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FROM BIBLICAL FIDELITY TO ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY:
THE GOSPEL MINISTRY FROM ENGLISH SEPARATISM OF THE
LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST
CONVENTION OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
William Gene Moore
December 2003

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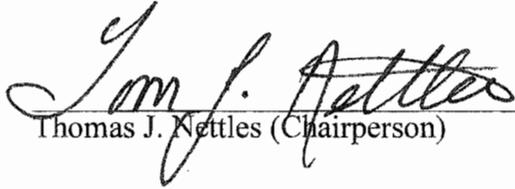
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LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST
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To Kynette

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Thesis	8
Background	9
Personal Interest	9
Relevance of Subject for Research	11
Contemporary Research	13
Methodology	16
2. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG ENGLISH SEPARATISTS OF THE LATE SIXTEENTH AND EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES	18
The Ministerial Office as Derived from the Scriptures	19
The Call to the Ministry and to a Church	22
Responsibilities of Ministers and of Churches	25
Conclusion	33
3. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG BRITISH BAPTISTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES	35
The Ministerial Office as Derived from the Scriptures	36
The Call to the Ministry and to a Church	48
The Responsibilities of Ministers to Their Congregations	55
The Responsibilities of Congregations to Their Ministers	61

Chapter	Page
Conclusion	66
4. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG AMERICAN BAPTISTS OF THE MID-SEVENTEENTH THROUGH THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURIES	69
The Ministerial Office as Derived from Scripture	70
The Call to the Ministry	76
Preparation for the Ministry	82
Licensing and Ordination to the Ministry	88
The Call to a Church	91
Responsibilities of the Minister and of the Church	94
Conclusion	105
5. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS FROM 1865 TO 1925: CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST	107
The Ministerial Office as Derived from Scripture	108
The Call to the Ministry	114
The Preparation of the Minister	127
Licensing and Ordination	131
The Call to a Church	139
Duties of a Minister to His Congregation	148
Preaching	152
Pastoral Work	160
Oversight of the Church	165
The Responsibilities of the Church to Its Pastor	172
Submission	172
Provision of Support and Affection	174
Financial Support	176

Chapter	Page
Conclusion	179
6. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS FROM 1865-1900: THE PUSH TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY	181
Biblical Support for Organizational Efficiency	184
Calls for Organizational Efficiency	186
The Pastor as Executive	194
Questioning the Move toward Organizational Efficiency	207
The Successful Pastor	216
Conclusion	239
7. THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS FROM 1901-1925: THE ACCEPTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY	242
The Perception of a New Day	243
The Spirit of Pragmatism	249
Model from the World of Business	253
The Key to Efficiency: Putting Everyone to Work	256
The Key Person for Efficiency: The Pastor	265
Seminary Education	267
Goals and Standards	269
Recommended Books on Efficiency	275
Examples of Efficiency	277
<i>The Efficient Church</i>	287
Concerns about Organizational Efficiency	303
Conclusion	321
8. CONCLUSION	324
BIBLIOGRAPHY	329

PREFACE

One of the more divisive debates among Baptists during the past couple of decades has been over the office of pastor in the local church. The dispute over the pastor's calling, authority, and responsibilities has created convictions and parties, with all sides claiming not only the support of Scripture, but also the precedence of history. Obviously, what Scripture teaches about the ministry is paramount. History, however, can never be relegated to irrelevance, for no one comes to the Scriptures with a clear slate. We are, to varying degrees, children of our heritage. Much of the practice of the church today is the result of what our forebears understood and practiced. While we must examine our understanding and practice in light of the Scriptures, we must also recognize that we are not the first generation that has examined those divine words in order to discern the will of God. Baptists who care about understanding and applying the Scriptures to the office of the gospel ministry are obligated to understand how their predecessors interpreted and applied those same Scriptures.

Consequently, this study has been far more than an academic exercise. As a Southern Baptist pastor, I believe that all aspects of the ministry are to be directed by the Scriptures. The Scriptures alone serve as the ultimate authority. Sensing that much of what is done in the Baptist ministry today is without biblical justification, I have desired to investigate not only what the Scriptures teach about the office of pastor but also what our Baptist predecessors understood the Scriptures to mean. In addition, if our practice has drifted from what earlier Baptists taught and practiced, I need to understand how a different perspective arose and whether the new perspective is a real or only an apparent departure. Obviously, I serve as no impartial observer. Admittedly, I am attracted to the

biblical simplicity which dominated Baptist views of the gospel ministry up to the twentieth century. In hopes of treating the historical witness fairly, however, I have sought to let Baptists speak for themselves rather than risk distorting their beliefs to support my predilections. My ability to deal justly and accurately with the evidence must await the judgment of those who investigate this work.

While many have helped make this dissertation possible, formal appreciation is reserved for four wonderful people. Tom Nettles, my supervising professor, has served as both mentor and friend. Linda Murphy, our church's proficient secretary, has guarded my time by fending off telemarketers and by taking care of less-than-critical requests from people dropping by the church. Beth French has provided peace of mind by scouring for unwanted typos and grammatical oversights. This dissertation would never have been completed without the support of my loving and faithful wife, Kynette. Without complaint, she packed up our belongings, three daughters, and a teacup poodle to trek with her husband to Louisville, Kentucky, for yet another (and final!) formal academic adventure in his quest to become a better equipped minister of the gospel.

To God alone be the glory.

William G. Moore

Clinton, South Carolina

December 2003

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The year 1993 witnessed the release of David Wells's *No Place for Truth*, in which he posits two models of Protestant ministry striving for ascendancy during the twentieth century. He explains that "in one model, theology is foundational, and in the other it is only peripheral." This difference is of no mere incidental import: "In the one [model], theological truth explains why there is a ministry at all, what it is about, and why the Church without it will shrivel and die. In the other, this reasoning is marginalized so that what shapes, explains, and drives the work of ministry arises from the needs of a modern profession."¹

Wells charges evangelicalism with having displaced the pursuit of truth with the pursuit of pragmatism as the church's ultimate objective. This displacement, he maintains, has resulted in ministers being valued more for securing observable results than for faithfulness to their biblical calling:

In this new clerical order, technical and managerial competence in the church have plainly come to dominate the definition of pastoral service. It is true that matters of spirituality loom large in the churches, but it is not at all clear that churches expect the pastor to do anything more than to be a good friend. The older role of the pastor as broker of truth has been eclipsed by the newer managerial functions.²

Wells argues, "Ministerial function should be defined by ministerial being, that what a minister does should grow out of that minister's calling, out of the fabric of truth of which that minister is an exponent." Consequently, "ministerial being should be defined,

¹David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth: Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 218.

²*Ibid.*, 233.

if the New Testament is to be allowed any say in the matter, by worthy character, a passion for truth, and the kind of wise love that yokes together this character and this passion in the service of others.” Conversely, though, Wells maintains that “professionalization has worked to undo this relationship, for the market in which ministers must function is shaping who they must be in a way that makes connections to this world of truth uneasy and often unnecessary.”³

With the professionalization of the ministry, ministerial success came to be measured in terms of quantifiable achievements. Wells points out, “For if it is the case that careers can be had in the Church, then it is inevitable that ministers will be judged by the height to which they ascend on the ladder of achievement, and they in turn will judge the Church on the extent to which it facilitates this ascent.” He laments, “It is a little difficult to see how such calculations can be reconciled with the biblical notion of service, the call to serve the Church without thought of what one might receive in return.” Along with this shift, there developed in the seminaries an emphasis upon courses focusing upon the practical aspects of the ministry and a decline in the traditional emphasis upon the

³Ibid., 237. Wells describes “professionalization” as an attempt to reverse the growing irrelevance of ministers to the society. While physicians and attorneys and bankers offer services which serve needs in society, ministers who practice their vocation in the traditional manner of brokering theological truth are seen as irrelevant. Wells writes, “There can be little doubt that it is the realization of their sinking fortunes that has inclined the clergy to give their concentrated attention to the problem of how to present themselves instead as serious professionals in the modern world. . . . My argument is that this attempt has resulted in a drastic transformation in the role of the clergy, that it has left behind the older model of a theologically based and sustained understanding of the ministry, and that the results are unhappy. *More than that, clergy have assumed for their new model of pastoral life a surrogate theology that arises not from theological truth at all but from the demands of the profession of which they are now a part.* So I shall go on to argue that one can make a virtual correlation between the degree to which the clergy are professionalized and the degree to which they will have forfeited, or deliberately abandoned, their fundamental task of being brokers of truth. And at the root of this transformation is a naivete about culture, for it has not been discerned that the translation of the clerical calling into the language of professionalization involves an immersion in the *culture* of professionalization.” Ibid., 221. Emphasis added. Admitting the existence of “a good deal of variation in our understanding of what constitutes a professional,” Wells defines a professional “as an individual who has received training and education to develop an ability, usually intellectual in nature, that can be exploited in the interests of both acquisition and aspiration.” Ibid., 224. Consequently, “professionalization therefore carries with it both the idea of fees charged and the idea of a career pursued. And the degree of specialization that professionals have typically grants them a monopoly over the work for which they charge fees. In order to sustain this monopoly, most professionals join others in the same profession to maintain organizations that control who can do the work and how it should be done.” Ibid.

study of theology. The roles of the minister continuously expanded from “brokering God’s truth, caring for the sick and ailing, and building up Christian character and understanding . . . to a whole new line of responsibilities, which in some cases eclipse the older and more foundational responsibilities.”⁴

This dissertation provides support for Wells’s argument concerning the shift in the role of the pastor in evangelicalism in general by examining Southern Baptists in particular. Evidence exists that a shift from theology to pragmatism—from an emphasis upon right beliefs to an emphasis upon what methods will bring about desired, observable results—which Wells has observed in evangelicalism as a whole exists today in Southern Baptist life. For example, an examination of weekly and monthly newspapers of Southern Baptist state conventions provides evidence of an emphasis upon pragmatic concerns. One will find many articles on church growth methodologies, evangelism techniques, evangelistic campaigns, human interest stories, and news items pertaining to local churches and associations, state conventions, and the entities of the SBC. Outside of the weekly Sunday school lessons, rarely will articles be found which examine or discuss doctrinal issues, with the exception being articles which question or even oppose any use of doctrinal “tests” in employment in denominational entities. Such “tests,” such articles typically claim, are credal and anti-Baptist.⁵

⁴Ibid., 231–32. Wells observes that “by 1986, the list of ministerial roles had expanded . . . to fourteen. . . . Evangelical churches gave their top priority to planning ability, facility in leading worship, and sensitivity to the congregation. This was followed, in order, by spiritual development of the congregation and pastoral counseling for those in need, visiting the sick, and support of the church’s stewardship program. These were followed by three equally ranked activities: providing administrative leadership, involving the laity in the church’s programs, and supporting the church’s mission in the world. Holding issues of social justice before the congregation was listed last as a pastoral priority.” Ibid., 232–33.

⁵The following state papers were surveyed: *The Alabama Baptist*, 4 April 2002; *Arkansas Baptist News*, 28 March 2002; *Baptist & Reflector*, 10 April 2002; *The Baptist Beacon*, April 2002; *The Baptist Courier*, 28 March 2002; *Baptist LIFE*, 22 March 2002; *Baptist Message*, 28 March 2002; *Baptist Messenger*, 4 April 2002; *Baptist New Mexican*, 23 March 2002; *The Baptist Record*, 21 March 2002; *Baptist Standard*, 8 April 2002; *Biblical Recorder*, 30 March 2002; *California Southern Baptist*, April 2002; *Capital Baptist*, March 2002; *The Christian Index*, 28 March 2002; *Florida Baptist Witness*, 28 March 2002; *Hawaii Pacific Baptist*, April 2002; *Illinois Baptist*, 3 April 2002; *Indiana Baptist*, 9 April

Another evidence that a shift has taken place in the Southern Baptist view of the ministry is found in popular books on church leadership. One of the most popular books on church growth among Southern Baptists is Rick Warren's *Purpose-Driven Church*. Because the church is a living organism, Warren claims that churches will grow if hindrances to growth are removed. He maintains, "The church is a body, not a business. It is an organism, not an organization. It is alive. If a church is not growing, it is dying." While acknowledging the last thing needed is another church growth book, Warren explains that there are principles which will help remove barriers to church health and will allow a church to grow naturally. After having spent twenty years observing growing churches, reading "nearly every book in print on church growth," studying the New Testament "with 'church-growth eyes,' searching for principles, patterns, and procedures," and reading church history, Warren maintains that "my greatest source of learning, however, has been watching what God has done in the church I pastor." He explains:

It gave me an education that no book, no seminar, and no professor could have ever given me. I started Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County, California, in 1980, and spent the next fifteen years testing, applying, and refining the principles, processes, and practices in this book. Like a research and development center, we've experimented with all kinds of approaches to reaching, teaching, training, and sending out God's people. Saddleback has served as a laboratory for everything written in this book. The results have been very gratifying and have, I believe, brought glory to God. I am continually humbled by God's power to use ordinary people in extraordinary ways.

2002; *Iowa Baptist*, April 2002; *Ohio Baptist Messenger*, April 2002; *Religious Herald*, 28 March 2002; *Southern Baptist Texan*, March 2002; *Western Recorder*, 2 April 2002; *Word & Way*, 4 April 2002; *The West Virginia Southern Baptist*, April 2002. The only articles observed dealing specifically with doctrine, other than the above-mentioned Sunday school lessons, include a one-column answer to a question concerning the security of the believer ("Baptists Ask . . .," *Arkansas Baptist News*, 28 March 2002, 5) and an article concerned with the practice of the dedication of babies during worship services ("The Dedication of Children," *Baptist Messenger*, 4 April 2002). Articles opposing the use of statements of faith as a standard for denominational employment are typified by the following: Mark Wingfield, "It's 'not Enough' to Believe Every Word of the Bible, SBTC Leader Says," *Baptist Standard*, 8 April 2002, 3; Mark Wingfield, "El Paso Missionary Recalls Rankin Pledged no Signing," *Baptist Standard*, 8 April 2002, 3, 8; and Mark Wingfield, "Missionaries Explain Reasons for not Signing BF&M," *Baptist Standard*, 8 April 2002, 9.

Warren attests to the utilization of the principles found in his book by churches “of all sizes, shapes, locations, and denominations.” He claims, “It seems that every day I get a letter from another church that has adopted the purpose-driven church paradigm and has been able to ride waves of growth that God has sent their way.”⁶ The fact that churches of “all . . . denominations” have experienced numerical growth through the application of Warren’s principles reveals ultimately the irrelevancy of theology and supremacy of pragmatism. Saddleback itself has grown from a church plant to over ten thousand in worship attendance.

Warren writes about how he wanted to invest his life discovering and implementing “biblical, cultural, and leadership principles . . . that produce growing, healthy churches,” how God told him where He wanted Warren to start a church, how his realtor became his first church member within two hours of looking for a place to live, how he wanted to plan a style of worship that “would be the best witness to unbelievers.”⁷ While Warren cautions that “Saddleback’s growth is a sovereign act of God that cannot be replicated,” he maintains that “we *should* extract the lessons and principles that are transferable.”⁸ Among the methods which his church uses to attract the unchurched is to focus upon the demographic target which it seeks to attract. These persons, designated “Saddleback Sam” and “Saddleback Samantha,” are well educated, like where they live, like their jobs, see health and fitness as high priorities, would rather be in a large group than a small one, are skeptical of organized religion, like contemporary music, think they are enjoying life more than they did five years ago, are self-satisfied about their station in life, prefer the casual and informal, and are overextended in both time and money.⁹

⁶Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 15–19.

⁷*Ibid.*, 25–42.

⁸*Ibid.*, 66.

⁹*Ibid.*, 170.

To say that Warren and Saddleback represent a departure from their Baptist heritage is no overstatement. No Baptist during the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries ever spoke of principles, particularly of cultural and leadership principles, for church growth. No one spoke of providing a style of worship to target the unchurched, and certainly no one would have created a demographic model to serve as the church's target group.

Warren's model provides direct implications for how churches view the ministry. Warren writes elsewhere: "How do you structure a church so it just keeps on growing and doesn't plateau? I believe there are 10 essentials you must focus on as you structure your church." Among those ten essentials, one which directly impacts the view of the gospel ministry is particularly enlightening: "You must change the primary role of the pastor from minister to leader." He explains:

You can grow a church to 300 with pastoral skills or ministry skills, but for it to grow beyond 300 will require leadership skills. As a leader, you must learn to communicate your vision in very personal and practical ways. You must also learn to motivate your church through your messages, and understand that it's easier to motivate a group than it is to motivate individuals.

A leader also equips others for ministry. Otherwise, you'll burn out and the church won't grow. An expanding ministry also demands you learn how to raise money. Those who write the agenda must underwrite the agenda. And you must learn to manage your time. Effective leaders know where their time goes.¹⁰

For Warren, the pastor who wants his church to grow beyond three hundred in attendance is to see himself no longer as a minister but as a leader. In essence, he becomes the church's chief executive officer, not its watcher over souls.

Warren also insists that, if a pastor wants his church to grow, the church must be constantly evaluated. He counsels, "Take a regular and honest look at what is going on in your church (and where your church is going). If you try to study everything you'll end up with the paralysis of analysis, so decide to track three or four significant numbers,

¹⁰Rick Warren, "First-Person: 10 Essentials for Giving Purpose to Your Church" (Baptist Press, 2003) [on-line]; accessed 8 October 2003; available from <http://www.bpnews.net/bpcolumn.asp?ID=1088>; Internet.

such as attendance or small groups.” The pastor needs to establish numerically where his church is and compare those numbers with where the church was initially and where he wants it to be. Warren concludes, “Finally, decide on a standard for measuring the health of your church and shoot for it. The process is constant; you may hit the mark you’ve set today, but tomorrow is a new day. Continually evaluate your progress and make the necessary adjustments to grow healthy while growing larger.”¹¹ Once again, the pastor is the chief executive officer leading his religious institution toward growth, both spiritually and numerically.

Another evidence of a departure from the pattern of Baptist forefathers is seen in another popular book, *Can We Do That?* Subtitled “24 innovative practices that will change the way you do church,” the book reveals a departure from the biblical offices of pastor/elders and deacons in order to lead a church which will grow numerically. Co-author Ed Young, Jr., founding and senior pastor of Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas, announces, “We are a staff-led church.” He explains, “The people in the church who are gifted to lead are the ones in leadership positions. We have no elders or deacons; each pastor or director is responsible for the decisions made in his or her department. No one knows the church like the staff, so we believe they should be the ones calling the shots.” He notes that the church has relatively few full-time, paid employees, which “means that we have to make use of laity a lot more. The members have to get more involved in ministry—and that’s a win-win situation. Because the people feel a sense of ownership in what we’re doing, they develop a loyalty toward the church. And by volunteering to serve the Lord, they develop and mature spiritually.”¹² This approach to

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Andy Stanley and Ed Young, *Can We Do That? Innovative Practices That Will Change the Way You Do Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing Co., 2002), 103–04. Andy Stanley, no longer a Southern Baptist, also pastors a church with no deacons. He explains why North Point Community Church in metro-Atlanta, Georgia, does not have the office of deacon: “My answer is that the office of deacon is descriptive, not prescriptive. In the Book of Acts, we read that the early church appointed deacons to ease

leadership is used, not because it has biblical support, but because it works. Such leadership, the authors claim, is effective in producing a growing church.

One may well question if Baptists have always measured the ministry by quantifiable, observable results. Have Baptists always esteemed the minister for observable results due to his style of leadership? Has a shift taken place which explains the present-day emphasis upon the minister's ability to increase the measurable statistics of the church, and, if it has, when did that shift take place?¹³

Thesis

When one examines the origination of Baptists in England in the early seventeenth century, one discovers foundationally that their establishment of separate churches arose from their conviction that the Scriptures taught that only persons giving evidence of regeneration were proper candidates for baptism and church membership. While their Protestant brethren claimed that they, too, followed the Scriptures alone, Baptists argued that nowhere did the Bible authorize the baptism of infants.

This same principle of *sola scriptura* guided the early Baptist organization of churches in general and the ministry in particular. Baptists referenced their beliefs about ecclesiology with direct support from the Scriptures. The minister's call to the ministry, preparation, ordination, call to a congregation, and responsibilities to that congregation, as well as the congregation's responsibilities to its minister, were derived from clear bib-

the workload of the apostles. And from what we read in 1 Timothy chapter 3, I think it's safe to assume that the appointment of deacons was common in the early church. At the same time, nowhere is the appointment of deacons commanded or required. Choosing deacons was simply something the early church did to meet a specific need." Ibid., 115.

¹³I do not want to imply that a pastor not be sensitive to his culture. Without question he must understand his culture and its language in order to communicate effectively the Word of God and its requirements upon the church corporately and the believer individually. Neither do I want to imply that pastors are to be unconcerned about evangelism and, as a consequence of such evangelism, the church growing in membership as a result of new converts. My contention, though, is that a reliance upon methods in order to achieve observable results, an achievement which characterizes to a great extent the modern conception of an effective church and pastor, would have been a foreign notion to Baptists until the late nineteenth century.

lical statements and principles. My thesis is that, although these concerns of the ministry dominated the first 250 years of Baptist life, the latter third of the nineteenth century witnessed a shift in the Southern Baptist view of the gospel ministry towards the ability to produce quantifiable results—for example, monies raised, church buildings built, and conversions and baptisms produced—a shift which became firmly established during the first two and a half decades of the twentieth century. This shift was fueled by a Baptist concern for organizational efficiency, a concern which viewed successful churches as those which were optimally organized to bring in ever-increasing numbers of members and, consequently, to make a noticeable impact in their communities for religion and morality and to make a contribution to the causes of the denomination as a whole. Because pastors were seen as the key to organizational efficiency, ministers were judged according to the success of their churches in achieving these objectives.

This concern for organizational efficiency does not mean that Southern Baptists jettisoned their belief in the authority of the Scriptures. Indeed, they made a case that their organizing their churches for efficiency was fulfilling the divine mandates of evangelism and discipleship. They continued, for the most part, to preach strong messages and to teach biblical doctrine. Nevertheless, their emphasis upon organizational efficiency in order to produce quantifiable, observable results was a departure from their Baptist predecessors.

Background

Personal Interest

I have served in the ministry of Baptist churches since 1978, in independent Baptist churches for the first nine and a half years and in Southern Baptist churches since 1988. Throughout these years I have sought to understand what the New Testament prescribed for the organization and work of the church in general and for the ministry in particular. The models to which I was exposed in the churches I had attended and during

my early ministry were based upon the objective of securing results in evangelism. The pastor and the deacons functioned essentially as the ruling arm of the church and organized the church in order to gain conversions and add new members. The success of one's ministry and of one's church was determined by the number of baptisms and increase in membership. The churches, however, experienced a growing ratio of non-attending members to attending members and appeared to have little impact in their communities.

It was not until 1997 that I took a formal course in Baptist history. During that course I learned about the origination of the Baptists and their conscientious, determined efforts to establish new churches and the gospel ministry upon New Testament principles. Their simplicity of organization and their determination against great odds to establish a biblical ministry contrasted to the professionalization which I perceived in ministry of the late twentieth century church. In the spring of 1999, I wrote a paper for a seminar in Baptist distinctives in which I examined how American Baptists viewed the gospel ministry during the early to mid-nineteenth century. Again I was struck with the contrast which I perceived between their understanding of the ministry and contemporary practice.

As a Southern Baptist pastor, my overriding desire is to lead the church which God has entrusted to me to be a church which is faithful to His will as revealed in His Word. While the study of the New Testament is paramount in determining what the church and the ministry are to be, I believe that a study of our Baptist past can provide helpful guidance by understanding how our forefathers, often at great personal cost, established their ministry in their newly-organized churches. Additionally, a chronological study of our Baptist past can help us understand the dangers of an emphasis upon quantifiable results and can help keep our focus upon the biblical emphases of our forefathers.

Relevance of Subject for Research

The last few decades have found Southern Baptists raising questions and concerns about the direction of the pastoral office in their churches. For instance, Roger Willmore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Weaver, Alabama, has commented, “My heart is burdened for pastors. . . . I see men burning out, giving up and leaving the ministry because they cannot deal with the demands of ministry.” Providing assistance at the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee, Willmore attempts to aid ministers in their struggle to fulfill their calling as ministers. Concern about statistical success, he warns, is using the world’s standards to quantify ministerial success: “I am concerned that we have imported too many of the world’s standards into the church by which we attempt to measure the work of God.”¹⁴

Some Southern Baptists have joined David Wells in pointing out the emphasis upon pragmatism at the expense of theology. For instance, Thomas Ascol, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Cape Coral, Florida, and editor of *The Founders Journal*, observes that “evangelicals have largely been taken over by the consumer culture where the customer is king. Thus, just like any good capitalistic business, churches have become market driven.” Ascol asks, “What do religious consumers want? Happiness, good child care, social relationships, aerobic exercise classes and twelve-step programs covering everything from weight loss to enhancing one’s self-esteem would make the list. It seems that the last thing they want is doctrine.” Ascol warns, “As the church begins to recast its vision in terms of market analyses (diminishing or even dismissing its role as steward of God’s truth), it necessarily changes its conception of what a pastor ought to be. Consequently, today the role of the pastor is being modeled primarily after the therapist and manager rather than the theologian.”¹⁵

¹⁴“Pastor Offers Help for Ministry Demands,” *Baptist Message*, 28 March 2002, 9.

