, p. 111.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Baptist Chronicle, March 27, 1919, p. 1; Ibid, September 4, 1919, p. 11.

Bigger things than swimming pools were in view.

The Southern Baptist Convention in May, 1919, launched the Seventy-five Million Campaign. The various state conventions, Louisiana included, quickly ratified this gigantic undertaking. Since the Seventy-five Million Campaign involved a five-year span, it will be described in the following chapter. Faced with more students than it could accommodate and confident of financial support, the Education Commission began construction of an impressive administration and classroom building as the decade from 1911 to 1920 drew to a close.¹¹⁴

Considerable progress had been made by Louisiana Baptists. A disaster in the form of a fire had forced the matter of location of the Baptist college back into the limelight in early 1911; however, the decision reached at that time proved to be a permanent one. Encouraging signs of unity appeared in the years which followed.

Favored with better economic conditions than in the period of origin, and with solid encouragement from denominational leaders, Louisiana College grew consistently. The College did not enjoy an educational monopoly. On the one hand, Mount Lebanon and Keachie proved unequal to the challenges of this decade, and both of these venerable institutions ceased in 1912. However, by 1917, a Baptist Bible Institute and a missionary high school, Acadia Academy, were asking and receiving support from Louisiana Baptists, although Louisiana College continued as their primary concern.

Baptists emerged from World War I with a confident outlook toward the future. This optimism led to the adoption of a massive financial

¹¹⁴ L.B.C., Minutes, 1920, p. 43; Education Commission, "Minutes," January 15, 1920.

effort to undergird the anticipated progress. Louisiana Baptists joined this campaign. A large administration building was begun at Louisiana College at the end of the decade.

These years, beginning in catastrophe, proved to be generally fruitful. Louisiana Baptists anticipated ever greater accomplishments in the future, but such would not invariably be the case.

CHAPTER VI

THE PERIOD OF FRUSTRATION, 1921-1930

A Time of Expansion and Frustration for Baptists

Louisiana Baptists entered the 1920's with expectations of vast expansion for their total program. As noted previously, this confidence was the product of favorable economic conditions and of the naturally optimistic psychology which emanated from a victorious war effort. Progress came in the new decade, but it did not approximate the proportions that had been anticipated; therefore, the gains registered in this era could not obliterate a pervasive sense of frustration. The educational sphere reflected these qualities to a marked degree, though all the programs of Louisiana Baptists and Southern Baptists were victims of the malady.

It would be impossible to understand the developments of this era without considering the remarkable financial program known as the Seventy-five Million Campaign. Conceived and adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention at its annual meeting at Atlanta in May, 1919, this endeavor did not end until November, 1924. The plan called for the adoption of a goal of \$75,000,000, the sum to be subscribed immediately and to be paid over a period of five years. A cash share of the total amount was to be raised each year during this time, the amount

increasing each year until the drive culminated in 1924.¹ Headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee, and coordinated at the Southwide level by Lee R. Scarborough, the Seventy-five Million Campaign captured the imagination of Baptists. A general committee requested the various state conventions to assume specific proportions of the total objective, and response was enthusiastic. Reporting the tremendous undertaking which had been initiated, the Baptist Chronicle observed, "The hour when this was discussed was an epochal hour in Baptist History."²

The Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention endorsed the campaign in July, 1919, and initiated efforts to raise its quota of \$3,325,000 in five years. An intense promotional effort, covering five months and led by M. E. Dodd of Shreveport as state organizer, with the returning Edgar Godbold as publicity director, culminated during the week of November 30 - December 7, 1919, when a total of \$3,002,163 was subscribed.³ The campaign was intensely organized at the associational and local church levels. Godbold's instructions were detailed and practical: "Don't let the four-minute speakers talk too long. The short, live, pithy, fiery, personal message is much more effective than the long, tiresome, digressive, impersonal, indefinite effort ever can be."⁴ The total effort throughout the Southern Baptist Convention

¹Frank E. Burkhalter, "Seventy-five Million Campaign," Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), II, p. 1196.

²Baptist Chronicle, June 19, 1919, p. 1; Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Seventy-Second Annual Session of the Convention, 1920, p. 88. (Hereinafter referred to as L.B.C., Minutes).

³Baptist Message, August 28, 1919, p. 5.

⁴Ibid., October 16, 1919, p. 3.

resulted in a subscription of \$92,630,923, exceeding the goal by nearly eighteen million dollars.⁵ A spirit of unity and mutual helpfulness was strong among Baptists at this time; particularly it was the outgrowth of wartime experiences in cooperative endeavors.⁶

Louisiana Baptists, as well as Southern Baptists, greatly expanded programs of missions and education. However, their confidence of November, 1919, turned to apprehension and misgiving in 1920 and in the years which followed. In planning distribution of receipts from the campaign, \$1,075,000 of the Louisiana goal of \$3,325,000 was allocated to Louisiana College.⁷ Thus the story of Louisiana Baptist education in the 1920's was entwined with the Seventy-five Million Campaign. A preliminary plan for use of the anticipated receipts for the College included \$600,000 for endowment; \$400,000 for buildings; and \$75,000 for current expenses.⁸ Salary increases were granted to the administration and faculty, the cost to be covered by campaign receipts.⁹ As mentioned previously, a new administration and classroom building was authorized. Similar outlays for expansion were made in nearly every phase of the Convention's program.¹⁰ The Education Commission, reporting receipt of only \$102,000 of an anticipated \$325,000 in late 1920, warned of the

⁵Burkhalter, "Seventy-five Million Campaign," p. 1197.

⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1919, p. 82.

⁷Baptist Message, July 24, 1919, p. 7.

⁸"Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," October 3, 1919. (Hereinafter referred to as Board of Directors, Ed. Comm., "Minutes").

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1920, p. 87.

possibility that "we shall come to the end of our building enterprise under a heavy debt."¹¹ Noting progress at other colleges which Louisiana College might be unable to match, the Commission observed that "this campaign which all of us felt a year ago would be the greatest blessing may prove to be a curse."¹²

Receipts from the Seventy-five Million Campaign declined steadily, indicating a waning enthusiasm in spite of efforts by the leadership to stimulate better response.¹³ In 1923, total Louisiana receipts were approximately \$213,000.¹⁴ Final figures showed that Louisiana Baptists raised \$1,475,032 for all causes, nearly one-half of the amount subscribed; southwide receipts were \$58,591,713, less than two-thirds of the total subscription.¹⁵ Louisiana College received only \$450,000 of an anticipated \$1,075,000.

The Seventy-five Million Campaign was both a success and a failure, producing at the same time satisfaction and disenchantment. It exceeded anything Baptists had accomplished previously, and it opened their eyes to the potential of unified effort.¹⁶ Membership increased to over 109,000 in Louisiana Baptist churches as the result of more than 35,000 baptisms; church property values doubled.¹⁷ Yet the goals of the

¹¹ Ibid., p. 45.

¹² Ibid., p. 46.

¹³ Ibid., 1921, p. 36.

¹⁴ Ibid., 1923, p. 50.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1925, p. 59; Burkhalter, "Seventy-five Million Campaign," p. 1197.

¹⁶ L.B.C., Minutes, 1925, pp. 59-60.

¹⁷ Ibid.

campaign had not been achieved, and Baptists had incurred heavy financial liabilities because they had over-extended their programs.

A sagging economy undermined the campaign in its early years. War-time prosperity was ended by a short but severe depression in 1920-1921.¹⁸ Some improvement was evident toward the middle of the Seventy-five Million Campaign, but the roaring economic boom which characterized the nation generally in the 1920's was not as pronounced in the South as elsewhere.¹⁹ Farm prosperity did not rival business prosperity, and Louisiana Baptists were essentially a rural folk. Aside from the economic factor, there was the psychological one. The idealism and enthusiasm of the early post-war era faded; a spirit of disillusionment ensued.²⁰

Progress at Louisiana College

A major physical addition to Louisiana College was the administration building, which was named Alexandria Hall in recognition of large contributions from that area.²¹ Started in the expansive days when the Seventy-five Million Campaign was new, the building could only be

¹⁸Baptist Message, March 3, 1921, p. 12; Ibid., January 5, 1922, p. 6; L.B.C., Minutes, 1921, pp. 35, 38.

¹⁹Ibid., 1923, p. 30; Edwin Adams Davis, Louisiana: A Narrative History (2d ed., Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 350.

²⁰George Brown Tindall, The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945, Vol. X of A History of the South, eds. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (Baton Rouge, 1967), p. 190.

²¹"Minutes of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," January 7, 1921; Baptist Message, September 15, 1921, p. 5.

completed by borrowing \$125,000.²² Other building plans, such as additional dormitories and a new cafeteria, had to be postponed as it became apparent that the drive would fall significantly short of fulfillment.²³ Improvements in the mid-1920's were limited, and they frequently came through the generosity of interested groups. A Woman's Missionary Union in the Louisiana Association installed a kitchenette for the college infirmary.²⁴ The Class of 1924 gave an ornamental fence for the front of the campus.²⁵ Fortunately, the College escaped serious loss when a devastating storm swept the area in the spring of 1923, although some of the large pine trees which covered the campus were destroyed.²⁶ Alexandria Hall was the most enduring achievement of the era, and it has remained the chief building on the campus.

Other significant accomplishments at this time were the achievement of accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and the accumulation of approximately \$300,000 in endowment funds. Louisiana College was granted full accreditation in 1923; endowment efforts, faculty salary increases, and library improvements were prompted at various times in securing and maintaining accreditation.²⁷

²²"Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," September 16, 1921. (Hereinafter referred to as Ex Comm., Board of Trustees, "Minutes").

²³Baptist Message, March 6, 1924, p. 4.

²⁴Ibid., June 21, 1923, p. 8.

²⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1925, p. 82.

²⁶Baptist Message, April 19, 1923, p. 16.

²⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1922, p. 76; Ibid., 1923, p. 11; "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," January 8, 1924. (Hereinafter, referred to as Board of Trustees, "Minutes"); Baptist Message, August 31, 1922, p. 14.

The most sustained project of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College, successors to the Educational Commission as the result of an internal reorganization of the Convention's work in 1920, was the endowment effort. The General Education Board of New York, an outgrowth of the Rockefeller family's interest in improving education in the South, offered \$150,000 to go with the \$500,000 that Louisiana Baptists intended to provide for the College's endowment.²⁸ The Education Board of the Southern Baptist Convention promised \$100,000 to match \$100,000 raised at the state level.²⁹

The endowment project continued throughout four years, culminating in an intense promotional effort among Louisiana Baptists in the late summer and fall of 1924.³⁰ It was emphasized that for every dollar Louisiana Baptists contributed, the College would receive \$1.95, including the Rockefeller money and the Southern Baptist Convention Education Board funds.³¹ The campaign was pursued vigorously, especially among the businessmen of Alexandria, the alumni, and the former students of the College.³² A gift of \$1,000 came from a man described as "disappointed that the school was moved from Mt. Lebanon [who] had to rise above self and in the cause of Christian education."³³ The endowment

²⁸"Minutes of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," May 31, 1921.

²⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1921, p. 28.

³⁰Ibid., 1923, p. 81; Baptist Message, July 31, 1924, p. 1.

³¹L.B.C., Minutes, 1924, p. 33.

³²Baptist Message, August 14, 1924, p. 1; Ibid., October 2, 1924, p. 12.

³³Ibid., p. 2.

stood at \$275,161 in January, 1925, including \$75,637 from the General Education Board and \$100,000 from the Southern Baptist Education Board.³⁴ An effort in 1925 to increase the total to \$400,000 met with little success.³⁵ The trustees renounced further continuance of the project in November, 1925, declaring that it appeared "best to . . . renew the effort to increase the endowment at some later date."³⁶ However, it was destined to remain at about \$300,000 for many years. Because one of the conditions of the gift from the General Board was that Louisiana College be free of all debts, the Convention assumed its total indebtedness of \$150,000, most of which related to the construction of Alexandria Hall.³⁷

The enrollment at Louisiana College increased greatly during these years; the 1921 Convention report told of 287 students; 158 of these were in the college department; 42 were candidates for the ministry; 19 were seniors; 80 were freshmen. Each of these figures represented a record high.³⁸ A summer session was inaugurated in 1920, and the academy phase of the operation was concluded in 1923.³⁹ The number of freshmen was restricted to 160 in 1924, and many students had to take living accommodations in Alexandria or Pineville when dormitory space was

³⁴Ibid., January 8, 1925, p. 2.

³⁵Ibid., January 15, 1925, p. 1.

³⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1925, p. 83.

³⁷Ibid., 1924, p. 34.

³⁸Ibid., 1921, p. 78.

³⁹Ibid., 1920, p. 41; Baptist Message, October 25, 1923, p. 4.

exhausted.⁴⁰ By 1925, fall enrollment reached 412.⁴¹ College officials looked forward confidently, declaring that Louisiana was "rapidly gaining in the true spirit of education under denominational control."⁴² But new buildings did not materialize; the endowment could not be further increased; and the problem of operating deficits became perennial.⁴³

The Girls' College Emphasis

Aside from economic problems and overspending in anticipation of Seventy-five Million Campaign receipts, another development contributed to the frustration experienced at Louisiana College. During the decade between 1921 and 1930, a movement advocating the establishment of a girls' college by Louisiana Baptists gathered force; it culminated with the establishment in Shreveport of an institution named Dodd College, which opened its doors in September, 1927.⁴⁴ Sentiment favoring a girls' school had existed since the closing of Keachie, and a special study committee, headed by E. O. Ware, was appointed at the 1920 Convention.⁴⁵ The committee reported favorably in 1921 upon the desirability of such a college, stating that it should be "established at as early a date as practicable," but it observed that "such an effort is not

⁴⁰Ibid., August 21, 1924, p. 2.

⁴¹L.B.C., Minutes, 1925, p. 81.

⁴²Baptist Message, October 3, 1923, p. 9.

⁴³L.B.C., Minutes, 1925, p. 20.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1927, p. 42.

⁴⁵Ibid., 1920, pp. 7, 92.

advisable just now" ⁴⁶ It felt that such an attempt might undermine the Louisiana College building and endowment projects or that it might handicap the Seventy-five Million Campaign. The committee was continued for another year, and it was instructed to solicit bids from various towns and cities around the state. ⁴⁷

On December 31, 1921, a group of prominent Baptists, most of whom were members of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport, organized the M. E. Dodd Foundation. ⁴⁸ The moving force in this undertaking, Dodd, was the influential pastor of the church, then completing a decade of service. He told a pastors' conference that the time was at hand "to begin to house those stray females of ours," referring to the 400 who attended girls' colleges in other states. ⁴⁹ The Committee on Establishing a Female College recommended through Chairman Ware in 1923 that "the Convention look with utmost favor upon the effort of Brother Dodd and his helpers" ⁵⁰ This committee was continued with instructions to consider any additional offers by interested communities and to make a report "relative to launching the enterprise." ⁵¹ No other bids are reflected in the literature of the era; thus plans moved ahead toward the location of a Louisiana Baptist girls' college at Shreveport. Although Dodd and others did not agitate the project in the denominational

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1921, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1924, p. 36.

⁴⁹ Baptist Message, November 23, 1922, p. 14.

⁵⁰ L.B.C., Minutes, 1923, p. 31.

⁵¹ Ibid.

press until 1925, they concentrated efforts in the Shreveport area. The Dodd Foundation did not want to undermine the Louisiana College endowment effort of late 1924.⁵²

Members of the Foundation had contributed \$28,900 at the organizational meeting, and the fund continued to increase.⁵³ Others were invited to join the corporation by payment of one hundred dollars; in March, 1923, approximately \$40,000 had been received.⁵⁴ A choice property of thirty-four acres in the South Highlands section of Shreveport was purchased for \$125,000 in 1924.⁵⁵ The Dodd Foundation subsequently presented an official memorial to the 1924 Convention, offering this property to the Convention whenever the Convention would conduct a campaign for funds for a first dormitory.⁵⁶ The proposition included another provision pledging the Foundation to carry out a campaign among Shreveport citizens for an administration building. The Convention established a Girls' College Commission in 1925, and plans were projected for the dormitory campaign in early 1927.⁵⁷ A committee report emphasized the need for early action because other parts of the Baptist program were pending the results of this endeavor; it was also feared that some other denominational group might attempt to construct the girls'

⁵²Baptist Message, November 13, 1924, p. 16; Ibid., April 23, 1925, p. 1.

⁵³L.B.C., Minutes, 1924, p. 36.

⁵⁴Baptist Message, March 8, 1923, p. 6.

⁵⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1924, p. 36.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 36-38.

⁵⁷Ibid., 1925, pp. 23-24.

college if Baptists delayed longer.⁵⁸

Since the movement for a girls' college had been confined essentially to the Shreveport area, it is difficult to learn what opposition may have existed around the state. One discordant note was sounded after the 1925 Convention. An article in the Baptist Message questioned the wisdom of the Shreveport project in these words:

But [at] this time, when all of our mission work is suffering from lack of funds; when Louisiana College is calling for money; when Acadia Academy, the only school we have for teaching and training our French missionaries . . ., is in need of forty thousand dollars, would it be wise to put money in plans for another school?⁵⁹

The movement had solid support, however, as leading Baptists of the state had served on the committees which handled the matter during these years. Others from various areas had become participants in the Dodd Foundation. Familiar Baptist figures such as E. O. Ware, Claybrook Cottingham, W. H. Knight, W. H. Managan, Frank Tripp, and Mrs. Mary Lou Jenkins were affiliated with the unfolding drama.⁶⁰ With Baptist headquarters domiciled at Shreveport, most denominational staff members were sympathetic.

The Dodd Foundation conducted its special Shreveport campaign in the spring of 1926, perhaps to have it completed before the Convention's effort to fund a dormitory was started. Shreveport had become an increasingly important business center, its wealth based upon lumber,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Baptist Message, November 19, 1925, p. 4.

⁶⁰ L.B.C., Minutes, 1921, p. 7; Ibid., 1924, p. 6; Ibid., 1927, p. 9; Baptist Message, February 3, 1927, p. 1.

manufacturing, agriculture, and a thriving oil and gas industry.⁶¹ M.E. Dodd wrote extensively in the Baptist Message throughout this period; some opposition to or reluctance about the Convention's entrance into the project can be inferred from the tenor of his articles, particularly those which asserted that no thinking person would oppose the girls' college idea.⁶² The campaign among Shreveport citizens was successful, and by the time of the 1926 Convention, construction was about to begin on Shreveport Hall.⁶³

In the spring of 1927, the Convention's program for a dormitory was carried out. A state-wide effort, which was based upon approaches to Baptists of means for special gifts beyond the regular budget, was led by Frank Tripp, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minden.⁶⁴ A distinguished committee of one hundred Baptist leaders promoted the campaign at the local and associational levels. However, the effort fell embarrassingly short, due to uncertain financial conditions then prevailing and to the devastating flood of April, 1927.⁶⁵ Further efforts brought limited results as a total of \$142,000 of a goal of \$200,000 was subscribed; but only \$32,000 was collected.⁶⁶ This amount was placed in trust until the Convention could provide the entire \$200,000 which would

⁶¹Davis, Louisiana: A Narrative History, pp. 298, 302.

⁶²Baptist Message, February 18, 1926, p. 1; Ibid., January 27, 1927, p. 1; L.B.C., Minutes, 1927, p. 14.

⁶³Ibid., 1926, p. 16.

⁶⁴Ibid., 1927, p. 35.

⁶⁵Ibid.; Baptist Message, February 3, 1927, p. 1; Ibid., May 19, 1927, p. 4.

⁶⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1927, p. 35.

entitle it to assume ownership of the whole venture.⁶⁷

The school, named Dodd College in honor of its principal sponsor, opened under control of the Dodd Foundation in the fall of 1927.⁶⁸ M.E. Dodd served as president, but a dean was employed to direct day-to-day affairs.⁶⁹ It is probable that some resented the name chosen for the school, feeling that it symbolized a narrow, local movement at Shreveport. Dodd was a dynamic, talented personality who was probably the most distinguished minister among Louisiana Baptists. There could have been resentment or jealousy toward him or toward the affluent First Baptist Church which was the bastion of the entire girls' college movement. An impressive home called Founders' Hall was provided for President Dodd in 1929.⁷⁰ An attractive dormitory was erected with the encouragement and approval of the Convention; funds for the project were to come from the Convention's campaign for residence halls. The structure cost \$115,000; \$42,000 of this amount was eventually paid by the Convention.⁷¹ Total value of Dodd College in 1930 was estimated at \$561,085.81.⁷²

The school which developed was a four-year institution, embracing the last two years of high school and the first two years of college.⁷³

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁸ Baptist Message, August 11, 1927, p. 1; L.B.C., Minutes, 1927, p. 39.

