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THE BAPTIST SCHISM

by

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A THESIS

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## PREFACE

The Baptist Schism must be understood in the light of its history. Three things seem to stand out that led to the schism in 1845: The different ideas which existed as to organization; controversy in the field of home missions; and the positions taken on the slavery issue. The conflicts existing because of the first two things mentioned were going on when the slavery issue came into focus, but the slavery issue seemed to bring these others to a head and definitely point the schism to a North-South division instead of an East-West division which latter could have taken place had the slavery question not become a part of the issue.

These three are distinct issues, but they overlap each other in time and in substance. The method of organization, for example, is seen reflecting itself in the controversy on Home Missions, just as slavery is seen reflecting itself into the Home Mission controversy.

## CHAPTER I

### METHOD OF ORGANIZATION

Two distinct types of general organization developed among American Baptists: the associational or denominational method and the society method. The first chronologically was the associational movement, which had no rival for almost a century. The initial organization in America was the Philadelphia Association. In 1688 Elias Keach was called as pastor of the Pennepek Church in Pennsylvania. He had just come from England and was familiar with ecclesiastical developments there. English Baptists were already organized into associations. The vigorous missionary activity of Keach in the large area surrounding the Pennepek Church resulted in the organization of other Baptist churches and the creation of a spirit of fellowship. Keach encouraged the annual gathering of a number of churches at Pennepek for the purpose of observing the Lord's Supper, for fellowship, and for preaching. Quarterly meetings for these purposes began to be held in rotation

at Burlington, Cohansey, Chester, and Philadelphia. Although Keach returned to England in 1692, the logical result of his activity was the formation of the Philadelphia Baptist Association in 1707. Prior to this date the annual gatherings had been simply mass meetings, but following this formal organization the churches began to send representatives.

The early history of this association reveals the extreme sensitiveness of Baptists toward connectionalism and authoritarianism. Within this organized association, there was no suggestion for forty years of any sort of authority on the part of the association. Furthermore, no other Baptist association of churches appeared in America for forty-four years, and when others did appear, many of the churches did not affiliate for fear that too much authority would be vested in a central organization. Apart from fellowship and inspiration, the principal function of the Philadelphia Association for four decades consisted of giving advice on doctrinal questions sent in by the churches.

Two developments occurred almost simultaneously that presented a new pattern of associational activity. In 1749 an essay was prepared and unanimously passed by the vote of the Philadelphia Association, which made it plain what power an association of churches had, and what duty was incumbent on an association. The essay denied that an association was a judicature with superior power over its churches, but suggested that all Baptist churches

should voluntarily enter into an agreement and confederation for their mutual strength, counsel, and other valuable advantages. It asserted that an association of the delegates of associate churches have a very considerable power in their hands, respecting those churches in their confederation. This power was defined as the right of withdrawing fellowship from any church or any disorderly person that might be at variance in doctrine or practice, and of advertising such exclusion so that all associated churches might also withdraw fellowship. The association claimed authority to disown erroneous teachers, to send delegated persons to support the sentence of the association, and to deliver these decrees to other churches. In addition, the association might act as judge of the doctrines of any person or party in one of the associated churches and advise the church to whom such party belonged how to deal with the situation. It also could send able men to help the church in executing the power vested in her by the ordinance of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The second significant development came in 1775 when the Philadelphia Association began the systematic prosecution of local missions within the area covered by its own body. In 1766 a permanent fund was established for local missions. By 1771 the

<sup>1</sup> A. D. Gillette, ed., Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association from A. D. 1707 to A. D. 1807, p. 63. As presented in Robert Andrew Baker, Relations Between Northern and Southern Baptists (Fort Worth, Seminary Hill Press, 1948), pp. 9-10.

Philadelphia Association was looking to mission needs beyond its borders and appointed an evangelist at large, who reported in the following year that he had visited churches to the southward. This ministry under two successive evangelists continued until the American Revolution. Other associations were in the process of being formed, and they, likewise, were looking to mission needs outside their own territory.

In 1802 a plan was adopted by the Shaftsbury Association of Vermont, providing for an effective domestic mission program. A committee was appointed to handle mission contributions, examine the candidates, recommend the time and place of appointments, and pay salaries to the missionaries.<sup>2</sup> Other associations in the North and the South began similar programs, and it appeared that domestic missions were firmly entrenched in the hands of a denominational organization which was based immediately upon Baptist churches.

Upon the occasion of the formation of the Warren Association, Dr. Samuel Jones, moderator of the Philadelphia Association, wrote to James Manning of Warren, Rhode Island, September 8, 1767, and this letter was the official expression of the Philadelphia Association.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Wright, History of the Shaftsbury Baptist Association, pp. 37-39. As presented in Robert Andrew Baker, Relations Between Northern and Southern Baptists (Fort Worth, Seminary Hill Press, 1948), p. 11.

"For as particular members are collected together and united in one body, which we call a particular church, to answer those ends and purposes which could not be accomplished by any single member, so a collection and union of churches into one associational body may easily be conceived capable of answering those still greater purposes which any particular church could not be equal to. And, by the same reason, a union of associations will still increase the body in weight and strength, and make it good that a three-fold cord is not easily broken."<sup>3</sup>

In 1770 Morgan Edwards actually proposed a plan for a national union of Baptists in one body politic, by having the association of Philadelphia (the center) incorporated by charter, and by taking one delegate out of each association into the corporation. In 1775, the Warren Association issued a call for a general meeting of delegates from our societies in every colony in the interest of religious liberty. A meeting of Baptists was called to convene in Virginia, October 17, 1776, to form a "Continental Association", but the conditions of the time prevented this meeting from taking place. Sectional organization was now developing to the extent that there was a desire for closer cooperation between churches in areas which were far removed from the Philadelphia center.<sup>4</sup>

In 1799, the Philadelphia Association issued a call for a national meeting. Bishop's Register reports as follows:

<sup>3</sup> R. A. Guild, "The Denominational Work of President Manning," Baptist Review, 11 (1880), p. 559.

<sup>4</sup> Robert G. Torbet, A History of the Baptists (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1952), p. 251.



"Apprehensive of the advantage likely to result from a GENERAL CONFERENCE composed of one member, or more, from each association, to be held every one, two, or three years, as might seem most subservient to the general interest of Christ's kingdom, this association in 1799, respectfully invited the different associations in the United States to favor them with their views on the subject. At this meeting (that is, in 1800), having received approving resolutions from three of their sister associations, they recommended that the next year a committee be appointed to digest a plan, which may tend to accelerate this beneficial design.

This association thinks also, that it would be advisable to invite the general committee of Virginia, and different associations on the Continent, to unite with their own body, in forming a missionary society, and for employing Missionaries among the natives on the American Continent."<sup>5</sup>

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, Dr. Richard Furman, of Charleston, corresponded with Dr. Thomas Baldwin, of Boston, and Rev. John Kane, of New York, concerning a national union of Baptists. The national union, in the thought of the early leaders and of those in later decades, was to be composed of Baptist bodies such as associations and state conventions--comparable to the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Methodist General Conference.