¹⁵Thomas Ascol, “The Pastor as Theologian,” *The Founders Journal*, no. 43 (2001): 2–3.

Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., agrees that a shift in the Baptist understanding of the ministry has taken place and is none too thrilled about it. He comments, “In too many churches today, the centrality of preaching and administering the ordinances has been replaced by an emphasis on other things. We should stop and consider what effects this change is having on our churches and on their faithful and effective witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ Dever asks, “How did the change from exhortation to efficiency happen among our churches?” He answers, “Ultimately, we pastors must have fallen asleep at our jobs. We must have quietly conspired in allowing our churches to value this world more than the next. We did not oppose the subtle shift away from that emphasis on the hope we have for that day ‘when earthly labors are complete.’”¹⁷ Dever’s concern to help Baptists recover their ecclesiological heritage led him to publish *Church Polity* and to include in it ten works, originally published from 1697 to 1874, written by Baptists concerned with various aspects of ecclesiology.¹⁸

A shift obviously has taken place in Baptist thought, a shift which began to modify the responsibilities of the ministry in order to become more observably effective in its culture. Two questions need to be answered: first, when did the shift begin to take place and, second, when did that shift become accepted among Southern Baptists? This dissertation is an attempt to answer these questions by sensitizing Baptists to their eccle-

¹⁶Mark Dever, “The Noble Task: The Pastor as Preacher and Practitioner of the Marks of the Church,” in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life* (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001), 17.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 15–16.

¹⁸See Mark Dever, ed., *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life* (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001). The ten works are *The Glory of a True Church* by Benjamin Keach (1697), *A Short Treatise Concerning a True and Orderly Gospel Church* by Benjamin Griffith (1743), *Summary of Church Discipline* by the Charleston Association (1774), *A Treatise of Church Discipline and a Directory* by Samuel Jones (1798), *The Gospel Developed* by W. B. Johnson (1846), *Church Discipline* by Joseph S. Baker (1847), *Church Polity or the Kingdom of Christ* by J. L. Reynolds (1849), *Corrective Church Discipline* by P. H. Mell (1860), *Manual of Church Discipline* (1863) by Eleaser Savage (1863), and *Apostolical Church Polity* by William Williams (1874).

siological heritage and to note the bypaths which led Baptists away from the emphases of their forbears.

Contemporary Research

As seen in the above discussion, the assertion that Baptist churches are far removed from their English founding fathers is certainly no novel thought. Whereas the ministry of early English Baptists was focused upon preaching the Scriptures and presiding over the ordinances, the ministry of the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is much more multi-faceted. Writing at the midway point of the twentieth century, historian Robert G. Torbet observed:

To be a minister in this day of specialization is a much more demanding task than it was fifty years ago. The typical minister today is called upon to perform a multiplicity of tasks, any one of which calls for some special training and skill. He is expected to preach at least two sermons a week and to deliver numerous addresses on special occasions. It is his responsibility to administer the various departments of the church. Personal counseling and general pastoral care are considered a twenty-four-hours-on-call part of his job. He must show interest in community organizations and devote some margin of time to committee work, if he is to make any impact upon his town. If his church is to maintain any vital fellowship to its denominational program, he must find time to attend associational and state convention gatherings and committee meetings.¹⁹

Torbet calls attention to the increased emphasis upon organizational efficiency incumbent upon Baptist pastors during the mid-twentieth century.

Greg Wills has most specifically documented a shift in Baptists' understanding of the ministry by showing a decline in the practice of church discipline among Georgia Baptists throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. Wills notes that "before the late nineteenth century, Baptists defined the church in terms of its purity." Throughout the nation and among churches of Baptists and of other denominations as well, Wills attests, the pursuit of efficiency refocused the vision of an ideal church. Wills explains, "It was the vision of the efficient church that captivated Baptists of the Gilded Age. Bap-

¹⁹Robert G. Torbet, *The Baptist Ministry: Then and Now* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1953), 75–76.

tists by no means abandoned the quest for purity, but it no longer gave the policies and principles of Baptist churches their shape. The search for the efficient church transformed traditional notions of purity.” As a result of this new vision, churches “instituted more efficient systems of church finance and transformed themselves into centers of social life and recreational activity. Efficiency became the watchword of a new generation.”²⁰

This pursuit of efficiency did not leave the Baptist conception of the pastor unmarked. “Traditionally,” Wills notes, “Baptist pastors viewed themselves as custodians of orthodoxy and purity. They expected orthodox preaching to create right belief and pure behavior.” Conversely, “pastors in the New South supplanted the priority of proclaiming truth with that of efficient management of pious workers.”²¹ The value of the pastor became linked with his effectiveness in leading his church or churches toward efficiency: “Efficiency headed the list of virtues for New South pastors.”²²

From a not altogether different perspective historian Beth Barton Schweiger has focused on the pursuit of social progress among white Baptist and Methodist ministers in nineteenth-century Virginia. In *The Gospel Working Up*, Schweiger maintains that religion in the American South was increasingly linked with progress. She explains, “The Gospel ‘worked up’—that is, converts thought it improved everything it touched. . . . True religion not only brought progress, it was the main source of progress in their world—spiritual, moral, and material—and it did not encourage converts to distinguish between the three.” In addition, “it stirred people to act.”²³

²⁰Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785–1900*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131.

²¹*Ibid.*, 133.

²²*Ibid.*, 132.

²³Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), vii.

Schweiger points out that, whereas their predecessors saw themselves as alienated from the world, “by the first decades of the nineteenth century . . . Methodists and Baptists began to recast the social customs of their belief, as the appeal of alienation from society was replaced by their desire to influence it.” This desire for influence wrought among pastors, Schweiger maintains, citing Nathan O. Hatch’s words, wrought an “allure of respectability.” Many were motivated, though few succeeded in their attainment, of being transformed “from self-educated stump-speaking revivalists early in the century into professionals who valued seminary degrees and polished pulpits.” Education and denominationalism, with its emphasis upon organization and efficiency, led pastors to pursue greater efficiency in their local congregations: “Southern pastors filled pages of their publications with scorn for the old-fashioned and praise for new organizational strategies; they hungered after innovation and progress with every committee meeting and each new brick church.”²⁴

Schweiger notes two sets of divisions among Virginia pastors concerning methodological changes during the latter quarter of the nineteenth century in the name of progress. The first division was between rural pastors and city pastors, with rural pastors longing nostalgically for the ways of the past and town and city preachers advocating progress. The second division was often between older pastors and younger pastors—“while older pastors longed for the old days, younger men scoffed that the past held few charms. The present was superior, they argued, materially, intellectually, and spiritually.”²⁵

Daniel W. Stowell in his *Rebuilding Zion* presents a different inducement for southern churches to make use of new methods in their churches. He notes that “by the late 1870s, thousands of white southerners belonged to ‘northern’ denominations.”

²⁴Ibid., 6–7.

²⁵Ibid., 171–75.

Stowell writes, “In response to these assaults, southern white churches marshaled their considerable organizational, educational, and cultural resources in an attempt to reassert dominance over the religious life of the region.”²⁶

Of the above-mentioned works, Wills’s *Democratic Religion* most directly relates to this dissertation. Whereas Wills observes the growing emphasis upon organizational efficiency as it relates to church discipline during the latter third of the nineteenth century, my work documents the consistent Baptist view of the ministry into this period and how the change which Wills has observed becomes the widely-accepted view by the middle of the 1920s. While Schweiger’s thesis that Baptists and Methodists saw the gospel as having the potential to improve the circumstances of preachers during the nineteenth century, and she does document how this may have been the case in some instances, my work examines how the ministry was formally viewed. For instance, I will not be examining personal letters written by particular Baptists to show their motivations for increased organizational efficiency. I will be showing from their monographs and articles their theological and practical reasons for their view of the ministry. Stowell’s work, while interesting, relates to my work only in showing that there may have been motivations for organizational efficiency which transcended the desire to spread the conversion of sinners, the adding of new members, and the discipling of those members by gaining their involvement in the activities of the churches of the postbellum South.

Methodology

This dissertation will delineate how Baptists have viewed the gospel ministry from their English Separatist forebears through the Southern Baptists of the mid-1920’s. This effort will not attempt to show how the gospel ministry was actually practiced in individual churches. It will, however, examine how the ministry was presented by

²⁶Daniel W. Stowell, *Rebuilding Zion: The Religious Reconstruction of the South, 1863–1877* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 182.

Baptists in their writings. In order to show that Baptists carried a consistent understanding of the ministry based upon biblical concerns into the latter third of the nineteenth century, that a shift toward pragmatic concerns began to take place during that time period, and that the shift had become the widely accepted view among Southern Baptists by the middle of the 1920's, this work will rely heavily upon primary sources—monographs and books, confessions of faith, and newspaper articles—in which Separatists and Baptists put forth their beliefs about the ministry. By examining the contents of *The Christian Index* primarily from 1865 to 1925, as well as by examining other writings by acknowledged Southern Baptist leaders, the case for a shift will be made. *The Christian Index* is chosen because of its inclusion of articles and shorter exchanges which had appeared in other Baptist state papers, as well as its inclusion of articles written by Southern Baptist pastors and educators from other states in addition to those from Georgia. One reads the *Index* with an awareness of the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole, not merely a parochial view limited by the boundaries of the state. In addition, throughout at least the latter third of the nineteenth century, the *Index* enjoyed a physical presence beyond the boundaries of the state of Georgia as it incorporated Baptist papers in neighboring states which experienced financial difficulties.²⁷

²⁷After the Civil War, "other papers were absorbed by the *Index*, including the *Christian Herald* from Tennessee. In 1878, the paper was a combination of the *Florida Baptist*, the *Southwestern Baptist*, the *Christian Herald*, and the *Index* with a ministry in Florida, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia." John Jeter Hurt, Jr., "The Christian Index," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 1:259.

CHAPTER 2

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG ENGLISH SEPARATISTS OF THE LATE SIXTEENTH AND EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

English Baptist churches arose not out of a vacuum. Those who led the first English Baptists had themselves been Separatists, so named because of their disavowal of the extra-biblical practices of Anglicanism.¹ While many Anglicans of kindred spirit sought to reform the Church of England from within and would become known as Puritans, the Separatists believed it better to dissociate from what they viewed a corrupt church no longer bound by the dictates of Scripture. To understand the origin of Baptist views of the gospel ministry requires an examination of the Separatism out of which they came. English Separatists sought to obey the Scriptures in determining their views of the

¹Barry White concludes that the primary influence upon both General and Particular Baptists was Separatism. B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 167–68. For a similar view, see Thomas J. Nettles, *By His Grace and for His Glory: A Historical, Theological, and Practical Study of the Doctrines of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 24–25. William Estep, however, sees a greater influence by Anabaptists, concluding that “to deny the influence of Anabaptism upon the rise of English Baptists, both General and Particular, is unwarranted. It would appear that English Baptists owe their origins to both English Separatism and Dutch Anabaptism.” William R. Estep, Jr., “On the Origins of English Baptists,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 22, no. 2 (1987): 23. Estep goes on to state that “enough evidence is in that a new theory of Baptist origins . . . is in order. Simply stated, it suggests that English Baptists arose out of English Separatism under the influence of continental Anabaptism.” *Ibid.*, 24. White, however, sees the Dutch Anabaptists, through Englishman John Smyth, as having only negligible influence, if any, upon those who would become English General Baptists. B. R. White, *English Separatist Tradition*, 140–41, 164–65. Contending that the question concerning Baptist ecclesiology's arising from Separatism or a combination of Separatism and Anabaptism is a difficult one, Manley concludes that “those who develop a specialized knowledge in one area of study, whether it be Puritanism or Anabaptism, tend to posit a case for Baptist origins from their own special perspective” and leaves the issue unresolved. Kenneth Ross Manley, “Origins of the Baptists: The Case for Development from Puritanism-Separatism,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 22, no. 4 (1987): 43. A profitable survey of modern church historiography concerning the origins of Baptists is found in James Leo Garrett, Jr., “Restitution and Dissent Among Early English Baptists: Part I,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 12 (1977): 199–210, 251. Garrett concludes that “the earliest English Baptists seemingly arose from the matrix of English Separatist Puritanism.” *Idem*, “Restitution and Dissent Among Early

ministry, whether the issue was the office of the ministry, the call to the ministry and to a church, or the relationship of the ministers and their churches.²

The Ministerial Office as Derived from the Scriptures

Separatists viewed the Bible as their ultimate authority—nothing else could dictate either faith or practice.³ Indeed, the reason Separatists had departed from the Church of England arose from the latter's refusal to restrict their ecclesiology to the Scriptures.⁴ Separatists often produced apologies for their leaving the Church of England, and those apologies invariably reported egregious practices of the Anglican church. Henry Barrow, an early Separatist, catalogued a listing of what he viewed as abhorrent practices of the Church of England, of which the following is but a sample:

English Baptists: Part II—Representative Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century Sources," *Baptist History and Heritage* 13 (1978): 11. One is justified in examining English Separatism to understand the origin of Baptist views of the ministry when even those who see some Anabaptist influence are uncertain of its extent and acknowledge the importance of English Separatism in Baptist origins.

²Other denominations that arose out of English Separatism have likewise looked to that movement to understand better their own denomination. For instance, Barry Brachlow observes that his own denomination, the United Church of Christ, has benefited from such an examination of the Separatist John Robinson. Brachlow writes, "In more recent years, the subject of John Robinson's place in the English separatist tradition has been of particular concern to those within the Church of Christ who have been seeking to find present and future direction in light of historic traditions." Stephen Brachlow, "More Light on John Robinson and the Separatist Tradition," *Fides et Historia* 13 (1980): 6. He rightly warns, though, against predisposing one's findings according to present-day cultural and denominational considerations. *Ibid.*, 6-7.

³White maintains, "As the attempt to reconstruct the events and convictions which constituted the English Separatist tradition is undertaken it would be wise, in any discussion of their ideals, to remember an important assertion by Dr. [G. F.] Nuttall: 'Underlying the seemingly disproportionate concern with forms of government there was, nevertheless, a passionate desire to recover the inner life of New Testament Christianity, which, it seemed reasonable to believe, would clothe and express itself in forms such as those in which it had first appeared.' Without this reminder of their primary concern both the arguments and the assertions of sixteenth-and seventeenth-century sectaries can seem arid and irrelevant." B. R. White, *English Separatist Tradition*, xiii.

⁴Yarbrough elaborates, "English Separatism originated with Robert Browne in 1580 or 1581. It was characterized by a rigid adherence to congregational church polity, which resulted in several positions regarding English Christianity. The Church of England because of her episcopal form of government was judged a false church. Furthermore, the individual congregations within the national church were not accepted as true churches, although the Separatists did admit that true believers could be found within these congregations. They were urged, however, to separate themselves from the Anglican Church and align themselves with a properly organized, scripturally based congregation." Slayden A. Yarbrough, "The Ecclesiastical Development in Theory and Practice of John Robinson and Henry Jacob," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 5 (1978): 198.

The whole publick worship and administration injoynd of their church [the Church of England] was blamed . . . as idolatrous, devised by man, after the prescript of a rotten popish leitourgie, and proved . . . by expresse Scriptures. As in their Romish fastes, Lents, Embers, saints' and feastes' eaves. In their popish and Jewish feastes, their Hallow-masse, Candlemasse, Christmasse, the day of Christe's circumcision, the day of Epiphanie, their Easter, Pentecost, their Ladie's daies, Apostles' daies, saints' daies, Innocents' day, Soules' day, angels' day. . . . Their Juish and popish ministeriall vestures, surplices with sleeves, surplices without sleeves, rich and ordinarie copes broydered and fashioned as the high priestes' ephod, vestiments. . . . Their rending and shredding Scriptures to make their epistles and gospels upon their idol dayes, etc. Their reading Apocrypha in place of canonical scriptures in the church.⁵

John Robinson would later concur:

*If a man should set the Church of England before his eyes, as it differeth but from the reformed Churches, it would be no very beautiful bird. Yea what could it in that colour afforde, but Egyptian bondage; Babylonish confusion; carnal pomp; and a company of Jewish; Heathenish, and Popish ceremonies? Whatsoever truth is in the world it is from God, and from him we have it, by what hand soever it be reached unto us. Came the word of God unto you onely? & unto it we have good right as the Israel of God, unto whom he hath committed his oracles. Rom. 3.2.*⁶

Separatists objected so strenuously to these and other practices because the practices had, according to Barrow, “no foundation in the Word of God. And therefore such as no true minister of Christ ought to exercise, no true Christian to joyne unto.”⁷

Consequently, Separatists based their own ministry upon the dictates and principles of Scripture. While they condemned the state church for violating and adding to Scripture, they modeled their own ministry upon the Scriptures. “A True Confession,”

⁵Henry Barrow, *A Few Observations to the Reader of M. Giffard His Last Replie*, in *The Writings of John Greenwood and Henry Barrow*, ed. Leland H. Carlson, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), 104–05.

⁶John Robinson, *A justification of separation from the Church of England* (1610; reprint, Norwood, NJ: Walter J. Johnson, 1977), 9. While opposed to the Church of England, Robinson did provide a moderating voice among the Separatists. Packard comments, “The reformation which he [Robinson] effected was largely the substitution of Christian charity, with the sparkle of ready wit, for that bitterness which had characterized previous Separatist apologetics. The extravagant vehemence of Robert Browne—supposed founder of Congregationalism—and the tremendous invectives of Barrow, found no place in his pages. Language such as there is not paralleled anywhere in his books.” A. Appleton Packard, “A Reformer of the Reformed,” *The Congregational Quarterly* 30 (1952): 156.

⁷Barrow, *A Few Observations*, 106.

published by English Separatists in Amsterdam in 1596, provided the following as their guide:

That this ministerie is exactly described, distinguished, limited, concerning their office, their calling to their office, their administration of their office, and their maintenance in their office, by most perfect and playne lawes in Gods word, which lawes it is not lawfull for these Ministers, or for the wholl Church wittinly to neglect, transgresse, or violate in anie parte; nor yet to receiue anie other lawes brought into the Church by anie person whatsoever.⁸

Separatist John Penry noted that even the ministers of the Church of England taught that, “our Lord Ihesus Christ hath in his word for the administracion of holy thinges, appoynted *the* offyces of Pastor, Doctor[,] Elders, and Deacons to contynue to the end of the world together with their lawfull entrance and execution of their duties.”⁹ According to Separatist Francis Johnson, the established church, however, had extravagantly enlarged the offices established in the primitive church with their

ecclesiasticall offices of Archbishops, Lordbishops, Suffraganes, Deanes, Subdeanes, Prebendaryes, Chauncelors, Priests, Deacons or half Priests, Archdeacons, Subdeacons, Commissaryes, Officials, Doctors, Proctors, Registers, Scribes, Apparitors, Parsons, Vicars, Curates, Stipendaryes, Vagrant preachers [preachers?], Chapleyne or howse priests, Canons, Petticanons, Gospellers, Epistlers, Chaunters, Virgerers, Queristers, Organ-players, Churchwardens, Sidemen, Collectors, Clerks, Sextans, and the rest now had in these Cathedrall and parishionall assemblyes.¹⁰

While Separatists would disagree over particulars in the calling and duties of ministers, they all held the Scriptures as the controlling authority.

Not even the great Calvin was to be followed indiscriminately. When charged by fellow Puritans that the Separatists had rejected Calvin, Barrow protested: “That which hath ben said of the martyrs, our good hope and liking of many thowsandes, our general

⁸*A True Confession of the Faith*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 88.

⁹Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550–1641)* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 2:69.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 2:139.

and unfained love to all, may keepe the godly reader from giving credit to such reports.”¹¹

That did not mean, however, that the Separatists could accept all that Calvin had taught:

Furder of Mr. Calvine we have published our reverend estimation and judgment, commending and propounding his rare faith, knowledg, labour, constancie, meeknes, as an example to all men, especiallie to these his untoward disciples of these tymes that chuse rather to insist in [rely upon] his errors for worldly emolument, than in his vertues to be praised of God. Now then whilest unto Mr. Calvine’s person there is no wronge doon, we are not to be blamed, if we suffer our selves to be pressed with or follow his writings no furder than they are found consonant to the Word of God.¹²

Separatists claimed one ultimate authority and rejected even their dearest mentors when those mentors, in their view, departed from Scripture.

The Call to the Ministry and to a Church

Those men who would lead Separatist congregations did not merely pronounce themselves called by God with the expectation that a particular congregation would without question accept their pronouncement.¹³ While all Separatists recognized that ministers were called by God, they also believed that ministers were called to particular churches by that congregation. Ministers neither appointed themselves nor were appointed by a bishop. “A True Confession” held that the Bible placed the authority for placing and retaining a minister upon the local congregation:

That as *euery* christian Congregation hath povvre and commandement to elect and ordeine their ovvn ministerie according to the rules prescribed, and whilest they shal faithfully execute their office, to haue them in superabundant loue for their vvorke sake, to *provide* for them, to honour them and reuerence them, according to the dignitie of the office they execute. So have they also povvre and commandement *when* anie such defalt, either in their lyfe, Doctrine, or administration breaketh out, as by

¹¹Barrow, *A Few Observations*, 102.

¹²*Ibid.*, 102–03.

¹³Separatists appeared to follow Calvin’s thought in understanding the relationship of the inward call to the ministry and the outward, confirming call of the congregation. Concerning sources of Baptist views on ordination, St. Amant writes, “The inward call was essential, Calvin thought, but not sufficient. For ordination, something more was required—the inward call must coalesce with the outward call of the church. One’s calling to an office in the church is no longer only *immediate* as it was for the apostles and prophets but is ‘*mediate*, by the church.’ Early Baptist records are clear on this point. Both an inward and an outward call were essential prerequisites to ordination.” C. Penrose St. Amant, “Sources of Baptist Views on Ordination,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 23, no. 3 (1988): 8.

the rule of the word debarreth them from, or depriveth them of their ministerie, by due order to depose them from the ministerie they exercised; yea if the case so require, and they remayne obstinate and impenitent, orderly to cut them off by excommunication.¹⁴

The *Confession* supported this position of congregational authority in the calling of ministers with scriptural authorization.¹⁵

Similarly, Francis Johnson carefully argued from the Scriptures that every church had the “right and power graunted by the Lord, to chuse their ovvn Pastours, & other Ministers, Elders, Deacons, and Deaconesses: making choise of meet & fit persons: as also to use the ministration of the vvord, Sacraments, Censures, and vvhole ecclesiastical administration, being careful still to haue al things done, according to the ordinance of God, prescribed in his word.”¹⁶ Johnson provided eight reasons from Scripture supporting the right of churches to choose their own ministers. First, the churches established by the apostles had the right to choose their own ministers. Second, the people of Israel in the Old Testament possessed the right to choose their own leaders. Consequently, Israel’s electing of their leaders established a precedent for New Testament churches. Third, the churches’ choosing of their own ministers and officers would engender an attitude of love and reverence toward the believers’ leaders. Fourth, such choosing would give assurance that these men have been called and sent by God. Fifth, because all other weighty matters were done publicly in Israel and in the primitive churches, the choosing of ministers should be done publicly by the churches. Sixth, each church is a separate entity unto God and the Spirit speaks to each of the churches. Seventh, the Old

¹⁴*A True Confession*, 89.

¹⁵Cf. Calvin’s statement on the church’s call of a minister: “We therefore hold that this call of a minister is lawful according to the Word of God, when those who seemed fit are created by the consent and approval of the people; moreover, that other pastors ought to preside over the election in order that the multitude may not go wrong either through fickleness, through evil intentions, or through disorder.” John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1066.

¹⁶Francis Johnson, *A Christian plea conteyning three treatises* (Amsterdam: n.p., 1617), 252.