⁶⁹ Baptist Message, August 25, 1927, p. 7; L.B.C., Minutes, 1927, pp. 39-41.

⁷⁰ Baptist Message, April 18, 1929, p. 11.

⁷¹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1930, p. 84.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 80.

Its graduates received the Associate in Arts degree, and they were accepted for junior class standing in various colleges of the South. Vocational, business, and fine arts courses were available.⁷⁴ Every effort was expended to insure cultivation of Christian character. The college had an elite, finishing-school atmosphere which reflected the affluence of its founders and its clientele.⁷⁵ Records of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport reveal a constant and benevolent relationship between the college and the church.⁷⁶ The building program of Dodd College was supported by the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce and all of the civic clubs of that community. An article of the time expressed the dependence of the school upon the area as it said:

The future of Dodd College is bound up with the future of Shreveport, and its sponsors predict for the new institution a phenomenal progress, commensurate with . . . the dynamic character of the citizenship of the most aggressive city in the southwest.⁷⁷

Pastor J. C. Cox and the Mount Lebanon Church gave the old college's bell to Dodd College. A nostalgic satisfaction echoes from this comment: "It now rests safely in the classic tower of Shreveport Hall and is heard every morning, calling students to their classes as it called their parents and their grandparents in years gone by."⁷⁸

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Dodd College, A Junior College for Girls, Promotional Brochure found in Shreveport Times Library, Shreveport, Louisiana, n.d., p. 5.

⁷⁶"Minutes of the First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana," July 17, 1927; Ibid., June 9, 1929.

⁷⁷The Shreveport Times, October 31, 1929, Section C., p. 15.

⁷⁸L.B.C., Minutes, 1927, p. 43.

Acadia Baptist Academy

Quite a different drama was unfolding in Southwest Louisiana during these years. Acadia Baptist Academy developed under conditions of stark simplicity, knowing nothing of comfort and aiming mainly to win an uphill struggle for existence. Founded in 1917, the Academy was accepted by the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1919. That it was not only an educational venture was shown by the decision to place it under the Executive Board rather than the Education Commission. In 1920, the Convention structure was overhauled; the Commission was reorganized into the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College, and the Academy was placed under a separate board of trustees.⁷⁹ Trustees for each school were elected by the Convention for terms of three years. Membership on the Academy board was increased from nine to twelve in 1927.⁸⁰

Two motives comprised the objectives of Acadia Academy. The original catalog stressed educational development in its statement of purpose.⁸¹ By 1927-1928, the catalog said, "The real purpose . . . is to train people who will do mission work among the French speaking people of this section of the state."⁸² Both emphases were present from the beginning, but the missionary motive, based upon the need of the French people, grew increasingly dominant through the 1920's. The Reverend J. H. Strother was the administrator for the first two sessions; he was

⁷⁹Ibid., 1920, pp. 60-63.

⁸⁰Ibid., 1927, p. 47.

⁸¹Acadia Baptist Academy [Catalog], 1917-1918, p. 10.

⁸²Ibid., 1927-1928, p. 11.

followed by the Reverend L. U. Comalander, who served until 1923.⁸³

Comalander had been a faculty member at Mount Lebanon Academy when that school closed in 1912.

All grades were offered in the Academy in its early years. The first three sessions were very encouraging as attendance increased from 54 pupils with two teachers in 1917 to 176 pupils and seven faculty members in 1920.⁸⁴ A decline in enrollment occurred during the next three years; the postwar depression and the opening of a public school near the Academy were responsible.⁸⁵ That the school was meeting an educational need, either directly or indirectly, was revealed in a Baptist Message article which told of comments by two non-Baptists of the area. One man declared that the Academy community was the "most intellectual area in the parish," and the other one said that it "had been very effective in getting pupils in public schools."⁸⁶

The Academy was on the verge of closing in 1923 because of low enrollment, public school competition, and feeble financial support.⁸⁷ The trustees felt it would be advisable to relocate in some town with railroad facilities, though the advantages of rural location had been emphasized in the early years.⁸⁸ The facilities were offered to the

⁸³ Baptist Message, June 29, 1922, p. 16; *Ibid.*, September 27, 1923, p. 8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, June 29, 1922, p. 16.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, September 27, 1923, p. 16.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, August 28, 1923, p. 7.

⁸⁸ L.B.C., Minutes, 1921, p. 80.

public school board for \$12,000.⁸⁹ One of the Academy's problems related to inadequate provision for it in the Seventy-five Million Campaign.⁹⁰ Some felt that it was adversely affected by its reputation as the "French Academy."⁹¹

Eventually, the operation continued in the same location with the coming of the Reverend Thomas E. Mixon, who served as superintendent from 1923 to 1930.⁹² Several developments characterized this period. Attendance increased markedly, reaching a peak of 141 in 1927 from a low of 99 when Mixon assumed office.⁹³ Facilities were improved and expanded in 1925 and 1926. Thirty acres were added to the property, making a total of fifty.⁹⁴ A memorial gift by Mrs. J. W. McAlpine of Opelousas provided a new boys' dormitory.⁹⁵ Other buildings were renovated; more cottages for adult students with families were constructed, reaching a total of twelve in 1926.⁹⁶ This expansion program resulted in a debt of \$15,000 which was assumed by the Convention in 1926, but not before the adoption of a strong resolution designed to prevent a recurrence of such a situation.⁹⁷

⁸⁹Baptist Message, August 28, 1923, p. 7.

⁹⁰Ibid., June 28, 1923, p. 16.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., September 27, 1923, p. 8.

⁹³L.B.C., Minutes, 1923, p. 84.

⁹⁴Baptist Message, July 29, 1926, p. 16.

⁹⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1925, p. 21.

⁹⁶Ibid., 1926, p. 14.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 30.

The most significant development of the Mixon administration was the transition of the Academy into an essentially missionary enterprise as Louisiana Baptists sought to establish work in the predominantly Catholic parishes of Southwest Louisiana. Mixon told of the increase in ministerial students and mission volunteers in these words:

Four years ago, when no one could be found to take the task of training a few French workers for this big job, we started with 4 mission students, 2 preachers, one boy and one girl. During our four years this number has increased to more than fifty.⁹⁸

The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention continued its practice of contributing \$5,000 per year to Acadia Academy.⁹⁹ It was noted in 1929 that the Academy had more ministerial students than any other Baptist academy in the South.¹⁰⁰ Louisiana Baptists, through the Executive Board or by special gifts from groups or individuals, supplied the remainder of the school's support.¹⁰¹ Income from students was extremely limited.¹⁰² Mixon planted a large garden to supply the dining hall and student homes. "Poundings" were held by area churches to provide food for married students. The matter of the educational program was scarcely mentioned in the literature of the period as the Academy assumed an identity as a mission center more than a school.¹⁰³ Occasional references to graduates who engaged in post-secondary educational

⁹⁸ Baptist Message, April 28, 1927, p. 16.

⁹⁹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1927, p. 71.

¹⁰⁰ Baptist Message, June 13, 1929, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1928, p. 58.

¹⁰² Baptist Message, January 26, 1928, p. 16.

¹⁰³ Ibid., July 30, 1925, p. 5; Ibid., August 27, 1925, p. 4.

pursuits or who served in various secular occupations may be found, but these are obscured by voluminous accounts of mission workers who went directly to positions of service among the French Catholics of the area. Such individuals started their missionary activity during student days; a particularly effective Mission Band, which conducted worship services in many communities, was a feature of the mid-1920's; it was directed by Professor H. H. Stagg.¹⁰⁴

Events of 1928 and afterward led to retrenchment at Acadia Academy. Southern Baptists of that time were startled at the revelation of the embezzlement of \$953,000 of Home Mission Board funds by Clinton S. Carnes, the treasurer of that organization.¹⁰⁵ Coming on the heels of debts connected with the Seventy-five Million Campaign, the Carnes defalcation produced an extreme emergency. The Home Mission Board's annual appropriation to Acadia Academy was withdrawn; Louisiana Baptists were forced to assume more responsibility for the Academy.¹⁰⁶ The first five grades were eliminated except for tutorial services to ministerial volunteers.¹⁰⁷ An economic slowdown, which proved to be the prelude of the Great Depression, lowered the school's enrollment to eighty-five by 1930.¹⁰⁸

The erection of a principal's home in 1929 due to the "generosity

¹⁰⁴Ibid., February 21, 1924, p. 15.

¹⁰⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1928, p. 28.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 1930, p. 29.

of some ladies" was the only bright spot at the end of the decade.¹⁰⁹ Except for this structure and the expansion-renovation program of 1925-1926 noted above, Acadia Baptist Academy's requests for aid were very limited. In 1922, the trustees asked for help in securing a light plant and an improved water well, reporting that "coal oil lamps are a constant danger to our buildings and there is not a bath tub on the place."¹¹⁰ Several years later, the main need was a barn, but bedding for the students and shrubbery to adorn a campus recently freed of roaming cattle were urgently requested.¹¹¹ Also, the advent of fences for the cattle led to a request for a lawn mower to control the grass and weeds which covered the campus.¹¹²

It appeared for a short time that Acadia Academy would face competition in the form of other Baptist academies. When Louisiana College concluded its academy department in 1923, some expressed interest in founding several academies in various parts of the state.¹¹³ The Reverend Isaiah Watson spearheaded a movement to organize a Baptist Industrial School about two miles from Pineville, and at least three associations adopted resolutions favoring such an institution.¹¹⁴ However, opposition to the idea materialized when some questioned the need of Louisiana Baptists for an industrial school; thus the Convention did not

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1929, p. 87.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1922, p. 80.

¹¹¹ Baptist Message, February 14, 1929, p. 12.

¹¹² Ibid., April 11, 1929, p. 12.

¹¹³ Ibid., October 25, 1923, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., November 1, 1923, p. 4.

endorse the project.¹¹⁵

Louisiana Baptist Convention Developments, 1921-1930

The decade from 1921 to 1930 was a time of progress and consolidation for the Louisiana Baptist Convention as well as an era of disillusionment. Edgar Godbold served as Corresponding Secretary from 1920 to the fall of 1924. His main work was promotion of the Seventy-five Million Campaign. E. D. Solomon succeeded Godbold, and he led the attempt to cope with the massive debts which threatened every phase of Baptist work.¹¹⁶ As Baptists continued to increase in numbers their financial program became a more complex operation. In 1926 there were 810 churches with 122,105 members as compared to 533 churches with 43,037 members in 1906; there had been only 18,460 Baptists in 1886.¹¹⁷ Total contributions through the Convention to all missionary and educational programs increased from \$3,337.29 in 1886 to \$21,668.29 in 1906 and \$354,449.29 in 1926.¹¹⁸ In 1929, membership in Louisiana Baptist churches was reported to be 136,687.¹¹⁹

The growth of Baptist work led to a desire for a unified financial plan. What emerged in 1925 was the "Cooperative Program," and it soon attracted the support of individuals and churches. By 1929, it was described as "the most comprehensive and the best plan we have ever had

¹¹⁵ Ibid., November 22, 1923, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ G. Penrose St. Amant, A Short History of Louisiana Baptists (Nashville, 1948), p. 106.

¹¹⁷ L.B.C., Minutes, 1926, p. 53.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 1929, p. 61.

. . . almost a perfect plan" ¹²⁰ Each aspect of the Convention's program, including all agencies and institutions, was included in the Cooperative Program. When one contributed to this program, he was supporting all phases of Baptist work, thus making it theoretically unnecessary for special appeals by the various agencies. In 1926, several vital steps were taken to consolidate the entire Convention program. All boards of trustees were instructed to request the presence of the Corresponding Secretary at their meetings; a special financial committee of five members was set up to examine financial aspects of all reports before the reports were submitted to the Convention; nearly all of the accumulated debts of the various agencies were funded by the Executive Board, which assumed responsibility for them. ¹²¹ While the right to designate one's gifts was carefully respected, the organizational thrust was increasingly toward utilization of the Cooperative Program concept. In 1929, the Convention approved a report which asserted:

We believe the time has arrived . . . [to] adopt a policy . . . whereby the principle of cooperation among the agencies of the Convention must be applied to the making of obligations as well as to the sharing in distribution of funds. ¹²²

Signs of Stress

The Cooperative Program approach succeeded in reducing the massive accumulated debts of Louisiana Baptist enterprises from \$550,000 to

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 48.

¹²¹Ibid., 1926, pp. 29, 41-42.

¹²²Ibid., 1929, p. 32.

\$348,000 in the period between 1925 and 1930.¹²³ As much as 40 per cent of the budget each year was allocated to debt retirement. Disasters such as the flood of 1927 and the Carnes defalcation at the Home Mission Board caused receipts to slump in 1928; after 1929 had produced record contributions, the decline resumed and the Convention of 1930 was informed that "every cause is suffering" because of the lowest receipts in twelve years.¹²⁴

Louisiana College developed internally in terms of faculty stability and student quality, but further expansion of the school was not achieved in the difficult period between 1925 and 1930. Enrollment slumped slightly after reaching a peak of 415 in the fall of 1925 as President Claybrook Gottingham coped with the problem of operating "on a dead level."¹²⁵ Hopes for a \$250,000 building program were projected by the college trustees and approved by the Convention in 1926.¹²⁶ Not wishing to undermine the Dodd College campaign of 1927, the proponents of Louisiana College deferred their effort until 1929. At that time, the Convention approved a \$50,000 campaign by Louisiana College with hopes that an additional \$200,000 could be raised within three years.¹²⁷ Under the leadership of the Reverend John L. Dodge, this \$50,000 project

¹²³Ibid., 1930, p. 52.

¹²⁴Ibid., 1928, p. 14; Ibid., 1929, p. 61; Ibid., 1930, p. 51.

¹²⁵Ibid., 1929, p. 89; Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 16, 1929.

¹²⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1926, pp. 35, 69-70; Board of Trustees, "Minutes," June 1, 1926.

¹²⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1929, pp. 41-42, 47-48; Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 8, 1930.

was promoted vigorously, but only \$20,000 was subscribed.¹²⁸ A decade had ended, and the deteriorating financial position of the Convention was a grim warning of worse days to follow.

As Louisiana College approached the end of her first quarter of a century, there were evidences of both success and of failure. The number of graduates increased yearly, growing from fifty-seven in 1927 to eighty in 1929.¹²⁹ These individuals, including many who would distinguish themselves in the future, formed the nucleus of an alumni association which became active in these years.¹³⁰ The College provided large numbers of pastors for the churches; and nearly 400 teachers had been trained for the public school system.¹³¹ Louisiana College students entered graduate schools throughout the country.¹³² But progress was limited to accomplishments like a boulevard entrance to connect the campus with a new highway and a small athletic field, both financed largely by students and alumni.¹³³ The problem of deficits in operating expenses remained formidable as attempts to increase the endowment proved futile.¹³⁴ Signs of anxiety were everywhere: alumni and faculty groups petitioned the trustees for action; the trustees doubted the Convention's willingness and ability to promote the enterprise; President

¹²⁸L.B.C., Minutes, 1930, p. 29.

¹²⁹Baptist Message, May 19, 1927, p. 14; *Ibid.*, May 23, 1929, p. 16.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, January 31, 1929, p. 11; Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 16, 1929; *Ibid.*, June 4, 1929.

¹³¹Baptist Message, June 5, 1930, p. 5.

¹³²*Ibid.*, September 4, 1930, p. 1.

¹³³L.B.C., Minutes, 1927, pp. 90-91; *Ibid.*, 1928, p. 83.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 84; *Ibid.*, 1930, p. 73.

Cottingham rebuked the passivity of the trustees and wondered if the solution might be "a change of administration."¹³⁵

Conclusion

The decade from 1921 to 1930, though it produced considerable progress, left Louisiana Baptists in difficult circumstances. Expansion programs carried out in the optimistic spirit which followed World War I left heavy debts for Convention enterprises when it became apparent that the highly-publicized Seventy-five Million Campaign would fall considerably short of its goals. Baptists turned to a unified budget plan known as the Cooperative Program in 1925 and afterward; this plan was part of a consolidation effort to cope with the massive debt problem.

Louisiana College experienced no appreciable growth after 1925, but the early years of the decade witnessed the erection of a beautiful administration building, the achievement of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and the accumulation of an endowment of \$300,000. With a capacity enrollment and others desiring admission, the trustees, administration, and faculty became increasingly disturbed at the inability or disinclination of Louisiana Baptists to effect further growth of the institution.

Though economic conditions were erratic and the debt problem was tremendous, the movement among Louisiana Baptists to establish a girls' college was probably the ultimate factor accounting for Louisiana College's frustration. This does not imply the existence of hostility or

¹³⁵Board of Trustees, "Minutes," June 4, 1929; Ibid., January 8, 1930; L.B.C., Minutes, 1930, p. 74.

competition among various elements of the Convention; indications in the literature of the period show considerable mutual respect. Nevertheless, anxiety existed about the future of Louisiana College at a time when Dodd College was slowly emerging from dream to reality. Much of the support which went to Dodd College would probably have been directed to the Pineville school in the absence of a girls' college campaign. However, sentiment between 1921 and 1930 appeared to favor trying to support both Louisiana College and Dodd College.

Acadia Baptist Academy became increasingly identified as a missionary enterprise more than an educational institution. Its support was based upon its efforts to provide training for workers among the French people of South Louisiana. From a peak in the mid-1920's, the Academy program declined toward the end of the decade. Apparently support for the Academy did not present competition for either Louisiana College or Dodd College.

CHAPTER VII

THE PERIOD OF TRIAL, 1931-1940

Deepening Shadows

The Louisiana Baptist Convention, meeting in its 1930 session, pondered an uncertain future. For several years, a gnawing sense of frustration had gripped the denominational conscience. A feeling of anxiety permeated all aspects of the Convention's program; it was especially noticeable in regard to the educational enterprise. Burdened with heavy debts which had accumulated during the Seventy-five Million Campaign and alarmed at erratic economic conditions which had caused the poorest financial report in twelve years, Louisiana Baptists modified their program and hoped that better days were ahead.

Instead, the most difficult years that the Convention has faced in its modern period materialized as the Great Depression of the 1930's descended upon the denominational program which was already in a condition of disarray. A "greatly reduced but guaranteed" Cooperative Program budget of \$162,645 was adopted by the Convention in 1930; of this amount, \$12,000 was allocated to Louisiana College, \$9,000 to Acadia Academy and \$5,000 to Dodd College.¹ An amendment provided for revision of the budget after four months, if necessary, by the Executive Board. Income

¹Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Eighty-Third Annual Session of the Convention, 1930, pp. 34-35. (Hereinafter referred to as L.B.C., Minutes.)

fell so precipitately that the Executive Board, refusing to assume full responsibility, decided upon a called meeting of the Convention which convened on May 27, 1931.² At the suggestion of F. J. Katz, who had occupied the role of chief executive officer of the Convention since the resignation of E. D. Solomon at the end of 1930, the Convention's financial plan of 1930 was modified. In an action made retroactive to January 1, 1931, designated gifts, exclusive of contributions to buildings and endowments, were counted as part of the appropriations to all agencies participating in the Cooperative Program.³ Still the receipts declined, and the budget was further reduced to \$120,000 at the regular session in November, 1931.⁴

Though the educational institutions were included for reduced amounts in the budget for 1932, they were allowed to "go into the field" for funds before that year ended.⁵ The bottom was reached when the 1932 Convention adopted a budget of only \$80,000; no provisions were made for the schools in the budget; it was simply recommended and agreed that they would make direct appeals to the churches for support.⁶ It should be noted that the schools apparently preferred this course in the hope they would thus fare better. The same \$80,000 budget was adopted by the two succeeding annual sessions; the 1935 Convention, sensing some evidence of improvement, finally approved a slight increase of the budget

²Ibid., 1931, p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 4

⁴Ibid., pp. 31-33.