While all these developments were taking place, we find that a rival to the associational method of connectionalism appeared with the organization of the Massachusetts Domestic Missionary Society in 1802. The differences between the associational and the society methods may be clearly drawn. The former

<sup>5</sup> John Ripoon, Ed. The Baptist Annual Register (London: 1790-1802), 11, p. 262.

grew out of a distinctly denominational consciousness, that is, of having all phases of the work of the denominational program carried out under the auspices of a committee or committees appointed for this purpose. This idea is basic to the connectional idea of this denominationally centered group. We have here a denominational body already in existence taking up another aspect of denominational life. It has already been pointed out that the matter of conducting domestic missionary operations lagged far behind the denominational aspect of the first associational organization. Matters of doctrine, discipline, and even education had received precedence chronologically. The associational method was, in other words, a denominational program based upon the participation of churches in a formal connection. This was not just a method for conducting missionary activity, but was a method for conducting all the affairs of denominational life, and operated on the idea of local churches cooperating together by sending delegates to the meetings to discuss and transact the business of the denomination. A different emphasis and a completely new set of connectional ideas may be seen in the organization of the missionary society, or, as it may be called, the society method of conducting missions. Instead of having missions as secondary interest, or as one thing among many things, the missionary society was organized solely for missionary purposes; and instead of a constituency composed of churches in a formal connection, the missionary society was based upon individuals

whose participation was completely voluntary. Instead of having ecclesiastical significance, such as would be apparent in a formal connectionalism based upon official church representation, the society method renounced any relationship to organized churches as far as representation was concerned.

Why was the society method of conducting missions introduced when the associations, particularly in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas, had already begun a domestic mission program? Undoubtedly American Baptists were greatly influenced by the example of English and continental missionary societies. About ten years before the organization of the first American Baptist society, William Carey and the English Baptist Missionary Society had begun their epochal program. Other American denominations had already adopted the society method of conducting missions. The eagerness with which American Baptists seized upon this new mode of activity is best explained by their extreme sensitiveness toward the development of ecclesiastical bodies that might usurp the autonomy of the local churches. The fear of centralization was in the minds of many as they saw the associations, based immediately upon the churches in an ecclesiastical connectionalism, begin to increase in activity and authority. The formation of a missionary society by-passed this problem completely. A missionary society was composed only of individuals who had no sense of ecclesiastical relations with the churches;

it embraced only those who were positively missionary and eliminated the half-hearted or anti-mission group; and those interested in missions could join enthusiastically into the society program knowing that ecclesiastical centralization was not being forwarded.

Before 1814, then, there were two streams of thought concerning connectionalism. One looked toward a denominational body based upon churches; the other emphasized a society entirely separate from the churches and consisting solely of individuals interested in missions. The collision of these two currents of thought produced a revolution in Baptist organizational life.

The need was at once felt of some one central organization that would unite these forces into a missionary cause. Luther Rice had joined the Baptist church after being a member of the Congregational Church, and he had in mind a semi-connectionalism brought over from his Congregational training. During a journey from Boston to Savannah, 1813-1814, in the stagecoach between Richmond and Petersburg, a plan came to him. Later he wrote to Adoniram Judson who was in India:

"The plan which suggested itself to my mind, that of forming one principal society in each state, bearing the name of that state, and others in the same state, auxiliary to that; and by these large, or state societies, delegates to be appointed to form one general society . . . several state conventions have been formed already, and more will be originated. To these, it is calculated, auxiliaries will be formed, and that associations will also become constituents;

and that from there delegates, perhaps, ultimately, the delegates will be appointed to the general convention."<sup>6</sup>

The urgency was so great that the leaders did not have time to perfect the national denominational organization contemplated in the sequence suggested by Rice. Judson was in Burma, and Rice wished to return and join him, and some means needed to be devised at once in order to support these missionaries in India. Then, too, not all American Baptists favored such highly articulated denominationalism. Furthermore, many Baptists were opposed to the very principle of missions. It was impossible to lead some churches and associations into a denominational organization, because they were afraid of any centralized control, and others because they were opposed to missions, the main objective of the new organization. In most cases, these two grounds of opposition combined.

The situation called for immediate action. The New England leaders, with the exception of Dr. Baldwin of the Second Baptist Church, Boston, favored the "society" ideology as over against the "denominational." The Reverend Daniel Sharp insisted that a Boston society should be formed at once to support Rice and Judson, but Dr. Baldwin, having in view a national organization, advised delay until others could be consulted.

<sup>6</sup> J. B. Taylor, Memoir of Luther Rice (Baltimore: Armstrong and Berry, 2ne., 1841), p. 146.

A local society was formed in Boston at once to support Rice, at home temporarily, and Judson in India, until Dr. Baldwin's national plans might be perfected. But Sharp and others still thought in terms of local societies, limited to the Northeastern part of the country.

"Brother Rice was employed by the new society formed in Boston, to visit and stir up the churches and try to excite a missionary spirit among them. He started from Massachusetts to Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania, and met with so much success that the brethren in Pennsylvania encouraged him to go South where he produced a strong impression in favor of missions. It was at this juncture that proposals were made and received through the medium of the agent to meet in Convention for the purpose of taking into consideration what ought to be done in regard to foreign missions."<sup>7</sup>

The need was at once felt of some one central organization that would unite these forces in the missionary cause, and after mutual counsel among the officers of several existing bodies, a meeting was called for the organization of a national society. The meeting was held at Philadelphia in May, 1814, and resulted in the formation of "The General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions." The constitution declared the object to be to direct the energies of the whole denomination in one sacred effort for sending the glad tidings of salvation to the heathen, and to nations destitute

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Sharp's address, The Christian Reflector (Boston), June 18, 1846.

of pure gospel light. From the circumstances of its meeting once in three years, this body was popularly known as the "Triennial Convention," though that was never its official title. It continued to be the organ of the denomination for its foreign work until 1845. The Baptist churches of the entire country were represented in its organization and conduct and support. Richard Furman of South Carolina was elected its first president.

This convention was a foreign mission society, composed of individuals and official bodies interested in missions. These bodies might be churches, associations, or state conventions. If such Baptist bodies as these could not be enlisted for missions, then societies, composed of interested individuals, were formed within a church or an association. From these local societies, messengers were sent to the General Convention on the basis of contributions to the treasury of the Convention.

Even after the national body for foreign missions was formed, the Boston leaders were not national in their thinking, as reflected in the address which Dr. Sharp delivered upon retiring as a member of the Boston Board for thirty-two years and its president for many years. In spite of this, the denominational consciousness was still prominent. It was more pronounced from Philadelphia southward, and especially in Virginia and the Carolinas. There were certain ideas embodied in the work and organization of the Baptists in those states that determined the thinking

then and has continued to the present to determine trends in Southern Baptist life.

The point of view held by the New Englander's had triumphed in the convention by 1826, and so we have prevailing this idea of decentralization over against that of a denominational organization exercising a general direction of missionary, educational, and publication enterprises. The Convention became primarily a foreign mission society, while home mission work was placed in the hands of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, organized in 1832, and education and publication were put in the hands of societies established for those purposes. From 1820 to 1832 the battle between the two types of thought relative to connectionalism continued. By 1832 it was clear that the society method had emerged the victor.

The denominational consciousness was still prominent, although this idea of decentralization seemed to prevail. It was more pronounced from Philadelphia southward and especially in the Carolinas and Virginia.