Testament prophets foretold that all the assemblies “should haue the like gracious presence, light, glorie, and protection of God.” Eighth, without the power to choose their own ministers, churches would not be able to observe the ordinances in times of persecution or apostasy.¹⁷

According to Robert Browne, all men in governing positions in the church were “persons receyuing their authoritie & office of God, for the guiding of his people the Church, receyued and called thereto, by due consent and agreement of the Church.” As with other governing church leaders, the minister would be chosen after prayer: “a pronouncing of their earnest desire to haue God their gracious Gouvernor, in so waightie a matter, with an hūble cōfessing wherin and how much they haue need of his help, & an intreating for the same in the name of Christ Iesus.”¹⁸

After the minister was chosen, he would be ordained by the local congregation which called him: “a pronoucing thē with prayer & thanksgiuing, & laying on of hands (if such imposition of handes bee not turned into pompe or superstition) that they are called and authorised of God, & receyued of their charge to that calling.”¹⁹ An example of a

¹⁷Ibid., 253–55.

¹⁸Robert Browne, *A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians, and howe vnlike they are vnto Turkes and Papistes and Heathen folke*, in *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, ed. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 335. Browne’s importance to Separatist ecclesiology is a result of his being “the first known sustained attempt by an English Separatist to produce a consistent doctrine of the Church. It was characterized by a fusion of elements derived from mainstream Puritan thought about the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments with a concept of the covenant relationship between God and his Church which gave it a significant and interesting character of its own.” White, *English Separatist Tradition*, 66. George goes further than White by maintaining that Browne’s writings “contained the basic principles of Separatist ecclesiology. . . . At least three elements in Browne’s thought on this subject were assumed into the standard Separatist position as it was hammered out amidst numerous controversies over the next thirty years: the church as a covenanted community, gathered and separate from the parish assemblies, and entered into by voluntary consent.” Timothy George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition*, National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Dissertation Series, ed. Charles Talbert, no. 1 (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1982), 40–41. It must be recognized, though, that Browne later conformed to the Elizabethan establishment and was viewed by Separatists as an apostate. He died, though, as a non-conformist in the Northampton gaol in October 1633. White, *English Separatist Tradition*, 50–51.

¹⁹Browne, *A Booke which sheweth the Life and manners of all true Christians*, 341. George

newly-established congregation's calling their own ministers is seen in this quote of Separatist William Collins cited by historian Richard Bancroft: "*The church assisted with the mightie right hand of God, hath chosen ministers: Maister [Francis] Iohnson for her pastor: Maister Greenwood for her Doctor: Maister Studly and Maister George Knife[ton], for her elders: Nicholas Lee and Christopher Browne [Bowman], for her Deacons.*"²⁰

Responsibilities of Ministers and of Churches

The Scriptures likewise provided the ultimate authority for the duties of ministers of the church. Neither tradition nor political authority could usurp the authority of the Bible. Johnson expressed the common sentiment of Separatists:

The ministers of Christ must therefore euen unto kings & princes, to Priests and people, to high and low, of all estates and conditions, make knowvne the will of God, shevv them their sinnes, denounce Gods judgments against them, and in all

provides a helpful explanation of ministerial election and ordination in congregational polity: "In congregational theory induction to the ministry consists of two steps: election and ordination. By the former the persons chosen have right to their offices, by the latter they are solemnly admitted into the actual possession thereof. In support of the popular election of officers Robinson cited the New Testament example of Paul and Barnabas who ordained elders in various cities only after the suffrage of the churches (Acts 14:23), signified by the lifting up of hands in keeping with the customary mode of voting in the Greek assemblies. In the Leyden congregation two groups, women on account of their sex and children on account of their age, were prohibited from voting in church elections, although they were permitted to be present when the vote was taken. Following the election the duly installed officers, if there be any, would pronounce the person elected to his office and commence the procedure of ordination which consisted of public prayer and the imposition of hands. Ordination was thus 'properly the exequution of election.' In contrast to the practice of some Reformed churches which had eliminated the imposition of hands from the ordination ceremony, Robinson felt that this was an important part of the induction process. . . . However, in the event that the congregation is bereft of other officers, or the occasion is such that they cannot be present, it is not necessary, nor permitted, to bring in the officers of another Church for the laying on of hands. Rather must the congregation in this exigency 'vse other the fittest instruments it hath.'" George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition*, 153–54. One should not think, though, that Robinson promoted the direct election of ministers by the congregation. Brachlow explains, "As he [Robinson] understood the practice of the apostolic church recorded in Acts 6, the people chose those whom the elders thought fit. Only in the remote event that a church would be without officers, as for example, when a new church sprang up in foreign parts by the preaching of private Christians, or (as in his own experience) when an assembly of Christians separated 'from idolatry, whether heathenish or antichristian', could the people alone choose their ministers 'within themselves.' But this was hardly a novel doctrine in reformed circles, as he noted similar views expressed in the writings of Perkins, Melancton, Vermigli, Zanchy, and others." Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology, 1570–1626*, Oxford Theological Monographs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 196–97.

²⁰Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, 1:144–45.

things fulfill and execute all the duties of their office and functions, as there is need, and just occasion. So far ought they to be, from performing their ministerie, and duties of their calling, according to the prescription or pleasure of man: but onely according to the will and word of God.

For Separatists, the duties of the ministry held eternal and ominous implications: “not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, that we may be pure from the blood of all men.” Consequently, the Scriptures alone were to determine the duties of the minister: “The Scriptures alone are sufficient, for the direction of the Pastours and other officers administration And Christ himself (vvhoo alone is the head and Lavvgiver of his church) hath left sufficient direction in his vvord, both for the faith, and for the order of his church.” Ministers who failed to follow the dictates of Scripture by either adding to or taking away from holy writ “should sinne not only against God, but also against themselves, and against the Princes, Prelates, and people whomsoever, whose prescription & pleasure they should so follow.”²¹

The duties of ministers were differentiated according to their office. Browne taught that “a Pastor is a person hauing office and message of God, for exhorting & mouing especially and guiding accordinglie: for the which he is tried to be meete, & thereto is duellie chosen by the church which calleth him, or receyued by obedience where he planteth the Church.” In addition to pastors, Browne added teachers and elders:

A Teacher of doctrine is a person hauing office and message of God, for teaching especiallie and guiding accordinglie, with lesse gifte to exhorte and applie, for the which he is tried to be meete, and thereto is duellie chosen by the church which calleth him, or receyued by obedience, where he planteth the church. An Elder or more forward in gifte, is a person hauing office and message of God, for ouersight and counsaile, and redressing thinges amisse, for the which he is tried. &c.

The elder, in Browne’s scheme, appears to have a ruling function only, as opposed to the ministering of the gospel through preaching and teaching.²²

²¹Johnson, *A Christian plea*, 256–57.

²²Browne, *A Booke which sheweth the Life and manners of all true Christians*, 275.

Johnson distinguished between the offices of pastor and teacher with even more specificity than did Browne. Pastors were to use wise speech and doctrine to preach and apply the Word of God, to administer the sacraments, to carry out ecclesiastical discipline (to “execute the censures and sanctions of his vvord and judgments”), to exhort listeners “to godlines, righteous, and sobrietie,” to “defend the truth of God against all adversaries,” and to “governe the Church in all things (according to the duetie of their calling) carefully, vvisely, and faithfully, under Iesus Christ, the Lord and Archpastor of his church and people.”²³

Johnson viewed the pastors and teachers as ministers of the Word of God, and ruling elders, as well as deacons, as those assisting the ministers. He explained:

But now these Elders being (by the mercy of God) recovered again, and had in many of the reformed churches, it is for them carefully to attend upon their ovvn office and function; assisting the Pastors and ministers of Christ in the ministration & government of the church, & procuring (vvhat in them is) the good order, peace, and benefit of the whole church, and of all the members thereof: but stil leaving to the Pastors & other ministers the works of the ministerie perteyning unto them: that so all may performe and fulfill their ovvne offices and ministeries, according to the rule of the word of God.²⁴

John Smyth sounded a dissonant note in the Separatist view of the ministry in his rejection of the division of elders into pastors, teachers, and ruling elders. Smyth maintained that all elders are to be pastors. He provided several reasons for his view.

²³Johnson, *A Christian plea*, 260. Johnson maintained that “all which things may well be included and comprised in the verie name of a *Pastor*. Which is the more to be observed, both for the similitude of the Shepheard, whence it is taken; and because the names of Offices used in the Scripture, doe fitly note out the nature & duties of the Offices themselues, sometimes in one respect, sometimes in another.” Ibid. Johnson also distinguished between teaching and ruling elders. Evidently Johnson viewed pastors and teachers as teaching elders and ordained men in the church who did not teach as ruling elders: “In vvwhich respects, let is also be observed, whether the difference should not now in the church still carefully be kept betveene the ruling Elders, and betveeen the minister of the Gospell, the Pastors and Teachers: as there was heretofore in Israell betveeen the Elders of the people, and the ministers of the Temple, the Priests and Levites.” Ibid., 271.

²⁴Ibid., 288. Concerning deacons, Johnson wrote, “And touching the Deacons office it self, note also how it is distinct from the office of the ministers of the vvord: so as the Apostles thought it not to be meet or reason, that they should attend to the duties thereof, together vvith their ministerie: but that others should be appointed to that function: & that they vvould giue themselues continually to prayer, and to the ministerie of the word. *Act. 6.2.4*. And thus also the offices of the *Ministers, Deacons, and Elders*, are reckned as distinct, by the Apostle Paul, *Rom. 12.7.8*.” Ibid.

First, because only one kind of priests existed in the Old Testament, only one kind of elders should succeed them in the New Testament. Second, only one kind of elders existed under Moses; therefore, only one kind of elders should exist under Christ Jesus. Third, if Paul had intended to distinguish between pastors, teachers, and elders, he would have done so. He mentions in Philippians 1:1, however, only bishops and deacons are mentioned, and bishops are of only one kind. Fourth, one would have expected to find three kinds of ordinations of elders in Acts 14:23 if there had been a tripartite division. Only one kind of ordination is mentioned, indicating only one kind of office. Fifth, Paul gave only one general charge to the elders at Miletus (Acts 20:28) to do the work of pastors. It follows, therefore, that all elders are pastors. Sixth, exegesis indicates that the pastors and teachers of Ephesians 4:11 comprise one office. Finally, because all elders possess the gifts, duties, and ordination of pastors, they are all pastors. Smyth concluded by making an accusation against his fellow Separatists reminiscent of their accusations against the Church of England:

Hence this consecratory ariseth that the Eldership consisting of three sorts of Elders is the invention of man, having both an Antichristian Ministry and Government in it.

And therfor when the Popish prelacy was supprest, & the triformed presbytery substituted, one Antichrist was put down & another set vp in his place: or the beast was suppressed & his image advanced.

And therfor as they that submit to the prelacy are subject to that woe of worshipping the beast, so they that submit to the triformed Presbytery are in like manner lyable to the woe denounced against them [them?] that worship the image of the beast.²⁵

Although Smyth contended that there was only one kind of elders and that all elders are pastors, he denied that there was to be only one pastor in every church.²⁶

Smyth held that “all the elders must teach, exhort, convince, feed, oversee, rule, & lead

²⁵John Smyth, *The Differences of the Churches of the seperation: Contayning, a description of the Leitovgie and Ministerie of the visible Church*, in *The Works of John Smyth, Fellow of Christ's College, 1594–8*, ed. W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 1:308–09.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 1:312.

the church therfor they may all administer the seales of the covenant: for that is a cheef work of feeding & applying the covenant & that particularly.”²⁷

The most essential duty of the ministry was preaching. Responding to Anglican Richard Bernard’s *The Separatists Schisme*, Robinson wrote,

More particularly: this observation by you truely made, with that also which followeth, namely, that *the preaching of the word is to be preferred in the first place*, overthrowes the order both of the Prelacy and Priesthood of your Church. For if *the preaching of the gospel be the principall work of the Ministry, and to be preferred in the first place*, then are not your Provinciall and Diocesan Bishops, of God, which have obteyned the principall order, and office in your Church for a lesse principall work, namely government; and are preferred to the highest, & first place, not for the teaching of the Dioseces, & Provinces, which were impossible, though they desired it, but for ruling of them.²⁸

While Robinson, as well as all Separatists, would agree that ministers had other duties, no other duty could rival the priority of preaching the Word of God to the people gathered for worship.

Because preaching was the most essential duty of pastors, the Scriptures alone were to serve as the source for preaching. John Penry, shortly before his martyrdom in 1593, wrote: “We ground our faith only vpon the Canonycall scripture, being assured *that* they were geuen by inspiracion of God, and that they conteyne the whole reuealed will of God, vnto *which* none may add, and from which none may take away, and therefore also we reade them only when the Church meeteth together for the seruyce of God, and to edifie in *our* most holy fayth.”²⁹

²⁷Smyth, *Differences of the Churches of the seperation*, 302. Smyth’s contentions would not go unanswered. The following year (1609), Henry Ainsworth responded to these and other beliefs in which Smyth had departed from other Separatists. To see Ainsworth’s point by point critique of Smyth’s particular contentions concerning the ministry, see Henry Ainsworth, *Henry Ainsworth, A Defence of the Holy Scriptures, Worship, and Ministerie, used in the Christian Churches separated from Antichrist: Against the challenges, cavils and contradiction of M. Smyth: in his book intituled The differences of the Churches of the Separation* (Amsterdam: Giles Thorp, 1609), 88–117.

²⁸John Robinson, *A justification of separation from the Church of England*, 364.

²⁹Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, 2:77.

Not only was preaching to be from the Scriptures, it was also to be understandable to the hearers. In 1582, Browne, never one to mince words, castigated the preachers of the national church for their unfettered use of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in the pulpit:

These Maidens of the Bishoppes, are called to the Pulpit, and their euerie Maiden must hurle to them her dressing out of a hoode. . . . Their Latin is phisik to make hole the sicke, and their greeke and hebrewe will blesse you frō euill spirites. By these & by their booke of the order of preaching, they may stand before the Queene, as did Daniel before the king. For so soone as they haue stood vp in famouse places, & shewed their vniuersitie degrees, and how wel they become their hoodes, or their skarlett . . . gownes, and what standing in Cambridg, and reading they are of in the tongues and Doctors.³⁰

Browne so esteemed the Scriptures for preaching that, unlike most Separatists, he eschewed the use of classical rhetoric and logic. He acted not out of an anti-intellectual fervor, but out of concern for the sole authority of the Scriptures.³¹ Preachers must declare the Word of God and not their own message. Browne wrote, “For the seruaunt that telleth a true tale hath not done his maisters message, nor the arraunt [errand] for the vvich he vvas sent, except he tell & speak that for the vvich his maister sēt him.”³²

³⁰Robert Browne, *A Treatise Vpon the 23. of Mattheue, Both for an Order of Studying and Handling the Scriptures, and Also for Auoyding the Popishe Disorders, and Vngodly Comunion of All False Christians, and Especiallie of Wicked Preachers and Hirelings*, in *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, ed. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 2:173.

³¹Diane Parkin-Speer, “Robert Browne: Rhetorical Iconoclast,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1988): 520. Parkin-Speer comments, “In a radical Protestant way, he [Browne] wanted to establish a purer approach to understanding the Bible and communicating this understanding to the people. In the face of an English Protestant orthodoxy influenced by Calvinism, Browne proposed to carry the Reformation farther to the left than the Puritans by arguing that an academic preparation (a university education) was not necessary for understanding and preaching the scriptures. The attack on rhetoric and logic fits within the larger context of advocating separation from official authorization for preaching and the denunciation of official support for a state church as expressed in *A Treatise of reformation without tarying for anie* and *A Booke which sheweth the life and manners of all true Christians*, both published in 1582. He is a Separatist in rejecting rhetoric as in rejecting the church government of England.” Ibid.

³²Robert Browne, *A True and Short Declaration, Both of the Gathering and Ioyning together of Certaine Persons: and also of the Lamentable Breach and Division which fell amongst them*, in *The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne*, ed. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 402.

The preaching of the Separatists appears to have been expository.³³ Historian Horton Davies claims that “all Barrowist sermons were expository, and it appears they were delivered in a homely, if not a rough, manner.”³⁴ Robinson held to the perspicuity of Scripture and believed that the literal interpretation should be followed as long as it agreed with the teaching of the entire Bible. He was especially opposed to any hermeneutic which spiritualized the meaning of Scripture.³⁵

Separatists viewed the relationship between a congregation and its ministers as one of mutual agreement. Greenwood wrote, “*There can now be no pastor over anie people by the rules of Christ’s Testament, but where a mutuall covenant is made betweene the pastor and the people, he bounde to teach, guide, and governe them, they againe to obey him in the Lord. But the infidels have made no such covenant with the pastor.*”³⁶ Separatists, however, did not entertain the notion that the congregation would merely comply thoughtlessly to their ministers’ directives. Ministers were to be obeyed

³³The term *expository* is used here as the explicating of a portion or portions of Scripture. Stott’s explanation of expository preaching provides a helpful description with which the English Separatists would have agreed: “It refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor prizes open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds what is tightly packed. The opposite of exposition is ‘imposition’, which is to impose on the text what is not there. But the ‘text’ in question could be a verse or a sentence, or even a single word. It could equally be a paragraph, or a chapter, or a whole book. The size of the text is immaterial, so long as it is biblical. What matters is what we do with it. Whether it is long or short, our responsibility as expositors is to open it up in such a way that it speaks its message clearly, plainly, accurately, relevantly, without addition, subtraction or falsification. In expository preaching the biblical text is neither a conventional introduction to a sermon on a largely different theme, nor a convenient peg on which to hang a ragbag of miscellaneous thought, but a master which dictates and controls what is said.” John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 125–26.

³⁴Horton Davies, *The Worship of the English Puritans* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1948), 85.

³⁵George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition*, 120–21.

³⁶John Greenwood, *A Collection of Certaine Sclaunderous Articles Gyven out by the Bisshops against Such Faithfull Christians as They Now Unjustly Deteyne in Their Prisons Togeather with the Answere of the Saide Prisoners Therunto. Also the some of Certaine Conferences Had in the Fleete According to the Bisshops’ Bloudie Mandate with Two Prisoners There, in The Writings of John Greenwood, 1587–1590, Together with the Joint Writings of Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, 1587–1590*, ed. Leland H. Carlson, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), 161.

but not unconditionally: “That so long as the Gouvernours haue right vse of the submission and seruice of inferiours, and the inferiours also haue the right vse and welfare of their authoritie & guiding, they shall hold that communion, or else make a breache thereof, when once it shall tende to confusion and destruction.”³⁷ Ainsworth wrotes similarly:

So farr as the shepheards doe teach[,] rule and direct the sheep in the wayes of Christ, by his owne word and lawes; so farr ar they al jointly and every one severally, bound to obey and submit to their shephards, and no further. For although this be the ordinary way of teaching and governing the Church; yet if extraordinarily it fal out, that the shepheards walk and lead awry, and the sheep go aright; then is neyther the whol flock, nor any one sheep to follow or obey them unlesse they wil fall together into the ditch.³⁸

Separatists maintained that churches were responsible for providing materially for their ministers. To the question of “whether it be not the duty of all Churches, and of the members thereof, every one, according to their abilitie, to giue maintenance unto their Ministers, and (as there is occasion) to the Elders also that rule the church, & to the Deacons & Deaconesses that serue & minister therein,” Johnson answered affirmatively. He provided the following reasons for the support of ministers: the Lord has so ordained; Christians are to honor the Lord with their substance and the Lord has promised to bless such giving; such provision is the proper exchange of “carnall things” for “spirituall things”; the biblical examples of the vinedressers and herdsman receiving the fruit and milk, respectively; and the express teaching of Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17-18. Churches too poor to support their own ministers should be helped by churches possessing more substantial means. Johnson also held that the best interest of “Kings and all other Magistrates” would be served in the civil governments’ helping to provide for ministers

³⁷Browne, *A Booke which sheweth the Life and manners of all true Christians*, 338–39. Browne viewed this, as well as other directions concerning the relationship between the congegation and their leaders, as applicable to citizens and their civil government: “*We giue these definitions so generall, that they may be applied also to the ciuill state.*” *Ibid.*, 339.

³⁸Ainsworth, *Differences of the Churches of the seperation*, 130.

and churches. This provision, however, should not be to hinder or replace the duty of the churches and their members but should further their own offerings.³⁹

Smyth likewise held that, according to 1 Timothy 5:17-18 and Galatians 6:6, churches were to provide materially for elders “by weekly mayntenance according to their labor & necessities.” Smyth provided for “mayntenance of the Elders especially such among them as are most painful in the word & doctrine.” Elders who were more financially self-sufficient or who could labor in other occupations, however, should contribute to the church’s treasury instead of receiving support from it.⁴⁰

Conclusion

English Separatists operated under the belief that the Scriptures were the ultimate authority for Christians. In the Scriptures alone could one find clear direction for one’s faith and practice. Because Separatists believed that the Church of England had flagrantly violated scriptural precepts and principles, they believed that they had no choice but to separate from the national church and establish their own congregations. Separatists believed that the Scriptures provided clear direction for who could be called into the ministry. Ministers were called by God and their meeting scriptural qualifications was determined by the church. Ministers were called to a particular congregation by the authority of that congregation, not by being appointed by some ecclesiastical hierarchy above the local church. The relationship between ministers and congregations was one of mutual care and support. Ministers were charged with taking care of the souls of the members of their church, with their chief duty for doing so being the accurate and understandable preaching of the Word of God. They were not charged with being successful in their work—success was determined by God. They were charged with being faithful to fulfill their calling. The eternal destiny of souls was at stake. In addition, Separatists

³⁹Johnson, *A Christian plea*, 316–17.

⁴⁰Smyth, *Differences of the Churches of the seperation*, 1:319.

were convinced that congregations had certain duties, such as obeying the preaching and teaching of the Word and providing for the material needs of their ministers. Although individual Separatists sometimes differed over certain particulars with regard to the ministry, they all agreed that the Scriptures provided the controlling authority.

The fundamental legacy bequeathed upon Baptists by their Separatist predecessors was the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures. Indeed, English Baptists, arising out of Separatism, would also take the belief in the ultimate authority of Scriptures as the rule for guiding their understanding all of faith and practice in general and of the ministry in particular. Because God alone could bring about regeneration, Baptists would see the highest duty of their ministers to be fidelity to His Word. Once again, the pursuit of faithfulness would be the issue, not the pursuit of success. While Baptists, like their Separatist predecessors, would disagree on some of the particulars of the gospel ministry, to the Scriptures they would go for direction.

CHAPTER 3

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG BRITISH BAPTISTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

In seeking to understand the development of the concept of the gospel ministry among Southern Baptists, one must examine the views of the earliest Baptists, those British Baptists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Those foundational views provided later Baptists with a rich heritage of biblical and theological material as those early Baptists sought to develop an ecclesiology faithful to the Scriptures. Out of these Baptists would come to colonial America men who would establish and lead churches in the new land.¹

¹Leon McBeth notes, "Most Baptists in early America stemmed from a British background. While the earliest churches were indigenous, in time the English connection became clearer. Many who joined the colonial churches had first embraced the Baptist way in England or Wales, and countless letters between Baptists in the Old World and the New helped shape similar viewpoints. Baptists in America adopted the denominational structures common among their English brethren, reproduced English confessions and catechisms, and often sent to England for ministers. One cannot regard Baptists in America as merely an extension of those in England, but neither can one minimize the connections between them." H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 123.

An example of collaboration exists in early eighteenth-century correspondence between South Carolina and English Baptists. The English brethren were consulted over the issue of the severity of a certain slave statute and a church member's carrying out that legal, but considered by some South Carolina Baptists, immoral regulation. The letter from the English Baptists set forth the particular issue: "Now that we may Set the mater in a Clearer light, the better to Se whether this Brother that hath given offence to Some of you, hath Sinned in the thing, or no: we'll put it in a question (Viz.) Whether, a master may, and not Sin against God, make an Eunuch of his Slave, for being absent (without his master's leave) from his business for the Space of 30 daies?" The answer, which would be elaborated, was "We think he may not, as Circumstances may be; as, if he doth it without the law of the Majistrate, or in a Spirite of revenge, or obscenely like that forbiden, Deu. 25. 11, 12, or if he aimeth by it at his Slave death; If Either of these Circumstances attend, doubtles it would make the thing an Abomination, Savouring of injustice, cruelty, or unchristian behaviour: But however we hop better things of this Brother and things which accompany Salvation; For if we rightly Understand your letter, much is to be Said in favour of him." The letter noted that the castration was prescribed by law, "albeit humane laws binde not Simply of themselves, but So far forth as they are agreeable to God's word, Serve for the common good, Stand with good order, and hender not the liberty of Conscience." Having said that, however, the English brethren noted that the buying of slaves was not only legal but scriptural, and that not carrying out the punishment would encourage slaves to rebel,

These early Baptists did not fail to take the Separatist emphasis upon the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures as their own emphasis, especially in their view of the ministry. Whether General Baptist or Particular Baptist, the written witness of British Baptists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveals that their desire was to exercise biblical fidelity in all aspects of the gospel ministry. While their views were not always in agreement with one another, they always pointed to the Scriptures to support their position. They would see the Scriptures providing the qualifications for the ministry and that the local church was to certify that candidates for the ministry possessed such qualifications. They would see only those providing evidence of regeneration were to be baptized and received into the membership of the local church. Indeed, a regenerate church membership was central to their understanding of the church and became a Baptist identity. Consequently, they would maintain that the Scriptures required ministers to be faithful in caring for the souls of those members. They would certify that what the Scriptures did not require or promise was success in the ministry. Fidelity, not success, was the issue. Members were required by Scripture to provide for their ministers' material needs, to obey the teaching of the Word, and to uphold their ministers through prayer and kindly affection.