⁵Ibid., 1932, p. 27.

⁶Ibid., pp. 27-29.

for 1936 to \$88,000.⁷ During these years, the regular division of budget funds provided forty per cent for denominational programs within the state, forty per cent for debt retirement, and twenty per cent for Southern Baptist Convention programs.

With the educational institutions and several other agencies omitted from the regular budget and cast "into the field," the Cooperative Program technique was undercut to some extent. While some were happy at this development, the concept of a unified budget was generally approved, and Louisiana Baptists anticipated stricter adherence to it as soon as the emergency permitted.⁸ Cooperative Program receipts reached a nadir in 1933 when only \$51,052 of the projected \$80,000 were received (See Appendix).⁹ There was gradual improvement thereafter; by 1935, budget receipts were \$79,825, and the climb back toward the previous high of \$187,172 in 1927 was in progress.¹⁰ Including designated funds, the total receipts increased from \$85,134 in 1933 to \$136,361 in 1935 in comparison to the record of \$246,805 in 1929 (See Appendix).¹¹ The most encouraging fact of these dark years was the gradual reduction of the accumulated debt from \$348,000 in 1930 to \$281,000 in 1935.¹²

⁷Ibid., 1933, pp. 20-21; Ibid., 1934, p. 20; Ibid., 1935, p. 31.

⁸Baptist Message, March 19, 1931, p. 1; L.B.C., Minutes, 1932, pp. 26-27.

⁹Ibid., 1933, p. 39.

¹⁰Ibid., 1935, pp. 54-55.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 55.

Dodd College Struggles Ahead

An important educational development early in this decade was the decision to renounce efforts to effect Convention ownership and operation of Dodd College. First suggested in a resolution offered by S. C. Rushing at the 1931 session, the matter was referred to a special committee through efforts of M. E. Dodd.¹³ The Convention had been unable even to approach successful conclusion of its effort to raise \$200,000 for dormitory purposes at Dodd College. Declining economic conditions made it apparent that the Convention's commitment of 1927 to accomplish this goal within five years would not be met.¹⁴ In the meantime, with the approval of the Convention's Dodd College Commission, the M. E. Dodd Foundation had proceeded to build the dormitory.¹⁵ Thus the Foundation was left with a heavy debt when the Convention failed to raise the money.

The Rushing Resolution advised the Convention to face realistically its inability to complete its agreement with Dodd College, and recommended that it should withdraw officially from that endeavor. Deep feelings and strong opinions were manifested in the articles which appeared during this period. M. E. Dodd strove to retain the Convention's commitment to the project, suggesting that the Foundation should grant an extension of time for the denominational campaign for funds.¹⁶ He was careful to describe the Dodd College movement as an outgrowth of the

¹³Ibid., 1931, p. 39.

¹⁴Baptist Message, January 8, 1931, p. 8.

¹⁵Ibid.; L.B.C., Minutes, 1932, p. 69.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 70.

Convention's actions of 1920 and afterward, insisting that the Foundation consistently acted in the light of the Convention's interest in a girls' college.¹⁷ Dodd referred to "those who have done nothing for it and . . . who have fought it from the beginning."¹⁸ He noted that "many leaders . . . and others have expressed the opinion that the . . . Convention would feel a sense of genuine relief if they could be relieved from this contract."¹⁹ Attacks and criticism of Dodd College are not apparent in the literature of the era despite Dodd's insinuations.

The special committee made its report to the 1932 session of the Convention through its chairman, S. C. Rushing.²⁰ Expressing appreciation for Dodd College and regret at the chain of events which had developed, the committee declared that "the contract which has been pending for several years between Dodd College and the . . . Convention. . . is now incapable of being consummated." Then the report stated:

We recommend that in order that there be a perfectly clear understanding as to the future relationship of Dodd College to the . . . Convention, the Dodd College Commission be discontinued until such a time when increased receipts, better conditions, and the wisdom of the convention might justify a second effort . . . to own and operate Dodd College.²¹

The morning and afternoon sessions of the first day of the Convention were used for discussion of what had become an emotional issue. Included with Dodd as a proponent of Dodd College was the venerable E.O.

¹⁷ Baptist Message, January 8, 1931, p. 8; Church Chimes [First Baptist Church of Shreveport], October 15, 1932.

¹⁸ Baptist Message, February 12, 1931, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, January 8, 1931, p. 8.

²⁰ L.B.C., Minutes, 1932, pp. 16-17.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Ware, now appearing at his last session of the Convention; Rushing apparently acted as chief spokesman for those desiring to terminate the project. Eventually the committee's report was adopted in what amounted to a victory of harsh economic factors over sentiment. Ware warned in a subsequent article that the Convention would discover in time that it had made a tragic mistake.²² He confirmed the fact that antagonism existed toward Dodd College because of its name as he reviewed the chain of events which had led to the selection of the name.²³ Ware had been an active participant in those proceedings as a member of the Girls' College Commission, and he insisted the name was determined over Dodd's staunch objection. Nevertheless, a suspicion developed among some Baptists that a cult of personality was being fostered. The naming of the Dodd College yearbook, the "Emedee," with the dynamic minister's initials was probably objectionable to some people.²⁴

Seeking to ease the blow and to be fair in its action, the Convention cancelled the second mortgage note it had taken against the dormitory when it had delivered the \$42,000 which had been raised for that building.²⁵ Since the total cost of the structure had been \$115,000, the M. E. Dodd Foundation was left with a debt of nearly \$75,000 when the Convention renounced its intention to attain control of Dodd College.²⁶ The Convention requested that the Foundation release it from

²²Baptist Message, January 12, 1933, p. 1.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., December 3, 1931, p. 7.

²⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1932, p. 17.

²⁶Ibid.

the agreement of 1927, and the Foundation did so "reluctantly" in 1933.²⁷

In a further effort to preserve a pleasant relationship, the Convention commended Dodd College to the people of the state and requested "that Dodd College officials . . . make an annual report to this Convention along with the other Baptist schools."²⁸ Such reports, usually brief and always emphasizing that the Convention had requested them, were delivered by the M. E. Dodd Foundation throughout the decade 1931 to 1940. Otherwise, the girls' college issue faded into the background as the Baptist Message carried scant information about the project. The brief annual reports, however, sought to show the school's relevance to the denominational program. The 1934 report said, "In reality, we belong to you, even though we do not have any official relation to the Convention."²⁹

Dodd College struggled through these years as its enrollment alternately increased and decreased. The high school department was dropped in 1931.³⁰ A \$224,000 deficit was reached by 1935; a campaign led by a prominent Shreveport layman, James Smitherman, reduced the obligation to \$100,000.³¹ This amount was then financed in a bond issue secured by an annual appropriation of \$5,000 by the First Baptist Church of Shreveport.³² Of this amount, \$1,000 each year was in the form of a deduction

²⁷Ibid., 1933, p. 61.

²⁸Ibid., 1932, p. 36.

²⁹Ibid., 1934, p. 67.

³⁰Ibid., 1931, p. 82.

³¹Ibid., 1935, pp. 80-81.

³²"Minutes of the First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana," November 13, 1935.

from M. E. Dodd's salary at his request.³³ Dodd resigned the presidency of the college in 1935 while he was serving as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, the first Louisiana Baptist to be so honored.³⁴ He was succeeded by E. C. Solomon in 1936 as the school opened its tenth year.³⁵ The 1936 report declared that "Dodd College has now the brightest outlook in its entire history," and it expressed the belief that "the institution has passed through the experimental stage and is now ready for more ambitious developments."³⁶ A note of elitism may be detected in a reference to "the best service in higher education for the fine Christian women and homes of this area."³⁷

Austerity at Louisiana College

The main thrust of the Convention's educational program was centered at Louisiana College. As mentioned previously, an ambitious campaign was launched in 1929 in the expectation that \$250,000 could be raised for erection of two new dormitories and a dining hall. Instead, the project collapsed ignominiously and was abandoned, and the College ended its first quarter century on an uncertain note.³⁸ The enrollment declined and financial problems became so acute as to indicate that a crisis of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Baptist Message, January 17, 1935, p. 1.

³⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1936, p. 47; Lila McLure and J. Edward Howe, History of Shreveport and Shreveport Builders, Vol. I (Shreveport, 1937), pp. 166-167.

³⁶ L.B.C., Minutes, 1936, p. 47.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," May 26, 1931. (Hereinafter referred to as Board of Trustees, "Minutes").

epic proportions was at hand.³⁹ All thought of advancement or expansion in the foreseeable future was shelved as Louisiana College prepared to pass through the most trying period since the fire of 1911.

Added to burdens which were difficult to bear, the College's supporters had to cope with criticism and antagonism at a time when a unified effort was most desirable. One writer suggested that the school be transformed into a junior college lest its program become so expensive as to destroy its relevance to the rank and file of Baptist people.⁴⁰ It was argued that denominational resources were inadequate to face the developing financial crisis in the educational field. President Claybrook Cottingham, entering his third decade at the helm of the school, spoke of those who "would like to see Louisiana College fail in order that the educational work of Louisiana Baptists might be reorganized in some fashion more acceptable to them."⁴¹ He indicated that this attitude was discernible in the actions and utterances of some denominational leaders. No public controversy erupted, but the fact that the Dodd College issue was approaching a culmination provides one possible clue for interpreting such comments. A few years later, college officials rejoiced that the school had survived though some had anticipated a different outcome.⁴²

From a record high enrollment of 415 in 1925, attendance declined

³⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1931, p. 73.

⁴⁰Baptist Message, October 15, 1931, p. 7.

⁴¹Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 24, 1931.

⁴²Ibid., January 16, 1934.

until there were only 261 students in the fall of 1931.⁴³ Thereafter, very slight increases were evident from year to year, reaching 360 by 1936.⁴⁴ In 1933, however, student fees were reduced by the Board of Trustees; thus actual income declined as the student body increased.⁴⁵ Faculty members canvassed for students, leading to the observation that the faculty worked seven days a week.⁴⁶ Whereas graduating classes had numbered as many as eighty, some years now produced fewer than thirty degrees, evidencing the attrition rate produced by adverse economic conditions.⁴⁷

The financial emergency was not occasioned exclusively by reduced attendance and low student fees. As described above, Louisiana College's unfortunate plight was connected with the emergency which developed when the Convention's Cooperative Program receipts declined alarmingly in 1930 and afterward. By 1932, the College was "in the field" for support, indicating that no budgeted amounts were being channeled to the support of the school.⁴⁸ Its administration, faculty, trustees, alumni, and friends sought to contact individuals and local churches, presenting to them the dire conditions of the College and appealing to them for aid. The churches that operated on annual budgets -- not many did at this time -- were asked to include the College in their budgets. Others were

⁴³L.B.C., Minutes, 1931, p. 73.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1936, p. 73.

⁴⁵Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 10, 1933.

⁴⁶Ibid., May 24, 1932.

⁴⁷Baptist Message, June 1, 1933, p. 1.

⁴⁸Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 24, 1931; Ibid., October 27, 1931; L.B.C., Minutes, 1931, p. 74; Ibid., 1932, p. 62.

below the 1930-1931 peak level.⁵⁵

Many individuals and groups rallied to the aid of Louisiana College, but the dedicated faculty which endured affliction and challenged others with its willingness to wait for better days certainly played a decisive role in the drama. The faculty was amazingly stable throughout the decade 1931 to 1940. President Cottingham and Dean H. M. Weathersby had been associated with the college for more than twenty years. Others such as W. P. Carson, J. E. Brakefield, Willie Strother, J. E. Caldwell, E. O. Wood, and the exceedingly popular Coach Henry Walden -- most of whom would spend the remainder of their professional careers at the College -- were veteran professors when the debacle struck.⁵⁶ One month's salary was donated by all employed personnel on one occasion, a contribution valued at \$7,503.00.⁵⁷ Even with expenditures greatly reduced, the finances fell months behind as the years passed. The largest item in the deficit which accrued in these years was the overdue salaries.⁵⁸ A notable rapport existed between administration and faculty members. Frequently faculty representatives attended meetings of the Board of Trustees; seemingly, faculty participation was desired.⁵⁹ A special campaign in 1934 to raise \$14,000 for overdue salary payments failed

⁵⁵Board of Trustees, "Minutes," October 27, 1931; Ibid., May 24, 1932; Ibid., January 10, 1933; L.B.C., Minutes, 1931, p. 74.

⁵⁶Ibid., 1933, p. 55; Louisiana College, Louisiana College Bulletin Catalog Number Session 1934-1935 with Announcements for the Summer Session 1935 and for the Session 1935-1936, pp. 6-7; Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1936, p. 7; Ibid., 1938, p. 4; Ibid., 1939, p. 5.

⁵⁷Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 24, 1931.

⁵⁸"Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," May 5, 1931; L.B.C., Minutes, 1934, p. 61.

⁵⁹Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 24, 1931.

requested to provide opportunity for college personnel to discuss the school's needs and to collect offerings for the program.⁴⁹ For a while, conditions were so bad that local churches could scarcely handle their own obligations, and President Cottingham declined to push the College until some evidences of improvement were detectable.⁵⁰

Adversity continued to plague Louisiana College for several years. Aside from low enrollment and denominational crises, the school was hurt financially as its endowment funds were unable to produce the excellent returns which had helped the budget for several years.⁵¹ Indeed some of the endowment funds were lost as investments in various business ventures declined in value or disappeared when some of the companies failed.⁵² These losses were offset in subsequent times as wise investments in a redeveloping market produced favorable returns.⁵³ The most severe economy in operations was practiced as President Cottingham reported reductions in operating expenses of 33 1/3% between 1928 and 1932, declaring that further reductions would probably impair the quality of the educational program.⁵⁴ Salary reductions were made from time to time until eventually they reached a level between 35 and 40 per cent

⁴⁹Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 24, 1932; L.B.C., Minutes, 1933, p. 56; Ibid., 1934, p. 61.

⁵⁰Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 23, 1933.

⁵¹Ibid., May 24, 1932.

⁵²Ibid.; Ibid., May 23, 1933.

⁵³Ibid.; Ibid., May 24, 1938.

⁵⁴L.B.C., Minutes, 1932, pp. 61-62.

dismally, but the project did direct attention to the sacrifices these individuals were making.⁶⁰ Considerable truth was reflected in a report in 1936 which asserted that the College was being "maintained by the self-sacrificing service of the members of its staff."⁶¹

Among the developments of the 1930's were few joyous occasions. One especially high spot was the completion by President Cottingham in 1935 of a quarter century as administrator of Louisiana College. Many congratulatory articles appeared in the Baptist Chronicle at this time, and they revealed the high esteem in which the veteran educator was held.⁶²

An editorial observed:

Big in physique, big in brain and big in sympathy, this man Cottingham has been the most potent leader in our Baptist [life] in Louisiana for the past decade. His judgment on all denominational matters is sought by his brethren, and usually for his attitude on any given matter to be known generally means the final decision by his brethren in that way.⁶³

Several staunch supporters of the College across the years were removed by death, most notably E. O. Ware, who died in December, 1933.⁶⁴ Ware, appropriately known as the "father of Louisiana College," held a unique place in the affection of Louisiana Baptists as the passage of the years drew a cloak over the struggles of an earlier era. Describing events of long ago, one article noted:

Two colleges . . . established by the pioneers . . . were struggling along, but it was apparent that they were fighting a losing battle. Dr. Ware realized that the only

⁶⁰Ibid., September 18, 1934; L.B.C., Minutes, 1934, p. 62.

⁶¹Ibid., 1936, p. 75.

⁶²Baptist Message, May 2, 1935, pp. 1-2; Ibid., p. 7.

⁶³Ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁴Ibid., December 14, 1933, p. 2.

hope for a strong Baptist college was to close these schools and establish a college at the very center of the state. However, there were many who felt that the already existing schools should be preserved and these were some of the most influential and wealthy Baptists in the state. Dr. Ware displayed his real genius of leadership in working out this complicated school problem that resulted in Louisiana College at Pineville.⁶⁵

W. H. Managan, a prominent layman who had served as Convention president and as president of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College, died in 1934.⁶⁶ The aged J. R. Edwards, once president of Mount Lebanon, original member of the Education Commission and veteran trustee of Louisiana College, passed away in April, 1937.⁶⁷ One of the last acts of the old minister was a trip to Pineville for a rally in the interest of the College.⁶⁸

One is impressed by the combination of realism and optimism which characterized President Cottingham and others. Whereas he carefully gave factual reports which portrayed the harsh circumstances the College faced, Cottingham declared confidence that the situation would improve:

Conditions are probably no worse than they are with other individuals, corporations and institutions. The members of our organization are loyal and willing to carry on. We all believe the lane must soon turn and we have confident faith in the future of Louisiana College.⁶⁹

A moving testimony, revealing both the extent of support rendered to the College by some of its backers and the depth of satisfaction they derived from its development, echoed in these comments:

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 22, 1934.

⁶⁷ Ibid., May 25, 1937.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 23, 1933.

There have been days when Louisiana College was much less prosperous than it is today, and . . . days when I was much more prosperous than I am today.

During those days it was always a great pleasure to me to give not only my time . . . but also to give of my money and to lend my endorsement to help the credit of the college. I consider the money which I have invested in Louisiana College to be one of the best investments I have ever made. Most of my other investments have been swept away. This one remains and I believe will remain⁷⁰

The words were those of W. C. Beall, only man with unbroken tenure on the College's governing board since its origin and one who had served unstintingly as a member of the Executive Committee throughout that time.

Louisiana College continued to produce scores of individuals who went into various occupations and who filled their places of responsibility adequately. Numerically, its graduates were concentrated in the areas of education and religious service, but there were representatives of the school in nearly every walk of life. A 1935 article told of over 500 teachers and nearly 150 ministers who had gone into the schools and churches of Louisiana.⁷¹ College personnel rejoiced at the records their students made in graduate schools, listing advanced degrees they received.⁷² Seven of thirty practicing physicians in the Alexandria-Pineville area were products of the Baptist school.⁷³ Over 125 personnel in the local Rapides parish school system hailed from Louisiana

⁷⁰Baptist Message, April 23, 1936, p. 2.

⁷¹Ibid., July 11, 1935, p. 4.

⁷²Ibid., July 25, 1935, pp. 1, 8; "Report of the President of Louisiana College to the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," January 7, 1936, p. 2. (Hereinafter referred to as President of L.C., "Report").

⁷³Baptist Message, January 7, 1937, p. 7.

College.⁷⁴ Most of the colleges and universities in Louisiana had faculty members whose training had started at the Pineville school.⁷⁵ An article noted that thirty-two high school principals in Louisiana had taken degrees at Louisiana College.⁷⁶ A prominent attorney in Virginia was one of the early graduates of the school.⁷⁷ Its products occupied numerous responsible and honorable places in Baptist denominational life.⁷⁸

Hard Times at Acadia Academy

The experience of Acadia Baptist Academy was both similar to and different from that of Louisiana College during the 1931-1940 era. A common factor was the mutual awareness that both schools were engaged in a struggle for survival. The Academy, like the College, was fortunate to have capable leadership in this trying decade as A. S. Newman, who served as superintendent from 1930 to 1935, was succeeded by Alfred Schwab, whose tenure extended to 1940.⁷⁹ Both men proved equal to the challenges of this difficult period, many appreciative comments appearing as Baptists noted with approval the quality of leadership they demonstrated.⁸⁰ Another person who labored with quiet efficiency for

⁷⁴Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 23, 1934.

⁷⁵Baptist Message, January 7, 1937, p. 4.

⁷⁶Ibid., August 22, 1935, p. 1.

⁷⁷President of L.C., "Report," January 7, 1936, p. 2; Baptist Message, January 7, 1937, p. 4.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 7; Ibid., May 27, 1937, p. 6.

⁷⁹Ibid., June 20, 1935, p. 7; Ibid., July 11, 1940, p. 1.