As already indicated, the General Convention was composed of individual, state, and associational mission-interested societies. There were still leaders like Luther Rice, Richard Furman, William B. Johnson, and others who had the hope and expectation of transforming the Convention into a truly representative denominational body. In 1817 changes in the constitution enlarged the scope of the Convention to include home missions and education,



but a reaction set in by 1820. In that year, the ardent friends of foreign missions and those opposed to the plan of making the Convention into a denominational body succeeded in holding the General Convention to foreign missions only; however, the agitation continued. William Staughton, a Philadelphia pastor active in the General Convention, had written in 1813:

"The plan of a general Association is a good one. I wish it success. Such an Association is practiced by seven of the individual Associations in Virginia, called a General Conference; but it has extended no farther through our American Union."<sup>8</sup>

Morgan Edwards, also a pastor in Philadelphia, had written earlier, in 1770, concerning the Philadelphia Association:

"But what I deem the chief advantage of this Association is, that it introduces into the visible church what are called joints and bands whereby the whole body is knit together and compacted for increase by that which every part supplieth. And therefore it is that I am so anxious to render the said combination of Baptist Churches universal upon this continent."<sup>9</sup>

The Reverend Francis Wayland, writing in the American Baptist Magazine under the pseudonym "Isaac Backus," suggested a national program for Baptists--churches combined into

<sup>8</sup> William Staughton, Baptist Magazine (London), February, 1813, p. 83

<sup>9</sup> Morgan Edwards, Baptist Family Magazine, July, 1857, pp. 211-212.

associations, associations into state conventions, and state conventions into a national body. He even suggested an international program; "thus the Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic would be united together in a solid phalanx."<sup>10</sup> In the 1820's, associations began to call for a national representative body. Even from Boston, where there was little sympathy with a centralized denominationalism, an editorial in the Christian Watchman commented:

"When these Conventions (that is, state conventions) began to be organized it was contemplated . . . that the whole world meet at some central point by their delegates in a General Convention. Such a meeting would have many advantages. It would not be among the least, that a large number of brethren from different states, united in the doctrine of Christ, and in their views of Gospel ordinances, would see each other on the most friendly terms, and for mutual consultation on the best means of concentrating their energies in promoting the common interest of the Redeemer's Kingdom . . . To diffuse a conviction of this duty, let us have the wisdom and strength of the whole denomination in a phalanx."<sup>11</sup>

The year 1826 saw decentralization. The General Convention disassociated itself from education and moved its headquarters to Boston. Its seminary had already closed in Washington and another opened in Newton Center. The Baptist General Tract Society moved to Philadelphia. The plan for a true denominational

<sup>10</sup> Reverend Francis Wayland, under the pseudonym "Isaac Backus," American Baptist Magazine (Boston), 1823, pp. 198-202.

<sup>11</sup> The Christian Watchman, Boston, June 27, 1827.

body seemed to be dead. The agitation pro and con in reference to an all-inclusive body continued for two more decades. Even as late as February, 1844, Dr. W. C. Buck, editor of the Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer, proposed that the General Convention be transformed into a denominationally all-inclusive body, and this attitude shows that the people in the South who followed this trend of thinking were determined to have a denominational body, and this determination led to the schism of 1845.

"Let the Convention be regarded as a great national Association of the States . . . a grand council fire, around which every chieftan of the host, elect, and every soldier of the cross may be invited to rally. . . Here we might display our national motto e pluribus unum. . . Should such a mode of action be adopted, it will supersede the necessity of a Western organization, and will bind the union in fetters of love."<sup>12</sup>

On March 28, 1844, Dr. Buck published a proposed constitution for a new general convention of the Baptists of the United States. This convention was to be composed of delegates from the state conventions and general associations, the number from each to be determined by the Baptist membership in each state. Baptists in the North moved in their thinking toward decentralization. Associations in the North ceased to observe the Lord's Supper in their meetings. The Board of the Baptist State Convention of New Hampshire had issued a new confession of faith

<sup>12</sup> W. C. Buck, Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer, Louisville, February 15, 1844, p. 2., cols. 4-5.

in 1833 with no reference, direct or indirect, to the general church idea, limiting the article dealing with ecclesiology to a definition of a particular church.

In the South, it will be seen, the trend continued in the direction of centralized thinking and action. But the accepted method of conducting denominational work on a national scale was based on the Northern ideas of ecclesiology--a separate and distinct organization for each particular phase of work. Contributions were made by individuals and Baptist bodies of any character to each organization according to the interest of the contributors.

The acting Board, located in Boston, conducted the work of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions. The Executive Board of the American Baptist Publication Society was located in Philadelphia. The American and Foreign Bible Society, established in 1837, carried on Bible distribution from its New York headquarters. Southerners and Northerners, churches and individuals, made contributions to the work of one or more of these societies, according to the information and interest involved.

There continued to be suggestions and calls for a more comprehensive denominational organization from both the North and the South, but the greater number were from the South. State conventions were organized on a more inclusive basis, which kept alive the desire for a national organization comparable in the national sphere to the state convention in its sphere. This issue, along

with others we will study later but which existed at the same time, kept American Baptist life, as well as other phases of American life, rent to its depths for a decade and a half following 1830.

Because of this issue, as well as some others which we will see in the following chapters, Southern and Northern Baptists parted company in 1845--the Northern Baptists going further in the direction of the society method; Southern Baptists going in the direction of denominationalism. Thus, we see here one of the important factors that led to the Baptist Schism in 1845.

## CHAPTER II

## THE HOME MISSION CONTROVERSEY

During and immediately after the war of Independence there was a tremendous tide of emigration from the seaboard states into the territory beyond the Allegheny Mountains. There were many Bpatists among the multitude that were going into this area. The human tide was moving westward into the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys.

When the General Convention was formed in 1814 to support Rice and Judson on the foreign field, there was a call for home mission activity also. Those who favored a general denominational organization joined with the promoters of home missions, and at the next meeting of the General Convention in 1817, changed the constitution to provide for home missions and education. In that year, J. M. Peck and J. E. Welch were sent to the West as home missionaries. There came a reaction to these men being sent as missionaries, and three years later, the General Convention

resolved to hold itself to foreign missions only and let home missions and education be cared for otherwise. To that extent, the opponents of a general denominational organization triumphed and the formation of separate societies for each phase of the work became the accepted method.

The Massachusetts Domestic Missionary Society, under the leadership of its secretary, Dr. Jonathan Going, supported Mr. Peck until permanent plans could be evolved. In April, 1832, the American Baptist Home Mission Society was formed. Its motto has always been "North America for Christ." The society's headquarters was in New York, and, from the beginning, most of its missionaries came from New England and New York and were sent to the upper Mississippi Valley, north of the Ohio. "In the year 1832, when the home mission society was organized, there were in its peculiar field--the west--nine hundred churches, a large part of them feeble and pastorless, since there were but six hundred ministers, and the total membership was but thirty-two thousand."<sup>13</sup>

Within three years after the formation of the society, there were complaints in the South and West, and calls for a Southern organization to meet the needs south of the Ohio and later, in the Republic of Texas. The Christian Index, March 24, 1835, reviewed the report of the Society and said that little attention

was given to the Mississippi Valley, south of Tennessee. In the issue of July 23, an appeal from Nashville, Tennessee, was published, addressed to Dr. Going. A correspondent in the Baptist Banner was more specific:

"It appears from the last report of the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Home Mission Society that they have not a single Missionary in all Kentucky, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida, and that they partially or entirely sustain one missionary in Mississippi, three in Tennessee and three in Arkansas, making in all seven missionaries for these six states and one territory ... only one missionary to every 428,581 souls, while in the state of Michigan . . . they have sixteen missionaries... one missionary to every 4,000 souls . . . Why are these states (Illinois and Indiana) so liberally supplied? Are they more needy? Are they more destitute? They are more liberally supplied because of Northern contributions, and because Northern preachers refuse to come to the south . . . It is, therefore, apparent, that the only way to produce effort in the South must be brought about by the formation of a Southern Baptist Home Mission Society."<sup>14</sup>

The question of a Southern home mission organization was proposed in the auxiliary convention of Tennessee for the Western district, held at Paris, Tennessee, in 1837. It was freely discussed and was referred to the annual meeting of the state convention, at Mill Creek, the same year:

"The expediency of the measure was argued on the ground that the American Baptist Home Mission Society . . . had treated the South and Southwest with almost total neglect; that the distance of our region from New York . . . was so great that they obtained but little information of our circumstances, and consequently

<sup>14</sup> The Baptist Banner, Louisville, September 12, 1837, p. 3., cols. 2-4.



did not, as we believed, feel so deep an interest in our affairs as they otherwise would; that they, being personally acquainted to no great extent with any ministers besides those residing in the North, seldom engaged the services of southern men; and northern men, with but very few exceptions, were unwilling to live amongst us."<sup>15</sup>

In November of the same year a call from the Republic of Texas was sent by a committee, appointed by the recently organized Washington Church, to the "Baptist Board of Foreign Missions in the United States," and to the American Baptist Home Mission Society. A copy of the appeal to the Foreign Board was received by the Reverend S. G. Jenkins of Mississippi, brother of a member of the committee. He sent it to the Christian Index in which it was published February 22, 1838.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Jesse Mercer, the editor, wrote and asked that the American Baptist Home Mission Society take the subject under immediate consideration, and as soon as practicable, send some qualified brother or brethren into the spacious field.

The call to the Home Mission Society from the church at Washington, in the Republic of Texas, reached the board of the society at its regular meeting, December 18, 1837. Several efforts were made to heed the call. After nearly two years, Reverend James Huckins of Vermont, agent of the Society in South

<sup>15</sup> R. B. C. Howell, The Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer, Louisville, March 21, 1839, p. 3., col. 3.

<sup>16</sup> The Christian Index, Washington, Georgia, February 22, 1838, pp. 101-102.

Carolina and Georgia, agreed to go. He had become popular among the Baptists in those two states and was recommended for the Texas mission, probably by Dr. W. B. Johnson.

The anti-mission forces in the churches in many instances were opposed to centralization of authority, to an educated and paid ministry, and to such man made organizations as Sunday Schools, missionary societies, and theological seminaries. The hyper-Calvinism, which so often characterized the theological frame of mind of this group, was frequently used to bolster and justify their other arguments against exerting any effort to evangelize the lost.<sup>17</sup> Alexander Campbell, the prominent anti-mission spokesman along the Ohio Valley, expressed the fear that missionary societies, which he regarded as unscriptural, would dominate the churches, thus impairing local autonomy.<sup>18</sup> The July 19, 1844 issue of The Christian Index read as follows:

"Hitherto our contributions have been generally expended in the free states of the West, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and the territories of Iowa and Wisconsin. A few missionaries have been sent to Missouri, a still smaller number to Arkansas and Texas. Florida and Louisiana have been overlooked . . . equally destitute with Iowa and Wisconsin, and where probably a greater amount of good could be effected, with the same expense and labor . . . The American Home Mission Society have made it (Mississippi Valley) the chief scene of their operation . . . Meanwhile the South and Southwestern new states, equally destitute, have been measurably overlooked.

The emigrant to the West have been chiefly from the New England and Middle States . . . In Florida,

<sup>17</sup> Henry C. Vedder, A Short History of the Baptists, (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), p. 286.

<sup>18</sup> Torbet, op. cit. p. 286

in Louisiana, in Arkansas, is an extensive field, more destitute, as far as Baptists are concerned, than any other in the United States. Indiana has an equal number of ministers with Alabama, Illinois and Mississippi, yet scores of missionaries have been sent to these two western states, and none to the later. . . .

This feeling (of hostility to the south) is the strongest in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Michigan; yet these states, while supplying thousands of emigrants to the West, have never collectively given half as much in one year to the Home Mission Society, as has been contributed by Virginia in the same space of time."<sup>19</sup>

The Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer justified separation on the basis of this neglect of the South. In an editorial review of the thirteenth annual report of the Home Mission Society-- nine Southern states reporting it says:

"The South is sustaining missions in the Eastern and Northern States instead of the contrary, as many of our Eastern friends suppose. . . . Those nine southern states have not only supported all the domestic missions of this Board in the entire south, but those of Canada and Texas also, and furnished the liberal sum of \$554.97 $\frac{1}{2}$  to support domestic missions in northern states. . . . The south will not only lose nothing by being thrust out from the Northern Society; but it also proves that the domestic missions of the south can be better sustained in our separate existence. . . . We once before (about two years ago) made a similar expose from a monthly report."<sup>20</sup>

These complaints, voiced by Baptists in the South, were honestly made but were based on inadequate information. However little foundation there was for the complaints of Baptists in the

<sup>19</sup> The Christian Index, Penfield, Ga., July 19, 1844, p. 3., cols. 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> The Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer, Louisville,

South that the Society was neglecting that area, those who were registering the complaints were sincere and the effect on Southern minds was the same as if the charges of neglect had been true.

The work of the Society in the South from 1832 until 1845 (when the Southern Baptist Convention was formed) may be seen in the following chart.<sup>21</sup>

Year	No. of States	No. of missionaries	Missionary weeks of labor
1832	3	7	177
1833	4	14	410
1834	7	26	1011
1835	8	28	Not Shown
1836	9	24	Not Shown
1837	10	28	1041
1838	7	29	1152
1839	10	25	1139
1840	10	20	786
1841	11	26	1083
1842	12	29	1089
1843	12	21	837
1844	12	29	917
1845	10	22	754

The true index of how much was accomplished in the South is seen in the number of weeks of missionary labor. Quite often

<sup>21</sup> Robert Andrew Baker, Relations Between Northern And Southern Baptists (Fort Worth: Seminary Hill Press, 1948), p. 31.

missionaries appointed to the Southern field would serve for a month or less. When this was true, it is evident that no accurate picture of the work done on the field could be gained by noting the number of missionaries appointed. The number of appointments is important, however, in that it shows the intention of the society. In order to set out the scope of the work, this chart is amplified at five-year intervals to show the number of missionaries serving in the individual Southern states in a particular year.<sup>22</sup>

Year	State	No. of missionaries appointed	Missionary weeks of labor
1832	Kentucky	2	78
	Mississippi	1	13
	Missouri	4	86
1837	Arkansas	5	91
	Delaware	1	52
	Florida	1	13
	Kentucky	1	52
	Maryland	2	104
	Mississippi	1	13
	Missouri	12	525
	South Carolina	1	26
	Tennessee	2	69
	Virginia	2	96
1842	Arkansas	2	41
	Delaware	2	65

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 31-32.