The Ministerial Office as Derived from the Scriptures

As did their Separatist predecessors, from their beginning British Baptists eschewed the plethora of ministerial offices of the Church of England, an excess viewed

could reduce the owner to poverty (the statute required the master who refused to carry out the punishment forfeit his slave to the first informant), and could place the slave under greater danger with a punishment more ruthlessly inflicted by another. William G. McLoughlin and Winthrop D. Jordan, "Baptists Face the Barbarities of Slavery in 1710," *The Journal of Southern History* 29 (1963): 497–99. While not mentioned in the correspondence, the statute required castration of the slave who ran away for a period of thirty days the fourth time. *Ibid.*, 495.

An example of Baptists born and trained in Britain who came to the colonies to pastor was Morgan Edwards. A Welshman educated at the Bristol Academy in England, Edwards became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia in 1761. Roger Hayden, "Bristol Baptist College and America," *Baptist History and Heritage* 14, no. 4 (1979): 29.

as being entirely without scriptural support. Characteristic of their disdain are the words of Edward Terrill, an elder of the Baptist church at Broadmead in Bristol:

Wherefore in y^e reign of King James, y^e Popish worship struggling for life, it thought to revive againe by Treasons and Politick Contrivances. But God, of his Infinite grace, Continued y^e Spirit of Reformation; that a people were raised up, (in y^e Days of King Charles y^e First,) to cast off y^e Scrapes of Church Government by y^e Papall *Hierarchy*, namely, of Lordly Bishops; because that it was directly opposite to y^e holy Scripture, and Rule of true Worship. For they did Lord it over God's Heritage, and thereby did manifest themselves to be as y^e skirts of y^e whore of Romeish Babilon; by reason they looked not after y^e Pure and Spirituall Worship of God, but rested in y^e Reliques of Antichristian forms of Worship, by unscripturall Officers, called, (after Humane inventions,) Chancellors, vice-Chancellors, Deans, Archdeacons, Prebends, Queristers, Registers, Proctors, Apparitors, &c., not like y^e worship Instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ recorded in Scripture. Haveing scarcely y^e form of Godlinesse, and wholly denied y^e power thereof, from such we are commanded to turne away.²

The number of offices in the established church was repugnant to Baptists. Not only did Baptists argue that the existence of such offices was without scriptural support, they also maintained that such an ecclesiastical organization created the antithesis of the simplicity of scriptural worship. While the Reformation had, by the “Infinite grace” of God, thrown off the church government of Rome, the Church of England retained such “Reliques of Antichristian forms of Worship, by unscripturall Officers.” From such, Baptists believed, they were “commanded to turne away.”³

John Gill agreed with earlier Baptists that the Scriptures alone provided direction concerning the office of the ministry in particular as well as the church in general. He summarized what all Baptists accepted, “If the inquiry is about the nature of a Church, its government, officers, and discipline, look into the ancient records of the scripture, and there you’ll meet with a just and true account of these things, the original of them, and

²Edward Terrill, *The Records of a Church of Christ*, in *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640–1687*, ed. Roger Hayden (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1974), 81–82.

³Early Baptists rarely failed to use the Church of England as a foil in arguing for a biblical ministry. The General Baptist Standard Confession of 1660 maintained that “the Elders or Pastors which God hath appointed to oversee, and feed his Church” are not to be “*greedy of filthy lucre* (as too many National Ministers are).” *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 229.

rules concerning them.” With the Scriptures as the authoritative source, Gill noted that “you will find that a church is a society of saints and faithful men in Christ Jesus, that are joined together in holy fellowship; that are incorporated into a visible church-state, and by agreement meet together in one place to carry on the worship of God, to glorify him, and edify one another [Eph. i. 1. 1 Cor. xi. 20].” One would find that the government of the church “is not national, provincial, or parochial, but congregational; that its offices or officers are only these two plain ones, bishops, overseers or elders, and deacons [Phil. 1. 1].” Reminiscent of the words of Edward Terrill, Gill expressed his evident disdain for the meta-scriptural offices of the Anglican church: “You will find nothing of the rabble of the Romish hierarchy; not a syllable of archbishops, archdeacons, deans, prebends, priests, chantors, rectors, vicars, curates, &c.[;] there you will observe laws and rules of Christ, the sole head of the church, his own appointing, for the better ordering and regulating affairs.” In addition, in the Scriptures one will find “rules about the reception and rejection of members, for the laying on, or taking off censures, for admonitions and excommunications; all which are to be done by the joint suffrage of the church.”⁴ Representative of eighteenth century English Particular Baptists, Gill found in the Scriptures alone the prescription and description of the local church.

While rejecting this profusion of extra-biblical offices, Baptists did not, however, agree always on either the designation of the ministerial office or the number of ministerial offices. In 1611 General Baptist founder Thomas Helwys published in Amsterdam a confession of faith which clearly delineated the position of his church on essential doctrinal matters. The twentieth article stated that “the Officers off everie Church or congregation are either Elders, who by their office do especially feed the flock concerning their soules, Act. 20.28, [1] Pet. 5.2, 3. or Deacons Men, and Women who by their office releave the necessities off the poore and impotent brethrē concerning their

⁴John Gill, *The Scriptures the only Guide in Matters of Religion* (London: G. Keith and J. Robinson, 1750), 20.

bodies, Acts. 6.1-4.”⁵ The elders were to possess ministerial oversight, and the deacons were to watch over the material needs of the members. Helwys followed John Smyth’s understanding that each church was to have a plurality of elders with no division of the elders into pastors, teachers, and ruling elders.⁶

The elders alone possessed the ministerial office, while the deacons took care of the material needs of fellow believers. Particular Baptists, appearing on the scene within three decades, would formalize a similar understanding in their London Confession of 1644: “That being thus joyned, every Church has power given them from Christ for their better well-being, to choose to themselves meet persons into the office of Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Deacons, being qualified according to the Word, as those which Christ has appointed in his Testament, for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of his Church.”⁷ These Baptists, at least initially,⁸ followed other Separatists in designating ministerial officers as pastors, teachers, and elders, with the deacons being charged with material oversight.⁹ The Second London Confession reveals that at least by

⁵Thomas Helwys, *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed., ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 121–22. Helwys, Estep explains, composed this confession “in order to establish the identity of his own small group as distinct from that of the Mennonites,” the group which John Smyth had petitioned to join. W. R. Estep, “Baptists and Authority: The Bible, Confessions, and Conscience in the Development of Baptist Identity,” *Review and Expositor* 84 (1987): 604.

⁶As seen in chapter 2, John Smyth maintained that all elders were to be pastors. See Smyth, *Differences of the Churches of the seperation*, 1:309–12.

⁷*The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed., ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 166. For an examination of ecclesiology set forth in the 1644 Confession, see B. R. White, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968): 570–90.

⁸McGlothlin notes that “‘pastors’ and ‘teachers’ are omitted in later editions.” W. J. McGlothlin, ed., *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 184.

⁹Robert Browne taught that “a Pastor is a person hauing office and message of God, for exhorting & mouing especially and guiding accordinglie: for the which he is tried to be meete, & thereto is duellie chosen by the church which calleth him, or receyued by obedience where he planteth the Church.” In

the 1670s Particular Baptists had become convinced that Scripture supported only two offices in the church: “A particular Church gathered, and compleatly Organized, according to the mind of Christ, consists of Officers, and Members; And the Officers . . . are Bishops or Elders and Deacons.”¹⁰ Nehemiah Cox, son of Benjamin Cox, explained that “Bishops or Elders are ordinary Officers in the Church, of *Divine Right* and Appointment . . . ; Their Office is superior to that of Deacons, as more nearly concerning the Good and Edification of the Church, by so much as the care and conduct of Mens Souls doth transcend the care of the outward Man, and supplies of temporal Life.”¹¹

By 1660 the practice of General Baptists was presented in a representative confession signed by forty men speaking for the main General Baptist districts. By 1663 this confession became the “Standard” Confession of the denomination.¹² This confession viewed the ministry in the local church as being comprised of “Elders or Pastors which God hath appointed to oversee, and feed his Church.”¹³ By 1654, however, General Baptists had come to recognize a second ministerial office in addition to local-church

addition to pastors, Browne added teachers and elders: “A Teacher of doctrine is a person hauing office and message of God, for teaching especiallie and guiding accordinglie, with lesse gifte to exhorte and applie, for the which he is tried to be meete, and thereto is duellie chosen by the church which calleth him, or receyued by obedience, where he planteth the church. An Elder or more forward in gifte, is a person hauing office and message of God, for ouersight and counsaile, and redressing thinges amisse, for the which he is tried. &c.” Browne, *A Booke which sheweth the Life and manners of all true Christians*, 275. See also *A True Confession*, published in Amsterdam by English Separatists in 1596, which held the offices of the church to be “Pastors, Teachers, Elders, Deacons, Helpers to the instruction, government, and seruice of his Church.” *A True Confession*, 88. For a comparison of the Particular Baptists’ 1644 Confession with the Separatists’ 1596 Confession, see White, “The Doctrine of the Church in the Particular Baptist Confession of 1644,” 575–85.

¹⁰*Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. W. J. McGlothlin (1677; reprint, Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1911), 266.

¹¹Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatioin [sic] of an Elder and Deacons in a Baptized Congregation In London* (London: Tho. Fabian, 1681), 15.

¹²William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 220–21. Estep notes that with its revision in 1663, this confession was known as *The Standard Confession*. Estep, “Baptists and Authority,” 606.

¹³*A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith*, 229.

elders: the messenger. Though not using the term *messenger*, Thomas Helwys had indicated the possibility of such an office: “That the Officers off everie Church or congregacion are tied by Office onely to that particuler congregacion whereoff they are chosen, Act. 14.23, and 20.17. Tit. 1.5. *And therefore they cannot challeng by office anie auctoritie in anie other congregacion whatsoever except they would have an Apostleship.*”¹⁴ Thomas Lover stated that “they [the churches] have power to chuse Messengers, Pastors and Teachers from among themselves, *Acts* 1.21,22.”¹⁵ Lover found scriptural support for the office of messenger in the apostolic office itself: “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord *Jesus* went in and out amongst us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his Resurrection, *Acts* 1.26. They gave forth the lots, and the lot fell upon *Matthias*, and he was numbred among the eleven Apostles (which in *English* is Messengers) *Titus* 1.5.”¹⁶ The General Baptist Orthodox Creed of 1679 likewise viewed the office of messenger as one of three church offices: “The officers [of the visible church of Christ] . . . are these three, viz. Bishops, or Messengers; and Elders, or Pastors; and Deacons, or Overseers of the Poor.”¹⁷ Thomas Grantham, a General Baptist leader in Lincolnshire, designated “the Office of Messenger or

¹⁴Helwys, *Declaration of Faith*, 122. Emphasis added.

¹⁵Thomas Lover, *The True Gospel-Faith Witnessed by the Prophets and Apostles, and Collected into thirty Articles, Presented to the world as the present Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ* (London: Francis Smith, 1654), 9. Lumpkin notes that “nothing is known of Thomas Lover or his church, though Lover must have been an early leader among General Baptists.” Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 190.

¹⁶Lover, *The True Gospel-Faith*, 9.

¹⁷*An Orthodox Creed, or a Protestant Confession of Faith, Being an Essay to Unite and Confirm All True Protestants in the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Religion, against the Errors and Heresies of Rome*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 319. Lumpkin explains that “the Creed was not published in the name of the General Assembly but of a group of the more earnestly orthodox General Baptist churches of the Midlands, in the counties of Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Oxford.” Part of the reason for the creed’s being published “lay in the desire to refute the Hoffmanite Christology which Matthew Caffyn, a General Baptist messenger, was preaching in Kent and Sussex, and in the fear of a return of popery to England.” Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 295.

Apostles” to be “a perpetual Ministry to the Church.” He acknowledged that “it is most certain there were several things proper and peculiar to the First and Chief Apostles, not to be pretended at all by their Successors the subordinate Messengers.” Nevertheless, “it is also true, that many things pertaining to their Office as Itinerate Ministers, are of perpetual duration in the Church with respect to that Holy Function, and consequently to descend to those who were to succeed them as Travelling Ministers, to plant Churches, and to settle those in order who are as Sheep without a Shepherd, &c.” Grantham maintained that “this Office is as firmly settled in the Church, as any other, and therefore the Abrogation of this is in effect to abolish them all. See 1 *Cor.* 12. *Ephes.* 4. The Promise of Christ, *Mat.* 28.20. pertains to them to the End of the World, as well as to any part of the Church.” According to Grantham, the Great Commission necessitated the office of messenger which, unlike the office of elder, alone was fit for the task of evangelizing those outside the church:

And that Commission, *to teach all Nations*, must have a Ministry authorized by it, whilst the Nations are to be taught, or the Gospel to be preached to every Creature; at least the Commission is of virtue to empower such a Ministry to teach all Nations, as well as to baptize Converts; yet no Officers as such, in the Church, save that of Messengers or Apostles, are obliged to do that Work, but to look to their particular charge. This office is perpetuated by virtue of Christ’s Speech, *Luke* 11.49. *I will send them Prophets and Apostles.* As also in that the Primitive Churches, by the Will of God, had such a Ministry of Apostles inferiour to the Chief Apostles, 2 [Cor. ?] 8, 23, where certain Brethren of the travelling Ministry, are called the Apostles or Messengers of the Churches, and the Glory of Christ.¹⁸

To the support he found in Scripture, Grantham added testimony from Clement, Alexander, Theodoret, Ireneus, and Bullinger: “Thus then both the Sacred Scripture, great Antiquity, and later Doctors, do all consent to the Truth of our Opinion in this Particular.”¹⁹ General Baptists applied what they understood as both biblical and historical

¹⁸Thomas Grantham, “*Christianismus Primitivus*”: or, *The Ancient Christian Religion* (London: Francis Smith, 1678), Book 2:119–20.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, Book 2:120.

precedence for the office of messenger, who were entrusted with a governing role over a group of churches in a geographic area as well as evangelizing those outside the church.²⁰

Though disagreeing on the number of ministerial offices, both groups of early English Baptist churches commonly had a plurality of elders. Some Particular Baptist churches, though, distinguished among the elders as pastors and ruling elders. The church meeting in Broadmead, Bristol, “essentially Calvinist in theology,”²¹ designated their non-pastor elders as ruling elders. For instance, one reads that “before this Time, our brother Purnell, y^e *Eldest Ruleing Elder*, being in y^e 9th Month last deceased, y^e Church had severall times under consideration, who to Choose and make a Ruleing Elder in his Stead.”²² On occasion the church would be without a pastor and would cease observing the Lord’s Supper until another pastor was called, even though there were ruling elders in the church at that time.²³

General Baptist churches during the seventeenth century apparently did not divide elders into different groups. Helwys held that “there being but one rule for Elders, therefore [there is] but one sort of Elders.”²⁴ Grantham acknowledged the belief by other denominations that there existed “a difference between the Office of Bishops and Elders.” Scripture, he was certain, “makes them rather one Office than two.” He argued that “it is most plain, that the same whom the Apostle calls Bishops, *Act. 20.28.* are expressly called Elders of the Church, *ver. 17.* And so again in *Titus 1.5.* the Direction is, that Elders be ordained in every City, of such Persons who are blameless, &c. And the

²⁰For an examination of the office of messenger among British General Baptists during this era, see J. F. V. Nicholson, “The Office of ‘Messenger’ amongst British Baptists in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 17 (1957–58): 206–25.

²¹Roger Hayden, ed., *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640–1687* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1974), 48.

²²Terrill, *The Records of a Church of Christ*, 122.

²³*Ibid.*, 128.

²⁴Helwys, *Declaration of Faith*, 122.

Reason is rendered, *ver. 7. For a Bishop must be blameless.*” The obvious conclusion was that “*Paul’s* Judgment is, that a Bishop and an Elder is all one.” Grantham explained that the various terms for the same office “doth import the variety of the Work, both to take care, oversee the Flock, to feed and rule it.”²⁵

During the eighteenth century, though, evidence reveals that at least some of the New Connexion of General Baptist churches did indeed divide their elders into pastoral elders and ruling elders. For instance, in the section entitled “The State of the Churches” in *The Minutes of an Association of General Baptists, held at Leicester on April 27-28, 1786*, five churches, out of the total of twenty-one, noted that they each had one pastor and one or more ruling elders. Most of the churches, though, either did not mention the status of their elders or acknowledged that they were at present without a pastor.²⁶

With the exception of a few churches, the common practice of Particular Baptists appears to have provided for no distinction among elders. The Second London Confession simply stated that the officers of the church, “to be continued to the end of the World, are Bishops or Elders and Deacons.”²⁷ Nehemiah Cox offered this common explanation:

And it is evident the Holy Ghost intends no distinction, or preeminence of Office among those that bear these Characters, by any of these different Terms [elders, bishops, overseer, and pastors and teachers], but they are all suited to the same Office in its different respects: These Ministers are sometimes called *Elders*, because of their gravity, and precedency in the House of God, perhaps with some respect to the Paternal Authority and Preeminence of the Heads of Families, and Elders of the People amongst in *Israelites* of old; and at other times *Bishops* or *Overseers*, because their Work is to *take the oversight of the Flock*, and to acquit themselves as faithful *Watchmen*, who *watch* for the Souls of the People committed to their Trust, that they may give an account of them to the great Shepherd with joy, and not with grief: And because it is incumbent on them *to feed the Church* with the Words of Eternal Life, and to open the Mind of God to them from the Scriptures,

²⁵Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book 2: 121.

²⁶Dan Taylor, chair, *The Minutes of an Association of General Baptists, Held at Leicester, the 26th and 27th Days of April, M.DCC.LXXXVI* (1786).

²⁷*Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren in London and the Country*, 266.

that they may by their Ministry be instructed unto his Kingdom; they are also stiled *Pastors and Teachers*.²⁸

Keach, likewise, denied the division of elders into pastors and ruling elders. Keach began his answer to the question by offering an interesting concession: “There might be such in the primitive apostolical church.” Whether there *had been* such an office, however, provided no justification for there *continuing to be* such an office: “But we see no ground to believe it an abiding office, to continue in the church, but [it] was only temporary.” Keach provided two reasons for this conclusion: “1. Because we have none of the qualifications of such elders mentioned, or how to be chosen,” and “2. Because we read not particularly what their work and business is, or how distinct from preaching elders; though we see not but the church may (if she sees meet) choose some able and discreet brethren to be ‘helps in government.’”²⁹

As did most Baptists, Keach indicated the desirability of a plurality of elders in each church: “A Church thus constituted ought forthwith to choose them a pastor, elder or elders, and deacons, (we reading of no other officers, or offices abiding in the church).”³⁰ Evidently, if a church failed to have enough qualified men to serve as elders, the ordaining of a single pastor was permissible: “Therefore such are very disorderly churches who have no pastor or pastors ordained, they acting not according to the rule of the gospel, having something wanting.”³¹ Nehemiah Cox explicitly called for a plurality of elders: “The particular Charge given to *Titus* is, To *ordain Elders in every City*: This is to be explained by conference with *Act. 14.23*. where the practice of the Apostles themselves is recorded, *And having ordained them Elders in every Church, &c.* κατὰ πολὺν and κατ’

²⁸Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin [sic]*, 18.

²⁹Benjamin Keach, *Glory of a True Church, And its Discipline display'd* (London: John Robinson, 1668), 9.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 6.

³¹*Ibid.*

ἐκκλησίαν is the same in these Texts.”³² Cox explained that “the Converts in every City were not then so numerous but they might conveniently come together in one place for the Worship of God; and so to ordain them Elders in *every City*, was to do it in *every Church*.”³³

Commenting on Philippians 1:1, John Gill, the foremost English Baptist pastor-theologian of the eighteenth century, continued the common Particular Baptist understanding that “‘bishops’ were the pastors, elders, and overseers of the church, for a bishop and an elder is one and the same; (see Acts 20:17, 28); where the elders of the church at Ephesus are called ‘overseers’ or ‘bishops’; for the same word is used there as here; and the Syriac version here renders the word by ܐܘܠܝܘܬܝܢ, ‘elders.’” Such officers were not to be divided into two classes, as Gill implied: “And they design no other than common and ordinary pastors; who have the name of elders from their age, gravity, and seniority; and that of bishops and overseers from the nature of their office, which is to feed, watch, inspect, and take the oversight of the flock, minister sound doctrine to them, and preserve them from error and heresies.” Gill expressed the need for a plurality of elders, if such churches were large enough to require more than one elder. He wrote, “It seems by this, and the instance of the church at Ephesus, that there were, and so may be, where there is necessity for it, more pastors or bishops than one in a church.” The text, though, could be interpreted otherwise, but the interpretation was unlikely: “Unless it can be thought that there were more churches than one in each of these cities; or that the pastors of adjacent churches are here included; neither of which seem to be a clear case, but the contrary.” Even then, however, “these pastors or bishops were all upon an equal foot; one had not any authority or power over another, or more authority than another;

³²Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin [sic]*, 5.

³³*Ibid.*, 5.

they were not metropolitan or diocesan bishops, but pastors of a particular church; and were neither lords over one another, nor of God's heritage."³⁴

Even though most Baptists held that there was no division of elders into preaching and ruling elders, some Baptists did evidently see that one elder would serve as “first among equals.” Hanserd Knollys, who had signed the First London Confession, held that “not all [elders are] of equal Dignity and Authority” and supported his claim from the Scriptures, the “ancients,” as well as “*Modern Divines*, and Protestant Writers of good esteem and approbation.”³⁵ Knollys concluded:

I would not be misunderstood, therefore I will take liberty to tell the Reader, That this Priority, Presidence, and Pre-eminence of any one Bishop above other Bishops, Pastors, Teachers, Presbyters, or Elders, and Ministers of Christ, is not any *Lordly* Prelacy, with *coercive* Power over the Conscience, or *Dominion* over the Faith of God's Clergy But I mean and intend anyone of the Bishops, Pastors, Teachers, Presbyters, or Elders, who are, or shall by the Consent, Approbation and Choice of the rest be appointed, ordained, and set over hem as *Chief* Bishop or Presbyter of the Church in any City and Villages adjacent, who for Order sake in Gospel-Government, hath Priority, Pre-eminence, and Authority above the rest of the Presbyters or Bishops of the same Church, not alone, *nor without them*, but when *Convened* with them, to Act, Rule, Guide, Order and Govern with their Consent, Suffrage and Assistance, according to the Laws of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Constitutions and Commandments, the Practice and Example of his holy Apostles, *Act. 15.2, 6, 19, 22.*³⁶

³⁴John Gill, *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments: Philippians* [CD-ROM] (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1999), 6.

³⁵Hanserd Knollys, *The World that Now is; and the World that is to Come: Or the First and Second Coming of Jesus Christ* (London: Tho. Snowden, 1681), 57–61.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 68–69. James M. Renihan has a different and worthy understanding of Knollys' position. He states, “This priority [of one minister above the others] was not, however, expressed within the eldership of a local church. It was, based on his [Knollys'] unusual view that all of the congregation in one city should be considered as part of the one ‘church’ in that city, the choice of one elder from the different congregations to have precedence in the one church there. . . . This position is very unusual for Baptists, and I can find no evidence to demonstrate that it was ever put into practice among them. Knollys' view resembles the episcopalian structure of the National Church far more than the Independency with which the Baptists are commonly associated.” James M. Renihan, “The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675–1705: The Doctrine of the Church in the Second London Baptist Confession as Implemented in the Subscribing Churches” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1997), 204–05. While Renihan may be correct, one would think that some other Baptist would have written in opposition of Knollys' view. If, on the other hand, the view presented above (that Knollys represents an elder being chosen as “the first among equals”) is correct, the silence from all quarters may indicate that this was common practice within each congregation. One recognizes, of course, that arguments from silence are not the strongest, and yet there appears to be no extant written response to Knollys' position.

Whether stated or not, Baptists apparently operated with such an understanding because, almost without exception, their churches designated one ruler as *pastor* or *minister* while listing the other ministerial leaders as *elders*.