⁸⁰Ibid., March 22, 1934, p. 5; Ibid., June 13, 1935, p. 1; Ibid., June 20, 1935, p. 7; Ibid., May 27, 1937, p. 6.

nine of these ten years was Gerhardt Casselmann, who was principal during Schwab's administration.⁸¹ An early graduate of the Academy, he won a place of respect and esteem because of his ability and dedication.⁸² Otherwise, unlike Louisiana College, the Academy experienced considerable turnover among its personnel.⁸³

Among the distinctive aspects of the Academy's situation, the most remarkable was the stark simplicity of the struggle. With limited facilities and those of the most primitive type; with greatly reduced avenues of support since the eclipse of Home Mission Board funds in 1928 and afterward; with declining Convention support as that body decided to put the educational institutions "in the field"; with a decline in the enrollment and a fee structure that was never intended to provide significant income; the Academy faced a dismal future. At one point in 1930 Newman reported a bank balance of \$0.98.⁸⁴ Conditions remained trying as future financial reports told of cash on hand in amounts of \$346.52 in 1932, \$21.74 in 1933, \$602.62 in 1934, and \$546.35 in 1935.⁸⁵

Another unique condition at the Academy in these years was the absence of a debt problem. The policy of the school was to live within its income, regardless of how meager a standard of living this

⁸¹Ibid., June 6, 1935, p. 1.

⁸²Ibid., July 11, 1940, p. 1.

⁸³Ibid., May 30, 1935, p. 1.

⁸⁴L.B.C., Minutes, 1930, p. 72.

⁸⁵Ibid., 1932, p. 71; Ibid., 1933, p. 63; Ibid., 1934, p. 8; Ibid., 1935, pp. 79-80.

produced.⁸⁶ A glimpse of the spartan existence that such an approach entailed may be seen from the requests for assistance which were made from year to year. In 1932-1934, the main emphasis was upon receiving food for the students.⁸⁷ This aid was frequently given in the form of produce sent by various individuals, churches, and associations.⁸⁸ Baptists were reminded that some students were living on fifteen or twenty cents worth of food per day; they were asked to curb personal extravagance and to send the resultant savings to the Academy.⁸⁹ As time passed, emphasis was placed upon material needs such as hundreds of gallons of paint, turpentine, and linseed oil for a renovation program.⁹⁰ Pianos, desks, a stove for the kitchen, mule teams, cattle, wire, and books for the library were in demand.⁹¹ A list of some improvements made during the Newman administration included a mission bus received in 1931, five head of mules, a farm wagon, plows, a planter, a typewriter, several cattle, a refrigerator, one piano, and two grease guns.⁹²

Facilities on the seventy-one acres which now comprised the Academy property were: an administration building, a girls' dormitory and a boys' dormitory, each a frame-type, two-story structure, a dining hall,

⁸⁶Ibid., 1931, p. 71; Ibid., 1932, pp. 70-71.

⁸⁷Ibid., 1933, p. 63; Baptist Message, March 29, 1934, p. 1.

⁸⁸L.B.C., Minutes, 1933, p. 63; Baptist Message, September 2, 1935, p. 3; Ibid., December 5, 1935, p. 3.

⁸⁹Ibid., March 1, 1934, p. 5.

⁹⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1934, p. 68; Ibid., 1936, p. 81.

⁹¹Ibid., 1931, p. 71; Ibid., 1937, p. 83.

⁹²Baptist Message, May 30, 1935, p. 8.

the superintendent's house, sixteen cottages for married students, a small store and post office building, and a barn.⁹³ No attempts were made to expand the plant during the darkest days; however, reports and news articles stressed the desirability of a new administration building as conditions began to improve.⁹⁴ There appeared to be no chance that such a facility could be provided.

In seeking to understand the ability of Acadia Academy to endure these days of privation, the only adequate explanation one can arrive at is that it persisted because people were convinced that it was accomplishing a noteworthy missionary purpose. Many articles and testimonies about the validity of the Academy's program appeared throughout the period. A minister, describing a recent visit at the school, said, "In my opinion [the Academy] is one of our best and most deserving institutions, and by virtue of its location, the work it is doing [,] and its constituency, it is second to none as a missionary agency"⁹⁵ A striking characteristic of such literature is the almost total absence of genuine emphasis upon the educational role of the school. One should not be deluded into the belief that the school did not achieve educational objectives; the correct picture included education and missions, but always the missionary function was paramount in the mind of the general constituency.

Attendance averaged 106 in the 1930-1935 period, the total falling

⁹³Ibid., January 6, 1938, p. 1.

⁹⁴Ibid., November 18, 1937, p. 3.

⁹⁵Ibid., March 1, 1934, p. 5.

below 80 on one occasion and not rising above 120 at any time.⁹⁶ One-half, and sometimes two-thirds, of the students were ministerial or missionary volunteers; a high percentage were adults turning from other walks of life to prepare for the ministry. An interesting development was the increasing variety of students as those of Italian, German, Spanish, Syrian, and Indian parentage joined the preponderantly French student body. The proportion of French students declined in the early and middle years of the decade, not because of de-emphasis upon French missions; but the French element was very strong again by 1938-1940.⁹⁷ The Academy was frequently called "the school of the second chance," and to some it was a school of the only chance.⁹⁸

The most striking educational achievement of this period came in 1933, when Acadia Academy was fully accredited by the Louisiana State Department of Education. A letter from Assistant Supervisor W. A. Sizemore conveyed the good news, and it was quoted verbatim in a subsequent report by A. S. Newman.⁹⁹ High school courses of a general or college preparatory nature, together with such remedial or tutorial work in lower grades as was necessitated by the educational deficiencies of older students, comprised the curricular offerings.¹⁰⁰ Aside from

⁹⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1930, p. 71; *Ibid.*, 1931, p. 70; *Ibid.*, 1932, p. 70; *Ibid.*, 1933, p. 62; *Ibid.*, 1934, p. 67; *Ibid.*, 1935, p. 79.

⁹⁷Baptist Message, September 7, 1939, p. 8.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, August 27, 1936, p. 1.

⁹⁹Letter from W. A. Sizemore, Assistant High School Supervisor, State Department of Education, to A. S. Newman, quoted in Baptist Message, March 30, 1933, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰Baptist Message, March 15, 1934, p. 1; *Ibid.*, January 6, 1938, p. 1.

regular secondary education, there were courses of Bible study, doctrine, church polity, and mission techniques designed to prepare graduates for either higher education or immediate entry upon active ministerial service.¹⁰¹

Acadia Academy received support from the Home Mission Board, which renewed its relation as soon as its financial condition permitted.¹⁰²

The school also benefited from direct aid from women's groups in other states, especially Virginia, and it constantly profited from efforts of the Woman's Missionary Union in Louisiana.¹⁰³ Occasional visits by denominational dignitaries for mission rallies and other special programs were among the high moments of these years.

The ultimate test of the Academy was its products. Graduates and former students occupied numerous responsible positions, being especially recognized for the effective way in which they contributed to the pastoral and missionary needs of the denomination.¹⁰⁴ Obviously, most of the students found their way into religious activities, but the Academy pointed proudly to the people it sent into other endeavors, notably the teaching field.¹⁰⁵ It was especially satisfied to note the success

¹⁰¹Ibid., March 15, 1934, p. 1.

¹⁰²L.B.C., Minutes, 1937, p. 84.

¹⁰³Baptist Message July 6, 1933, p. 1; Ibid., October 19, 1933, p. 7; Ibid., March 15, 1934, p. 8; Ibid., April 26, 1934, p. 3; Ibid., March 21, 1935, p. 5; Ibid., March 5, 1936, p. 1; Ibid., December 19, 1935, p. 16; Ibid., May 27, 1937, p. 6; Ibid., January 6, 1938, p. 6; Ibid., September 7, 1939, p. 8; Ibid., March 21, 1940, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., January 6, 1938, p. 12; L.B.C., Minutes, 1932, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵Baptist Message, January 6, 1938, p. 12.

of its graduates who went ahead to further educational training; one of the graduates of 1933, Earl Guinn, was destined to become a future president of Louisiana College.¹⁰⁶

The Shadows Recede

Slowly at first and then more perceptibly, the fortunes of Louisiana Baptists began to improve. The Convention's receipts increased as the second half of the decade unfolded; this allowed the Cooperative Program budget to be raised from \$80,000 for 1935 to \$150,000 for 1940 (See Appendix).¹⁰⁷ The latter amount was only slightly below the 1931 figure of \$162,000.¹⁰⁸ Priority was still given to the vexing problem of debt; by 1940, Baptists were anticipating an end to the long financial burden. One of the key factors in solving the financial crisis was the Baptist Hundred Thousand Club which originated in 1933 and served a worthy purpose for almost a decade.¹⁰⁹ Baptists across the South were urged to join the club and give a dollar a month beyond regular church offerings, this amount to be applied exclusively to the principal of the denominational debts with administrative costs of the program being assumed by the Sunday School Board.¹¹⁰ The idea had great appeal to those who realized that no real progress could be made until the debts were removed. By 1940, a southwide total of \$1,231,200 had been contributed

¹⁰⁶Ibid.; L.B.C., Minutes, 1938, p. 77.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 1934, p. 20; Ibid., 1939, p. 23.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 1940, p. 23.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 1930, pp. 34-35.

through the Baptist Hundred Thousand Club.¹¹¹ Some state conventions, including Louisiana after 1938, kept half of the receipts for payment on state convention debts and sent the remainder to the Southern Baptist Convention.¹¹²

The Louisiana Baptist Convention returned Louisiana College and Acadia Academy to the Cooperative Program budget for 1938 and afterward, the College for \$12,000 and the Academy for \$5,000.¹¹³ At this time, a Budget Control Committee was set up as the Convention sought to move away from the direct appeal technique in favor of the unified budget concept.¹¹⁴ The schools cooperated in this endeavor although Superintendent Alfred Schwab of the Academy pointed out after the first year that his school was receiving less support under the new plan.¹¹⁵ However, the Academy was known for loyalty to the denominational program, its graduates being enthusiastic supporters of the Convention.¹¹⁶

A crisis developed at Louisiana College when notice was received that the College had been placed on probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, an action which had been threatened for some time.¹¹⁷ Sensing the developing emergency and realizing that denominational fortunes were finally improving, the Board of

¹¹¹Ibid., 1940, p. 23.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid., 1937, p. 33.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 26.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 1938, p. 77.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 1939, p. 66.

¹¹⁷Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 18, 1937; Ibid., October 21, 1936; Ibid., January 10, 1935.

Trustees of the College, at a special meeting in October, 1936, had decided to request an all-out Convention campaign to liquidate the College's accumulated debt from the depression years.¹¹⁸ A memorial from the faculty, requesting relief from pressing hardships caused by delinquent salaries, had played an important role in stimulating the trustees.¹¹⁹ The 1936 session of the Convention witnessed a parade of speakers urging action to aid the beleaguered College, particularly to relieve the struggling faculty.¹²⁰

The outcome of the College appeal was a Convention decision in 1936 to appoint a Committee of Fifteen to conduct a broad-based campaign in support of Louisiana College.¹²¹ When the probation decree was publicized in December, 1936, anxiety gripped Louisiana Baptists, who now realized that the College was in great danger.¹²² The denominational press was filled with discussion of the school crisis.¹²³ Nevertheless, criticism developed in the spring of 1937 when the Committee of Fifteen announced plans to raise \$150,000.¹²⁴ A called session of the Convention, attended by four hundred messengers, met at Winnfield on March 30,

¹¹⁸ Ibid., October 21, 1936.

¹¹⁹ Faculty Memorial attached to Board of Trustees "Minutes," October 21, 1936.

¹²⁰ L.B.C., Minutes, 1936, p. 17.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Baptist Message, December 17, 1936, p. 2; Ibid., January 21, 1937, p. 1.

¹²³ Ibid., January 28, 1937, p. 1; Ibid., February 4, 1937, p. 1; Ibid., February 11, 1937, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Ibid., March 25, 1937, pp. 2, 7.

1937; the \$150,000 goal for the campaign was approved.¹²⁵ Led by A. S. Newman, former superintendent of Acadia Academy, the project fell far short of its goal as receipts totaled \$30,872.¹²⁶ There was another dimension, however, and therein the campaign was successful. Louisiana Baptists were thoroughly aroused at the prospect of losing their College; the school received much favorable publicity; and the hard-pressed faculty was assured of denominational intent to honor obligations to them.

A five-year expansion program was approved in 1937, calling for 1,000 students by 1943; for four new buildings including a girls' dormitory, a boys' dormitory, a dining hall, and a fine arts building; and for adequate endowment.¹²⁷ In 1938, the Executive Board assumed responsibility for an accumulated Louisiana College debt of \$75,325, thus freeing the school to look ahead for the first time in years.

As the College remained on probation, the Convention of 1938 approved a \$100,000 state-wide campaign for endowment to be conducted in 1939.¹²⁸ Simultaneously, the Alexandria-Pineville community planned a drive for \$100,000 for erection of a girls' dormitory.¹²⁹ This effort, spearheaded by Morgan W. Walker and J. W. Beasley, was brilliantly successful, and the 1939 session of the Convention was informed that "it [the dormitory campaign] has done more to consolidate the favorable

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 1.

¹²⁶Ibid., February 4, 1937, p. 1; L.B.C., Minutes, 1937, pp. 27-29.

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 34-35.

¹²⁸Ibid., 1938, p. 31; Board of Trustees, "Minutes," November 15, 1938.

¹²⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1938, p. 31; Baptist Message, February 9, 1939, p. 1.

opinion toward Louisiana College than anything . . . during our history."¹³⁰ A three-story, brick structure was erected in time for occupancy in September, 1940.¹³¹

The probation under which Louisiana College had operated for nearly four years was lifted in 1940.¹³² A ten per cent salary increase in the fall of 1939, the first one since the onset of the depression, was followed by a similar increase in May, 1940, thus meeting one of the major criticisms by the accrediting body.¹³³ Attendance increased to 429, an all-time record, by 1940, producing increased operational funds; the number of graduates reached 99 in 1940.¹³⁴ A Bachelor of Science degree was offered after 1938.¹³⁵ Chapters of national honor societies in various disciplines were organized, bringing dignitaries to the campus for installation services.¹³⁶ The athletic program of the College received considerable attention during the 1930's in connection with a series of football games between the Wildcats and the National University of Mexico.¹³⁷

¹³⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1939, p. 60.

¹³¹Ibid., 1940, p. 69.

¹³²President of L.C., "Report," May 20, 1940, p. 2.

¹³³Board of Trustees, "Minutes," September 18, 1939; Ibid., May 21, 1940.

¹³⁴L.B.C., Minutes, 1940, p. 68.

¹³⁵Baptist Message, September 8, 1938, p. 1.

¹³⁶Note of appreciation in Autograph Book from Ware Hall, Girls' Dormitory at Louisiana College, from Mrs. Byron Crowley, National President of Kappa Omicron Phi, January 9, 1939.

¹³⁷Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1931, p. 5; The Wildcat [Louisiana College student newspaper], September 17, 1937, p. 5.

Acadia Baptist Academy was the beneficiary of the Ruby Anniversary Celebration of the Woman's Missionary Union.¹³⁸ What had appeared to be a dream at the hard-pressed missionary school suddenly materialized into reality as funds were provided for a new, frame-type administration and classroom building and for the renovation of several other structures.¹³⁹ The new facility was named for Mrs. Mary Lou Jenkins, who had supported the Academy program for two decades.¹⁴⁰ It was dedicated in a special ceremony in April, 1940, with Dr. J. B. Lawrence of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as guest speaker.¹⁴¹

With a degree of prosperity returning to Baptist enterprises, with Louisiana College and Acadia Academy reinstated in the Cooperative Program budget, with several evidences of progress at the schools, with signs of increased awareness of educational needs, the M. E. Dodd Foundation prepared to resume its drive for incorporation of Dodd College into the Louisiana Baptist Convention program. With its financial posture improved but with an enrollment that had slipped to seventy, the Foundation in 1938 made its most detailed report to the Convention since that body had renounced its intention to assume control of Dodd College.¹⁴² The report stressed that the girls' college movement originated in Convention action and that all of the Foundation's efforts had been

¹³⁸ L.B.C., Minutes, 1939, p. 65; Baptist Message, September 7, 1939, pp. 1, 8; Anne Thurmond Pate, The Incense Road: A History of Louisiana Woman's Missionary Union (New Orleans, 1937), p. 115.

¹³⁹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1940, p. 73.

¹⁴⁰ Baptist Message, September 7, 1939, p. 8.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., May 2, 1940, p. 4.

¹⁴² L.B.C., Minutes, 1938, pp. 32-36.

subsequent to that action. It was reported that a recent poll had shown over eighty per cent of Louisiana Baptists in favor of a girls' college.¹⁴³ A chapel was built and plans were developed for a gymnasium for the school.¹⁴⁴ Finally, in 1940, the Foundation announced its intention to present a formal request for assumption of control by the Convention, thus triggering a storm of protest which will be described in the following chapter.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

In summary, the years from 1931 to 1940 brought the Louisiana Baptist Convention program, especially the educational enterprise, to the greatest crisis it had faced. This situation resulted from a combination of the economic adversity of that period and the heritage of debt which had hung over Baptist operations since the days of the Seventy-five Million Campaign. It was further aggravated by the efforts of Dodd College to become an integral part of the Convention program at a time when that body could scarcely cope with the burdens it already carried.

The Convention in 1932 repudiated its intention to achieve control of Dodd College, the decision occasioned by its inability to carry out a commitment to raise \$200,000 for dormitories. Strained feelings resulted from this action because many prominent Baptists were warm supporters of the movement for a girls' college, the roots of which reached back to the demise of the old college at Keachie. An effort was made to

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Baptist Message, January 11, 1940, p. 1; Shreveport Times, May 22, 1940, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ Baptist Message, August 8, 1940, p. 1.

promote harmony through the conciliatory wording of the Rushing Resolution and the invitation to Dodd College to continue making annual reports. The school at Shreveport endured the subsequent years through the steadfastness of its Shreveport clientele, chiefly Dr. M. E. Dodd.

Louisiana College passed through these perilous days largely because of the unusual tenacity of its faculty, many of whom were veterans when this crisis developed. The strong administrative leadership of President Claybrook Cottingham was also a bulwark. Conventional finances deteriorated so alarmingly that the College was placed "in the field" for support. Enrollment declined and a large deficit in operational expenses was accumulated. Nevertheless, the program was carried on without curtailment of the school's offerings, although multiple economy measures were executed. As conditions gradually improved in the latter part of the decade, Louisiana College rallied and demonstrated new vitality by 1940. After a crisis developed when accreditation was suspended in 1936, the school's friends came to its rescue in the campaigns of 1937 and 1939. A new girls' dormitory was provided in 1940 after a notably successful financial campaign in the Alexandria-Pineville area.

Acadia Academy lived through these trying years, though precariously, because of a combination of effective leadership, absence of any appreciable debt, willingness to endure on a marginal level, loyalty to the denominational program, and supremely because Baptists were fascinated with the French mission work carried out at the school. The high points were the achievement of accreditation by the State Department of Education in 1933 and the erection of a new administration and classroom building in 1939.

As 1940 announced the approach of a new decade, Baptist enterprises

were demonstrating new vitality. A cloud developed upon the promising horizon when the M. E. Dodd Foundation renewed its effort to achieve incorporation of Dodd College into the Louisiana Baptist Convention program. Renewed controversy about educational matters and unexpected changes would characterize the years ahead.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION AND EXPANSION, 1941-1956

Dodd College Renews Effort for Convention Affiliation

It was apparent in 1940 that the Louisiana Baptist Convention was emerging from the long struggle for survival into which it had been plunged by the debt crisis and the Great Depression. Financial receipts were steadily, though not rapidly, increasing; by 1941, total income would be equal to the previous record achieved in 1928-1929.¹ Baptists were able to face the future with more optimism than they had displayed for two decades. They could anticipate a time not far ahead when the denominational debt would be completely liquidated. Old leadership in the person of Secretary-Treasurer F. J. Katz, whose business acumen had been especially helpful in the days of crisis, was being replaced by W. H. Knight, a highly-respected denominational personality with far-reaching vision of Louisiana Baptist potential.² Yet there were clouds on the horizon, one of which was posed by the bid of the M. E. Dodd Foundation for assumption of its assets by the Louisiana Baptist

¹Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes of the Ninety-Fourth Annual Session of the Convention, 1941, p. 61. (Hereinafter referred to as L.B.C., Minutes).