District of Columbia	2	52
Florida	1	52
Kentucky	2	60
Maryland	4	169
Mississippi	2	91
North Carolina	1	26
Tennessee	2	52
Texas	2	117
Virginia	1	52

The Society, of course, was endeavoring to secure the greatest amount of co-operation from those interested in home missions. Whatever resources were provided by the auxiliaries were prorated according to the judgment of the Society. The distribution of the missionaries, it will be seen, was the occasion of sectional complaints, and was one factor in advancing the idea of Southern separation in 1845.<sup>23</sup>

One of the complaints alleged that the South was furnishing more money to the Society than the Society was expending for missionaries in the South. The following table of receipts from the South and expenditures for missionaries in the South covers the decade from 1832 to 1841.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> W. W. Barnes, "Why the Southern Baptist Convention was Formed," Review and Expositor, Louisville, January, 1944, pp. 11-17.

<sup>24</sup> Baker, op. cit., p. 34.

State	Missionaries	Appropriation	Receipts
Alabama	1	\$ 37.50	\$ 450.00
Arkansas	27	2,725.00	None
Delaware	8	1,025.00	55.00
Dist. of Columbia	1	50.00	772.00
Florida	3	400.00	100.00
Georgia	0	None	6,325.00
Kentucky	8	1,675.00	228.00
Louisiana	6	865.00	37.00
Maryland	20	2,435.00	1,825.00
Mississippi	12	1,610.00	1,760.00
Missouri	96	12,180.00	248.00
North Carolina	2	600.00	4,985.00
South Carolina	3	300.00	4,930.00
Tennessee	28	3,340.00	468.00
Texas	4	2,225.00	100.00
Virginia	10	1,375.00	6,810.00

The summary shows that in this decade there were two hundred and twenty-nine missionaries appointed in sixteen southern states. Total appropriations were \$30,842.50 and total receipts from the South were \$29,093.00. If it is agreed that the states listed in this chart constitute the South of that period, this would mean that the South did not furnish more money to the Society in gifts than it received in expenditures for missionaries. If the view

of a few others should be accepted, placing Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri in the category of Western rather than Southern states, it would mean that the thirteen southern and southwestern states gave \$28,149.00 for missions during this decade, with only \$13,646.50 being spent in their area. That, of course, might give grounds for complaint. On the other hand, the following chart shows the amounts contributed by the northern states during the same period.<sup>25</sup>

State	Missionaries	Appropriation	Receipts
Connecticut	1	\$ 75.00	\$ 7,520.00
Illinois	164	18,547.00	497.00
Indiana	102	11,325.00	18.00
Iowa	10	750.00	32.00
Maine	5	300.00	2,510.00
Massachusetts	0	None	15,547.00
Michigan	88	10,160.00	265.00
New Hampshire	2	150.00	2,637.00
New Jersey	4	216.00	3,625.00
New York	18	6,555.00	51,942.00
Ohio	152	17,448.00	495.00
Pennsylvania	11	1,247.00	3,699.00
Rhode Island	0	None	3,040.00
Vermont	3	415.00	1,384.00
Wisconsin	15	1,337.50	6.00

<sup>25</sup> Ilib., p. 35.



These fifteen states gave a total of \$93,217.00 to the work of the Society during this first decade, while receiving appropriations of \$68,525.50. It is not correct to say, then, that Southern contributions during this decade were applied to the evangelization of northern fields?

A related question, however, in all fairness must be asked. Apart from the financial contributions of any particular area of the country, did the Society neglect some sections that were just as needy as places where missionaries were being sent? The last chart shows the ground for this complaint by the South. In the four northwestern frontier states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, a total of five hundred six missionaries were appointed during the decade shown, at a cost of \$57,480.00, with receipts amounting to \$1,275.00. The combined population of these states in 1840 was 2,393,783. In the six southwestern frontier states of Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Missouri, a total of one hundred seventy-seven missionaries were appointed at a cost of \$22,395.00, with receipts amount to \$2,741.00. The combined population of these states in 1840 was 2,318,276. In Louisiana, with a population in 1840 of 352,411, \$865.00 was spent for missionaries during these ten years; while in Michigan, with a population in 1840 of 212,267, \$10,160 was appropriated. In Illinois, with a population in 1840 of 476,183, one hundred sixty-four missionaries

were employed during this period at a cost of \$18,547; in Mississippi, with a population in 1840 of 375,651, twelve missionaries were employed at a cost of \$1,610.

The records of the monthly meetings of the board of the Home Mission Society show clearly that the board was endeavoring to meet the calls for mission work in the Southern states. The board had difficulty in finding qualified men who were ready to work in needy places in the South. The board agreed to pay Dr. W. B. Johnson a salary of one thousand dollars per year to labor in New Orleans, and this was a high salary at this time. The high salary was agreed to because of the abilities and high standing of Dr. Johnson. He agreed to go, but circumstances seem to have arisen that prevented him from doing so.

By looking at the facts, it can be found that the Southerners had some ground for cause of their complaints, and made other complaints that were based on inadequate information. It must be kept in mind that the people making these complaints were sincere men interested in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They did not know how greatly the board was endeavoring to secure the men needed for the work in the South. The effect on Southern minds, however, was the same as if all the charges of neglect had been true, and did as much to bring about the schism among Baptists in 1845 as if they had had proper grounds for all the complaints which they made.

As early as 1835 there were calls for a Southern Convention. The Biblical Recorder, December 2, 1835, did not think such a meeting was wise. However, in 1837, its editor, Mr. Meredith, proposed such a convention, but Editor Sands of the Religious Herald thought that the difficulty and expense, due to lack of communication, were too great. He proposed that each state convention send eight or ten delegates to consult in the interest of the denomination. The tendency to separation was greater in the West because of the apparent need of mission work. The Reverend Robert T. Daniel, a North Carolina leader who had gone to the West and preached through Tennessee and Northern Mississippi, issued a call for those interested to meet at Columbus, Mississippi, to form a Southern Baptist Home Mission Society. Some of the leaders in Kentucky and Tennessee thought the movement was hasty and favored delaying action until all the state conventions and general associations in the states of the south could be enlisted, but the meeting convened, nevertheless, and the society was formed May 16, 1839. It functioned for nearly three years; after the death of Elder Daniel, it lapsed.

The West was developing a consciousness of its own. In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected President of the United States, the first one to come from west of the Alleghenies. Many of the national leaders were thinking in terms of the East against the West. Some of the Baptist leaders in the West were thinking likewise. Baptist anniversaries were always held in the East and

usually north of the Potomac. Some of the Western leaders resented the attitude of superiority assumed by the Easterners. There developed strong sentiment for a Western denominational organization. Reverend J. M. Peck, of Illinois, Reverend W. C. Buck, of Kentucky, and Reverend R. B. C. Howell, of Tennessee were greatly interested in evangelizing the Mississippi Valley. On May 11, 1839, in the home of Dr. Buck, in Louisville, a group met to consult upon the advisability of forming a Western Baptist home mission society, having the valley as its particular field. But Editor Buck's views enlarged. He conceived a Western denominational organization to embrace all phases of religious activity. A Western Baptist Convention had convened in 1833, mainly in the interest of education. It was a convention without power of action, without funds or any means to obtain them. It was something entirely different that Dr. Buck had in his mind, a denominational sort of organization in the Western part of the country.

At the meeting of this convention in Louisville, June 3, 1840, Dr. Buck proposed a reorganization, forming a general convention of Western Baptists, composed of delegates from the General Associations and State Conventions in each Western State and Territory that contributes funds. This plan of reorganization was submitted to the several state bodies and their answers considered in the meeting of the Western Baptist Convention in Louisville, June, 1841. The majority favored reorganization, but upon the

earnest request of the advocates of the Western Publication Society the question was deferred.