The Call to the Ministry and to a Church

British Baptists allowed only for each congregation to choose its own ministers. Helwys wrote in *The English Declaration at Amsterdam* that “these Officers are to be chosen when there are persons qualified according to the rules in Christs Testament, 1. Tim. 3.2-7. Tit. 1.6-9. Act. 6.3. 4. By Election and approbacion off that Church or congregacion whereoff they are members, Act. 6.3. 4 and 14.23, with Fasting, Prayer, and Laying on off hands, Act. 13.3. and 14.23.”³⁷ In like manner, Particular Baptists, in their Confession of 1644, held that “every Church has power given them from Christ for their better well-being, to choose to themselves meet persons” as their ministers, “and that none other have power to impose them, either these or any other.”³⁸

Such a belief continued to be fundamental throughout the eighteenth century. Writing in 1777, John Ryland, Sr., explained that the government of the local church was “congregational, or what is usually stiled independent.” Such independence was not to be interpreted as an affront to the civil government or to the sovereignty of God. Rather,

by the word *independent*, we mean, that the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole fountain of all spiritual rights and power, has given us allowance and command to associate together, to incorporate ourselves into regular societies, to carry on all the parts of public worship and discipline, to choose our pastors and deacons, to receive in new members, to admonish and reprove those who violate his laws, and to exclude from all that prove incorrigible and impenitent.³⁹

³⁷Helwys, *Declaration of Faith*, 122.

³⁸*The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists*, 166.

³⁹Cited in T. S. H. Elwyn, “Particular Baptists of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association as Reflected in the Circular Letters 1765–1820,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 37 (1997): 7–8.

No person or body outside of the local church could interfere with that church's choice of its leaders.

That an inward call to preach the gospel was recognized early in Baptist life is seen in Benjamin Cox's *Appendix* to the First London Confession.⁴⁰ He wrote: "A disciple gifted and enabled by the Spirit of Christ to preach the Gospel, and stirred up to this service by the same Spirit, bringing home to his soule the command of Christ in his word for the doing of this worke, is a man authorized and sent by Christ to preach the Gospel, see *Luke* 19.12, &c. *Mark* 16.15. and *Matt.* 28.19. compared with *Acts* 8.4. *Philip.* 1.14. 3. *Ioh.* 7." Such men were to be esteemed: "And those gifted disciples which thus preach Jesus Christ who came in the flesh, are to be looked upon as men sent and given of the Lord; 2 *Ioh.* 4.2. *Rom.* 10.15. *Ephes.* 4.11, 12, 13." Proof of God's approval of their ministry would be in the lives of their converts: "And they which are converted from unbelieve and false-worship, and so brought into Church-fellowship by such Preachers according to the will of *Christ*, are a seale of their ministry, 1 *Cor.* 9.2." These preachers, though not officers of a particular church, were to play a leading role in newly established churches:

And such preachers of the Gospel may not only lawfully administer Baptisme unto beleevers, and guide the action of a Church in the use of the Supper, (*Matt.* 28.19. *Acts* 8.5-12. 1 *Cor.* 10.16.) but may also call upon the Churches, and advise them to choose fit men for officers, and may settle such officers so chosen by a Church, in the places or offices to which they are chosen, by imposition of hands and prayer, *Act.* 6.3-6. *Acts* 14.23. *Titus* 1.5.⁴¹

Missing from Cox's explanation, however, was any direction concerning a local church's

⁴⁰White conjectures that Cox's work "was evidently intended not merely to expound his personal views but those of the whole group more fully in answer to certain questions which had been raised by some who had read the Confession [the revised London Confession, 1646]." B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, rev. ed. (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 73.

⁴¹Benjamin Cox, *An Appendix, to a Confession of Faith, or A more full Declaration of the Faith and Judgement of Baptized Beleevers*. (London: n.p., 1646), 10-11.

involvement in the sending out of such a preacher.⁴²

The church's duty to ordain its ministers and, by doing so, to confirm the inward calling of the candidate would be clearly maintained throughout the British Baptists' first century. Keach, in his discussion of an orderly church, provided this counsel to congregations in choosing officers: "And what kind of men they ought to be, and how qualified, is laid down by *Paul to Timothy*, and to *Titus*. Moreover, they are to take special care, that both bishops, overseers, or elders, as well as the deacons, have in some competent manner all those qualifications."⁴³ Likewise, Nehemiah Cox advocated a careful scrutiny of both the life and doctrine of the candidate for ordination. After delineating the qualifications based upon 1 Timothy and Titus, Cox wrote: "This is the Rule of Trial that all Churches are bound to have in their Eye, and diligently to attend to, in their Election of Elders." Such a "trial" had weighty repercussions: when the scrutiny is biblically carried out, "Christ approves their choice, and *the Holy Ghost makes their Overseers*; for both the Gifts, Grace, and Authority of a Gospel-Minister are from him; and no Man or society of Men under Heaven, can *de jure*, make him a Minister that Christ hath not qualified for such a Service."⁴⁴ The fact that a church has acted is not in and of itself proof that the ordained elder is qualified, "for the validity of all Church Acts depends upon, and is determined by, their conformity to the Rule of Christ's Holy Will and Testament."⁴⁵

⁴²The 1656 Somerset Confession would make no such omission: "THAT as it is an ordinance of Christ, so it is the duty of his church in his authority, to send forth such brethren as are fitly gifted and qualified through the Spirit of Christ to preach the gospel to the world (Acts 13:1, 2, 3; 11:22; 8:14)." Implicit in the directive is that the church sends out those whose ministerial gifts the members have tested and affirmed. *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ In the County of Somerset, and of some Churches in the Counties neer adjacent, in Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 212–13.

⁴³Benjamin Keach, *Glory of a True Church*, 6.

⁴⁴Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin [sic]*, 21.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 21. The initial ordination did not mean that the elder had attained a state of complete maturity. Cox added that "as these Gifts, Graces, and Vertues, ought to be in some good degree visible in him that is ordained to Eldership, before that Charge be committed to him; so after his Ordination it

Thomas Grantham also affirmed the duty and responsibility of the local church to ordain with great care those who would be gospel ministers. He succinctly lays out the procedure for ordination:

That such who first orderly comes into Christs Church, and waiting there attains to degrees of Christianity, rightly qualified, and competently gifted by Gods Spirit, ought to teach in the Church, and as occasion serves, to preach to the world (being approved by the Church so to do); And that from among such some are to be chosen by the Church, and ordained by fasting and prayer, and laying on of hands, for the work of the Ministry, such so Ordained, we own as Ministers of the Gospel.⁴⁶

Grantham sets down a logical pattern: a man must be a baptized believer, he must attain some degree of spiritual maturity, he must give evidence of being gifted for the task, and he must be approved by the church to teach both within and without so that his gift may be tried. Those men who give evidence of a calling by God during this period of testing would therefore be chosen and ordained with due gravity for the gospel ministry.

Qualifications centered upon a man's doctrinal beliefs and personal godliness. Ministers were required to be godly examples. In addition to the unscriptural offices of the Church of England, the ungodliness of the established church's ministers provoked great consternation among Baptists. Terrill, having listed many of the extra-biblical offices of the Church of England, provided this assessment of its ministers' godlessness: "Under whom y^e Spirit of God in his People groaned, and were in paine to be delivered, earnestly waiting for y^e manifestations of y^e sonn of God; but instead of further Reformation, nothing but Prophanation of y^e Lord's Day, and a Booke of Sports sett forth and allowed against which y^e Spirit of God in many of his people testified."⁴⁷

behooves him perpetually to endeavor the giving of a more abundant proof of them in himself, by a daily increase in their Exercise." Ibid.

⁴⁶Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, 64.

⁴⁷Hayden, *Records of a Church in Bristol*, 82. Hayden explains the "Booke of Sports": "Issued first by James I in 1617 for the use of Lancashire magistrates, it defined the recreations which were permissable on Sundays. In 1618 the declaration was extended to the whole country, and minister were required to read it from their pulpits. It was re-issued by Charles I in 1633, and all clergy who refused to read it were deprived of their livings. The measure roused considerable opposition from Puritans with a

Baptist churches examined intently the lives of those who would be their ministerial officers.

The examination of the candidate's beliefs was of grave importance. Though writing of ministers generally and not necessarily of ministerial candidates specifically, Edward Drapes emphasized the necessity of doctrine. In answer to the query "*But what are the marks of those true Ministers that wee may know them,*" Drapes answered, "The onely true ground of a visible judging or discerning them, is by their doctrine: therefore *John saith, Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits: Hereby know yee the spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: that is to say, by trying the doctrines brought unto you, you shall be able to judge from whence the Preachers come.*"⁴⁸ Throughout their early history Baptists were castigated for having an improperly trained ministry.⁴⁹ Though possessing training in the arts was not a priority of many Baptists, the understanding of doctrine was. Grantham spoke for many Baptists with his rejection of the emphases of the "approved" schools:

But all such as come not first, to repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus, and so Baptized in his Name, for Remission of sins: But are only brought up in the Schools of humane Learning, to the attaining humane Arts, and variety of Languages, with many vain curiosities of speech: Seeking rather the gain of large rev-

strong sense of the Sabbath, and in 1643 the book was burned publicly with the consent of Parliament." Ibid.

⁴⁸Edward Drapes, *Gospel-Glory proclaimed before the Sonnes of Men, In the Visible and Invisible Worship of God* (London: n.p., 1649), 93. White writes: "Edward Drapes was one of the first Calvinistic Baptists to attempt to expound their ecclesiology in any detailed way in his *Gospel-Glory proclaimed before the Sonnes of Men.*" White, *English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 145.

⁴⁹Gordon Kingsley explains, "Regarded as more dangerous than exclusivism, however, was the employment of a lay ministry, acting without proper training or authority. Very few of the early Baptist ministers had a theological education (none of the signees of the 1644 Particular Baptist Confession were so trained, for example); and men who were 'called by the spirit to preach' simply did so, meanwhile supporting themselves in their secular trade or business. For Baptists' opponents, however, 'that over great confidence that many have, that they are ruled by the spirit' [quoted from *The Arraignment, Tryall, Conviction, and Confession of Francis Deane*], was a symptom of advanced anarchy, an intolerable state in which 'every man at his pleasure taketh upon him to be the Lord's Embassadour' [quoted from Ephraim Padgett's *Heresiography: or, A description of the Heretickes and Sectaries of these latter times*]." Gordon Kingsley, "Opposition to Early Baptists," *Baptist History and Heritage* 4, no. 1 (1969): 23–24.

enues then the gain of souls to God, such we utterly deny, for that they have need rather to be taught themselves, then fit to teach others.⁵⁰

As indicated above, the ordination of a man to a ministerial office was seen as a solemn undertaking. Helwys prescribed that the election and approval of elders be done “with Fasting, Prayer, and Laying on off hands, Act. 13.3. and 14.23.”⁵¹ Similarly, the General Baptist “Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations” directed that “Fasting and Prayer ought to be used, and laying on of hands, for the Ordaining of servants or Officers to attend about the service of God; *Acts* 13.3.”⁵² The Second London Confession required that the chosen elder be “Solemnly set apart by Fasting and Prayer, with imposition of hands of the Eldership of the Church, if there be any before Constituted therein.”⁵³ Keach wrote that, after a church had approved the qualifications of certain men for the office, the church would proceed to ordination: “after in a day of solemn prayer and fasting, that they have elected them, (whether pastor, &c. or deacons) and they accepting the office, must be ordained with prayer, and laying on of hands of the eldership; being first proved, and found meet and fit person for so sacred an office.”⁵⁴

Baptists were warned not to allow a potential candidate’s spiritual enthusiasm or notable abilities lead them to ordain an unworthy man. Putting such a man into the ministry could do incalculable harm. T. Blundell of Northampton, writing an associational circular letter in 1796, explained that a man “under the influence of the former [enthusiasm] has supposed himself to be divinely inspired; and that every impression of a text of scripture upon his mind must be the true meaning of it, taught him by the Holy

⁵⁰Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book 2: 64.

⁵¹Helwys, *Declaration of Faith*, 122.

⁵²*The Faith and Practice of Thirty Congregations, Gathered According to the Primitive Pattern*, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 187.

⁵³*Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren in London and the Country*, 266.

⁵⁴Benjamin Keach, *Glory of a True Church*, 6.

Spirit himself. Hence he neglects to consult the genuine meaning of scripture, and utters for God's word his own wild and indigested conceits." Unfortunately, too many congregations, Blundell lamented, were all too ready to be led by "such characters." A similarly "pernicious" situation was "the substitution of talents in the place of principle." The reliance upon natural talent instead of searching holy writ, Blundell observed, "is an evil of magnitude in the present age." He explained, "The more talents any man possesseth, whose leading views are at variance with the oracles of God, the greater mischief he is likely to accomplish; and all who any way encourage such preaching assist in planting a battery against the City of God, and partake of the guilt of destroying souls." Propagating such views was no mere difference of interpretation among godly men: "The dark soul of a publick teacher has even been the chosen habitation of the father of lies; because from thence he can propagate error with the least suspicion, and consequently to the greatest advantage."⁵⁵

The gravity given by a church to its call of a pastor is seen in this copy of the Broadmead church's call to Thomas Hardcastle:

Wee, whose names are underwritten, together with y^e rest of that Church of Christ (of which Mr. Thomas Ewins, lately deceased, was formerly Pastor,) being Assembled together, after seekeing y^e Lord by Prayer, have Unanimously Elected and chosen you, (our honoured and dearly beloved brother in y^e Lord,) Mr. Thomas Hardcastle, to be our Minister and Pastor, under our greate Shepherd, y^e Lord Jesus Christ, According to his Holy Command in Sacred Scripture; to Administer his word and Gospell Ordinances unto us, To y^e End we may yield all Sincere Obedience to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who died at Jerusalem, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, that in love we might serve him without fear in holinesse and Righteousness all y^e dayes of our life. And therefore we, through Infinite and rich grace, haveing obtained that wonderfull Mercy to be a Church of Christ, and by him alone preserved unto this day, And conscious of our duty Recorded in 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17, 18, Matthew xviii. 20; Matt. xxviii. 18, 19; Acts ii. 41, 42; with Ephesians iv. from 3 to 16 verse; 1 Corinth. xii. 28; Titus i. 5; with Acts xiv. 23; Acts vi. 5; and Acts xiii. 2, 3—Now, in Pursuance of this our Duty and privilege, Wee do hereby Testifie and, declare our joynt and solemne Call to you, our dearly beloved brother, Mr. Thomas Hardcastle aforesaid, to be our Pastor. Given under our hands y^e 29th of y^e 3d Month, An^o Dom. 1671.⁵⁶

⁵⁵T. S. H. Elwyn, "Particular Baptists of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association as Reflected in the Circular Letters 1765–1820," *The Baptist Quarterly* 36 (1996): 374.

⁵⁶Terrill, *The Records of a Church of Christ*, 130–31.

Following are the names of three elders, three deacons, one deaconess, and ninety-one other members.⁵⁷ Baptists recognized that the choice of leader carried with it eternal ramifications. Consequently, such a decision must be taken with the utmost care.

The Responsibilities of Ministers to Their Congregations

Baptists throughout this period viewed the ministry as a work, a labor to which a man diligently gave himself. Few would have disagreed with this mid-eighteenth century explanation by John Gill:

The ministry of the word is a work; it is called “the work of the ministry”, Ephesians 4:13[;] it is a ministering work, a service, and not a dominion; such who are employed in it have not the dominion, neither over the faith nor over the practice of men, no further than enjoined by the word of God: the ministry is a service, as the word imports, and not a “sinecure”; there is business to be done, and a great deal of it; enough to employ all the time and talents of ministers, and no room nor leisure to indulge to sleepiness, to laziness, and slothfulness: and it is a laborious work; the ministers of the gospel are not to be loiterers, but labourers in Christ’s vineyard; they labour in the word and doctrine, which requires much reading of the scriptures, frequent prayer, and constant meditation and “study”, in preparing for their work, which is a great “weariness to the flesh”; and much “zeal”, fervour, and affection in the performance of it, which is attended with much fatigue, and an expense of the physical spirits; to which the apostle may have some respect, 2 Corinthians 12:15 and the ministers of the gospel are not only fellow labourers with one another, but with the Lord himself in his church; the manuring, cultivation, planting, and watering his vineyard, and the building up of his people in a church state, are laborious services; so that if the Lord did not go forth working with them, it would be to no purpose; “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth”, which are both parts of the gospel ministry, but “God that giveth the increase”, success to their ministrations; “And except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it”, 1 Corinthians 3:7,9.⁵⁸

As seen in Gill’s words, the ministry was not for men looking for an easy occupation.

⁵⁷Terrill, *The Records of a Church of Christ*, 131–32. For additional articles dealing with issues of preparation for the ministry, calling to the ministry and to a church, and ordination, see F. G. Hastings, “Andrew Fuller and Ministerial Removals,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 8 (1936–37): 11–17; Seymour J. Price, “Abraham Booth’s Ordination, 1769,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 9 (1938–39): 242–46; Lionel F. Higgs, “The Calling and Ordination of Ministers in the Eighteenth Century,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 16 (1955–56): 277–79; Harry Foreman, “Baptist Provision for Ministerial Education in the 18th Century,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 27 (1977–78): 358–69; Stephen Copson, “Two Ordinations at Bridlington in 1737,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 33 (1989–90): 146–49.

⁵⁸John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity; or a System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures* [CD-ROM] (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1999), 1844.

The ministry was a wearying work, and one about which one could not be assured of outward success. Indeed, as Gill noted, it was “God that giveth the increase.”

Benjamin Beddome also noted “the precariousness and uncertainty of success,” and yet such uncertainty was not to diminish the intensity of the labor. Beddome wrote, “‘We have toiled all the night,’ say the disciples, ‘and caught nothing;’ and thus may ministers do, nay, many nights and days; but one happy draught, at last, will be a sufficient recompense for all their labour.” Beddome noted that “sometimes the gospel makes astonishing progress,” but such a harvest is not usual. “In general, ministers fish as with an angling rod, and it is but now and then that they win a soul to Christ.” He maintained that “the most faithful and zealous, the most skilful and industrious, are not always the most useful.” Continuing the fishing analogy, he illustrated, “The net or hook sometimes breaks, and the fish which seemed to be caught makes its escape; and thus it is in fishing for souls.” He applied the illustration to contemporary ministry: “Convictions are lost, and impressions wear off, hopeful prospects vanish, and those who seemed to have escaped the pollutions that are in the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, return like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”⁵⁹ Ministers were required to exercise faithfulness: God would

⁵⁹Benjamin Beddome, *Sermons Printed from the Manuscripts of the Late Rev. Benjamin Beddome, A.M. of Bouton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire* (London: William Ball, 1885), 305. Similarly, in a charge delivered in 1796 at the ordination of W. Belsher in Worcester, John Ryland maintained, “We cannot ensure the fruit of our labors, but he can do it infallibly; and he will accept, and reward, those whom he makes faithful, whether their success equal their expectations, or not.” John Ryland and S. Pearce, *The Duty of Ministers to be nursing Fathers to the Church; and the Duty of Churches to regard Ministers as the Gift of Christ* (n.p., 1797), 33. S. Pearce delivered the sermon at Belsher’s ordination. He observed, “You are not unacquainted, brethren, with the difficulties which lie in the way of our *success*. The labor of the Carthaginian general is not to be compared with ours! What are the stony Alps to a *stony heart!* or what the Roman legions to the powers of darkness—‘to spiritual wickedness in high places!’ Not merely to inform the judgments—to excite the passions—to conquer the prejudices of education, and to reform the manners of men, are before us—a more arduous task presents itself. My brethren, *our* point is not gained without a *change of heart!* a renovation of the whole soul! a conversion from the power of Satan unto God! But who is sufficient for these things? Can *human* energy effect them? Nay, my brethren, we are compelled to own that ‘we are not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves—all our sufficiency is of God.’ . . . Our only encouragement to labor, and our only hope of success, arise from the promise of God, and as a mean of enjoying it, the prayers of our people.” *Ibid.*, 48–49.

take care of the outward success.

Succinctly put, the duty of ministers to their congregations was to watch after the souls of their members. Helwys wrote that elders “by their office do especially feed the flock concerning their soules, Act. 20.28.”⁶⁰ The London Confession of 1644 stated that “the Ministers aforesaid, lawfully called by the Church, where they are to minister, ought to continue in their calling, according to Gods Ordinance, and carefully to feed the flock of Christ committed to them, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”⁶¹ The Second London Confession is only minimally more specific, utilizing the words of Acts 6:4: “The work of Pastors being constantly to attend the service of *Christ*, in his Churches, in the Ministry of the Word, and Prayer, with watching for their Souls, as they that must give an account to him.”⁶² Hanserd Knollys summarized that

the Office of a *Pastor, Bishop, and Presbyter, or Elder* in the Church of God, is to take the Charge, Oversight, and Care of those Souls which the Lord Jesus Christ hath committed to them, to feed the flock of God, to watch for their Souls, to Rule, Guide and Govern them (*by virtue of their Commission, and Authority received from Christ, Mat. 28.18, 19, 20. & Titus 2.15.*) according to the Laws, Constitutions and Ordinances of the Gospel.⁶³

While Baptists may have delineated the tasks of the elder or pastor in various ways, the over-arching category of responsibility was to watch over the souls of their

⁶⁰Helwys, *Declaration of Faith*, 121.

⁶¹*The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists*, 166.

⁶²*Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren in London and the Country*, 266.

⁶³Knollys, *The World that Now is*, 56–57. Revealing the continuity of British Baptist thought throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in 1778 Richard Hopper, pastor of the Friar Lane Church in Nottingham, concisely presented his understanding of the work of the minister: “Those of us who are invested with any office in the Church, ought seriously to consider the obligations under which we lie. Such who have the honour to be ministers and pastors in the Churches, ought diligently to feed the Church of God, by preaching the precious truths of the gospel, administering ordinances, &c. To study to approve themselves unto God and men, to be faithful to their charge, to dwell on the more substantial parts of religion, able to defend the truths of Christ against undermining Hereticks; to be clear, concise and spiritual; their stile ought to be manly, nervous and plain: in short, every part of their conduct whether in preaching, administering ordinances, or visiting their people, ought to indicate the unutterable dignity, value and importance of their great and sacred employ.” Elwyn, “Particular Baptists of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association (II),” 9.

members, with preaching being the foremost duty. In listing the duties “of the work of a Pastor, Bishop or Overseer,” Keach maintained that “the work of a pastor is to preach the word of christ [*sic*], or to feed the flock, and to administer all the ordinances of the gospel which belong to his sacred office, and to be faithful and laborious therein, studying to shew himself approved unto God, ‘a work-man that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.’” Such a task could not be left in the hands of the inept: “He is a steward of the mysteries of God, therefore ought to be a man of good understanding and experience, being sound in the faith, and one that is acquainted with the mysteries of the gospel: Because he is ‘to feed the people with knowledge and understanding.’” Such a work required the minister to “be faithful and skilful to declare the mind of God, and diligent therein, also to ‘preach in season and out of season;’ God having committed unto him the ministry of reconciliation, a most choice and sacred trust.” Showing the primacy of this work, Keach asked rhetorically, “What interest hath God greater in the world which he hath committed unto men than this?”⁶⁴

Nehemiah Cox also held to the primacy of preaching, combining the task with pastoral praying. Maintaining that the duty of the elder is “to stand in some respects, and to act in some things, as a *middle Person* betwixt God and the People,” Cox held that the preacher is to give himself to prayer—“the Mouth of the People unto God”—and to preaching—“the Mouth of God to the People.” Cox enjoined preachers to “1. Let your Care be, to deal with the Souls and Confessions of Men, as knowing that it is the Salvation of Souls which you are to labour after, a Care of Souls that is committed to you, and an account of them that you must make to God,” “2. That being accomplished, Be Sure that you speak *as the Oracles of God*, and deliver that doctrine to the People which is drawn from the pure Fountain of God’s Word,” and “3. Remember that the Duty of your Place is, *Not to preach your selves but Christ Jesus the Lord*; His Glory must be the Mark

⁶⁴Benjamin Keach, *Glory of a True Church*, 6.

aimed at by all your Labours, and his Grace the principal Subject of all your Discourses; It is not a Philosophic Harangue that will save the Souls of Men, but the *preaching of Christ Crucified*.”⁶⁵

In caring for souls, preaching was central and was given special attention. Drapes provided four principles for “the manner how it [preaching] must be administered”: First, no room could be given for the wavering, changing opinion of men. Preaching must be done “Infallibly, Certainly; Assuredly the Gospell they must preach must not be, *Yea and Nay, but Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus*: they must preach the words of God, the words of truth.” No room was given for the opinion of man; only that which communicates the Word of God is true. Second, preaching must be “in the name of God: They must not goe forth in their own authority, but in Christs: Therefore are they called Ambassadors of Christ.” No preacher preaches on his own accord. He is sent by God with the good news of Christ. Third, the preaching is to be performed “plainly; *Not in the enticing words of mans wisdom, but in demonstration of spirit and power*; in words easy to be understood.” Fourth, “it [the Bible] must be preached fully; The word of the Gospell must be declared fully, not onely for conversion, but for building up in the things of God; whoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; teaching them to observe all the commands of Christ.”⁶⁶

As shown above, preaching was not the only duty of ministers in watching over the souls of their members. Only those who faithfully conducted pastoral visitation could know the spiritual condition of their flock. Keach wrote, “A pastor is to visit his flock, to know their state, and to watch over them, to support the weak, and to strengthen the feeble-minded, and succour the tempted, and to reprove them that are unruly.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin* [sic], 22–26.