²John Pinckney Durham and John S. Ramond, eds., Baptist Builders in Louisiana (Shreveport, 1934), p. 215; C. Penrose St. Amant, A Short History of Louisiana Baptists (Nashville, 1948), p. 110.

Convention.

The Dodd College issue returned to the denominational forefront in 1940, and it culminated in a decisive action at the Convention of 1941, which met, ironically, in Shreveport. In August, 1940, the M. E. Dodd Foundation presented an official petition to the Executive Board of the Convention, requesting a \$5,000 allocation to Dodd College by the Convention during 1940 and calling for a complete review by that body of its Christian Education program.³ The petition stressed that the Foundation had always been guided by the Convention's interests and actions; now it promised to abide by whatever decision the evaluation study might reach.⁴ It was noted that the Convention's renunciation action in 1932 had mentioned "a second attempt" to attain ownership of the girls' college, and it was pointed out that the improved circumstances which might justify such an attempt were at hand.⁵ Budget receipts were increasing and the other educational institutions of the Convention were progressing.

Discussion of the Dodd College bid for Convention assumption of control was sharp and controversial as the 1940 session of the Convention approached. Most of the major complaints against the effort are visible in the literature of the period. Some leaders were opposed because they feared that the M. E. Dodd Foundation would not relinquish control of the school to the Convention; they felt the Foundation only

³Baptist Message, August 8, 1940, pp. 1, 4.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

wanted a financial subsidy.⁶ Others doubted the wisdom of making the school a Louisiana Baptist Convention institution when a large share of its constituency was from out-of-state, especially from East Texas and South Arkansas.⁷ Others opposed without specifying a reason; one noted that "Dodd said when we gave the college back that the Convention would be the loser."⁸ The reference to Dodd probably indicated the personality issue as a continuing point of irritation.

Dr. M. E. Dodd was intelligent and perceptive; one is not surprised to learn of his official request to the Foundation in December, 1940, that the name of the school be changed.⁹ He asserted that he had been embarrassed for years by the decision to name the institution for him. Yet there is no public record of any earlier effort to renounce the designation, though E. O. Ware had stated in 1933 that Dodd opposed the use of his name.¹⁰ The name became an enduring and, perhaps, an increasing liability as attempts to secure Convention ownership were pursued. After suggesting several possible alternate names, Dodd proclaimed his personal choice to be Louisiana Woman's College, interestingly omitting the term "Baptist."¹¹ The report of Dodd College to the 1939 session of the Convention identified the institution as Louisiana

⁶Ibid., October 3, 1940, p. 2.

⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1941, p. 75.

⁸Baptist Message, August 8, 1940, p. 2.

⁹Ibid., December 19, 1940, p. 1.

¹⁰Ibid., January 12, 1933, p. 1.

¹¹Ibid., December 19, 1940, p. 1.

Baptist Junior College for Girls and Young Women.¹²

One of the major arguments against the school, which had been previously implied, was now stated explicitly. A Baptist Message article noted:

[Dodd College] is undoubtedly of untold worth as an institution, for the education and social advancement of the fine young women of those well-to-do families. However, the average Baptist girl, who is less interested in social attainment, but determined to secure the basic learning necessary to qualify her for needed respectable work, will find a school some place which meets her requirements, and into whose environment she fits in very snugly. And her struggling family must not be expected to help finance an institution which is entirely out of her social and financial range.¹³

The writer identified himself as "a representative of the plain country Baptist people. . . ."¹⁴

A more reasoned, and probably a more effective, opposition was mounted by those who simply felt that Dodd College was not a priority item in the Convention program. Louisiana Baptists were still struggling to cope with their burdens, and those of this school of thought felt that only necessities should be considered.¹⁵ It is probable that some in this group doubted the desirability, certainly the necessity, of a separate school for girls. Coeducation was becoming more acceptable as time passed.

On the other hand, several leaders sided with the Foundation group. While endeavoring to strike a conciliatory note, Editor Finley W. Tinnin

¹²L.B.C., Minutes, 1939, p. 67.

¹³Baptist Message, August 29, 1940, p. 2.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., October 31, 1940, p. 7.

of the Baptist Message declared that the facts of the history of the girls' college movement among Louisiana Baptists were correctly stated by Dr. Dodd and the Foundation.¹⁶ A South Louisiana minister, J. B. Brock of Opelousas, noting that E. O. Ware had never been satisfied with coeducation at Louisiana College, reproached Louisiana Baptists for "trying to drown our child."¹⁷ On the eve of the Convention of 1940, M. E. Dodd appealed to his fellow Baptists as he said, "With everything to gain and nothing to lose, why should we not put our heads and hearts together for this great advance . . . ?"¹⁸

The Dodd College dispute was postponed for another year as the Convention endorsed a resolution by W. H. Knight, the incoming Executive Secretary-Treasurer. He called for a thorough examination of the Baptist program of Christian Education.¹⁹ A special committee, led by E. F. Haight of New Orleans, worked for months to carry out this study, the results of which were required to be published well before the 1941 session.²⁰

Resignation of Claybrook Cottingham

As Dodd College awaited the outcome of the special committee's study, Louisiana College experienced an unexpected development. Newspapers carried reports on March 6, 1941, that Claybrook Cottingham had

¹⁶Ibid., September 17, 1940, p. 2.

¹⁷Ibid., September 26, 1940, p. 2.

¹⁸Ibid., November 14, 1940, p. 7.

¹⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1940, pp. 14-15.

²⁰Ibid.; Baptist Message, February 27, 1941, p. 2.

been elected to the presidency of Louisiana Polytechnic Institute at Ruston, Louisiana.²¹ The reports were startling to the multitude to whose minds Louisiana College and Cottingham were synonymous, for he had, after all, been associated with the school from the day it opened in 1906. In a few days, Cottingham announced his decision to sever his relationship with Louisiana College as of April 1, 1941.²² Midst fond farewells from trustees, faculty members, friends of the Central Louisiana area, and Baptists at large, the esteemed educator left his home of thirty-five years.²³

The departure of President Cottingham did not come as a complete surprise, for an unpleasant atmosphere had plagued his administration since the spring of 1940.²⁴ As the dormitory funded by the Alexandria-Pineville campaign of 1939 was under construction, rumors circulated of alleged wrongdoing at the College.²⁵ An article from the Alexandria Daily Town Talk, entitled "Rumors Affecting Louisiana College Branded Blackmail," was reprinted in the Baptist Message; Editor Finley Tinnin, referring to a constituency "deeply shocked by the gossip and rumors," asserted that the newspaper article "should set these rumors at rest."²⁶

²¹Alexandria Daily Town Talk, March 6, 1941, p. 1.

²²"Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," March 17, 1941. (Hereinafter referred to as L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes").

²³Ibid.; Baptist Message, March 20, 1941, p. 2; Ibid., March 27, 1941, p. 1.

²⁴L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 21, 1940.

²⁵Alexandria Daily Town Talk, May 13, 1940 (article reprinted in Baptist Message, May 23, 1940, p. 1).

²⁶Baptist Message, May 23, 1940, p. 2.

The stories alleged that there was a shortage in funds for the new dormitory, that the contract was not awarded to the lowest bidder, and that there had been kickbacks to some college officials.²⁷ C. M. Managan resigned as financial agent of the College about this time, his decision apparently occasioned by some of the charges; however, there was no outward indication of complicity or misconduct.²⁸ Managan was a member of a distinguished Baptist family, and he had served as president of the Convention in 1931 and 1932.²⁹

On several occasions, one of them as early as 1937, President Cottingham had referred in his report to the Board of Trustees to rumors against and attacks upon his character, always requesting opportunity to defend himself.³⁰ The minutes usually omit references to any consideration of such a matter. However, on two occasions, there was open discussion of unspecified charges.³¹ In one case persons in addition to board members participated.³² Each episode, never spelling out details of the charges, ended in a unanimous vote of vindication, although in the last discussion several trustees abstained from voting.³³

²⁷Alexandria Daily Town Talk, May 13, 1940 (article reprinted in Baptist Message, May 23, 1940, p. 1).

²⁸Baptist Message, May 16, 1940, p. 1.

²⁹L.B.C., Minutes, 1940, p. 102.

³⁰L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 25, 1937; "Report of the President of Louisiana College to the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," January 18, 1940, p. 1. (Hereinafter referred to as President of L.C., "Report").

³¹L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 25, 1937; *Ibid.*, May 21, 1940.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

The verdict was generally favorable to Cottingham. The girls' dormitory, first major building constructed since 1921, was named Cottingham Hall; a petition from the student body had first suggested the choice.³⁴ He continued to hold an honored place in denominational life, being requested to write a history of Louisiana College, which he declined to do, and he was one of the main speakers at the Centennial Celebration of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1948.³⁵ Cottingham was well-liked and highly-respected in his new position.³⁶ Dean H. M. Weathersby, who had worked with Cottingham for thirty years, evaluated his colleague as follows:

First, he was a thinker. He never took his opinions second hand but thought his way through to his own conclusions. Second, he had strong convictions and the courage to defend them. . . . Third, he was a natural leader. Louisiana Baptists for many years followed his leadership as they have that of few men.³⁷

Early in 1941, Louisiana College was placed on probation for a second time by the Southern Association of Colleges.³⁸ Low salaries, overloaded personnel, and library deficiencies were the main weaknesses.³⁹ Dean H. M. Weathersby, serving as Acting-President while a

³⁴Baptist Message, February 5, 1942, p. 1; *Ibid.*, April 30, 1942, pp. 1, 8.

³⁵L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 20, 1943.

³⁶Louisiana Baptist Convention, Centennial Program, 1948, p. 6.

³⁷Letter of H. M. Weathersby to Lynn E. May, Jr., March 18, 1954 (cited in Lynn E. May, Jr., "Claybrook Cottingham: A Study of His Life and Work" (unpub. Th. D. dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1956), p. 141.

³⁸President of L.C., "Report," January 21, 1941, p. 1.

³⁹*Ibid.*

committee of trustees searched diligently for a successor to Cottingham, led a successful effort to restore the College to regular standing with the accrediting body.⁴⁰ He also wrestled with difficulties produced by a declining enrollment which was related to the approach of World War II.⁴¹ The most dramatic educational development at this point was the impending report of the Convention's Special Committee on Education. By the time Louisiana College's new president was named, the vexing issue of Dodd College's future had been settled.⁴²

Dodd College Issue Reaches Climax

As provided by the Knight Resolution of 1940, the Special Committee on Education published its findings in September, 1941, thus allowing two months for evaluation of the report before the Convention met to act upon it.⁴³ A document running to nearly twenty pages, the report covered various aspects of Christian education.⁴⁴ The committee gave Louisiana College an all-out endorsement; it approved Acadia Baptist Academy within the context of its dual role as a missionary-educational venture; and it completely repudiated Dodd College.⁴⁵ Though interest in the committee's deliberations was keen, the report did not stir a great amount of public controversy. There was a sharp but courteous

⁴⁰Acting President of L.C., "Report," May 27, 1941, p. 1; Ibid., January 13, 1942, p. 1.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²L.B.C., Minutes, 1941, pp. 37-38.

⁴³Baptist Message, September 25, 1941, p. 1.

⁴⁴L.B.C., Minutes, 1941, pp. 23-38.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 37-38.

exchange between M. E. Dodd and the committee chairman, E. F. Haight. Interestingly, Haight was a member of the Dodd Foundation, having paid the stipulated amount for membership.⁴⁶ Dodd had written a circular letter to Foundation members after the committee's report had been publicized. The letter had seemingly alleged that the committee report was an attack on Dodd College, even an attack on Dodd personally. Haight professed his warm regard for Dodd, and he disclaimed any intention for the report to be used to discredit Dodd College.⁴⁷ Belatedly, the Dodd Foundation, at a meeting in early November, adopted a proposal described in the following paragraph, but the Haight committee refused to hold a meeting before the Convention with Foundation members.⁴⁸

A newspaper article predicted a clash over the Dodd College issue as the day of decision arrived.⁴⁹ The Executive Board, in its regular report, had recommended acceptance of an offer from the Foundation to transfer all of its assets to the Convention in return for the Convention's assumption of all liabilities of the College, but the Special Committee on Education was recommending against the proposition. In a dramatic scene, Chairman E. F. Haight yielded the floor to A. L. Wedgeworth, who requested permission to present a new proposition from the Foundation.⁵⁰ Subsequent to Wedgeworth's discussion, Haight announced there would be a change in the Special Committee's report. After a noon

⁴⁶Baptist Message, November 13, 1941, p. 2.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., November 20, 1941, p. 2.

⁴⁹Shreveport Times, November 26, 1941, p. 20.

⁵⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1941, p. 24.

recess, the matter was resumed with Wedgeworth delivering a written interpretation of the Dodd College offer to the Convention. The crucial point was the explicit declaration that the offer was not contingent upon the Convention's continued operation of the school; while the Foundation expressed the hope that the institution might continue to function, the only requirement upon the Convention would be total assumption of the Foundation's liabilities.⁵¹ The Haight Committee then recommended that the Foundation's offer be accepted, and that Dodd College not be operated beyond June, 1942.⁵² An amendment to delete the latter provision was defeated after it was explained that bondholders for the Convention's debt had agreed to assumption of \$100,000 additional indebtedness only upon the condition that any additional school program be terminated at the end of the current session.⁵³

In analyzing the action which thus climaxed the girls' college movement, the overriding conclusion is that the majority of Louisiana Baptists were opposed to Dodd College. As time passed, the opposition increased, both in numbers and in intensity. At the end, some probably decided against Dodd College because of the increasing divisiveness of the issue. With the Convention's receipts growing steadily and with its debts only eighteen months away from complete payment, the indebtedness explanation appears inadequate. Also, the First Baptist Church of Shreveport had offered a month before to increase its contribution to the Cooperative Program by \$6,000 per year if the Convention took over

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 24, 38-39.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 37-38.

⁵³Ibid., p. 24.

the school.⁵⁴ In conciliatory words, Wedgeworth declared that both the Convention and the Foundation had been sincere about the girls' college, and he asserted that "no doubt many mistakes have been made on both sides of the issue"⁵⁵

Final disposition of the Dodd College property was entrusted to the Executive Board, which set up a committee including some of the College's boosters to expedite the matter.⁵⁶ The committee endeavored to work out a disposition which would allow the college to be used as a service institution for either educational or hospital purposes.⁵⁷ Early in 1943, the property was sold to Centenary College for \$105,650, the exact amount of indebtedness the Convention had incurred since assuming title to Dodd College.⁵⁸ The Executive Board reported that the sale "appeared to be a happy solution to all concerned."⁵⁹

M. E. Dodd continued to occupy an important place in the forefront of Baptist life, being destined to serve as the centennial celebration director for the Southern Baptist Convention in 1945 and for the Louisiana Baptist Convention in 1948.⁶⁰ However, the girls' college held a special place in his affections, and the aging minister grieved over

⁵⁴"Minutes of the First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana," October 16, 1940.

⁵⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1941, p. 38.

⁵⁶Baptist Message, February 26, 1942, p. 5.

⁵⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1942, p. 81.

⁵⁸Ibid., 1943, p. 46.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Baptist Message, July 20, 1944, p. 1; L.B.C., Centennial Program, p. 1.

the death of the school. His granddaughter wrote that "it nearly broke my grandfather's heart (he never got over it) when the Convention voted to close Dodd College."⁶¹

The War Years

In January, 1942, it was announced that Dr. Edgar Godbold had accepted the presidency of Louisiana College.⁶² Though several individuals had been considered, his was the only name brought to a vote, and he had received unanimous approval by the trustees.⁶³ Godbold's acceptance was delayed for several months, possibly as a result of a suggestion by M. E. Dodd that he postpone a final decision until the Special Committee on Education had reported its findings in November, 1941.⁶⁴ His election returned a popular and respected figure to Louisiana Baptists, among whom he had worked as financial agent of the College and later as Corresponding Secretary of the Convention. In the eighteen years since his departure from Louisiana, he had served as president of Howard Payne College in Texas and as General Secretary of the Missouri Baptist Convention.⁶⁵

President Godbold assumed leadership of Louisiana College at a critical juncture. The United States had entered World War II a month

⁶¹Letter from Mrs. Virginia Joyner to the author, April 13, 1970.

⁶²Baptist Message, January 22, 1942, p. 5.

⁶³L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 27, 1941; Ibid., September __, 1941 [day of month omitted].

⁶⁴Letter of M. E. Dodd to Edgar Godbold, January 22, 1942 (printed in Baptist Message, February 5, 1942).

⁶⁵Baptist Message, January 22, 1942, p. 5.

previously, and the Dodd College decision had left some ruffled feelings among Louisiana Baptists. Having been at Louisiana College in World War I, he could draw upon a reservoir of personal experience in facing the new emergency. Wisely, Godbold sought to draw the College and the Convention closer together. Always a staunch denominational man, he sought to boost the entire Convention program, welcoming a strong hand of control by that body and urging that it reciprocate by increasing its support of the College.⁶⁶ The new president worked energetically to keep the enrollment at a reasonable level, traveling as widely as possible with limited supplies of gasoline and with worn tires on his automobile.⁶⁷ He sought to attract support from those who had boosted Dodd College, reminding them of their aid to Louisiana College in financial campaigns of an earlier period as well as securing the old Mount Lebanon bell from Centenary College.⁶⁸ M. E. Dodd, who had arrived in Shreveport in 1912, the same year Godbold came to Louisiana College, led his church in support of Louisiana College.⁶⁹

Aside from the calamity of war and the strained educational milieu, other factors were favorable at the time of Godbold's entrance into office. Convention finances were improving constantly; the denominational debts were being liquidated; and the Special Committee on Education had emphasized the absolute centrality of Louisiana College in the further

⁶⁶Ibid., April 30, 1942, p. 7; Ibid., June 4, 1942, p. 6.

⁶⁷Ibid., April 22, 1943, p. 1.

⁶⁸Ibid., December 24, 1942, p. 1.

⁶⁹Ibid., February 5, 1942, p. 8; "Minutes of the First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana," December 15, 1943.

development of the Baptist program in the state.⁷⁰ A \$5,000 increase in the allocation to the College had been made in the budget for 1942, and other increases could be anticipated.⁷¹

Executive Secretary-Treasurer W. H. Knight, an early graduate of Louisiana College, was a far-sighted inspirational leader for the denomination and an enthusiastic supporter of the College.⁷² With ability as an executive and with a talent for persuasive leadership, Knight was able to bring about a new level of cooperative effort in Louisiana Baptist work. Increases which might have appeared unreasonable when he took office were achieved as wartime prosperity allowed the Convention to pay out its debt in May, 1943.⁷³ The debt obligation had been approximately \$200,000 when Knight assumed office in January, 1941.⁷⁴ As the decade unfolded, the Executive Board encountered the pleasant problem of disposing of surplus receipts.⁷⁵ Close cooperation among trustees, administration, and denominational officials--with Knight a welcome guest at trustee meetings--insured for Louisiana College a share of this bounty. On one occasion, Knight presented a check in excess of \$54,000 to the College from surplus funds.⁷⁶

Denominational cooperation increased steadily under Knight's

⁷⁰L.B.C., Minutes, 1941, pp. 30, 33, 35, 37.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 41.

⁷²St. Amant, A Short History of Louisiana Baptists, p. 110.

⁷³Baptist Message, May 13, 1943, p. 1; L.B.C., Minutes, 1942, pp. 50-51.

⁷⁴Ibid., 1941, p. 68.

⁷⁵Ibid., 1943, p. 42.