Division was in the air during the second half of the thirties, due to the natural desire of each section to realize its own needs and objectives. Should the division be East against West or North against South? If the need for domestic missions in the valley had remained the major issue, a Western denominational organization might have developed. The question of slavery arose, however, to divide the West as well as the East, and forced the issue along the lines of North and South instead of East and West.

## CHAPTER III

## THE SALVARY ISSUE

Of all the divisive factors in American life in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, slavery cut the deepest because it was at once a political, economic, social, moral, and religious issue. But not until the opposition took the form of abolitionism in the 1830's did the issue begin to portend those divisions in the religious and political spheres realized in the decades following 1830. In December, 1833, the Board of the General Convention for foreign missions, located in Boston, the hub of abolitionism, received a communication from the Baptist ministers in and near London on the question of slavery. During the previous year, under the leadership of English Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, emancipation of slaves was accomplished in that island.<sup>26</sup> Out of the enthusiasm of

<sup>26</sup> Baker, op. cit., p. 40.

victory, the London ministers wrote to American Baptists. The Boston Board replied, September 1, 1834:<sup>27</sup>

"Resolved, That the Board earnestly desire a closer intimacy with their Baptist brethren in England, believing that the cause of truth in both countries, and throughout the world, would be promoted by a more cordial union and cooperation of the two great branches of the Baptist family.

Resolved, That while, as they trust, their love of freedom and their desire for the happiness of all men are not less strong and sincere than those of the British brethren they cannot as a board interfere with a subject that is not among the objects for which the Convention and the board was formed.

Daniel Sharp. V. Pres.  
Lucius Bolles, Cor. Sec.

The existence of a potential conflict within Baptist circles in America may already be glimpsed. When this correspondence was published, C. P. Grosvenor, Baptist pastor at Salem, Massachusetts, and already an outspoken abolitionist, took prompt issue. About fifty Baptist ministers of his persuasion met at Boston on May 26 and 27, 1835, and voted their approval of another reply to the London group, which had been prepared by Grosvenor. This second reply condemned slavery and pledged every moral effort to accomplish its overthrow. Before being sent the document was signed by about one hundred thirty other Baptist ministers.

In the spring of 1835, Elders F. A. Cox and J. Noby (the former being the chairman of the London Board of Baptist ministers which had addressed American Baptists on slavery and had

<sup>27</sup> The Baptist Magazine (London), January, 1835, p. 11.

taken a very active part in securing the English emancipation victory) were appointed by the Baptist Union of England to visit the churches in the United States to promote the sacred cause of negro emancipation. They greatly disappointed American abolitionists, however, by their refusal to speak out on the slavery issue because of its political bearings. After their return to England the Baptist Union sent a resolution to America again condemning vigorously the alliance of American churches with slavery. The accompanying letter urged action on the question. Replying for the Acting Board of the General Convention on January 7, 1837, Baron Stow expressed appreciation for the spirit and tone of the communication, but said that since the constitution of the Board limits them to the business of foreign missions, they will not, under existing circumstances, intermeddle in any way the question of slavery. During May and June, 1836, a great many strong resolutions were passed by English Baptist associations, some declining any fraternal union with those in America who approved slavery. On January 18, 1838, the English Baptist Union again addressed American Baptists in strong words of rebuke on slavery. The reply by Baron Stow is significant since it shows a considerable development in the direction of abolitionism in official correspondence of the General Convention. He urged the English brethren to be patient with American Baptist and not think them tardy in accomplishing an object which



American Baptists, as well as English Baptists, are anxious to see immediately effected. He closed by saying that God was on their side and their cause would prevail. In 1838, again there came an avalanche of resolutions from English associations condemning slavery. It is worthy of note that in 1839 and 1840, the English Baptists Union addressed its appeals to the Baptist abolitionists, not to the General Convention.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to this official relation with English Baptist abolitionists, many of the American abolitionist leaders had informal contacts with them. At the world anti-slavery convention held in London in June, 1840, for example, Nathaniel Colver, Elon Galusha, and C. P. Grosvenor were delegates from various American organizations and imbibed the spirit of the English who wanted to do away with slavery immediately. These three men were the first principal officers of the American Baptist Anti-Slavery Convention.

Southern Baptist grew irritated by the propoganda of northern abolitionists, and shifted from their earlier willingness to forsake slavery to a readiness to defend the institution. In 1822 and again in 1835, the Charleston Association in South Carolina defended the practice before the state legislature. The clergy of all the denominations in Richmond, Virginia, among whom were many Baptists, passed a resolution in 1835, disapproving of abolitionists interference from other states. In the North, on the other hand, a small but vigorous group of anti-slavery Baptists,

<sup>28</sup> Baker, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

in the 1830's, gained control of some churches and associations, particularly in Maine. In 1836 the Hancock Association urged immediate emancipation, while the Washington Association, also in Maine, forbade its members to have fellowship with slave holders. The anti-slavery interest won Churches and then Associations to condemn slavery and further not to have fellowship with those who had any kind of connection with slavery.

The movement toward organizing a national Baptist anti-slavery society came in 1839. There had been considerable agitation in the ranks of the Baptists themselves relative to the formation of a denominational anti-slavery society. Several state Baptist papers were outspokenly abolitionist, including the Eastern Baptist, Brunswick, Maine; the Baptist Register, Concord, New Hampshire; the Telegraph, Brandon, Vermont; and the Christian Reflector, Worcester, Massachusetts. Typical of the denominational agitation in the abolitionist papers were the articles in the Emancipator on January 31, 1839; One (written anonymously) urged a Baptist anti-slavery society; another signed by a Baptist Minister launched a bitter attack against slavery.<sup>29</sup>

On May 11, 1839, in conjunction with the meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York, a group of Baptist abolitionists met for two sessions to consider methods to be

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

used in organizing a Baptist abolition society. At this meeting, a central committee for correspondence was formed and an invitation was prepared for publication, asking all advocates of immediate emancipation among American Baptists to send in their names to the secretary, or by way of Baptist abolitionist newspapers or individuals. It was planned that thereafter a formal call for organization would be made and widely circulated. On December 7, 1839, more than eighty Baptist ministers and laymen met at Worcester, Massachusetts, and urged that slavery should not be tolerated just to advance the cause of missions. On March 19, 1840, and in succeeding issues of the Emancipator, official notices were published announcing the meeting of a Baptist national anti-slavery convention in New York on April 27, 1840. The official call was dated February 14, 1840, and represented seven hundred Baptist from thirteen states. More than half of them were Baptist ministers.<sup>30</sup>

The convention met at the McDougal Street Baptist Church, New York, on April 28-30, and about one hundred attended. Two addresses were prepared, one to Northern and one to Southern Baptists. The address to the Northern Baptists opened by identifying the convention as being a proponent of immediate emancipation. It insisted that Northern Baptists had a duty to do something about slavery in the churches of the South, and closed with the assertion that after the South had been urged to put away the

<sup>30</sup> The Christian Watchman, Boston, June 19, 1840.

system should the Southern Baptist Churches still cling to the evil, and defend it as scriptural and right, "It will become your duty, in the fear of God and in a manner the most solemn and deliberate, to withdraw yourselves from their fellowship."<sup>31</sup>

The lengthy address to Baptist in the South, signed by the president and the secretary of the convention, asserted that slavery was wrong and unscriptural, and that it brought a curse upon those engaging in it and disrepute upon all Baptists. Southern churches were urged to confess the sinfulness of holding slaves, and to remonstrate against laws which entrenched the system. If this was disregarded, the church members should gather their families and possessions and emigrate to the North. It closed by saying that if Southern Baptists would not do this, they could not be recognized as consistent brethren in Christ and "their hands could not be cordially taken at the Lord's table."<sup>32</sup>

The year that followed the organization of this Baptist Abolitionist convention and the wide circulation of its addresses was one filled with much feeling and attempts of groups to further their own cause.