⁶⁶Drapes, *Gospel-Glory proclaimed before the Sonnes of Men*, 97–98.

⁶⁷Benjamin Keach, *Glory of a True Church*, 6.

In addition, elders must be engaged in, as Nehemiah Cox wrote, “the due exercise of *Discipline* in the Church, and the right ordering of all things pertaining to the Government thereof.” Watching over souls required the pastor to remember that “he is the *Overseer* of God’s House, and is to *rule* therein, not in a despotical or lordly way, but by the Testament of Christ, as becomes a *Minister*, and as one set over the *Lord’s Heritage* who are a voluntary People, and to be governed not with force and rigor, but with their own consent.”⁶⁸ Grantham similarly explained, “The Government of Christ of the Church of God, is committed to the Bishops and Elders, they are therefore to exhort, reprove, rebuke with all authority, to bind and loose in conjunction with the Church of God, as those that sin against God are found to be penitent or obdurate respectively, *John* 20.23. *1 Cor.* 5.3, 4, 5.”⁶⁹ An elder who refused to be engaged in necessary discipline would have been considered unworthy of leading the church of God.⁷⁰

Certainly among the principle duties of elders was the administration of the ordinances: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Keach explained that the ordinances were no mere ceremony: “This appertains to that Dispensation of the Mysteries of God that is committed to him [the bishop or elder], and to that feeding of the Sheep of Christ which is required of him.”⁷¹

Nehemiah Cox provided these sobering words for elders: “Consider, That it is the Care and Charge of Souls that is committed to you; not the Temporal Concerns of this Life, but the Affairs of Eternal Life are the Business of your Stewardship: Now one Soul is of more worth than all the World, because immortal, and made for an Eternal State.”

⁶⁸Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordination* [sic], 27.

⁶⁹Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, Book 2: 123.

⁷⁰For an extensive examination of a case of church discipline involving accusations against one who would be ordained a minister, see G. Reid Doster, “Discipline and Ordination at Berkhamsted General Baptist Church, 1712–1718,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 27 (1977–78): 138.

⁷¹Benjamin Keach, *Glory of a True Church*, 26.

Matters such as increasing personal wealth, growing in societal status, or attaining civic reformation were not matters of concern for the pastor of a church of Christ. The pastor must be consumed with the state of the souls under his care. Cox recognized the gravity of such a responsibility: “The influence that the Ministry of the Word hath into the future state of Men, made *Paul* say, as in an extasie, *Who is sufficient for these Things!*” The magnitude of such a responsibility should make men quake at the prospect of taking the office of elder. Cox meditated upon the value of those souls: “They are the souls of Men that God thought it worth the giving of his own Son to redeem, and Christ thought not much to shed his precious Blood for; the Church is a Society of Men which God hath purchased to himself by his own blood, and now committed to your Care, and appointed you to watch for their Souls.” Cox concluded with this warning: “Therefore take heed to your selves, and to your Flock; for if any of them perish in an evil way thro’ your neglect of Duty towards them, They die in their sins, but God will require their Blood at your hand.”⁷²

The Responsibilities of Congregations to Their Ministers

The London Confession of 1644 prescribed that “the due maintenance of the Officers aforesaid, should be the free and voluntary communication of the Church, that

⁷²Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin [sic]*, 31–32. Thorton Elwys provides the following summary of the view of John Ryland, Sr., concerning the work of the minister: “The first [order of church officers], Pastors, Elders, or Bishops, are appointed and ordained to represent to the people the whole system of truth in the law and the gospel in the most striking and amiable light; to lead worship of the whole church, in all its branches; to administer all public ordinances; to take the sense and vote of the church with respect to the admission of new members; and to execute every part of the people’s determinations.” Elwyn, “Particular Baptists of the Northamptonshire Baptist Association (II),” 8. For additional eighteenth-century expressions of the work of the ministry, see Dan Taylor, *The Faithful and Wise Steward* (Leeds: Griffith Wright, 1766); Beddome’s sermon “On the Duty of Ministers to Promote Their People’s Joy,” in Beddome, *Sermons from the Manuscripts of Benjamin Beddome*, 356–62; *The Duties of Church Members briefly considered; in a circular letter from The Baptist Mnisters and Messengers, Assembled at Leicester, June 2 and 3, 1778*, moderated by Richard Hopper (Nottingham: G. Burbage, 1778); Ryland and Pearce, *The Duty of Ministers and the Duty of Churches*.

For an examination of the preparation and practice of British Baptist preaching during the early eighteenth century, see Raymond Brown, “Baptist Preaching in Early 18th Century England,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 31 (1985–86): 4–22.

according to Christ's Ordinance, they that preach the Gospel, should live on the Gospel and not by constraint to be compelled from the people by a forced Law."⁷³ While Particular Baptists opposed the power of the state to levy support for ministers, they did believe that the duty of the congregation was to care for the material needs of their ministers. The Somerset Confession (1656), believed to be the work of Thomas Collier,⁷⁴ explicitly stated: "That such a ministry labouring in the word and doctrine, have a power to receive a livelihood of their brethren, whose duty it is to provide a comfortable subsistence for them, if they be able, to whom for Christ's sake they are servants (I Cor. 9:4, 7; I Tim. 5:17, 18)." The confession, though, provided for an exception: "Yet is commendable in cases of necessity, for them, for example sake, and that they may be able to support the weak, to labour and work with their hands (Acts 20:24, 25)."⁷⁵

While early General Baptists believed that churches were to provide for the material necessities of their ministers, they intended for such maintenance to be on a voluntary basis by the members of the church. The 1660 Confession was typical of General Baptist statements:

That the Ministers of Christ, that have freely received from God, ought freely to Minister to others, I *Cor.* 9. 17. and that such who have spiritual things, freely Ministered unto them, ought freely to communicate necessary things to the Ministers, (upon the account of their charge) I *Cor.* 9. 11. *Gal.* 6. 6. And as for . . . Tyths, or any forced Maintenance, we utterly deny to be the Maintenance of Gospel Ministers.⁷⁶

Particular Baptist Benjamin Keach, who had begun his ministry as a General Baptist, had published in 1689 a monograph entitled *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance*

⁷³*The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptists*, 166.

⁷⁴Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, 200. Lumpkin describes Collier as "the great Particular Baptist apostle to the West of England . . . , a lay-preacher of extraordinary gifts and energy. Ibid.

⁷⁵*A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ In the County of Somerset*, 212.

⁷⁶*A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith*, 230. Grantham uses practically the same wording, obviously borrowing from the 1660 Confession. Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus*, 70. The "Tyths" spoken of were probably government-imposed levies to support the Church.

Vindicated. Subtitled *Wherein, A Regular Ministry in the Churches, is first Asserted, and the Objections against a Gospel Maintenance for Ministers, Answered*, Keach's work provided a biblical and practical apology for churches' providing material support for their ministers. Keach first established scriptural support for a regular ministry. He argued: "It cannot be denied but Christ hath, and ought to have, a stated and regular Ministry in the Churches, according to his own Institution: Who himself, when he entered upon his Ministry, here on Earth, did call forth Apostles and Disciples to bear that part of the Work with him, which he called them to, and fitted them for: See *Mark*, 3.13. to the 9." Keach went on to provide support from the gospels and the epistles for a regular ministry. He went on to establish that "Christ being now in Heaven, and an extraordinary Call being ceased, the Scriptures being a perfect and standing Rule to the Church through all Ages, he has committed this Care to her self, according to the Power given to her . . . , to provide Ministers, for her own edification, in Obedience to his Command and Rules given in his word." Having chosen qualified men, Keach concluded, "It is very dishonourable to God, and a reproach to our *Sacred Religion* for the Churches . . . to let them lye under those unsupportable burdens, of worldly Snares and Incumbrances; without providing for them, according to the Ordination of our Lord Jesus Christ in the *New Testament*."⁷⁷

In addition, members were to hold their elders in high esteem. Nehemiah Cox wrote: "You owe to your Pastor great Love, Respect, and Honour, for his Work-sake; And God requires that you make a due [?] paiment thereof: . . . If you have a true Friend in the World, it is he that watcheth for your Souls, tells you the truth, and travels night and day to present you perfect unto God." Cox realized, though, that the duty of pastors required the confrontation of sin in the lives of their members. He counseled: "And let

⁷⁷Benjamin Keach, *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*, ed. James M. Renihan (n.p., 1998), 4–7. For an overview of Keach's monograph, see A. J. Klaiber, "The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated," *The Baptist Quarterly* 2 (1924–25): 224–31.

not his faithfulness in admonishing you, cause an abatement of your love to him; but if you love your own Salvation, let it rather raise your esteem of him.” Cox warned members tempted to recalcitrance: “Christ will not bear the contempt of his Messengers, therefore take heed that you provoke him not, by casting a scornful Eye upon them; nor rob your own Souls of the benefit of their Ministry, by entertaining evil Surmises, or undue Prejudices.”⁷⁸

Concomitantly, Cox observed, “You owe *Submission* and *Obedience* to them in the discharge of their office, and in the exercise of that Rule and Oversight which Christ hath committed to them for your Edification.; *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves*, Heb. 13.17.” This obedience, though, “is not a blind Obedience that the Apostle requires, nor such as shall suppose a Legislative Power in Church-Officers, but an orderly subjection to them acting in their Office according to the Law and Testament of Jesus Christ.” Teaching contrary to the “Reason and Judgment” of the Scriptures is not to be observed. Cox cautioned, however, that “when the Law of Christ is observed, and a conformity with that urged, by the evidence and demonstration of Truth from the Holy Scriptures, herein the Obedience of the People is justly expected; and he that thinks himself too good, or too wise, to receive Instruction, or submit to Reproof from his Pastor, ill deserves a place in any Christian Congregation.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin [sic]*, 33.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 33–34. The Somerset Confession succinctly stated that “the authority of Christ in an orderly ministry in his church, is to be submitted unto (Heb. 13:17; 2 Thes. 3:14).” *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ In the County of Somerset*, 212. Encouraging church members not only to submit to the biblical teaching of their pastor, but also with gratitude realize that his duty is not to placate his hearers but to propagate truth, Samuel Pearce wrote what should be the cry of each member of the church: “Give me the preacher who opens the folds of my heart; who accuses me, convicts me, and condemns me before God; who loves my soul too well to suffer me to go on in sin, unreprieved, through fear of giving me offence; who draws the line with accuracy, between the delusions of fancy, and the impressions of grace; who pursues me from one hiding place to another, until I am driven from every refuge of lies; who gives me no rest until he sees me, with unfeigned penitence, trembling at the feet of Jesus; and then, and not till then, soothes my anguish, wipes away my tears, and comforts me with the cordials of grace. Give me the preacher ‘who constantly affirms that they who have believed, be careful to maintain good works;’ who insists, that a life of peace and communion with God, is utterly abhorrent to the practice of iniquity; and faith-

In spite of such warnings, however, not all members of a Baptist church held godly ministers in such high esteem nor obeyed the sound teaching of Scripture. Benjamin Keach lamented: “Alas, in our days, some that would be thought to be great professors, stick not to vilify Christ’s ministers, even some of the best of men; and are so full of malice, they care not what wrong they do to their brethren, nor to the truth itself, or interest of God, and so expose themselves to a lasting shame, and their spirit, and practice, to an abhorrence.” Such behavior was nothing less than scandalous: “They are like cursed Ham who discovered his father’s nakedness; these persons violate all laws, both human and divine.”⁸⁰ Keach later added, “The glory and beauty of a congregation, is the more manifest, when the authority of the church, and the dignity of the pastoral office are maintained.”⁸¹

Having established that the minister was a gift of God to a congregation, Samuel Pearce exhorted one congregation, which had just called a pastor after a five-year period of being without pastoral leadership, to realize that ministers “ought to be highly esteemed for Christ’s sake.” Pearce argued that a faithful minister is identified with Christ and should be treated as Christ would be treated by believers. Being “possest with this idea of your minister,” he offered, “you will be always disposed to view his person

fully reminds me, that ‘if I sin, that grace may abound, my damnation is just.’ Give me the preacher who pants not for my safety only, but also for my *increase in grace*; who cautions me, ‘reproves me, rebukes me, exhorts me with all long-suffering and doctrine;’ who charges me ‘to give all diligence to add to my faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.’ Brethren, if Christ have given you such a man as this, receive him as an angel from heaven; and prize such a pastor as one of the most valuable gifts that can be imparted to the church.” Ryland and Pearce, *The Duty of Ministers and the Duty of Churches*, 56.

⁸⁰Benjamin Keach, *Glory of a True Church*, 27.

⁸¹Ibid. Nehemiah Cox would later echo Keach’s sentiment: “The Edification and Beauty of the Church is much concerned in her *Order*, not such an Order as Superstition will dictate, or litigious Nicety contend for, but such as we have already described; which sets her in a conformity with Christ’s will; and particularly the filling up of the Offices which he hath appointed, with Persons duly qualified for the administration of them, and the regular acting both of Officers and Members in their respective places.” Nehemiah Cox, *A Sermon Preached at the Ordinatoin [sic]*, 5.

and his ministry in the most favorable light; and should you perceive an imperfection in your pastor (for to absolute perfection what modern pastor can pretend, when an apostle disclaimed it?) you will either bury it in his virtues, or cover it with the mantle of your own affections.”⁸²

Conclusion

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British Baptists did not always speak with one voice on every matter concerning the ministerial office in the local church, but they did believe that the Scriptures alone provided the direction they were to follow. John Gill succinctly expressed such a view of the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures:

The scriptures are the only external guide in matters of religion; they are the way-posts we should look up unto, and take our direction from, and should steer our course accordingly: *to the law and to the testimony: if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them* [Is. viii. 20]; we should *not believe every spirit, but try them, whether they are of God* [1 John iv. 1]; and the trial should be made according to the word of God; the scriptures should be searched, as they were by the noble *Bereans*, to see whether the things delivered to consideration are so or no; the inscriptions on these way-posts should be read, which are written so plain, that he that runs may read them; and they direct to a way, in which men tho’ fools shall not err.⁸³

While the earliest Particular Baptists saw a division among ministers as did their Separatist forbears, the General Baptists from their beginning maintained that all elders were pastors. Most of the Particular Baptists would come to a similar conclusion. On the other hand, General Baptists concluded that the Scriptures called for the office of messenger. Because of their understanding of the Scriptures, however, Particular Baptists would never accept an officer over churches outside of the one to which he belonged. Whereas some Particular Baptist churches divided their elders into teaching and ruling elders, most Particular Baptists and all General Baptists, at least through the seventeenth

⁸²Ryland and Pearce, *The Duty of Ministers and the Duty of Churches*, 100. For another eighteenth-century expression of the duties of church members to their pastors, see Beddome’s sermon “On the Sources of Ministerial Delight” in Beddome, *Sermons from the Manuscripts of Benjamin Beddome*, 260–68.

⁸³Gill, *The Scriptures the only Guide in Matters of Religion*, 9–10.

century, rejected such a distinction. Some New Connexion General Baptists, however, apparently did have ruling elders. All British Baptist churches, though, did understand the eldership of the local church to be a plurality, especially if the church were large enough to need more than one elder.

Because of their understanding of the Scriptures, British Baptists believed that only the congregation had the authority to call its own officers. No one outside the church could impose officers upon a fellowship of baptized believers. The call to ministry of a church was no light-hearted affair. The inward call of the candidate must be affirmed by the congregation. The congregation would determine if a believer had been gifted by God for the work of the ministry. The life, doctrine, and abilities of the candidate for the office of elder were investigated soberly and prayerfully. After all, the congregation would be submitting to those whom they called as elders.

The duties of British Baptist ministers to their congregations all involved watching over the souls of their members. Knowing that they themselves would answer to God for the state of their people, ministers could well ask, “Who is sufficient for these things?” Proclaiming the Word of God, engaging in pastoral visitation, administering the ordinances, and overseeing church discipline were essential duties of the minister. Outward success was left in the hands of God—ministers were required to be faithful in carrying out their scriptural tasks.

In addition, congregations had responsibilities toward their ministers. They were required to supply for the material needs of their spiritual guides, at least as much as they were able to do so. Both General and Particular Baptists were adamant in their opposition to the enforcement of collections by outside bodies to provide for the ministerial material support. The Scriptures taught that it was the duty of churches to provide voluntarily for their ministers. Ministers were also to be held in high esteem, not only with outward respect but also with submission and obedience to their scriptural teaching.

British Baptists provided those in America who would follow their path with a belief in the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures to determine their faith and practice in general and their ecclesiology in particular. For these Baptists, nothing mattered more than fidelity to the Scriptures, a lesson which, as will be seen in the following chapter, colonial Baptists sought diligently to follow.

CHAPTER 4

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG AMERICAN BAPTISTS OF THE MID-SEVENTEENTH THROUGH THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURIES

British Baptists bequeathed unto American Baptists one paramount concern: the necessity of being faithful to the Scriptures in all matters of faith and practice. As seen at the outset of the previous chapter, the relationship between British and American Baptists was tightly knit. Many American Baptist elders came to the colonies from Britain, were trained in Britain, and regularly communicated with their British counterparts. The early major and influential American confessions of faith, the Philadelphia and the Charleston, were adapted from the 1689 London Confession of Faith. Consequently, one is not surprised to see the American churches emphasizing the same fidelity to the Scriptures which their British brethren emphasized. To that end, American Baptists would see a regenerate church membership as central to their understanding of the church.¹ Ministers themselves, therefore, must provide evidence of conversion and meet the biblical requirements of godly living. Once again, Baptists would differ on particulars of the office. Many churches would have a plurality of elders, with some of those

¹The Philadelphia Confession, for instance, stated: "The Members of these Churches are Saints by Calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing in and by their Profession and Walking, their Obedience unto that Call of Christ; and do willingly consent to walk together according to the Appointment of Christ, giving up themselves to the Lord and one to another, by the Will of God, in professed Subjection to the Ordinances of the Gospel." *Confession of Faith Put forth by the Elders and Brethren Of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country. Adopted by the Baptist Association met at Philadelphia, Sept. 25, 1742, in ". . . To Set Them in Order;" Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association Upon Baptists of American to 1814*, by James L. Clark (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2001), 240. The Philadelphia Confession cited in this chapter is a facsimile of the the sixth edition [1743]. For an analysis of the influence of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, see James L. Clark, ". . . To Set Them in Order;" *Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association Upon Baptists of American to 1814* (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2001).

churches distinguishing ruling elders from the pastors in the church. Because of their rapid expansion in the colonies, most churches would be led by a single elder, the pastor, and yet most acknowledged the biblical support for a plurality of elders. The chief concern of elders, though, would be caring for the souls of those under their watch. Baptists would recognize the importance of their pastors' preaching the Scriptures so that hearers might know what God required of them and that they might be comforted and strengthened during their earthly pilgrimage. Pastors would recognize the importance of knowing the needs of their people, praying for them, and seeking out the lost in hopes of conversion. Church members would be expected to support their pastors with their material possessions, prayers, kind affections, and godly living.

In a word, the surpassing criterion for ministers during this period, as it had been with their Separatist and British Baptist predecessors, was biblical fidelity. While ministers would be gratified if God smiled upon their efforts by granting visible success, they viewed such fruit as that which God provided, not that for which they were responsible. While ministers and church members viewed unfaithfulness to the Scriptures as being a cause for the lack of success, they never viewed faithfulness as guaranteeing success. Their responsibility lay in being faithful to the Word of God.

The Ministerial Office as Derived from Scripture

Baptists throughout this period continued to look to the Scriptures to determine what the office of the gospel ministry was to be. A confession of faith published by Elias Keach, son of the famous Benjamin Keach, was "the first generally-used Baptist confession of faith of which we hear in America."² Concerning the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, the confession stated, "We believe the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God, and are the only Rule of Faith, and Practice; all things

²William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 349. This confession is adapted from the 1689 London Confession, as were the Philadelphia and Charleston confessions.

being contained therein that are necessary for us to know concerning God, and our Duty unto him, and also unto all Men.”³ Consequently, all of theology in general and of ecclesiology in particular must be that which the Scriptures stated. Keach’s statement concerning “Church-Officers” was accepted by Particular Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic:

We do believe that every particular Church of Christ is independent; and that no one Church hath any Priority or Super-intendency above or over another: and that every Church ought to be *Organical*: that an *Elder*, or *Elders*, a *Deacon*, or *Deacons*, ought to be elected in every Congregation, according to those holy Qualifications laid down in the Word of God: and that the said Elders and Deacons so chosen, ought solemnly to be ordained with Prayer, and laying on of Hands of the Eldership, That such Churches as have not Officers so ordained, are disorderly, there being something still wanting.

Support for this statement was found in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:5-8; Acts 13:3; and 1 Timothy 5:22 and 4:14.⁴

³Elias Keach, *A Short Confession of Faith, Containing the Substance of All the Fundamental Articles in the Larger Confession, Put Forth by the Elders of the Baptized Churches, Owning Personal Election and Final Perseverance* (London: n.p., 1697), 5.

⁴*ibid.*, 25–26. The Charleston Association’s *Summary of Church-Discipline* similarly stated: “The ordinary officers of the church, and the only ones now existing, are, ministers and deacons, *Phi.* 1. 1. In the first gospel-churches there were other officers, such as apostles, prophets and evangelists, *1 Cor.* 12. 28. [and] *Eph.* 4. 11. who were endowed with extraordinary gifts, which were then necessary for the confirmation of the gospel, but are since become extinct. Ministers of the gospel, who are frequently called elders, bishops, pastors and teachers, are appointed by Christ to the highest office in the church; and therefore need peculiar qualifications; such as are pointed out, *1 Tim.* 3. 2.---7. and *Tit.* 1.5.---10.” Baptist Association of Charleston, *A Summary of Church-Discipline. Shewing the Qualifications and Duties, of the Officers and Members, of a Gospel-Church*, 2nd ed. (Charleston, SC: Markland, McIver, & Co., 1794), 8. That the church was to be organized scripturally continued to be a matter of concern. Oliver Hart maintained, “No machine can move regularly, when it lacks any of its main springs, or most important wheels. Neither can a church without its officers. Divested of these, the service of the house of the LORD can never be set in complete order. . . . Probably you are ready to inquire, ‘Who are the proper officers in ‘a gospel church?’ I answer, Ministers and deacons, and they only. . . . By ministers, I mean such as sustain the highest office in a gospel church. Who are indiscriminately termed bishops, pastors, teachers, elders, &c. I have chosen to style them ministers, as being the most common appellation among us, if not in scripture. Their work lies chiefly, in preaching the gospel, administering ordinances, leading and governing the church. Deacons are ‘helps’ to ministers, and their work consists, principally, in managing the outward concerns of the church.” Oliver Hart, *A Gospel Church Portrayed, and Her Orderly Service Pointed Out—a Sermon, Delivered in the City of Philadelphia at the Opening of the Baptist Association, October 4, 1791* (Trenton, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1791), 20–21. Richard Furman explained the significance of the scriptural terms used for the gospel minister: “The same officers are designed by presbyters, or elders, and bishops, or overseers, in the church: The elders of the church of Ephesus, (*Presbuterius tes ecclesias*,) which Paul sent for to Miletas, are not only stiled by him bishops, which the Holy Ghost had made, over the flock of God: (*Pneuma to agion etheto episkopous*;) but the church is called (*Poimnio*) the flock, a term which has most

Exhibiting their belief in the authority of the Scriptures, the members of the Charleston Baptist Association declared in the preface of its *Summary of Church Discipline*, “We mean not to impose our sentiments on any person whatever, or to anathematize those who differ from us in opinion. The Word of God, and no human composition, is the standard by which our principles and conduct must be tried.” The purpose of the *Summary* was to provide a biblical understanding of the qualifications and duties of both officers and members of gospel churches, but the Scriptures were to be “carefully consulted, to see whether these things be true.”⁵

Concerning the scriptural teaching of church officers, the *Summary* stated, “The ordinary officers of the church, and the only ones now existing, are ministers and deacons (Phil. 1:1). In the first gospel churches there were other officers such as apostles, prophets, and evangelists (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) who were then necessary for the confirmation of the gospel but have since become extinct.” The *Summary* explained that “ministers of the gospel, who are frequently called elders, bishops, pastors, and teachers, are appointed by Christ to the highest office in the church and therefore need peculiar qualifications such as are pointed out (1 Tim. 3:2-7 and Titus 1:5-10).”⁶

strict relation to (*Poimen*) a shepherd or pastor, and the elders are directed (*Poimainein*) to feed them as a shepherd. And in his epistle to Titus, the apostle explains what he means by the persons called *elders* in the first instance, by stiling them *bishops* in the second. As elders we behold them possessed of experience, wisdom and respectability; as bishops, invested with the oversight, or care of the church, and ‘watching for souls as those who must give account to God.’” Richard Furman, *A Sermon, on the Constitution and Order of the Christian Church, Preached Before the Charleston Association of Baptist Churches* (Charleston, SC: Markland and McIver, 1791), 19.