⁷⁶Baptist Message, February 1, 1945, p. 8.

astute guidance. Of 905 churches affiliated with the Convention in 1944, an average of 636 contributed to the Cooperative Program each month; only 30 churches failed to contribute anything during the year.⁷⁷ By contrast, only 93 of 866 churches had given to the Cooperative Program each month during 1940, and an astounding 510 had given nothing during the year.⁷⁸ The Cooperative Program budget increased from \$150,000 for 1941 to \$275,000 for 1946.⁷⁹ Actual income grew much more spectacularly (See Appendix). Receipts for the Cooperative Program increased from \$135,000 in 1940 to \$445,000 in 1945.⁸⁰ Designated gifts moved during the same period from \$101,000 to \$422,000, thus producing a total rise in Convention receipts from \$236,000 in 1940 to nearly \$869,000 in 1945.⁸¹ After the denominational debts were paid out in 1943, the division of Cooperative Program funds usually provided one-third for Southern Baptist Convention programs and two-thirds for Louisiana Baptist programs after subtracting administration expenses.⁸²

The war years brought problems to Louisiana College, but these did not prove unbearable. Financially, there were difficulties occasioned by decreased enrollment, especially by departure of men for the armed forces during each session, but these were offset by prudent financial

⁷⁷L.B.C., Minutes, 1944, p. 46.

⁷⁸Ibid., 1940, p. 23.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 22; Ibid., 1945, p. 68.

⁸⁰Ibid., 1940, pp. 52-53; Ibid., 1945, p. 57.

⁸¹Ibid., 1940, pp. 52-53; Ibid., 1945, p. 57.

⁸²Ibid., 1943, p. 42; Ibid., 1944, p. 66; Ibid., 1945, p. 58.

practices and increased denominational support.⁸³ Scholarships provided by the Woman's Missionary Union were especially helpful in this period, providing funds and encouraging attendance.⁸⁴ The loss of faculty members to the armed forces presented a particularly distressing problem because satisfactory replacements were hard to locate.⁸⁵ Since some departments had only one faculty member, a whole area of work could be radically affected by an unanticipated resignation. On one such occasion, a science instructor had to assume responsibility for the physical education program.⁸⁶ The majority of the faculty made up a veteran group which had been in service at Louisiana College for many years, and this lessened the number of departures. The intercollegiate athletic program was discontinued, football being the first casualty, and a vigorous intramural and physical training program was initiated in its place.⁸⁷ Attendance decreased each year, the lowest point being reached in 1943-1944, when the fall enrollment was 300.⁸⁸ Many who entered school departed for the armed forces before completing a session; therefore, financial returns from student fees was proportionately lower than the

⁸³ Baptist Message, February 13, 1941, p. 5; *Ibid.*, February 1, 1945, p. 8; L.B.C., Minutes, 1945, pp. 39-40.

⁸⁴ Baptist Message, September 27, 1945, pp. 1, 5; President of L.C., "Report," January 25, 1944, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Baptist Message, February 13, 1941, p. 5; *Ibid.*, October 15, 1942, p. 1; *Ibid.*, November 12, 1942, p. 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, October 29, 1942, p. 8; Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1949, p. 13.

⁸⁷ Baptist Message, February 27, 1941, p. 1; *Ibid.*, January 1, 1942, pp. 1, 5; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 13, 1942; Acting President of L.C., "Report," January 13, 1942, p. 2.

⁸⁸ L.B.C., Minutes, 1943, p. 56.

attendance totals indicated.⁸⁹

The College sought to relate itself to the national defense effort. A Civilian Pilot Training Program was conducted; an Army aviation cadet group received quarters and training on the campus; courses were provided to aid in training nurses for government service.⁹⁰ As space became available in the men's dormitory, it was offered for emergency military housing or, if not thus required, for meeting public housing shortages created by national defense projects in the area.⁹¹ Conversely, the college students found various opportunities to offer services to the thousands of soldiers who were training in Central Louisiana.⁹² The curriculum was geared to the war effort by emphasis upon courses which might be useful to those soon to enter the armed forces; programs of study were accelerated to allow opportunity to complete one's college education within three years.⁹³ Some wondered if the College might fold should the military authorities not continue to find a use for it, but President Godbold cheerfully denied that such a situation existed, although he admitted the need for maximum exertion to endure the stresses of the time.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Baptist Message, April 22, 1943, p. 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid., May 21, 1942, p. 6; L.B.C., Minutes, 1942, p. 56; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 25, 1943.

⁹¹ Ibid., January 20, 1943; Baptist Message, July 23, 1942, p. 1.

⁹² Ibid., January 1, 1942, p. 6.

⁹³ Ibid., February 12, 1942, p. 9; Ibid., April 2, 1942, p. 1; Ibid., May 21, 1942, p. 6; Louisiana College, Louisiana College Bulletin Catalog Number Session 1943-1944 with Announcements for the Summer Session, 1944 and for the Session 1944-1945, p. 41.

⁹⁴ Baptist Message, January 7, 1943, p. 1.

Familiar figures aside from Cottingham departed in these years, and others who were to play vital roles in the College's future came into view. Death removed the two oldest trustees, W. C. Beall and Dr. J. A. White.⁹⁵ These men had served constantly on the governing body since the school's inception, White having been the only treasurer the board ever had.⁹⁶ O. B. Owens, professor of biology since 1921, who had continued to serve in that capacity after he had completed a medical degree and set up a private practice in Alexandria, was unable to continue longer because of medical shortages; he was replaced by C. J. Cavanaugh, who has taught with distinction until the present time.⁹⁷ The long career of the greatly respected professor of Bible, J. E. Brakefield, was concluded by his retirement in 1945.⁹⁸ Simon W. Tudor, a graduate of Louisiana College in its early years and a successful contractor, was elevated to the presidency of the Board of Trustees where he would serve for a decade.⁹⁹

Acadia Baptist Academy, 1941-1950

Before resuming the story of Louisiana College, it is necessary to

⁹⁵Ibid., January 19, 1941, p. 3.

⁹⁶Ibid., June 15, 1944, p. 5; "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," July 7, 1944.

⁹⁷Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1943, pp. 8-9; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 22, 1945; President of L.C., "Report," May 22, 1945, p. 4.

⁹⁸Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1945, p. 5; "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," March 31, 1945.

⁹⁹L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 20, 1943.

turn to Acadia Baptist Academy, which encountered a series of circumstances that brought it to a dramatic crisis in 1944. Joseph T. Fielder had succeeded Alfred Schwab as superintendent in the summer of 1940.¹⁰⁰ Coming from Texas, where he had worked as Director of Extension and Teacher Placement at Howard Payne College, Fielder was apparently not as familiar with South Louisiana as his predecessors.¹⁰¹ All of the faculty members resigned or were released in 1941, causing him to work without experienced associates.¹⁰² The pressures exerted upon the Academy during the national emergency from 1941 to 1944 proved to be nearly disastrous. Total enrollment decreased, and, more importantly, the number of adult students diminished. Whereas there were 114 students in 1940-1941, only 74 had enrolled by November, 1943.¹⁰³ The number of ministerial students decreased from thirty-one in 1941 to fourteen in 1943.¹⁰⁴ A shortage of gasoline and tires made it impossible for Fielder to travel and to promote the school to a great extent.¹⁰⁵ Mission work was likewise confined to a narrow area near the school, and the program was related more closely to established churches.¹⁰⁶

A particularly damaging development was the inclusion of an

¹⁰⁰Baptist Message, August 8, 1940, pp. 1, 8.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁰²L.B.C., Minutes, 1941, p. 93.

¹⁰³Ibid., 1943, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Baptist Message, April 16, 1942, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., March 16, 1944, p. 2.

increasingly large number of "problem children" in the enrollment.¹⁰⁷ Apparently started late in the 1930's, this trend accelerated in the war years, probably indicating an attempt to build up a sagging enrollment. Finally, the statement of purpose in the 1944-1945 catalog included such students as it said, "The Academy offers an opportunity to the mal-adjusted boy or girl to find his or her proper place in society."¹⁰⁸

Since the government was discouraging large gatherings, the Louisiana Baptist Convention met in a one-day session in 1943, but the brief meeting was a memorable one. Secretary Knight delivered a notable address which came to be accepted as a blueprint for the Convention's program for the next ten years even though its goals appeared to be more than Louisiana Baptists could reach.¹⁰⁹ A second result of the abbreviated session was the appointment of a special committee to study Acadia Academy during the following year.¹¹⁰ This action was precipitated by an appeal from the Academy for increased Cooperative Program support.¹¹¹ Behind this request was the fact that the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention had quietly withdrawn its support from Acadia Academy.¹¹² Only two weeks before the Convention, the boys' dormitory had been destroyed by fire, creating a wave of sympathy

¹⁰⁷ Acadia Baptist Academy, Acadia Baptist Academy Catalogue Number Session 1944-45, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1943, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹² Ibid.

for the school but adding yet another financial problem.¹¹³ A strong endorsement of the school by area churches was embodied in a resolution presented to the Convention by Acadia Association to support the request for increased denominational subsidization.¹¹⁴

Obviously, the Academy had arrived at a critical juncture in its history. Slowly at first but with increasing tempo, the Baptist Message reflected the debate which stirred Louisiana Baptists.¹¹⁵ Realizing that the existence of the Academy was in jeopardy, its adherents sprang to defend it before the substance of the committee's report was known.¹¹⁶ Throughout the summer and fall of 1944, trustees, faculty members, alumni, former students, and various other friends rushed to the rescue of the beleaguered school.¹¹⁷ One letter came from as far away as the South Pacific.¹¹⁸ Former administrators J. H. Strother and Albert S. Newman wrote powerfully in support of the Academy.¹¹⁹ However, Superintendent Fielder remained in the background until his resignation in July, 1944.¹²⁰ Various church groups such as Sunday School classes and missionary societies expressed their belief in the continued

¹¹³Baptist Message, November 11, 1943, p. 1.

¹¹⁴L.B.C., Minutes, 1943, p. 11.

¹¹⁵Baptist Message, September 14, 1944, p. 2; *Ibid.*, September 28, 1944, pp. 1, 7; *Ibid.*, p. 2; *Ibid.*, October 26, 1944, p. 2.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, September 14, 1944; *Ibid.*, October 5, 1944, p. 2.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, October 26, 1944, pp. 2, 7; *Ibid.*, November 2, 1944, p. 2; *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 15; *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, August 3, 1944, p. 3.

usefulness of the school.¹²¹

The reasons motivating the Academy's friends were varied. Many desired to keep the school because of its past success.¹²² Others felt that closing the school would be a form of retreat.¹²³ Some desired to preserve for others opportunities which had been beneficial to themselves.¹²⁴ There were those who feared that Louisiana College was seeking to undermine the Academy in order to open a high school department for itself.¹²⁵ A few probably favored the school's continuance because its smallness and relative obscurity preserved features of an older age.¹²⁶ Some felt that the Academy might have value as a potential junior college.¹²⁷ Though written in a partisan spirit, the literature provided considerable insight into the history of the institution. One article observed:

After experimenting with a mission school . . . for more than 25 years Louisiana Baptists still do not know whether they wish to continue it or not. If good women . . . keep working it is to be hoped that some denominational leaders . . . will give to this mission work and school some downright serious consideration.¹²⁸

¹²¹Ibid., November 16, 1944, p. 2; Ibid., November 30, 1944, p. 2; Ibid., April 19, 1945, p. 7.

¹²²Ibid., September 14, 1944, p. 2; Ibid., October 7, 1944, p. 2.

¹²³Ibid., October 26, 1944, pp. 2, 7; Ibid., November 2, 1944, p. 15.

¹²⁴Ibid., August 24, 1944, p. 2.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid., October 12, 1944, p. 2.

¹²⁷Ibid., September 14, 1944, p. 2.

¹²⁸Ibid., October 11, 1945, p. 4.

Few voices were raised against the Academy although several, including Editor Finley Tinnin of the Baptist Message, assumed a neutral tone.¹²⁹ One area pastor, J. B. Brock of Opelousas, minced no words as he declared, "The whole truth is, as I see it, we do not need Acadia Academy."¹³⁰ A strong proponent of Louisiana College who feared the idea of the Academy's becoming a junior college, Brock felt that the development of public education and the decline of the French language had removed the urgency of the Academy.¹³¹

Shortly before the Convention met in its 1944 session, the findings of the Special Convention Committee on Acadia Academy were published by Chairman S. C. Rushing. A detailed study had been conducted, and the committee had reached conclusions which confirmed the fears of those who felt that the life of the school was threatened. Rushing reported that the Academy was no longer an asset to Louisiana Baptist mission work, that the cost of operating it was out of proportion to the returns it yielded, that the over-age or "second chance" students were growing fewer in numbers, that the incorrigible students were "very large [in numbers] and very troublesome," and that continued operation of the Academy would require a heavy outlay of money because of its inadequate facilities.¹³² Rushing published a letter he had received from the Secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board explaining that the Board's decision to withdraw its support from the Academy had been based

¹²⁹Ibid., September 14, 1944, p. 2; Ibid., November 9, 1944, p. 2.

¹³⁰Ibid., September 28, 1944, p. 7.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 1.

¹³²Ibid., November 9, 1944, p. 8.

upon "surveys . . . [which] convinced [us] that the academy was no longer a missionary asset" ¹³³ Rushing concluded as follows:

Only 49 French-speaking pupils have finished the academy in the last eighteen years. Many of these are not ministers or missionaries. We are sorry that the facts do not reveal the school to be a glamorous missionary enterprise. It is disappointing to us even as it is to many of you. ¹³⁴

The expected dispute over Acadia Academy was avoided when the Special Committee brought a milder report than the one just described. The committee recommended that the Convention provide funds to operate the school for the duration of the war and for two years thereafter; that it be closed after the two-year period if the enrollment dropped below fifty in the 16-28 age bracket; that it be continued should fifty or more in this age bracket, half of them to be ministerial students, be enrolled, and that it be continued until such time as enrollment dropped below this figure for two consecutive years. ¹³⁵ The fifty students were to be regular high school students with the curriculum restricted to high school subjects except in rare instances of tutelage in elementary subjects. ¹³⁶

Henry C. Price assumed the administrative role at the Academy in February, 1945, replacing Eddie Savoie, who had been acting superintendent since Fielder's departure. ¹³⁷ A repair and renovation program was pushed vigorously during 1945 and 1946 as Price and his associates

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1944, pp. 15-16.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

¹³⁷ Baptist Message, January 18, 1945, pp. 1, 3.

labored to meet the conditions of the probation the Convention had placed upon the school.¹³⁸ The new superintendent had both teaching and ministerial experience, thus preparing him for the unique position to which he had been called. He was described as "an intelligent and efficient principal and counselor for both student body and faculty" by one who went on to observe, "With a remarkable knowledge of practical matters like electrical fittings, plumbing, carpentry, painting, farming, and farm-animal care, he fits well into the needs at ABA."¹³⁹ The enrollment increased very slowly, particularly because preference had to be given to the 16-28 age group. Higher admissions standards were implemented as questionable individuals were rejected.¹⁴⁰ By February, 1946, Academy officials rejoiced that they were meeting all items of the probation imposed by the Convention in 1944.¹⁴¹

The Academy's trustees, noting that the conditions of the probation were being satisfied, requested the 1946 session of the Convention to appoint a committee which would cooperate with a committee of trustees in studying a long-range program of expansion for the school.¹⁴² The joint committee was organized, and it proceeded to work upon its assignment, during which time another setback was suffered when the boys' dormitory was destroyed by fire in February, 1947.¹⁴³ This problem was

¹³⁸ Ibid., April 12, 1945, p. 1; Ibid., August 9, 1945, pp. 1, 8.

¹³⁹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1945, p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ Baptist Message, August 9, 1945, p. 8.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., February 28, 1946, pp. 1, 8.

¹⁴² L.B.C., Minutes, 1946, pp. 64-65.

¹⁴³ Baptist Message, February 13, 1947, pp. 1, 8.

quickly resolved as friends of the Academy rallied to provide funds in the amount of \$9,000 for rapid construction of a pre-fabricated building to house the boys.¹⁴⁴ Since most of the youngsters had lost their entire possessions, supplies of clothing poured into the school until Superintendent Price announced that the need had been satisfied.¹⁴⁵ This evidence of support strengthened the Academy as the 1947 Convention approached.

Proclaiming that the school had met every phase of the 1944 probation and citing "considerable material progress . . . in new buildings and renovating present buildings," the Executive Board's report concluded that the Academy "has now merited the support of the Convention and is in line for whatever advance program the Convention may decide upon."¹⁴⁶ Thus the joint committee's recommendations were approved, including the following points: probation was officially lifted; location at the present site was confirmed; expansion was approved.¹⁴⁷ The Convention also voted to allocate \$20,000 from the 1947 surplus and \$30,000 from the 1948 anticipated surplus for the Academy's building needs and to request the Louisiana Baptist Foundation to promote a \$50,000 Thanksgiving offering in 1948 for this purpose.¹⁴⁸

The resignation of Superintendent H. C. Price in October, 1948, created another vacuum of leadership on the eve of the Thanksgiving

¹⁴⁴Ibid., February 27, 1947, p. 3.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., February 20, 1947, p. 1.

¹⁴⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1947, p. 28.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 63-64.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

offering of 1948.¹⁴⁹ As the trustees looked about for a successor, the Board of Trustees and the Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church indicated a desire for A. S. Newman, a former superintendent, to return. Newman, then State Brotherhood Secretary, wrestled with the matter before indicating his decision to decline.¹⁵⁰ The trustees then turned to V. K. Fletcher, who assumed the administrative post in March, 1949.¹⁵¹

Fletcher, who had sixteen years of experience in public school education, proved an indefatigable worker as he crisscrossed the state in an attempt to promote the Academy among Louisiana Baptists.¹⁵² Stafford G. Rogers, a notably successful pastor of the Pilgrims Rest Church and an ardent supporter of the Academy, led the church to underwrite the advertising and promotional campaign projected by Fletcher, and he personally entered into the endeavor, traveling far and wide to boost the school and writing effectively in its behalf.¹⁵³ Money continued to accumulate as churches observed "Dollar Day for A.B.A." By July, 1949, receipts totaled \$50,000, thus enabling the building program to move ahead.¹⁵⁴ A two-story brick boys' dormitory to replace the quonset-type

¹⁴⁹Baptist Message, October 7, 1948, pp. 1, 8.

¹⁵⁰Letter from A. S. Newman, State Brotherhood Secretary, to the Reverend S. G. Rogers, November 18, 1948; *Ibid.*, December 9, 1948; *Ibid.*, December 27, 1948; Letter from A. S. Newman, State Brotherhood Secretary, to Dr. L. A. Stagg, December 27, 1948.

¹⁵¹Baptist Message, February 10, 1949, p. 4.

¹⁵²L.B.C., Minutes, 1949, p. 41.

¹⁵³"Minutes of the Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, Eunice, Louisiana," January 9, 1949; *Ibid.*, January 16, 1949; Manuscript of S. G. Rogers, Untitled handwritten manuscript [1948]; Baptist Message, April 21, 1949, p. 5; *Ibid.*, May 12, 1949, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, November 17, 1949, pp. 1, 6; L.B.C., Minutes, 1949, p. 42; Baptist Message, October 20, 1949, p. 7.

building erected after the fire of 1947 was followed by a brick gymnasium-auditorium, total outlay for the projects running to approximately \$125,000.¹⁵⁵

Enrollment at the Academy increased slowly but steadily. By the fall of 1950, a total of 109 had been registered, including ten ministerial students.¹⁵⁶ However, the proportion of regular teenage students grew constantly larger as Superintendent Fletcher announced his intention to continue the building program so as to accommodate 250 by the fall of 1951.¹⁵⁷

Louisiana College in the Postwar Period, 1945-1956

Louisiana Baptists continued to experience a period of expansion as the post-war years unfolded. A denominational highlight came in 1948 when the Convention observed its centennial. The First Baptist Church of Shreveport was host for this occasion, and M. E. Dodd was chairman of the observance; the final session was held at the historic Mount Lebanon Church.¹⁵⁸ The Convention receipts in the centennial year reached \$1,205,000 in comparison to the 1848 offering of less than \$100 by the founding fathers and the \$7,700 which had been given in 1893, the year E. O. Ware offered his first resolution for a central college.¹⁵⁹ Membership had increased from 1,000 in 1848 to 270,000 in

¹⁵⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1949, p. 41.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 1950, p. 28.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Louisiana Baptist Convention, Centennial Program, 1948, p. 13.

¹⁵⁹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1948, pp. 44, 46.