In New York and New England, the Free Baptist Foreign Missionary Society was formed in 1840 on abolitionist principles. No missionaries were immediately appointed, but missionaries of the

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., May 22, 1840.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., June 19, 1840.

Boston Board, anti-slavery in sentiment, were approached. Because of the delay by the American Baptist Free Missionary Society in the appointment of missionaries, the more militant abolitionists formed the American and Foreign Baptist Missionary Society to begin home and foreign work at once. The constant agitation of these two societies, both strongly abolitionist in sentiment but disagreeing in method, accomplished the objective of each: to develop abolition sentiments among the rank and file of Baptists and thus force the Boston Board to refuse fellowship with Baptists in the Southern states. The missionaries of the Boston Board were approached and some of them agreed to accept support from the new society rather than continue under the patronage of the Board of the General Convention.

Many Baptists in New England preferred to remain with the Boston Board in the hope and expectation of influencing the Board to take some action that would cause a rupture with the South, thus working hand in hand with the Free Baptist Missionary Society. There were slaveholders among the missionaries of the Board. If the board could be influenced to dismiss these, or to secure their resignation, the issue would be gained.<sup>33</sup> Among these missionaries was the Reverend Jesse Bushyhead, chief justice of the Cherokee Nation, working under the Board among his people. The Christian Reflector asserted that Dr. R. E. Pattison, home missionary of the Board, was endeavoring to get Mr. Bushyhead to resign because he

<sup>33</sup> Baker, op. cit., p. 63.

owned slaves. The missionary died July 17, 1844, apparently before the issue was settled. Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, missionaries of the Board in Siam, were slave-holders, and Mrs. Henrietta Hall Shuck, missionary in China, would inherit slaves upon the death of her father.<sup>34</sup>

By the year 1840, the abolition issue was beginning to be felt among Baptists in the South. The Alabama Convention, November 7-9, 1840, took cognizance of the matter and appointed a committee of five--Jesse Hartwell, D. P. Bestor, W. C. Crane, J. H. Devotie, and M. P. Jewett--to make recommendations. The committee reported: (1) That abolitionism was unscriptural, was against the national constitution, was against the peace and prosperity of the churches, and dangerous to the permanency of the Union; (2) that money should be withheld from the Board of Foreign Missions and from the American and Foreign Bible Society until Alabama Baptists were assured that these agencies had no connection with the anti-slavery agitation. The following resolution was adopted:

"Resolved, That, if satisfactory information be not obtained upon this subject, we recommend the formation of a Southern Board, through which our funds may be directly transmitted."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The Baptist, Nashville, April 5, 1845, p. 514., col. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Baptist Banner and Western Pioneer, Louisville, November 26, 1840, p. 3., col. 3.

The Board of Managers of the Triennial Convention issued an address, November 2, 1840, signed by Daniel Sharp, President, and Baron Stow, recording secretary. This was included in the Board's report to the Convention in Baltimore, April, 1841. This stated that as a Board they had no right to take action on issues, except as they had been voted that power, but they were members of individual churches and as such could vote as they thought best in the particular church of which they were members. The General Convention, in April, adopted the report of the Board, and, notwithstanding the personal attitude of some of the members and officers, the official pronouncement for the time being allayed some Southern fears concerning the Foreign Board. The Alabama Convention authorities seemed to be satisfied with the official attitude of the Board of the General Convention.

While the fear of the Alabama Convention was allayed, neither the abolitionists nor the slaveholders were entirely satisfied with the position the Board had taken. While the Board may not have taken any direct action against the position held by the Alabama Convention, the people of Alabama knew the personal views of the members of the board, and this made it so they were not entirely satisfied. The strength of the abolitionists in the convention was increasing.

When the Triennial Convention met at Baltimore in 1841, both sides were prepared for battle. Some effort was made, however,

to avoid the issue again; for in a secret meeting of the Northern conservatives and Southerners, a compromise proposal discouraging innovation and new tests and disclaiming participation in the doings of the abolition Baptists was signed by seventy-four persons. The understanding was that slavery was a subject with which the convention had no right to interfere. In the same year, the Board of the American Baptist Home Mission Society also issued a declaration of neutrality.

All this was not agreeable to many Northern Baptists, who criticized the Baltimore Compromise, that is, this proposal which was signed by the seventy-four and later adopted by the convention. The Provisional Foreign Mission Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Convention sent a circular letter to one or more of the missionaries of the Foreign Board of the Triennial Convention, presumably inviting them to receive their support from the anti-slavery convention. This seems clear from the reply written on November 15, 1842, by Solomon Peck, the secretary of the Foreign Board. He insisted that the Board members had yielded their personal neutrality, which the Board had said that they would keep on the issues involving the question of slavery. He also stated that the Board members refused to be subservient to either the South or the North. He admitted, however, that they were not apologists for slavery.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The Baptist Missionary Magazine, Boston, November, 1843, pp. 169-170.



The anti-slavery movement was taking on a definitely religious tone as the churches were being enlisted in its support. Many wished to send their missionary funds through some channel other than a convention which condoned slavery. Consequently the American and Foreign Free Baptist Board of Foreign Missions was formed in Boston in 1843, but the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions which administered the missionary funds of the convention, ruled against the existence of such an organization.

When the Triennial Convention met in Philadelphia in 1844, there were 460 delegates present, eighty of whom were from the South. Distance was an important factor in keeping the number from the South at such a low figure.

Dr. W. B. Johnson, the retiring president of the Convention and a Southerner, declined reelection for reasons of health. Since the Convention had been led by a Southerner for twenty-one years out of thirty years, and possibly to appease the Northerners, Dr. Francis Wayland of Rhode Island, a moderate on the abolition question, was chosen as president. A Virginian, Dr. J. B. Taylor, became secretary.

On Thursday evening April 25, Dr. Richard Fuller, a Baptist minister from South Carolina, presented a resolution calling upon the convention to restrict itself solely to its missionary enterprise. Dr. Fuller, being a slave-owner, was anxious to keep the slave question from being discussed by the Convention. Dr. Spencer

H. Cone, a prominent minister of New York City, favored the attempt to remove the issue of slavery from the conventions policies, but Dr. Nathaniel Cloves, pastor of Tremont Temple, Boston, rose to speak against the resolution as being simply an avoidance of the issue at hand. After much debate the resolution was withdrawn and a new one introduced by Dr. George B. Ide, who was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia. The new resolution was a second attempt to maintain unity by a noncommittal policy on the institution of slavery. Dr. Ide urged that the members of the convention continue to cooperate in the work of foreign missions, disclaiming all sanction, being free to express and promote whatever views they held on the institution of slavery. The whole matter was again laid on the table in this convention. The Home Mission Society issued another declaration of its neutrality by a vote of 123 to 61, but it also appointed a committee of nine to consider the amicable dissolution of the society.