⁵Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 3.

⁶*Ibid.*, 31. Baptists continued to use the terms *pastor*, *minister*, *elder*, and *bishop* to designate the pastoral office in the local church because those terms were found in the Scriptures to designate the office of gospel minister. Consequently, other terms to support a hierarchical view were summarily dismissed because they were not biblical. To “Rev. Mr. Benjamin Lord, of Norwich,” Isaac Backus wrote, “You observe, that the scriptures determine that *bishops* and *presbyters*, or *elders*, are the same. . . . Well then, surely the *lord bishops*, which claim so much superiority over the *presbyters*, and act single in ordinations, are beside the scripture line, and therefore can’t transmit that line down to others.” Isaac Backus, *A Letter To the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Lord, Of Norwich; Occasioned by some harsh Things which he has lately published against Those who have dissented from his Sentiments about the Ministry, the Church, and Baptism* (Providence: William Goddard, 1764), 8.

Like their British counterparts, American Baptist churches, at least during the earlier part of this period, often had a plurality of elders. For instance, Horatio Gates Jones wrote of the Pennepek church in Pennsylvania: “During her long existence as a visible Church [1688-1866], she has had but nineteen Pastors, and in her earlier history, she had two or three Ministers at the same time, who labored together in word and doctrine as occasion offered. This arose from the fact that the ‘gifted brethren’ were brought forward at the ‘Conference meetings.’” He noted that “John Watts, Evan Morgan, Samuel Jones and Joseph Wood, were four brethren whose ‘gifts’ were thus exercised, and who were ordained to the work of the ministry, and in turn were the Pastors of the Church.”⁷

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the spiritual leadership of a Baptist church was usually provided by only one pastor, not by several, as had often been the case in seventeenth and eighteenth century England. Indeed, many churches were without even one pastor. W. B. Johnson pointed his brethren back to the apostolic example: “It is worthy of particular attention, that each church had a plurality of elders, and that although there was a difference in their respective departments of service, there was a perfect equality of rank among them.” Applying the apostolic example to the nineteenth century, Johnson explained that each elder would have a particular area of ministry within the church:

The particular department of service which each shall occupy, will be determined by the talent which he has for one or the other line of duty. For example, one of the bishops may have a particular talent for presiding over the body, for regulating its affairs by advice, admonition, rebuke. Let such an one be the *presiding* bishop.

⁷Horatio Gates Jones, *Historical Sketch of the Lower Dublin (or Pennepek) Baptist Church*, in “. . . To Set Them in Order;” *Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association Upon Baptists of American to 1814*, by James L. Clark (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2001), 388. According to Jones, the Pennepek church “may be regarded as the mother Church of the Baptists in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Delaware and Maryland, as its early Pastors were accustomed to preach the Gospel in all of these Colonies; and hence its early history is of more than ordinary notice.” *Ibid.*, 376. The Pennepek church, also known as the Lower Dublin Church, provided pastoral supply for a branch congregation in Philadelphia, the branch becoming the First Baptist Church, which was constituted as a separate church on May 15, 1746. A. D. Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707 to 1807*, tricentennial ed., Philadelphia Association Series (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2002), xi, n. 4.

Another may have a particular capacity for teaching the flock by exposition of scripture and exhortation, and in visits to the members. . . . A third may be endowed with the talent for superintending a Sabbath school, directing the course of studies, gathering up children for the school, and alluring them to the reading of the scriptures and religious works. To this service, then, let *him* be devoted. And a fourth may be endowed with the gift of laboring in the word and doctrine, that is, of preaching the gospel of Christ. . . . I mean not by the above view, to determine the number of bishops for each church at four, but simply to exhibit what services the bishops might respectively render to a church.

In a day when many churches found it impossible to be able to afford *one* pastor, Johnson realized that “whilst a plurality of bishops is required for each church, the number is not fixed, for the obvious reason, that circumstances must necessarily determine what that number shall be.” He suggested, “In a church where more than one cannot be obtained, that one may be appointed upon the principle, that as soon as another can be procured there shall be a plural.” More indigent churches, though, were not to use their relative poverty as an excuse to be without a pastor or pastors: “And when, from the poverty and fewness of the members, it may be impracticable for them to afford a support to the ruler or rulers they may have, let the members faithfully do what they can, and let the rulers imitate the example of Paul, who ‘ministered with his hands to his necessities, and to them that were with him.’”⁸

As was the case with their British counterparts, some American Baptist churches had ruling elders, at least well into the eighteenth century. *A Short Treatise on Church-Discipline* of the Philadelphia Baptist Association provided this explanation of the office:

Ruling Elders are such Persons as are endued with Gifts, to assist the Pastor or Teacher in the Government of the Church; it was as a Statute in Israel, *Exod.* 18. *Deut.* 1. 9-13. The Works of Teaching and Ruling belong both to the Pastor; but in case he be unable, or the Work of Ruling too great for him, God hath provided such for his Assistance, and they are called Ruling Elders, *1 Tim.* 5. 17.[.] Helps, *1 Cor.* 12. 28.[.] Governments, or he that ruleth, *Rom.* 12. 8. They are qualified for, and called unto, one Part of the Work: And Experience teacheth us the Use and Benefit of such Rulers in the Church, in easing the Pastor or Teacher, and keeping up the Honour of the Ministry. Their Qualifications are such as are requisite to Rule, as Knowledge, Judgment, Prudence, &c. and as to the Manner of their Ordination, it is

⁸William Bullein Johnson, *The Gospel Developed Through the Government and Order of the Churches of Jesus Christ* (Richmond, VA: H. K. Ellyson, 1846), 80–88.

like Ordination unto other Offices in the Church, with Fasting and Prayer, with Imposition of Hands. Their Office only relateth to Rule and Order, in the Church of God, and doth not include Teaching; yet if the Church findeth they have Gifts and Abilities to be useful in Teaching, they may be put upon Tryal, and if approved, they may be called and solemnly set apart by Ordination, it being wholly a distinct Office from the former, which was only to rule well, and not to labour in Word and Doctrine.⁹

The office of ruling elder was distinguished from that of pastor in that the former involved ruling only, while the latter included both ruling and teaching. Also, ruling elders were not precluded from teaching, but if the congregation discovered one had the gift of teaching and, after a period of observation, approved such a one, that man was to be ordained as a teaching elder or pastor.

Concerning ruling elders in the Pennepek Church, out of which would come the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, Horatio Gates Jones explained, “Pennepek Church also had, for many years, *Ruling Elders*—a species of officers which most of the early Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware had among them, as the early records show.” He recited from the minutes of the church “the following action on the subject of Ruling Elders”:

1715. June 19th. A proposal was made for having Ruling Elders in y^e Church; left to consideration till next Quarterly Meeting.

1726. June 17th. At same time y^e Church called forth brother John Holme to take upon him the office of a ruling elder, to which he answered he thought himself not fitly qualified for a place of charge and weight y^t y^t place did require.

1747. June 18. Bro. Vansandt was called to the office of Ruling Elder by prayer and laying on of hands.

Jones noted, “When this office was discontinued does not appear; but it is certain that it

⁹*A Short Treatise of Church-Discipline, in “. . . To Set Them in Order;” Some Influences of the Philadelphia Baptist Association Upon Baptists of America to 1814*, by James L. Clark (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2001), 278–79. For a similar explanation, see Morgan Edwards, *The Customs of primitive churches; or A set of propositions relative to the name, materials, constitution, power, officers, ordinances, rites, business, worship, discipline, government, &c. of a church; to which are added their proofs from scripture; and historical narratives of the manner in which most of them have been reduced to practice* (1774), 32–33. Edwards suggested that “there should be two elders in a church, at least, that when they be divided in judgment the teaching elder may make a third, and so determine the matter.” *Ibid.*, 33.

was not used in 1770. The latest mention of such is in a manuscript List of Members, for 1763, when William Marshall is named as the Ruling Elder.”¹⁰

The Call to the Ministry

What constituted a call to the ministry? Baptists continued to understand the call to the ministry was comprised of an internal, or subjective, call and an external, or objective, call. The internal call was the work of God providing a man with the conviction that God had set him apart unto this work. Isaac Backus viewed the Scriptures as teaching that such a divine call continued to exist for contemporary ministers as it did for prophets and apostles of the Bible. He surmised,

Since Gospel-Ministers now, personate the same eternal God that his Servants did of old; and since He is present with his Church to send them forth, as really now as formerly; since also Man is no more fit for it than heretofore; and the Work of watching for Souls as those that must give Account, and of feeding God’s Flock, is as great now as ever it was: Therefore I conclude, that in Order for Persons rightly to go into that Work in these Days, they must experience essentially the same Call from the *Lord of Hosts*, that all his Messengers did in old Time.¹¹

Baptists viewed the gospel ministry as God’s work to be done by those of God’s choosing.

Backus compared the manner of the internal call to conversion. He noted that “the Lord deals variously with different Persons, as to the Means he uses, and as to the length of Time that they are under Conviction, before the Work is accomplished; and also

¹⁰Horatio Gates Jones, *Historical Sketch of the Lower Dublin Baptist Church*, 384. Jones later noted that “Messrs. John Holme, John Vansandt, and William Marshall were the only persons who were chosen to act as Ruling Elders.” *Ibid.*, 408. A facsimile of Jones’s work is included in the appendix of Clark, “. . . *To Set Them in Order*,” 367–411. A 1728 query from the Hopewell church to the Philadelphia Baptist Association asked, “What course to take in choosing a ruling elder in the church?” The association responded: “We answer, that a church wanting ruling elders or deacons, as in other cases, should set a day apart, and by fasting and prayer, seek the guidance and direction of God, and then unanimously pitch upon one or more of their brethren to act upon trial in the office of ruling elder or deacon; and our judgment is, that persons called upon trial in the said offices, may act by authority of the church, with a full power as if completely qualified; but not so teaching elders or ministers of the word and ordinances.” Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707 to 1807*, 29.

¹¹Isaac Backus, *A Discourse Shewing the Nature and Necessity of an Internal Call To Preach the Everlasting Gospel* (Boston: Fowle, 1754), 33–34.

as to many Circumstances that attend it.” Consequently, “no Man can lay out an exact Method, and determine that every Soul which is savingly changed, must be led exactly in that particular Path.” Regardless of the means and length of time involved, one thing is universal: “Yet as to the Essence of the Change, all experience alike, that are truly converted.” So it was with those called to the ministry: “The Means that are used, and many Circumstances of it, may be very various, but the Substance of the Call is always the same.”¹² As all who are converted experience a changed life, so all who are called to the ministry experience “something of the Nature of these Things”:

They have such Views of the Condition that immortal Souls are in, and of the Glories of divine Truth, that they are constrained by divine Power, and are animated by Love to, and Zeal for the Good of the Children of Men, to go and (like *Apollos*) to speak, and teach diligently the Things of the Lord: and that not only in private, but also boldly in the Synagogue, *Acts* 18. 24, 25, 26. Or in great Assemblies, when they can have Opportunity; which is one great Means, by which God’s People obtain Satisfaction of their being sent of Him; and so bid them God-speed, as *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, and the Brethren at *Ephesus* did to *Apollos*, *Ver.* 27.¹³

The external, or objective, call was the recognition by the church that a man had exhibited qualifications required to pastor a church. To those who objected to Backus’ explanation of the internal call, Backus responded: “This Text [2 Tim 2:2] proves clearly, that Gospel Ministers should be ordained, and publickly set apart in the Church, and I have no where denied it. Also it gives the Character of the Persons that are to be ordained.” Backus explained that “they are called of God, and made faithful in his Work before they can be rightly received and ordained as Officers in his Church.” Backus realized that “some may yet say, That to hold to such an internal Call as this, will destroy all Order in the church, for when Men get a Notion that they are called of God, they will not only preach, but also administer the Ordinances, and run into all manner of Confusion, and none can control them.” Backus replied that such an objection was unwarranted. Again he compared the call to the ministry with conversion: “The Reason

¹²Ibid., 34.

¹³Ibid., 42.

and Nature of the Thing shews plainly, that holding to an internal Call, no way invalidates external Ordination in the least: for as when a Soul is converted, though he has an internal Right to all the Privileges of the Church of Christ; yet he has not an external Right thereto, 'till he is openly received as a Member." He applied the analogy to the ministry: "So a Person that is called to preach, has not a Right to act in those Things which are peculiar to an Officer in the Church, 'till he is publicly set apart therein.'" Backus applied his analogy concretely:

Praying, exhorting, and Preaching, though they are Duties to be performed in the Church, yet they are not so confined thereto, but that they may be rightly performed where there is no particular Church at all: which might be easily shewn, were it needful to stand upon it. But the administrating of special Ordinances, and acting in Church Discipline, are Things peculiar to a visible Church, and therefore we cannot clearly act in them without we have a visible standing therein, as an Officer, or a Member.—*For what have I to do to judge them that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?* I Cor. 5. 12.

Backus distinguished between duties such as "praying, exhorting, and Preaching . . . where there is no particular church at all" and duties concerning "things peculiar to a visible Church." The former required not the confirmation of the church, while the latter did.¹⁴

What qualifications were necessary for a man to become an elder? The first requirement, and one obviously not taken for granted, was that the candidate be regenerated. Isaac Backus, preaching at the ordination of Asa Hunt, reminded the congregation that "it is God that makes able ministers." Backus insisted that ministers themselves must be converted by God into "new creatures," because such conversion "is so essential to the very nature of their work, and so plainly revealed in the scripture." The reason for their being converted was that "a principal part of their work is to labour to *reconcile* sin-

¹⁴Ibid., 64–65. Of Backus' view of the the call to the ministry, Robert G. Torbet writes, "Isaac Backus' view of the ministry was typical of that held by most Baptists of that early day. At a time when the Congregational state church was making educational qualifications the primary requirement for ordination and standing in the ministry, he insisted that true ministers of the gospel are called into that work by the special influence of the Holy Spirit. By this, however, he did not mean to deny the need for external ordination. On the contrary, he felt that one must have a visible standing in the visible church." Robert G. Torbet, *The Baptist Ministry: Then and Now* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1953), 23.

ners to God; and to imagine any one to be fit for that work, who is not truly reconciled himself, is one of the first-born of absurdities.” Backus asked, “The nature of their work is *spiritual*, and how can *carnal* men perform it?” Backus noted that “ministers are to comfort others by the comfort wherewith *they themselves are comforted of God*, 2 Cor. 1. 4. They are to lead others in a way they are acquainted with, and ought to be able to say, *We speak that we know, and testify that we have seen.*” Backus further supported his contention by noting that a man cannot act in a truly selfless manner “until he is born from above This [conversion], and this only can and doth give them to act from more noble principles, than self-seeking and self-righteousness: It enables them to preach by *faith*, and in their conduct to look to things *unseen, which are eternal*, 2 Cor. 4.5, 6.13.18.” In addition, because of the difficulty of the minister’s work, “divine help” is needed. Backus asked, “But how can that be without union with him [Christ], even as the branch has with the vine?”¹⁵

Baptists viewed a man’s piety and doctrinal soundness as the chief criteria for qualification. Neither a man’s station in life nor his educational attainments were matters of preeminent concern. The *Summary of Church-Discipline* of the Charleston Baptist Association asserted that, because ministers “have the charge of souls and are leaders in the house of God, churches cannot be too careful in chusing men to the ministerial function.” Consequently, “they ought to be men fearing God, being born again of the Spirit, sound in the faith, and of blameless lives and conversations, as is becoming to the gospel of Christ, having fervent desires to glorify God, and save souls (*John* 3. 10; *2 Tim.* 1. 13; *1 Tim.* 3. 2; *Rom.* 9. 3. chap. 10. 1).”¹⁶ Francis Wayland, who served as president of Brown University from 1827-1855, examined 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and

¹⁵Isaac Backus, *Evangelical Ministers described, and distinguished from Legalists. A Sermon, The Substance of which was delivered October 30. 1771, at the Ordination of Mr. Asa Hunt, To the Pastoral Charge of the Third Baptist-Church in Middleborough* (Boston: Philip Freeman, 1772), 7–11.

¹⁶Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 8.

maintained, “It would seem . . . that any disciple of Christ, of blameless character, meek, forbearing, temperate, sober, just, holy, thoroughly attached to the doctrines of the gospel, having a natural gift for teaching, and having had some experience in the Christian life—not a novice—has the qualifications for the ministry which the New Testament requires.”¹⁷

Other denominations might complain that limiting the qualifications to these, without requiring a requisite amount of education as well, would so reduce the prestige of the ministry that the literate would be driven from it. Only the illiterate would then be in the ministry. Wayland, however, would countenance no other qualification than those set forth in the Scriptures:

The apostolic qualifications for the ministry are confined to the illiterate, or they are not. If they are, then it would be safer, after all, to adhere to the apostle’s rule, for grace is before gifts in the view of the Master. But if these qualifications are equally distributed through every range of culture, by adhering to the rule we shall have a large variety of gifts adapted to every situation, and after all, have such men as every Christian must say are best suited to the work of saving souls. Our rule would then seem to be, to require, in all cases, the apostolic qualifications, and consider every man a suitable candidate for the ministry who possesses them, whatever may be his attainments or position in society. If he be *apt to teach*, he will be neither an *imbecile* nor a *pedant*.¹⁸

Similarly, theologian John L. Dagg saw the qualifications for the ministry as gifts endowed by the Holy Spirit which, in themselves, constitute a call to the ministry of the gospel. Dagg elaborated, “The special qualifications which the Holy Spirit bestows, bind him on whom they are bestowed to use them in the service of Christ. They are given to fit him for this service, and they constitute a divine call for him to engage in it. They are not given to confer a privilege merely, but they are a solemn call to duty—a call

¹⁷ Francis Wayland, *Notes on the Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, & Co., 1857), 50. “S,” writing in the *Texas Baptist*, elaborated upon three qualifications for the ministry: “true, ardent piety,” “talent” required for the tasks of the ministry, and “an intelligent, strong and unconquerable conviction of duty.” S, “The Christian Ministry,” *Texas Baptist*, 2 May 1855, 2.

¹⁸ Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 52.

demanding the service of the whole life.”¹⁹ Consequently, the one gifted for the ministry could do nothing other than the work of the ministry and remain contented.

How could one know if one were called to the ministry? Was a call simply a personal feeling which was attributed to God and against which no one could stand? Elias Keach stated what Baptists throughout this period held: “We do believe that every Brother that hath received a Gift to preach, having first pass’d the Probation of the Church, and being regularly called by the same, ought to exercise the said Gift to the Edification of the Church when desired; and that no Brother ought to take upon him to preach, until he has a lawful Call so to do.”²⁰ Passing “the Probation of the Church” required the church’s confirmation of one’s call and removed self-appointed ministers. In a letter “addressed to the churches,” a writer to Kentucky’s *Western Recorder* in 1858 provided the answer which appears to have been accepted practice in Baptist churches. Noting that only those whom God has called should enter the ministry, the writer asked the inevitable question, “How is the call of God to be ascertained? That a miraculous intimation of his will is to be expected, no rational man, at the present day, believes.” There were evidences which God would provide to help one seeking to ascertain such a call, or, as the writer put it, “two things”: “The first is, that the individual possess a sincere desire to be thus employed. He must feel a strong concern for the glory of God, and for the salvation of men. His heart must be moved with desires to proclaim the love of Christ to dying sinners, and to persuade them to be reconciled to God.” The call to the gospel ministry, though, was not to rest only upon a man’s testimony that he felt that God had called him and that he had a great desire to follow that call: “But another necessary thing is, that he possess suitable gifts. . . . By suitable gifts we mean a sound understand-

¹⁹John L. Dagg, *A Treatise on Church Order* (1858; reprint, Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1990), 242–43.

²⁰Elias Keach, *A Short Confession of Faith*, 29. For biblical support Keach listed 1 Tim 3:2; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:10; Rom 12:6-7.

ing, a capacity and a desire to learn, an aptitude to teach, a reasonable degree of ability to be useful to his fellow men as a minister, when his mind shall have been cultivated as much as his circumstances may allow.” Did this mean that the believer’s personal testimony that he possessed such gifts and that he sincerely desired to enter the ministry constitute proof that he was indeed called by God? The writer answered, “Of these points, the individual is not a competent judge. His brethren must judge for him.”²¹

Wayland provided like-minded counsel. While one evidence of the call to the ministry was the conviction within a man that he must preach the gospel, Wayland warned that more was needed: “We may frequently mistake our motives. We may overrate our capacity. We may thus run before we are sent. Hence we frequently see men in the ministry who have manifestly missed their calling, who are useless as preachers, while they might have been very useful in some other situation.” What else was needed?

I answer, he in the next place lays his convictions before his brethren, who know his walk and conversation. He asks them to tell him, in the fear of God, whether or not their convictions correspond with his own, whether or not they in truth believe that he is called to undertake this work. They are bound to take up this subject with solemn deliberation. They do wrong, if they do not employ all the means in their power to come to a right decision.²²

Only when a man’s fellow believers could confirm his call could that man with confidence claim to be called into the ministry.

Preparation for the Ministry

Baptists were quick to respond to the charge that, historically, they had cared little for an educated ministry. For instance, D. C. Haynes argued:

We have said that Baptists have ever been the fast friends of missions: the same remark is true of general and ministerial education. Nothing is more unjust than the charge, still reiterated, that the regular Baptists have ever been indifferent to education for the ministry. In illustration of the injustice of our opponents, the American translators of the church history of Professor Hase, Messrs. Blumenthal and Wing, among other singular mistakes of Baptists in this country say: “*Of late years some portions of this denomination have done much to redeem their order from the*

²¹“Ministerial Gifts to Be Sought Out and Encouraged,” *Western Recorder*, 10 March 1858, 2.

²²Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 107.

reproach of indifference to education.” Baptists have ever been more or less active in this work, and have had learned men in their ranks, from the time of Luke the evangelist, and Paul the apostle.

They *do not*, indeed, deem education *essential* to the ministry; but *desirable*, as is amply proved by their entire history.²³

Many earlier American Baptists, however, did appear to put little weight upon a formal education.²⁴ Wayland noted that Baptists forty or fifty years after Jonathan Edwards discounted the importance of education. Most of them had left a “mechanical” occupation in order to enter the ministry. Piety, not learning, was seen as the prerequisite for ordination:

They saw that education, rather than piety, was in many denominations the test of ministerial qualification; and, instead of assigning to it its proper and subordinate place, they abjured it altogether. This was, doubtless, an error. Are not we now liable to the very error against which they contended? Be this as it may, there was, undoubtedly, in most parts of our country, a prejudice against men who were “college learned.”²⁵

Not a few early American Baptists, though, recognized that an educated ministry was needed in order to oppose effectively heresy and infidelity. A 1797 circular letter of the Charleston Association made that very point. It acknowledged that “a man of plain good sense and real piety, may be greatly useful as a teacher, though not possessed of scientific knowledge, especially among a people not greatly improved by science, and while the preaching of the most obvious and practical doctrines of the gospel is princi-

²³D. C. Haynes, *The Baptist Denomination: Its History, Doctrines, and Ordinances* (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, & Co.; Richmond, VA: Charles Wortham, 1856), 323.

²⁴On many occasions those respected ministers who had not had the opportunity for a formal education were great supporters of increased opportunities for younger ministers to acquire one. Jesse Mercer was a case in point. Although he himself did not possess an adequate formal education, Mercer was “an able, indefatigable, and successful advocate” for the cause of education, following in the footsteps of his father. He was an avid supporter of Columbian College in the District of Columbia and supported an ill-fated effort to cooperate with South Carolina Baptists in the establishment of “a literary and theological institution.” In January 1833, Mercer Institute was opened in Penfield, Georgia, with thirty-nine students, seven of whom were preparing for the ministry. In 1838 the Georgia Baptist Convention appointed a separate board of trustees to oversee the Institute, which in that year became known as Mercer University, named in honor of its well-known supporter. Charles D. Mallary, *Memoirs of Elder Jesse Mercer* (New York: John Gray, 1844; reprint, Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, n.d.), 160–69.