1948.¹⁶⁰ The budget continued to grow rapidly, reaching \$696,815.00 by 1950 after the Convention had further reinforced the Cooperative Program concept by abolishing most all of the special offerings and drives which were made perennially.¹⁶¹ Denominational developments were numerous; one of the more notable was the transfer of Baptist headquarters from Shreveport to Alexandria in 1947.¹⁶² This probably facilitated closer cooperation between Louisiana College and the Convention leadership.

The years just after World War II brought different challenges to Louisiana College from those which confronted Acadia Academy. Instead of a struggle to survive, the College was faced with a deluge of students as servicemen returned to civilian life.¹⁶³ President Edgar Godbold encountered many problems, but his only difficulty regarding enrollment was that of providing for as many as possible; he was criticized for inability to handle more enrollees, once referring to the "many cussings" he received for turning applicants away.¹⁶⁴ The situation was acute because there were no state colleges in the Central Louisiana area. The wave of new students struck first at midterm of the 1945-1946 session; attendance increased each year, moving from 368 in 1944-1945 to 667 in 1945-1946 and reaching a peak of 1,254 in 1949-1950.¹⁶⁵ As many as 400

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 1949, p. 31; Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁶²Ibid., 1947, pp. 20-21.

¹⁶³Baptist Message, January 3, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., August 29, 1946, p. 3.

¹⁶⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1944, p. 62; Ibid., pp. 52-53; Ibid., 1950, p. 30.

were turned away at one time.¹⁶⁶

President Godbold remained at the helm of the school from 1942 to 1951, distinguishing himself because of the prodigious energy he brought to his task. Following a man who had become an institution, Godbold quickly established an identity for himself as he demonstrated his undeniable talent for raising money. His first report to the Board of Trustees opened, "We need more money."¹⁶⁷ Constantly in the Baptist Message he reported what others were doing for church-related colleges, urging similar support for Louisiana College upon Baptists.¹⁶⁸ Working within the denominational framework, he aimed to increase support for the College at the local church level. Quietly he conducted a "still hunt" for funds among individuals.¹⁶⁹ Before the war ended, the Roy O. Martins of Pineville were remodeling a two-story building which dated back to 1911 and making of it the Martin Fine Arts Building.¹⁷⁰ About this time the president revealed that a non-Baptist friend had given \$40,000 without definite specifications as to use but in the hope it could be used toward a student center.¹⁷¹ Shortly after the close of the war, the S. H. Kress Company of New Orleans contributed an organ valued at nearly \$50,000 for the auditorium in Alexandria Hall.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ Baptist Message, July 18, 1946, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ President of L.C., "Report," May 26, 1942, p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ Baptist Message, February 1, 1951, pp. 1, 5.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., August 13, 1942, p. 1; Ibid., August 27, 1942, p. 10; Ibid., April 23, 1943, p. 6; Ibid., May 17, 1945, pp. 1, 8; President of L.C., "Report," January 19, 1943, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Baptist Message, June 4, 1942, p. 6.

¹⁷¹ L.B.C., Minutes, 1943, p. 56.

¹⁷² Baptist Message, November 8, 1945, p. 1.

Godbold received a signal honor in 1945 when he was elected to head the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, but he declined the offer and continued to lead the College.¹⁷³ A man of high principle and deep conviction who related well to all groups, Godbold left an indelible imprint upon the school and the students. Advancing in years, he set a hard pace, advising students that he "liked to work up a good sweat each day."¹⁷⁴ On numerous occasions during chapel or assembly sessions, he expounded his motto, "It is better to keep up than to catch up!"¹⁷⁵ Respected by students because he reciprocated that respect, the president was very disturbed by some trends he observed, especially the increasing tendency to marriage before completion of one's collegiate work.¹⁷⁶

The president desired to relate the College to the denominational and to the community will. Sometimes this aim required adaptation on Godbold's part as evidenced in the establishment of an excessively expensive department of nursing and in the re-entrance of Louisiana College into intercollegiate athletics, particularly football.¹⁷⁷ In both cases, he cooperated in spite of personal preferences to the contrary. At the same time, he stoutly resisted efforts or thoughts of diverting the college from its liberal arts nature into a technical and vocational

¹⁷³ Ibid., September 27, 1945, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., March 12, 1942, pp. 1, 5.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., March 29, 1945, p. 8.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., January 3, 1946, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., December 13, 1945, p. 1; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 22, 1946; Baptist Message, August 1, 1946, pp. 1, 3; President of L.C., "Report," May 25, 1948, p. 9.

school.¹⁷⁸

Unquestionably the greatest material achievement of the Godbold years was a large increase in endowment funds for Louisiana College. By 1944, the president had developed the conviction that endowment was the key to stability.¹⁷⁹ He believed that income from endowment would supplement student fees and denominational contributions as sources of income.¹⁸⁰ Funds continued to accrue for the greatly needed student center, and various improvements, such as the addition of a third floor to Ware Hall, were made; but the main emphasis was upon endowment.¹⁸¹ The Convention officially endorsed this effort in 1945, and a drive to stimulate response was started with a powerful address by M. E. Dodd.¹⁸² Godbold and others traveled tirelessly during 1946 to carry the campaign to the associational and local church levels.¹⁸³ In 1947 and afterward, many of the churches responded to the request that endowment for the College be made a budget item.¹⁸⁴ Money began to accumulate as the

¹⁷⁸ Baptist Message, March 8, 1945, p. 1; *Ibid.*, May 2, 1946, p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, August 10, 1944, p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, February 8, 1946, p. 1; *Ibid.*, September 12, 1946, p. 1; *Ibid.*, July 10, 1947, p. 8; *Ibid.*, September 16, 1948, p. 7; *Ibid.*, July 28, 1949, p. 7; *Ibid.*, June 20, 1950, p. 6.

¹⁸¹ L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 22, 1946; Baptist Message, October 6, 1949, p. 1; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," November 13, 1950.

¹⁸² Baptist Message, December 13, 1945, pp. 1, 8.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, February 8, 1946, pp. 1, 8; *Ibid.*, February 28, 1946, pp. 1, 5; *Ibid.*, April 4, 1946, pp. 1, 6; *Ibid.*, April 18, 1946, pp. 1, 5; *Ibid.*, May 16, 1946, pp. 1, 8; L.B.C., Minutes, 1946, pp. 52-55.

¹⁸⁴ Baptist Message, March 6, 1947, pp. 1, 4; L.B.C., Minutes, 1946, p. 52; *Ibid.*, 1949, p. 46; *Ibid.*, 1950, p. 31.

Convention contributed generously from its surplus funds.¹⁸⁵ Before Godbold retired from office in 1951, the million dollar mark has passed, the fund having stood below \$300,000 when he entered office.¹⁸⁶

Changes were in store for Louisiana College as attendance declined in the fall of 1950 due to the Korean conflict and the diminishing numbers of World War II veterans still in college. Another approaching transition had been revealed in President Godbold's report to the Board of Trustees in May, 1950:

As of December 2, 1949, I became 70 years of age. Recently my family physician . . . gave me a thorough physical check-up and at the close of the examination he remarked, 'If Methuselah had had your heart and lungs and kidneys and stomach and other vital organs[,] he would be alive today.' Yet it isn't fair for you to continue the services of a man who can be accused of being old and worn out while at the same time you require members of the instruction staff to retire at 70 years of age. . . . I am ready to retire when [a] successor has been named.¹⁸⁷

A resolution from the faculty urged the desirability of keeping President Godbold in office, but the trustees honored his request that they "without undue delay, add another name to the group of your retired members."¹⁸⁸ Familiar faces disappeared in these years as Professors Willie Strother and Rosa Hill Dunwody retired and the prominent Dr. E. O. Wood, who had made Louisiana College a power in forensic competition, departed

¹⁸⁵ Baptist Message, February 12, 1948, pp. 1, 4.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., March 8, 1951, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ President of L.C., "Report," May 23, 1950, p. 7.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

to become head of the Department of Psychology at Baylor University.¹⁸⁹
 The campus had been saddened by the unexpected death of Miss Hattie Strother, who during many years as dean of women had exerted a powerful influence over a generation of Louisiana College students.¹⁹⁰

Dr. G. Earl Guinn, a graduate of Acadia Academy, Louisiana College, and the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, became the fifth president of Louisiana College in September, 1951.¹⁹¹ The first minister to head the Baptist school in forty-one years, Guinn made a strong impression with the vigorous leadership he provided.¹⁹² Only thirty-eight years of age, he proved adequate to the challenges which faced him. No major building had been added since Cottingham Hall was completed in 1940; aside from it, Alexandria Hall in 1922 had been the last construction. Though the enrollment decreased to 636 in 1951, concern was mounting about a new wave of students expected by the end of the decade.¹⁹³ New buildings surpassed endowment as the main thrust of the Guinn administration.

The new president was committed to academic excellence, and he responded vigorously to the pressures being applied by the Southern

¹⁸⁹"Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," June 25, 1947; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 25, 1949; Ibid., May 24, 1949; Baptist Message, August 7, 1947, p. 7; Ibid., July 29, 1948, p. 1; Ibid., February 17, 1949, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., July 29, 1948, p. 1; Ibid., August 26, 1948, p. 1; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," September 10, 1948; The Wildcat, September 25, 1948, p. 2 [student newspaper].

¹⁹¹Baptist Message, August 9, 1951, p. 1.

¹⁹²L.B.C., Minutes, 1951, p. 52; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes of Special Meeting," September 18, 1952.

¹⁹³L.B.C., Minutes, 1951, p. 31.

Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The accrediting agency was concerned about inadequate library materials and facilities, faculty salaries, and faculty qualifications.¹⁹⁴ Forthrightly, Dr. Guinn said in his first report:

This board of trustees should know the facts about the faculty in the light of the standards of the Southern Association We have . . . 12 with only the bachelor's degree, 28 with the master's degree, three with Th.D.s, and only one Ph.D. One of the three Th.D.'s is not teaching in the field of religion. . . . If the Commission on Higher Education had checked this year on faculty degrees, very likely we would have been placed on probation.¹⁹⁵

The trustees approved Guinn's request that he be authorized "to proceed with the enlistment of a faculty that will meet [the] standard of the accrediting agency."¹⁹⁶

The Board of Trustees informed the 1951 session of the Convention that provision of additional facilities could not be postponed without serious detriment to the College. Thereupon the Convention consented to a request that churches be urged to divide their budget contributions to the College equally between the endowment and the building fund.¹⁹⁷

Concerned about the qualifications of faculty members, the Convention provided an additional \$25,000 for salary purposes since President Guinn had stated clearly that upgrading the faculty would require more adequate salaries.¹⁹⁸ Work on the long anticipated student center was started in

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ President of L.C., "Report," January 22, 1952, p. 1.

¹⁹⁶ L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 22, 1952.

¹⁹⁷ L.B.C., Minutes, 1951, p. 32.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

1952.¹⁹⁹ It was named for Morgan W. Walker, who had given the \$40,000 gift toward the project back in 1943; Walker contributed an additional \$25,000 toward equipping the center before it was completed.²⁰⁰ A local furniture company, Clarke, Dunbar, and Dunn, aided by enabling college officials to select furnishings at wholesale prices from the firm's Chicago sources of supply.²⁰¹

Shortly after his successor took office, Edgar Godbold was employed as a financial agent by the Board of Trustees; he also was elected president of the Convention in November, 1951.²⁰² During 1952, Godbold announced that a pledge of \$100,000 toward a library building had been made by Mrs. Nellie Norton Smitherman and Mrs. R. W. Norton of Shreveport.²⁰³ The gift was conditional upon the securing of additional money; thus intensive efforts to fund the new project were in progress before the student center was finished in 1953.²⁰⁴ Construction began on the library shortly afterward, and it was completed during 1955.²⁰⁵ Other new buildings provided during this time, though far less expensive, were the athletic dormitory, the Home Economics cottage, and the president's

¹⁹⁹ Baptist Message, February 28, 1952, p. 1.

²⁰⁰ L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 22, 1952.

²⁰¹ Baptist Message, February 19, 1953, p. 1; President of L.C., "Report," January 27, 1953, p. 1.

²⁰² "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," October 1, 1951.

²⁰³ President of L.C., "Report," May 20, 1952, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ Baptist Message, May 29, 1952, pp. 1, 8; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 26, 1953.

²⁰⁵ Baptist Message, September 24, 1953, p. 1; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes of Special Meeting," November 19, 1953; Baptist Message, June 30, 1955, p. 3.

home.²⁰⁶ Funds for the Home Economics building were provided by W. S. Warner, a trustee who allowed a portion of a \$50,000 gift for endowment purposes to be used for the cottage.²⁰⁷

Throughout the period after 1951, endowment funds continued to accrue, but endowment was seldom mentioned as a prime need. The emphasis was upon new facilities, with as many as 400 churches making monthly contributions; both causes prospered, the endowment reaching \$1,666,000 in 1955.²⁰⁸ On the other hand, the expanded facilities allowed Louisiana College to respond adequately when the enrollment began to increase again, reaching 960 in 1956.²⁰⁹

Death removed prominent educational figures W. H. Knight, M. E. Dodd, and Edgar Godbold in a twelve-month span in 1951-1952.²¹⁰ Knight had led Louisiana Baptists to their greatest achievements, and he had molded a sense of genuine unity.²¹¹ Dodd, of whom much has been written herein, had retired in 1950 after being a stalwart figure among Baptists for half a century.²¹² Godbold's death was particularly tragic, as he died of injuries received in a traffic accident while driving to the 1952 session of the Convention over which he was to preside. The

²⁰⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1952, p. 57; Ibid., 1953, p. 40.

²⁰⁷Baptist Message, December 11, 1952, p. 2.

²⁰⁸L.B.C., Minutes, 1955, p. 28.

²⁰⁹Ibid., 1956, p. 52.

²¹⁰Ibid., 1952, pp. 2, 9.

²¹¹Baptist Message, December 20, 1951, p. 1.

²¹²"Minutes of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana," May 14, 1951; Baptist Message, August 14, 1952, p. 1.

College community was shocked by the passing of the popular former president.²¹³ President Guinn said, "We have lost a true and beloved friend. I have lost a faithful and wise counselor. The College has lost an untiring servant."²¹⁴

In spite of the progress and expansion which were evident, the Guinn administration had its difficulties. The first strains were apparent as the new president proceeded with the upgrading of the faculty. On several occasions, dismissed individuals appealed without avail to the trustees.²¹⁵ As time passed, signs of friction between Guinn and some of the trustees appeared.²¹⁶ These clashes seemingly developed out of differences over the college's athletic program.²¹⁷ Some of the trustees were engaged in supporting the athletic program, and some procedures along this line were not properly carried out through regular administrative channels.²¹⁸ Two unusual documents included in the records of the Board of Trustees indicate the seriousness of this matter. One contains minutes of a meeting of a group of trustees in December, 1952, without the president's knowledge or presence.²¹⁹ The other is an

²¹³L.B.C., Minutes, 1952, p. 26; Baptist Message, November 27, 1952, p. 1; Louisiana College, The Pine Knot, 1953, p. 31; The Wildcat, November 26, 1952, p. 2.

²¹⁴President of L.C., "Report," January 27, 1953, p. 1.

²¹⁵L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," May 20, 1952, p. 3.

²¹⁶President of L.C., "Report," January 27, 1953, pp. 4-6.

²¹⁷Ibid.; L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes of Special Meeting," February 19, 1953.

²¹⁸President of L.C., "Report," January 27, 1953, p. 6.

²¹⁹"Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," January 27, 1953. [Record of a December 15, 1952, meeting of the committee held without the President].

undated, unsigned, two-page challenge to the propriety of such meetings; it was obviously written by President Guinn.²²⁰ Though not stated in the minutes, this document was probably read at the January, 1953, meeting of the trustees; the majority of the trustees appeared to support the president.²²¹ Relationships improved afterward, but in January, 1955, several trustees requested a called meeting of the board, at which time several charges were leveled at the president.²²² Particularly, he was under attack because he had accepted a position on the State Board of Institutions, of which he was currently chairman; and he was criticized by segregationists for implementing a program of off-campus extension courses for Negroes in the Alexandria area.²²³ Again a majority of the trustees strongly supported the president; thus the charges were dismissed.²²⁴ Obviously, the road ahead was uncertain.

Louisiana Baptists continued to set new financial records between 1951 and 1956. The Cooperative Program budget remained the basic thrust, but large amounts were designated each year.²²⁵ When the Cooperative Program received \$1,277,840.45 and designations increased the total to \$2,034,481.33 in 1954, the Convention voted to expand the Cooperative Program emphasis by providing for capital and operating

²²⁰[G. Earl Guinn], Memorandum attached to L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," [January, 1953].

²²¹L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes," January 27, 1953.

²²²L.C. Board of Trustees, "Minutes of Special Meeting," January 28, 1955.

²²³Ibid.

²²⁴Ibid.

²²⁵L.B.C., Minutes, 1952, p. 27; Ibid., 1953, p. 51.

expenses of its agencies through the budget.²²⁶ Henceforth, institutions would not campaign for support among the churches; rather the churches would be urged to avoid budget commitments to any agency in favor of giving more support to the Cooperative Program.²²⁷ Surplus funds materialized yearly, and the two schools were included in division of these funds.²²⁸

Acadia Baptist Academy, 1950-1956

Acadia Baptist Academy was prevented from continuing the expansion program started in 1949-1950 when the Convention failed either to make allocations for capital purposes or to approve additional campaigns for funds.²²⁹ The Woman's Missionary Union made appropriations toward a chapel for the school, the total amounting to \$22,206.97 by 1954.²³⁰ Handicapped by inadequate facilities, Superintendent V. K. Fletcher kept the Academy in the denominational eye as he provided a flow of interesting news.²³¹ The academic aspect of the program was emphasized as Fletcher and his faculty, with the approval of the State Department of

²²⁶Ibid., 1954, p. 83.

²²⁷Ibid., pp. 66, 69.

²²⁸Ibid., 1955, pp. 27-28; Ibid., 1956, p. 66.

²²⁹Ibid., 1951, p. 45; Ibid., 1953, p. 37.

²³⁰Ibid., 1954, p. 41.

²³¹Baptist Message, February 1, 1951, p. 7; Ibid., November 8, 1951, p. 7; Ibid., March 13, 1952, p. 5; Ibid., October 30, 1952, p. 5; Ibid., January 1, 1953, p. 8; Ibid., April 2, 1953, pp. 1, 8; Ibid., October 1, 1953, pp. 1, 8; Ibid., February 11, 1954, p. 1; Ibid., November 4, 1954, p. 1; Ibid., August 25, 1955, p. 1; Ibid., September 27, 1956, p. 4; Ibid., October 25, 1956, pp. 6-7.

Education, experimented with a system whereby students studied two subjects each semester and spent two hours a day in each course.²³² The trend in enrollment at the Academy was toward a younger student body.²³³ News items reflected the changed character of the institution by describing athletic and social events along with items of a religious nature.²³⁴ Another indication that the Academy was becoming more of a regular high school was the publication of a yearbook, the Lighthouse, which emphasized a wide variety of student activities.²³⁵ However, ministerial students continued to constitute a significant share of the enrollment; in 1952-1953, there were 37 ministerial candidates in an enrollment of 141.²³⁶ The Academy looked with pride upon its graduates who matriculated at Louisiana College.²³⁷

Superintendent Fletcher succeeded in his objective of keeping Acadia Academy before Louisiana Baptists.²³⁸ Since the Convention's work was becoming more extensive, an exhaustive study of the long-range program was conducted by the Executive Board.²³⁹ A group of prominent Southern Baptist educators was invited by the Executive Board to

²³²Ibid., February 1, 1951, p. 7; Ibid., May 3, 1951, p. 7.

²³³Ibid., October 30, 1952, p. 5; Ibid., September 27, 1956, p. 4.

²³⁴Ibid., October 30, 1952, p. 5; Ibid., January 1, 1953, p. 8; Ibid., April 2, 1953, pp. 1, 8; Ibid., January 20, 1955, p. 3; Ibid., April 19, 1956, p. 9.

²³⁵Acadia Baptist Academy, The Lighthouse, 1951, p. 5.

²³⁶L.B.C., Minutes, 1952, p. 56.

²³⁷Baptist Message, January 29, 1953, p. 8; Ibid., September 27, 1956, p. 4.

²³⁸L.B.C., Minutes, 1954, p. 37.