As a test case, therefore, the Georgia Baptist Convention, just a few days after the Triennial Convention had adjourned, instructed its executive committee to recommend to the Board of the Home Mission Society James F. Reeves of Georgia for appointment as a missionary to the Cherokee Indians, his support to be guaranteed by the Triennial Convention. In proper manner, the Board was informed that he was a slaveholder and that this was to be a test case. The Board reached a decision in October, having held five

meetings of three hours each. The vote was seven to five against appointing Mr. Reeves.

This response led the Alabama Convention to present to the Foreign Mission Board, not a specific case, but a hypothetical question. There were certain Southern men who claimed that just subsequent to the Philadelphia Convention in 1844, the Board had caused the retirement from its service a highly respected Indian preacher, because he had owned slaves. Accordingly, the Alabama Convention in November, 1844, sent a letter embodying what is known as the Alabama resolutions to the Board of Managers of the Triennial Convention, insisting that the foreign mission agency which they supported give slaveholders and nonslaveholders the same privileges. The resolutions asked specifically if a slaveholder would be appointed as a missionary if one should apply to the Board. The resolutions further stated that no money would be sent from the treasury of the Alabama Convention until the Alabama Convention had received an answer to these resolutions.

The Board answered the resolutions in a frank way stating that they hated these particular resolutions were sent to them. In their answer the Board made it plain that they could not appoint a person who held slaves as a missionary if one should happen to apply. They went on to say that in their experience with the Board no slaveholder had ever applied for a missionary appointment.

The decision of the Board appears to have been a clear violation of the Convention's instructions, although the Board insisted that its statement was not an impairment of its position of neutrality with respect to the slavery issue in the denomination. Bolomon Peck, the Board's secretary, explained in a letter that he had given his vote in favor of the decision with reluctance and with a full consciousness that it verged closely, at best, on the limits of the Board's constitutional power, and it is wise to avoid in the eyes of all members of the Convention the least approach to a violation of constitutional rights. Mr. Peck, also, saw that this could be virtually an act of division in the convention.

From the decisions of these two mission boards, it appears that Abolitionist sympathizers were gaining more influence than the advocates of union in the national bodies. This is not to be wondered at, because the major societies of the denomination had originated in the North, principally in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. The policies, therefore, were influenced, if not actually formulated, chiefly by ministers and laymen of these centers. This is all the more remarkable since there were more Baptists in the Southern States than in the North and West combined. The distance from the urban centers of Baptist work in all probability prevented the Southern states from enjoying a full representation at the meetings of the societies.

Naturally enough, when the decision of the Foreign Mission Board became known, debate concerning the action began almost at once. Many justified the continuance of slavery on biblical grounds, pointing out that the Negroes' contacts with white masters brought them in touch with the gospel. Northern abolitionists also argued from the Scriptures, holding that they taught the inherent dignity and worth of every individual in the sight of God and moral wrong of the enslavement of men by their fellows. At the same time, others were seeking to conciliate the two groups.

Baptists in the South were almost unanimous for separation. There were differences in opinion concerning the time and extent of separation. Dr. R. B. C. Howell of Tennessee recognized that separation from the Board must come for three reasons: The Board had done violence to the Word of God, had violated the constitution of the General Convention, and had reversed the judgment of the whole church as expressed in the last session of the Convention. There was no question of separation now, except as to when, how, and how far.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE SCHISM

The Virginia Baptist Foreign Mission Society, following the action of the Boston Board, took the lead and issued a call for a consultative convention:

"To the Baptist Churches of Virginia and the Baptist Denomination of the United States generally:

Dear Brethren:

You will perceive by the accompanying resolutions of the Executive Committee of the Georgia Baptist Convention, that they have acceded to our proposal to hold in Augusta, Georgia on Thursday before the 2d Lord's day in May next, a Convention. The Church in Augusta cordially approving the design, it may now be considered as certain, providence permitting, that the convention will be held. On this important movement we desire briefly and plainly to express our views. We remark then,

1. We wish not to have a merely sectional convention. From the Boston Board we separate, not because we reside at the south, but because they have adopted an unconstitutional and unscriptural principle to govern their future course. The principle is this--that holding slaves is, under all circumstances, incompatible with the office of the Christian ministry.

On this point we take issue with them; and verily believe, that, when the mists of prejudice shall have been scattered, we shall stand justified in the eyes of all the world. For ourselves we cordially invite all our brethren, North and South, East and West, who are aggrieved by the recent decision of the Board in Boston, and believe that their usefulness may be increased by cooperating with us, to attend the proposed meeting.

2. We are desirous to see a full Convention. Let us, brethren, have a meeting concentrating in a good measure, the wisdom, experience, and sentiments of the denomination in the South, and Southwest, and such portions of our brethren in other places as may deem it best to unite with us. As we shall have no principle of representation, the churches, associations, mission societies, or other religious bodies, may send as many delegates as they choose. Application has been made to the Railroad and Steamboat lines to furnish the delegates free return tickets. Should the application prove successful, as we hope it will, the cost of going and returning from Richmond, will not much, if at all, exceed twenty-five dollars. Should our application result favorably, the earliest possible information shall be given of it.

3. Several important subjects, beside the question of organizing a Foreign Mission Society, will, we presume, come under the consideration of the Convention. We will mention some of them, that our brethren in Virginia, especially, may learn, as far as practicable, the views and wishes of the denomination. Whether it will be better to organize a separate Bible Society, and Publication Society, or to continue our connexion with the existing institutions, are questions which must be discussed. It is quite likely too, that the subject of building up a common Southern Theological Institution will claim a share of attention.

And now brethren, you must perceive that the convention will stand in pressing need of divine guidance. For this let us all devoutly and constantly pray, then assembling in the fear of God, and with a sincere desire to promote his kingdom and glory, we may effect his blessing:

James B. Taylor, Pres.  
C. Walthall, Sec'y."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The Religious Herald, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. 12., April 10,

Three hundred twenty-eight delegates from the churches of the South met at Augusta, Georgia, May 8, 1845, to organize the Southern Baptist Convention. It proved to be a new type of Baptist organization, being a firmly centralized denominational body functioning through various boards. Thus, it was unlike the Triennial Convention, which in reality had been principally a foreign mission society, and which it continued to be even after the division when it changed its name to the American Baptist Missionary Union. The newly constituted convention was a type of organization that had been rejected by the Northern leaders after 1820. It was such an organization as Luther Rice and Richard Furman desired in 1814; such a one as Dr. Buck and Dr. Howell desired to form in the West; such a one as many desired in the General Convention in 1823 and 1826; such an organization as had been functioning in the several state conventions. It was truly a denominational convention, comprehending within its scope any phase of work, missions, education, and benevolence that the convention should desire to perform.

Tendencies toward this schism that took place in 1845 could be detected almost from the beginning of Baptist people in this country. The conflict between the society plan and the denominational plan of organization was something basic to the conflict that ensued over a period of years among Baptist people. With this conflict going on, the accusations made in the realm of Home Missions tended to make the matter worse, and make sectional



differences show up as they had never done before. These two things seem to be the basic cause of Baptist difficulties at this time, so, when the slavery issue became dominant it served to bring to a head different ideas and disputes which had been brewing for many years, and so we see the culmination of these decades of disputes taking place in the Baptist Schism of 1845, and an entirely new organization set up called the Southern Baptist Convention.

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