²³⁹Ibid., pp. 67-69.

evaluate Louisiana College and Acadia Academy.²⁴⁰ Subsequent to their report, the Executive Board appointed a committee from its membership to join a committee of Academy trustees in a new consideration of the school's role in the Convention's future plans.²⁴¹ This move stirred misgivings among the Academy's supporters who remembered the evaluation of a decade earlier.²⁴² Fletcher welcomed the new study, expressing confidently his conviction that growth was "just around the corner."²⁴³ At the same time, he wondered aloud "how anyone [could] question the need for such a school?"²⁴⁴

A tense moment came when the Joint Committee on Acadia Academy presented its findings to the 1956 session of the Convention. Favorable in substance, the report advised that the Academy was useful and relevant to denominational purposes.²⁴⁵ It recommended that the location remain the same and that the trustees be authorized to proceed with a building program.²⁴⁶ Most importantly, the evolving nature of the Academy as a school for teenagers, which still provided for older students, was recognized.²⁴⁷ The educational function was exalted, the

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 37; Baptist Message, February 23, 1956, p. 8.

²⁴¹ "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Acadia Baptist Academy," January 9, 1956, p. 45; Ibid., February 27, 1956, p. 47; Ibid., April 30, 1956, p. 49.

²⁴² Baptist Message, February 23, 1956, p. 8.

²⁴³ L.B.C., Minutes, 1956, p. 59.

²⁴⁴ Baptist Message, February 23, 1956, p. 8.

²⁴⁵ L.B.C., Minutes, 1956, pp. 60-61.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

purpose of the Academy no longer being considered to be primarily that of a mission center.²⁴⁸ Contrary to the Rushing Committee report in 1944, this study led to a controversial exchange on the floor of the Convention, although it had not excited a public debate while it was in progress.²⁴⁹ Prominent among those speaking for the report were A. S. Newman, a former superintendent, and Dr. J. Norris Palmer, respected pastor of the First Baptist Church of Baton Rouge.²⁵⁰

Conclusion

To summarize briefly, the years from 1941 to 1956 constituted a period of transition and expansion for the Convention's educational institutions. Both elements were evident at Louisiana College, but the transitional aspect was the dominant feature at Acadia Academy. These developments occurred against a backdrop of unprecedented progress by the Convention itself in terms of numbers, unity, and finances.

Louisiana College had three administrations as the lengthy tenure of Claybrook Cottingham was followed by ten years of leadership by Edgar Godbold, who was himself succeeded by G. Earl Guinn. Cottingham's departure brought to the College a figure who emphasized denominational cooperation; Godbold was able to secure renewed and expanded support for his institution, especially for purposes of endowment. The retirement of Dr. Godbold led to further transition as President Guinn took positive action to stimulate the erection of new facilities. The new

²⁴⁸Ibid., p. 61.

²⁴⁹Ibid., p. 60.

²⁵⁰Ibid.

president came under attack because of his determination to effect needed upgrading of the College faculty. His actions in other areas were criticized by some trustees, and a potentially dangerous lack of mutual confidence developed. An emphasis upon building projects resulted in the provision of several new facilities, the major ones being the Morgan W. Walker Student Center and the Richard W. Norton Memorial Library. Enrollment reached an all-time high in the period from 1946 to 1949; after a brief lull, it moved upward again by 1954. Finally, familiar figures departed as an entire generation of new leadership came to the front.

Though there was expansion in the form of a modest increase in enrollment and in the provision of a new boys' dormitory and a gymnasium-auditorium, the dominant theme at Acadia Academy after 1941 was transition. Most important of the transitional aspects was the change in the nature of the institution to that of a general high school for teenagers who needed the services of such a school for a variety of reasons. Somewhat inadequate leadership in the early years of this period was followed by V. K. Fletcher's aggressive campaign to publicize the school. Emotional attachments to the school prevented a decision to close it in 1943-1944. While the Price and Fletcher administrations strengthened the position of the Academy, they could not alter the fact that the school had evolved far from its original function. Thus a further examination of its role was carried out in 1955-1956, resulting in another endorsement of its continued usefulness which was, however, not unanimous.

As 1956 drew to a close, Louisiana College had completed its fiftieth year and Acadia Academy had entered its fortieth one. While

the future was indefinite, the College's position in the Convention program appeared secure, but the Academy's role continued to be precarious.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

Several reflections which have grown from the investigation might properly precede a statement of findings, particularly in that they constitute a frame of reference for the undertaking. First, interest in Baptist history developed late; the Southern Baptist Historical Society was not founded until 1938.¹ While interest in historical perspective is growing among Baptists at present, its recency creates a formidable task for those who probe the past. The materials upon which the historian usually depends are scant and inadequate except for recent decades. Second, the absence of a central depository for historical materials, staffed with professional personnel actively engaged in the collection and organization of data, hinders research projects. Some improvement in this area may come in the near future as the Louisiana Baptist Convention is constructing an archives center in its headquarters at Alexandria. The microfilm project of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission is presently increasing the availability of research materials.

A third observation is that, while writings on Baptist history in general have not appeared in abundance, there is a special paucity of Baptist educational history. Pattillo and MacKenzie point out the

¹Penrose St. Amant, "Southern Baptists: Unity in Diversity," Search, I (Spring, 1971), p. 11.

deficiency of scholarly literature in the area of church-related education.² Baptist scholars have tended to stress the missionary, evangelistic, and ecclesiastical aspects of denominational history.

Special attention should be called to the imprecision which the student of Baptist history encounters, an imprecision emanating from the decentralized nature of Baptist life and polity. To illustrate, the multitude of routes by which an individual's gift can reach a Baptist school makes it impossible to determine the true measure of support the denomination is giving. Within this context, it is easier to assess the Convention's contribution than to write of Baptists and education. It is important to remember that total Baptist giving to the institutions described herein exceeded what is categorized as Convention support.

The most important conclusion growing out of this study is that Louisiana Baptist Convention educational institutions have contributed effectively to the denomination and to the larger society. Obviously, Acadia Baptist Academy's impact was confined mainly to the Convention and its program since most of its graduates found their way into denominational service. However, one can infer an influence on society by these individuals in the communities where they served. Brickman and Lehrer stress the importance of the denominational college in their study of higher education in the past century.³ Wicke,⁴

²Manning M. Pattillo, Jr. and Donald M. Mackenzie, Church-Sponsored Higher Education in the United States (Washington, D.C.:

³William W. Brickman and Stanley Lehrer, eds., A Century of Higher Education, Classical Citadel to Collegiate Colossus (New York: Society for the Advancement of Education, 1962).

⁴Myron F. Wicke, The Church-Related College (Washington, D. C.: The Center of Applied Research in Education, Incorporated, 1964).

Rudolph,⁵ and Brown and Mayhew⁶ note the contemporary significance of the small, church-related, liberal arts school. The history of Louisiana College verifies these observations. Quantitatively, especially so in the latter years of this study, and qualitatively the school served its denomination and the general society. Sending its graduates into most of the vocational avenues which comprise the mainstream of life, Louisiana College has made a significant impact. Numerically its greatest influence has been exerted in the fields of education and the ministry. Responding to social, economic, and military phenomena, Louisiana College has identified itself with the world of which it is a part. The absence of state-supported institutions of higher learning in the populous Central Louisiana area during the College's first half century of existence reflected a degree of success on its part in relating to the general needs of the community. Increasing financial support in recent years has revealed an awareness of the school's educational and cultural contributions to the area.

A second generalization relates to the question of evolution of purpose. The history of Louisiana College demonstrates remarkable consistency of purpose. It was conceived as a liberal arts college, and it has remained so, refusing both the tendency to exist as little more than a Bible school and the urge to expand superficially into an institution providing vocational and technical programs of questionable quality. The success of its graduates has provided a measure of its generally

⁵Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962).

⁶Hugh S. Brown and Lewis B. Mayhew, American Higher Education (New York: The Center of Applied Research in Education, Incorporated, 1965).

adequate academic quality; that quality has been upgraded in recent years to meet the increasing challenges of present-day society. In sharp contrast to the College, Acadia Academy has veered increasingly from its original purpose. Its difficulty in retaining solid Convention support has stemmed primarily from its development into an educational institution for teenage students as opposed to its earlier role as a training school for adult religious volunteers. By 1956, nearly sixty per cent of the Academy's income was being derived from student fees, confirming the reduced denominational responsibility.

Another major area for assessment is that of consistency of commitment on the part of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. One notes unmistakably the increasingly fragile commitment to Acadia Academy after 1940. An adequate judgment would appear to be that, while responsive to the needs of Acadia Academy during its first quarter century, Louisiana Baptists never developed a genuine commitment to denominational secondary education. The Convention has supported the idea of public education. In regard to Louisiana College, one senses that the Convention has had a consistent commitment to the institution as absolutely essential to the success of the denominational program. This attitude is reflected in a comment by T. W. Gayer, who acted as interim Executive Secretary-Treasurer for several months after the death of W. H. Knight. Speaking of allocations in the Cooperative Program budget for educational purposes, he said, "This is a necessary expenditure if we mean for Baptists to move forward. No denomination can move forward without leaders, and there is no way to have leaders without schools."⁷ One might wonder

⁷Baptist Message, December 20, 1951, p. 8.

at the Convention's action in removing the College from the Cooperative Program budget in 1932 and afterward; however it was designed to increase the institution's income, not to limit it, and the action was taken at the behest of college officials. The methodology of support changed, but the commitment was constant.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the priority of the educational commitment. This investigation indicates that the educational aspect of the Convention's program attained an increasingly significant role in the total enterprise in 1945 and afterward. Receiving special consideration in the division of surplus funds as well as a proportionately larger share of the basic budget, Louisiana College attained priority status, at least in relation to earlier times. The timing of this emerging priority brings one to the question of Dodd College.

Dodd College, viewed in historical perspective, cast a specter over the educational ventures of Louisiana Baptists. Without challenging the motives or the sincerity of those who worked unrelentingly to launch and to sustain the ill-fated school, it must be concluded that the girls' college venture strained the limited finances and threatened the cohesiveness of the Convention. Conceived from deep conviction, led by talented and dedicated individuals, blessed by enthusiastic initial response--Dodd College was crushed by the pincers of economic adversity, limited denominational strength, and, eventually, despair. To the lasting credit of Dodd's sponsors, it must be acknowledged that Louisiana College's increased priority was partially due to their transfer of allegiance. In a word, Louisiana Baptists could not support two colleges in the conditions that developed between 1925 and 1940; after 1940, when there was a possibility of success, they had begun to question the

desirability of a separate girls' college. When there was a will, there was no way; when there might have been a way, they had lost the will.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The most important source for this study has been the Minutes of the Louisiana Baptist Convention (entitled Minutes of the . . . Annual Session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention from 1893 through 1916; Annual of the Louisiana Baptist State Convention Containing the Proceedings of the . . . Session in 1917 and 1918; Annual of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in . . . Annual Session from 1919 through 1956).

Printed as job prints by various publishers, the Minutes for every session of the Convention from 1893 through 1956 are available and have been examined. These records are adequate for educational matters, especially after 1920. Even during the 1930's, when the Minutes were condensed to small volumes only one-half the size of previous years, the educational materials are generally complete. Whatever gaps appear indicate that reports were not received, not that they were deliberately omitted.

A second record of general significance throughout the investigation has been the Convention's official newspaper. Published as The Baptist Chronicle until July, 1919, while under private ownership, and as The Baptist Message since that date, the newspaper consistently presents educational material. In many respects, the Chronicle and the Message are superior to the Minutes, since the newspapers provide details which are omitted from the more formal record of the official actions of the Convention. The newspapers are especially useful in providing insight into differences of opinion which surrounded controversial

matters and for narrating the sequence of events which led to various actions of the Convention. As the Convention assumed increasing responsibility for its educational institutions through Cooperative Program allocations, the Baptist Message contained less material from Louisiana College and Acadia Academy; this is especially noticeable after 1950.

The consideration of Louisiana College profited greatly because of the availability of official records of its governing board. This information appears under the following titles: "Minutes of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," "Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention," "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College," and "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College." These records cover the entire history of the College; they are increasingly detailed after 1920, especially during the Guinn administration. The Education Commission of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, which governed Louisiana College from its origin in 1906, was succeeded by the Board of Trustees of Louisiana College in 1921. The Board of Directors of the Education Commission was equivalent to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees.

The reports of the president of Louisiana College are appended to the official minutes because the reports were made to the controlling body of the school. These reports amounted to overviews of the school's affairs; they also constituted the substance upon which trustee meetings were based. Usually the report was read at the beginning of the meeting; then its specific recommendations for action were considered. The overview sections of these reports were frequently used in .

formulating the College's report to the Convention at its annual sessions, sometimes appearing almost verbatim.

Other sources for Louisiana College were the Catalogue (published under slightly variant titles as job prints at different places), The Pine Knot, and The Wildcat. Copies of the Catalogue are available for all sessions except 1906-1907; however, these materials were not highly useful to this study because the project emphasized the role of the Convention. The yearbook, The Pine Knot, contains more descriptive content in its earlier editions, having become more of a pictorial guide since 1935. Copies of The Wildcat, student newspaper of the College, are not of sufficient number to be of real value for the period covered herein.

Serious obstacles confront one who seeks to trace the history of Acadia Academy. Whereas Louisiana College materials are generally available for all major periods, significant gaps occur in Academy records. First, no records of the proceedings of its Board of Trustees are available before 1949. All such information, to whatever degree it existed, was destroyed in the disastrous fires of 1943 and 1947. Second, no official catalogs are in evidence between 1929 and 1944, although such material was published. One is almost totally dependent upon The Baptist Message and Minutes of the Louisiana Baptist Convention for these years; no Academy report was printed in several issues, probably reflecting the preoccupation of the administrators with the bitter battle for survival. Third, the material which is available for Acadia Academy is often quite sketchy, affording relatively few details. Available sources make it difficult to study the Acadia Academy in depth before 1944, the year the school was placed on probation by the Convention.

Secular newspapers have not been very useful to this project,

because most accounts appearing in the newspapers are abbreviated descriptions of events narrated at greater length in the denominational press. On some occasions, lengthy articles are revealed to be "reprints" or "press releases" otherwise encountered through sources described above. The absence of an index for The Shreveport Times and The Alexandria Daily Town Talk imposes a severe handicap in the use of these newspapers.

The Mount Lebanon-Keachie Collection, housed in a special room in the Norton Memorial Library at Louisiana College, affords a general view of the old Baptist schools. Scattered issues of the catalogs of these institutions are available for the period from 1884 to 1912. These booklets appeared under variant titles and were produced as job prints by numerous publishers; they were very brief, frequently failing to provide much statistical detail. The Mount Lebanon materials are more adequate, a condition mainly caused by the inclusion of "Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Mount Lebanon University," a document covering the period from 1852 to 1905. The failure of the college at Keachie to relate itself effectively to the Louisiana Baptist Convention is manifested by the scarcity of information about that school.

Several secondary works have been useful in this investigation, especially C. Penrose St. Amant's A Short History of Louisiana Baptists. Written by a distinguished scholar, this brief volume provides an excellent overview of the major trends in Louisiana Baptist history. Educational matters are stressed, and they are related to the larger story of general denominational development. John T. Christian's A History of the Baptists of Louisiana is helpful in its coverage of the first two decades of the twentieth century. For the formative period of

the Convention, one is indebted to the pioneer historian, William Edward Paxton. His volume, A History of the Baptists of Louisiana, covers the years before 1883. There is a lengthy chapter about the origin of the Convention and a shorter one delineating educational highlights. The works of Vedder, Torbet, and Barnes have been relied upon for denominational developments beyond Louisiana.

Finally, the researcher notes the absence of any significant collection of miscellaneous materials which might augment the essentially official sources previously described. Such materials are probably in existence, awaiting an adequate, concerted effort to collect them and to make them available for historical study. Hopefully, such an initiative is developing currently. In the meantime, while lamenting the limitations of present tools for research, one should express gratitude for what has been preserved, most of it a "labor of love" performed without remuneration by those who cared.

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APPENDIX

LOUISIANA BAPTIST CONVENTION RECEIPTS, 1927-1956

	<u>Cooperative Program</u>	<u>Designations</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Nov. 1, 1926-Oct. 31, 1927	\$187,172.75	\$45,564.54	\$232,737.29
Nov. 1, 1927-Oct. 31, 1928	160,544.94	53,115.23	213,660.17
Nov. 1, 1928-Oct. 31, 1929	164,719.36	82,086.49	246,805.85
Nov. 1, 1929-Oct. 31, 1930	152,052.26	37,958.44	190,010.70
Nov. 1, 1930-Oct. 31, 1931	109,088.39	34,748.80	143,837.19
Nov. 1, 1931-Oct. 31, 1932	68,537.27	44,042.89	112,580.16
Nov. 1, 1932-Oct. 31, 1933	51,052.53	34,082.27	85,134.80
Nov. 1, 1933-Oct. 31, 1934	72,705.32	46,967.50	119,672.82
Nov. 1, 1934-Oct. 31, 1935	79,825.97	56,535.25	136,361.22
Nov. 1, 1935-Oct. 31, 1936	90,820.15	88,517.29	179,337.44
Nov. 1, 1936-Oct. 31, 1937	98,906.68	122,810.64	221,717.32
Nov. 1, 1937-Oct. 31, 1938	116,154.99	85,180.17	201,335.16
Nov. 1, 1938-Oct. 31, 1939	126,917.04	83,709.55	210,626.59
Nov. 1, 1939-Oct. 31, 1940	135,314.88	101,151.68	236,466.56
Nov. 1, 1940-Oct. 31, 1941	162,358.58	136,034.67	298,393.25
Nov. 1, 1941-Oct. 31, 1942	201,765.75	172,577.58	374,343.33
Nov. 1, 1942-Oct. 31, 1943	266,594.79	245,138.67	511,733.46
Nov. 1, 1943-Oct. 31, 1944	359,881.93	315,638.88	675,520.81
Nov. 1, 1944-Oct. 31, 1945	445,891.31	422,906.06	868,797.37
Nov. 1, 1945-Oct. 31, 1946	475,343.18	613,378.48	1,088,721.66

	<u>Cooperative Program</u>	<u>Designations</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Nov. 1, 1946-Oct. 31, 1947	\$517,247.80	\$516,145.31	\$1,033,393.11
Nov. 1, 1947-Oct. 31, 1948	561,109.10	644,074.53	1,205,183.63
Nov. 1, 1948-Oct. 31, 1949	628,029.15	633,904.05	1,261,933.20
Nov. 1, 1949-Oct. 31, 1950	706,906.91	750,617.80	1,457,524.71
Nov. 1, 1950-Oct. 31, 1951	829,532.27	624,240.13	1,453,772.40
Nov. 1, 1951-Oct. 31, 1952	965,320.23	744,326.84	1,709,647.07
Nov. 1, 1952-Oct. 31, 1953	1,105,138.69	738,691.57	1,843,830.26
Nov. 1, 1953-Oct. 31, 1954	1,277,840.45	756,640.88	2,034,481.33
Nov. 1, 1954-Oct. 31, 1955	1,640,186.24	562,299.36	2,202,485.60
Nov. 1, 1955-Oct. 31, 1956	1,866,095.26	593,585.39	2,459,680.65

Source: Louisiana Baptist Convention, Minutes, 1945, p. 57; Ibid., 1955, p. 65; Ibid., 1956, p. 66.

VITA ²

George Lewis Higgins, Jr.

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE LOUISIANA BAPTIST CONVENTION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, 1893-1956

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, January 16, 1928, the son of Mr. and Mrs. George L. Higgins.

Education: Graduated from Central High School, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1944; attended Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, from 1945 to 1949, receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1951, with majors in History and Bible; received the Bachelor of Divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1956, with a major in Church History; received the Master of Arts degree from the University of Colorado in 1961, with a major in Educational Administration; completed requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1971.

Professional Experience: Teacher and Coach, Acadia Baptist Academy, 1949-1953, 1956-1958; Assistant Principal, Acadia Baptist Academy, 1958-1961; Principal, Acadia Baptist Academy, 1961-1964; Principal and Administrator, Acadia Baptist Academy, 1964 to the present.