²⁵Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 22.

pally required.” The South Carolina Baptists noted, however: “But when controversies on intricate and delicate subjects arise; when men of genius and learning appear in opposition to the truth, and labour to subvert the faith; if there are not, at least some, able and learned advocates to stand forth in their defence, the cause of God, according to the ordinary course of events, must suffer.” In addition, because Christians are required by God to give their best gifts, those who would be ministers should attempt to gain as much training as they are capable of receiving.²⁶

A formal education was not seen by even its supporters, however, as the qualifying element of the gospel ministry. Jesse Mercer, always ready to support the cause of an educated ministry,²⁷ wrote that “education is not, *in the least*, designed, so far as we know, among Baptists, by any who are engaged to promote it in the ministry, to usurp the place or take the power of any of those gifts, talents, or mental endowments which God by his holy Spirit imparts, and without which no man has any right to pretend to be a minister of God.” Mercer compared education for the minister with clothes for the minister: “They [clothes] have no power in them to make the man, yet they are very necessary both to his comfort, and to render him acceptable to his fellow men. So education is very

²⁶Wood Furman, comp., *A History of the Charleston Association of Baptist Churches* (Charleston, SC: J. Hoff, 1811), 116–17. The letter recognized that “what is called a liberal education” was not “universally practicable, or necessary, to bestow on all who are admitted to the ministry.” It noted, “The age, matrimonial connection, and other circumstances of some candidates may obstruct it: the poverty of the churches they are connected with, and the want of learned men among them, may also greatly prevent it on their part: and these circumstances must be considered as affording providential direction.” The letter lamented that the difficulty in gaining such training was compounded by a lack of desire for an educated ministry by the churches themselves: “But the greatest obstacles to the execution, or adoption, of such a plan [to provide training], are low contracted sentiments, and an avaricious disposition. For where there is really a willing mind, and just sentiments, much can, and will be done. It is obvious that the same sentiments and disposition which obstruct a measure of this nature, operate likewise to the neglect of that necessary and important duty of supporting gospel ministers, actually employed in the church; and this is common in some places, notwithstanding God hath positively appointed ‘That those who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.’” *Ibid.*, 118–19.

²⁷See, for instance, Jesse Mercer, *Knowledge Indispensable to a Minister of God. Stated and Maintained in a Discourse, Delivered Before the Baptist Convention of Georgia, at Indian Creek Meeting House, in Morgan County, Georgia* (Washington, GA: The Christian Index, 1834).

necessary to the happiness and acceptance of a minister in the course of his ministry.”

Mercer also compared words for the minister with tools for the mechanic:

A mechanic, to do good work, must have a variety, and a knowledge of the use of tools. So a minister, to do good work in preaching for God, must have a fund, and be acquainted with the right use of words. But how shall he attain to *this right use* of words, unless he studies it? Does God give the knowledge of language now? It would seem that many think the less a man is educated, the more plain, forcible and useful he is as a preacher; but the fact is exactly the reverse. It ought to be apparent to every one, that the less a man knows, the poorer must be his stock of words, and the less his capacity to use them advantageously. . . . The learned minister of God, under the influence of a right spirit, will use his knowledge to present truth, not floridly, *but clearly*; not in the eloquence of human wisdom, *but in the simplicity* of demonstration, commending himself to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.²⁸

The concept of an educated ministry did not necessarily mean, though, that the minister had acquired a *formal* education. A writer in the *Western Recorder* asked, “Now, what do we mean, or rather what should be meant by an educated, a learned divine? Is it whether he understands political economy, or physical economy? Whether he is acquainted with Persian, or Chardaic, or Dutch? Is it because he can talk glibly about what Diogenees [*sic*] didn’t say, or Demosthenees [*sic*] did?” He continued, “What proves a man a learned divine but a knowledge of divinity, that is of the Bible? and what proves him an able divine but his aptness to teach and apply that divinity—the truths of the Bible to the hearts and consciences of men?” Competence in this calling consisted of an “aptness to teach and apply that divinity—the truths of the Bible to the hearts and consciences of men.” Few Baptists, if any, would have argued with the writer’s conclusion:

The man who can bring the law of God home to the consciences of men; the man who can administer the heavenly balm of the gospel to the diseased soul, the man who can snatch from the armory of God the winged arrow, that shall pierce the innerest soul of the obdurate and rebellious; the man, whose burning zeal and love, under God’s blessings, leads hundreds from darkness to light—that is the able, the learned divine; for “he,” says the Almighty, “THAT WINNETH SOULS IS WISE.”

²⁸Mallory, *Memoirs of Elder Jesse Mercer*, 185–87.

Regardless of one's view of the importance of a formal education, all would agree that nothing could replace the diligent study and fervent preaching of the Scriptures.²⁹

During the nineteenth century Baptists did often debate the best and most efficient way to train ministers. The one thing upon which they usually agreed was the need for more ministers and better ministers.³⁰ While this meant for some a formal education, for others there would be a different type of training. Wayland counseled that one of the most profitable things which an established minister could do for ministerial candidates “but who are, for various reasons, unable to pursue a protracted course of study” was to mentor them. The minister could provide them with books, teach them how to study the Word of God, take them to hear sermons and then discuss the delivery and content of the sermons with them, and take them to funerals, conferences, on visits to the sick. “No one can tell the advantage of such a course as this to a young man who has a talent for the ministry, and can avail himself of no other resource. If our ministers had always two or three young men in this sort of training, our ministry would be immeasurably increased in number, and improved in quality.” A ministerial candidate who had been provided in the providence of God with the ability and opportunity to attain a more formal education must take advantage of that opportunity. If not, “he must have a reason which will justify himself at the bar of God. But let him remember that these can not

²⁹“An Educated Ministry,” *Western Recorder*, 15 November 1854, 2. Jesse Mercer acknowledged, “There are many, who by *giving themselves to reading* (especially in this day, when there are so many books, made with so much care, on all useful subjects, and adapted to almost all capacities,) have acquired a good degree, and great aptness in the right use of knowledge. We think these a noble order of men, and highly to be commended.” While helpful, Mercer did not think such self-attainment of learning the best method for most ministers: “But it is expedient and wise to have places of learning. There can be a better selection of books, with less expense to each one. The most approved teachers can be obtained, who can teach many at the same time and at the same rate, they could a few. It is believed young men will learn faster and retain better, when together, than separated and alone.” Mercer, *Knowledge Indispensable to a Minister of God*, 16.

³⁰See “Ministerial Education,” *Western Recorder*, 8 April 1857, 2.

make him a minister of Jesus Christ. . . . They are merely accessories which may give increased efficiency to the essential qualifications.”³¹

One of the hindrances which prevented many men from getting a formal theological education was their lack of the requisite classical training. In his “Three Changes in Theological Institutions,” an inaugural address originally delivered before the trustees of Furman University in 1856, James P. Boyce saw this barrier as unnecessary:

In His Word and in His providence, God seems to have plainly indicated the principle upon which the instruction of the ministry should be based. It is not that every man should be made a scholar, an adept in philology, an able interpreter of the Bible in the original languages, acquainted with all the sciences upon the various facts and theories of which God’s Word is attacked and must be defended, and versed in all the systems of true and false philosophy. Indeed, some must understand these in order to encounter the enemies which attack the very foundations of religion.³²

Those who did not have the ability to obtain a classical education should nevertheless have the opportunity to obtain a theological education. Boyce proposed:

Let such a change be made in the theological department as shall provide an English course of study for those who have only been able to attain a plain English education. Let that course comprise the evidences of Christianity, systematic and polemic theology, the rules of interpretation applied to the English version; some knowledge of the principles of rhetoric, extensive practice in the development from texts of subjects and skeletons of sermons, whatever amount of composition may be expedient, and full instruction in the nature of pastoral duties—let the studies of this course be so pursued as to train the mind to habits of reflection and analysis, to awaken it to conceptions of the truths of Scripture, to fill it with arguments from the Word of God in support of its doctrines, and to give it facility in constructing and presenting such arguments—and the work will be accomplished.³³

Boyce’s proposal would come to fruition with the opening of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, in the fall of 1859. While theological education of the highest caliber would be provided to those who had acquired a pre-

³¹ Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 74–76.

³² James Petigru Boyce, “Three Changes in Theological Education,” in *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings*, ed. Timothy George (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989), 35.

³³ Boyce, “Three Changes in Theological Education,” 39.

seminary course of study, a challenging education suitable for those who had been unable to receive that course of study would also be provided.³⁴

Licensing and Ordination to the Ministry

Ministers were often licensed to the ministry before being ordained. This license provided the ministerial candidate with the opportunity to preach so that fellow believers would have the opportunity to determine if the candidate was indeed equipped by God to be a gospel minister. The license was usually for a stated period of time and often renewable each year.³⁵ Baptists would admit that the Scriptures were silent concerning the licensing of potential ministers. Nevertheless, because the ultimate supervision of gifts, according to 1 Corinthians, lay with the church, churches were within their rights to license candidates for the ministry.³⁶

Who was to license candidates? Wayland contended that the local church alone possessed that authority. While other denominations might question the ability of “common, uneducated brethren [to] know about the fitness of a man to preach the gospel,”³⁷ Wayland contended that an examination of other denominations revealed their methods inferior to Baptists. The local church would be in the best position to determine if a ministerial candidate is apt to teach and is of a godly character. The method for licensing, however, did not ensure that only qualified men would be admitted to the ministry: “If . . . we are false to ourselves, and treat this subject as a matter of form, to be

³⁴For a helpful and more extensive overview of the Baptist quest for a trained ministry, see Torbet, *The Baptist Ministry*, 31–41.

³⁵Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 114. Torbet provides this distinction between licensing and ordination: “The practice of licensing a preacher was much like that used among the Methodists with ‘local’ or ‘lay’ preachers. It only gave the man the privilege of preaching. Ordination, on the other hand, extended the right to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper and to perform weddings.” Torbet, *The Baptist Ministry*, 28.

³⁶E. B. Teague, “Licensing Ministers,” *The Christian Index*, 8 April 1857, 2.

³⁷Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 100.

acted upon without thought or consideration, it is not our principles but ourselves that are in fault.”³⁸ Churches must be diligent in examining candidates.

While licensing was for a limited time, ordination was considered to be a permanent action. As with licensing, the church was seen as the only body approved by Scripture with the authority to ordain. In 1789 the Charleston Association responded to a query concerning “how the ordination of ministers could be regulated so as to prevent the too hasty imposition of hands for the sacred office”:

The churches should in the first instance be careful to introduce no persons into this station but such as afford good evidence that they are truly pious and of promising gifts; should use every rational and proper means for their improvement: and in bringing them to ordination, it is advised, that the church call in the assistance of at least two, but rather three, of the ministers in union, who are the most generally esteemed in the churches for piety and abilities.³⁹

After examining New Testament texts dealing with the matter of ordination in general and with the appointment of Matthias in particular, W. B. Johnson laid down the following principles:

1. That under the present dispensation, a church of Christ has the authority to appoint or ordain to ministerial offices.
2. That in the exercise of this authority, after seeking in prayer for special direction of the Lord, the appointment or ordination, should be by casting of votes by the members.
3. That there is no privileged order of men, whose action is required to give validity to appointments or ordinations to ministerial offices, because the churches are clothed with the appointing or ordaining power.⁴⁰

The ordination of a man to the ministry, though performed by a church, was seen as so important that it was recommended that other churches assist and advise the ordaining church. The Charleston Association, in 1808, answered a query concerning the need for such a council: “It is recommended to the Churches, that on calling out a person to preach, they be careful ordinarily to obtain the assistance of neighboring ministers and

³⁸Ibid., 102–03.

³⁹Wood Furman, *A History of the Charleston Association of Baptist Churches*, 40.

⁴⁰Johnson, *The Gospel Developed*, 133.

churches, in forming their judgment of his qualification, before he be licensed to go out publicly as a minister.”⁴¹ In response to a similar query, the Bowdoinham Association in Maine gave this response in 1815:

The ordaining of an Elder, or setting apart of one to the work of the gospel ministry, is the transaction so *solemn* in its *nature*, and so *important* in its consequences, that it would be highly improper for a church belonging to this Association to proceed to the business without the concurrence of a suitable number of sister churches, furnished with Elders, *whom*, among other things, have received the solemn charge, “Lay hands suddenly on no man.”⁴²

The ministerial candidate would have been carefully observed for a period of time and then, on the appointed day, examined as to his fitness to serve as a minister of the gospel. Jesse Mercer, however, decried the quality of ministers of local churches. He believed that too often unqualified men were ordained into the gospel ministry: “Have not many Presbyteries ordained men to the gospel ministry, *purely* on their own and the responsibility of the churches to which they belonged, with very little, if any inquiry into their qualifications for the sacred office; or the obligations they felt for the honor of God, or the ministry into which they were being put?”⁴³ Wayland, too, lamented the laxness with which the ordination of ministers too often was carried out:

I fear, however, that these important considerations are frequently neglected. The council convenes on the day that has been publicly announced for the ordination. They have no time for any such inquiries as I have suggested, and they are, therefore, never made. It frequently happens that not a member of the council has ever heard the candidate preach, or has the means of knowing any thing of importance respecting his qualifications. The statement of the candidate’s call to the ministry, and of his views of doctrine, have almost passed into a stereotype form. An ordination, in short, is in danger of being considered merely a pleasant meeting of ministers—the private brethren in attendance being very few—to transact a matter of form, to be kindly entertained, and attend the ordination service in the afternoon.⁴⁴

⁴¹Quoted in William Henry Allison, *Baptist Councils in America* (Chicago: George K. Hazlitt, 1906), 63. It is understood that “licensed to go out publicly as a minister” is the act of ordination to the ministry, not the licensing for the trial period.

⁴²Quoted in Allison, *Baptist Councils in America*, 63.

⁴³Mallory, *Memoirs of Elder Jesse Mercer*, 267. See also Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 114.

⁴⁴Wayland, *Principles and Practices of Baptist Churches*, 117.

The negative consequences of ordaining unqualified men were seen as creating definite problems for both the ministry and the churches. Unqualified men could bring reproach upon the ministry and could create divisions among Baptists. The unqualified minister would probably not be asked to officiate at an important associational event and would consequently gather others who would sympathize with him concerning this perceived slight. An even greater evil would be providing unqualified ministers with an opportunity to bring into the church untried methods and untrue doctrines. Furthermore, the ordaining of unqualified ministers would turn the ministry into a profession in which one was paid while doing little or no labor. Churches were warned: "When a brother shall be recommended for ordination, judge of his case in view of a future state. Ask yourselves: have we the proper testimonials, justifying us to set apart to the sacred ministry this brother: Will this act, or will it not, advance the cause of our blessed Savior?"⁴⁵

The Call to a Church

Baptist pastors were neither self-appointed nor appointed by a denominational hierarchy. The Philadelphia Confession succinctly provided the understood method from the Scriptures: "The Way appointed by *Christ* for the Calling of any Person, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the Office of Bishop, or Elder, in a Church, is, that he be chosen thereunto by the common Suffrage of the Church it self; and solemnly set apart by Fasting and Prayer, with the Imposition of Hands of the Eldership of the Church, if there be any before constituted therein."⁴⁶

The Charleston *Summary of Church-Discipline* provided these directions for calling a pastor: "A church having no minister, should look among its own members, and see if there be any who seem to have promising gifts and graces for that great work. If such a one is found, he is to be put on trial for a season; when, on finding him promising,

⁴⁵"Premature Ordinations and Their Evil Consequences," *Texas Baptist*, 3 November 1859, 1.

⁴⁶*Confession of Faith Adopted by the Baptist Association met at Philadelphia*, 242.

and that they are edified by his preaching, they may call him to preach in public.” After this trial period, “if it should appear that his rod, like *Aaron*’s, buds, blossoms and bears fruit, he is to be set apart by ordination; that he may perform every part of the sacred function, *Acts* 13. 2. 3.” In many instances, though a qualified man would not be found among the members: “But should no such person be found in the church, it is the duty of a sister church, if possible, to supply them, *Cant.* 8. 8.” Before he could be placed into the pastorate, though, the man must first join that church. The *Summary* explained, “And if a person, who is a member of another church, be approved, and he inclined to accept a call from them, he must first become a member with them, that so they may choose him from among themselves, see *Acts* 1. 21. Thus were deacons chosen, *Acts* 6. 3.”⁴⁷

That too many unqualified men had been placed in the pastoral office was a pressing concern for Baptists. Furman admonished,

The qualifications required, in ministers of the gospel, should impress us with a deep sense of the importance of attending carefully to the admission of persons into that office: “That we lay hands suddenly on no man;” and that the things which we have heard, and learned, respecting the Redeemer; his salvation and kingdom; be committed “to faithful men, who may be able to teach others also.”

Furman observed that too many pulpits were filled by unqualified men. He asked,

How many unworthy characters, among the various denominations of Christians, and in different ages, have been admitted into this office; who have been either grossly ignorant of divine things, and even of natural; or actuated by the basest of motives? How often have the pride, ambition, and luxury, of wicked presumers on the ministry, thrown even nations into confusion and bloodshed; and proved a curse to the church. Hence the high stations, and lordly titles, invented and grasped at by some; and the craft and policy, practised under the guise of humility, by others: Who, while professing zeal and self-denial, have been lording it over the consciences of their deluded votaries; and providing amply to gratify the cravings of unhallowed passions.

⁴⁷Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 8–9. For a more extensive description of the manner and method of the call to a church, see William Fristoe, *A Concise History of the Kotocton Baptist Association: 1766–1808* (1808; reprint, Stephens City, VA: Commercial Press, 1978), 15–19. S. W. Lynd, editor of the *Western Recorder*, later made this distinction between the ordination of an elder and the conferring of the office of elder: “When men are chosen to the office by the vote of the church, the office is conferred upon them. The part which the presbytery takes does not confer office. It recognizes them as elders, and solemnly sets them before the churches and the world as ministers of Christ, by prayer and imposition of hands. This is their ordination.” S. W. Lynd, “The Church and Her Membership,” *Western Recorder*, 10 January 1855, 2.

Furman warned that “the profession, and practice of religion, in the church, generally take their tone, from the temper and conduct of the minister.” To ministers Furman exhorted, “O! then, let it be our grand concern to be alive to God, and instant at a throne of grace: That we may answer the end of our appointment in the church, in connection with the holy apostles, prophets and evangelists; for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and edifying of the body of Christ.”⁴⁸ Churches were to be careful to appoint only qualified candidates to the esteemed office, and those appointed were to consider the heritage and responsibility of being entrusted with that office.

Baptists recognized the value of long pastorates in one place of service. Short pastorates of only a couple of years were often deplored. A writer to the *New York Chronicle* maintained that

ministers and churches brought together as a mere matter of temporary convenience are almost as much out of place as temporary marriages. . . . The incumbent of the office must stay among his people long enough to marry their children and bury their dead, to share in their joys and sorrows, to endear himself to them as a friend and brother, and to create so many ties of affection between him and them that the hold which his eloquence and brilliancy give upon them shall be lost sight of in the higher regards of a brother, a friend, and a spiritual adviser.⁴⁹

Short pastorates were seen as an evil, being deplored by one Texas Baptist as “the migratory character of the ministry of the present day,” often the result of too many pastors looking for more attractive places of service: “There is a sense, in which all Christians are pilgrims on the earth, but these pilgrimages from church to church, from one field of labor to another, on the part of ministers, ‘ought not so to be.’”⁵⁰

The responsibility for maintaining a long pastorate rested not only upon the pastors but also upon the churches. Their failure to provide their pastors with adequate

⁴⁸Richard Furman, *Constitution and Order of the Christian Church*, 38–39.

⁴⁹“Accepting a Pastorate,” *Texas Baptist*, 19 August 1856, 1.

⁵⁰“The Permanency of the Ministerial Office,” *Texas Baptist*, 28 January 1857, 1.

support, both financially and in intangible ways, caused many pastors to feel that they had no choice but seek other places of service.⁵¹

Responsibilities of the Minister and of the Church

Baptists continued to view the ministry as a weighty responsibility with eternal implications. Ministers, after all, provided care for persons' souls. In his charge to Asa Hunt at the latter's ordination to the pastorate of the Third Baptist Church in Middleborough, Massachusetts, Isaac Backus remarked, "I doubt not but *the charge of souls* has sometimes appeared to you an insupportable weight; it is indeed too heavy for men or angels to go through of themselves."⁵² The Philadelphia Confession provided this summary of the work of pastors: "The Work of Pastors being constantly to attend the Service of Christ, in his Churches, in the Ministry of the Word, and Prayer, with Watching for their Souls, as they that must give an Account to him."⁵³ The eternal implications of pastoral care for souls could not be over-emphasized.

The primary responsibility of the minister in caring for souls was to preach the gospel.⁵⁴ This preaching was to be thoroughly scriptural and doctrinal in its content. The Charleston Baptist Association's *Summary of Church-Discipline* described the eternal implications for such work: "Persons thus commissioned, are to attend to their work with all possible engagedness, as it becomes those who have the charge of souls." This preaching of the Word required great diligence: "They must give themselves up to study,

⁵¹"Accepting a Pastorate."

⁵²Backus, *Evangelical Ministers described*, 28–29 (emphasis added).

⁵³Clark, ". . . *To Set Them in Order*," 242.

⁵⁴The Philadelphia Confession maintained that preaching the Word, though required of pastors, was not restricted to pastors: "Although it be incumbent on the Bishops or Pastors of the Churches, to be Instant in Preaching the Word, by Way of Office, yet the Work of Preaching the Word is not confined to them, but that others also gifted, and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved, and called by the Church, may, and ought to perform it." Clark, ". . . *To Set Them in Order*," 244. Such preachers included, for instance, evangelists [missionaries] who preached the gospel in other places.

prayer and meditation, 1 *Tim.* 4. 14, 15, 16. that they may be workmen who need not to be ashamed, 2 *Tim.* 2. 15. They must be instant in season and out of season, preaching the pure doctrines of the gospel, 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. chap. 4. 2.” Pastors were to preach with godly motives, not for carnal gain: “They are to feed the Lord’s flock with spiritual bread, *Acts* 20. 28. to preach with the view of bringing souls to Christ, and not for the sake of honor or *filthy lucre.*” Pastors were to acknowledge that theirs was not the role of a demagogue but a shepherd caring for and protecting the flock: “They are not to lord it over God’s heritage, but to be patient and tender-hearted, 2 *Tim.* 2. 25. They are to watch over the flock, to comfort the feeble-minded, 1 *Thess.* 5. 14. to sound the alarm to the wicked and obstinate, *Ezek.* 3. 17, 18. and to set their faces like flint against prophaneness, and every vice.”⁵⁵

Noted nineteenth-century pastor T. G. Jones unequivocally declared, “The great duty of the pastor is *to preach the Gospel.* Jones noted that this preaching was unrestricted to place, time, circumstance, or audience:

It must be preached publicly and privately—in season and out of season—preached from the pulpit to ‘the great congregation’—preached from house to house, and by the way-side—preached in the hovels of the poor, in the halls of wealth and fashion, and gaiety and sin—preached in the abodes of health, and at the bed-side of the sick and dying—preached in word and in deed.

Of course, such preaching required the pastor himself not only know the truth but also live the truth. Jones explained, “It is taken for granted that *the pastor is himself in possession of the truth*—and that it is not only in his head, and on his tongue, but in his heart, enshrined on the highest and holiest altars—otherwise he will be a ‘blind leader of the blind.’”⁵⁶

Popular preaching which appealed to the unregenerate or the spiritually immature was seen as being inherently harmful. One Baptist wrote, “We have at times

⁵⁵Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 10.

⁵⁶Tiberius Gracchus Jones, *Duties of a Pastor to His Church* (Charleston, SC: Southern Baptist Publication Society; Richmond, VA: Virginia Baptist S. S. and Publication Society, 1853), 10–11.

heard the opinion expressed that the people would no longer endure doctrinal preaching; that the prevailing taste required sermons of a practical character, fitted to move the feelings and fire the soul with ardent desires.” The writer maintained that a lack of doctrinal preaching leads to spiritual starvation, while “a faithful, affectionate, and intelligent exhibition of the cardinal truths of the Bible is essential both to the edification of believers and the conversion of sinners. . . . Doctrinal preaching has never been popular. Never yet has the unbelieving heart shown any relish for the doctrines of grace.”⁵⁷

Richard Furman described the preaching of Oliver Hart, a description of preaching which would have resonated with Baptists throughout this period. Furman observed that Hart’s “sermons were peculiarly serious, containing a happy assemblage of doctrinal and practical truths, set in an engaging light, and enforced with convincing arguments.” Hart was particularly concerned that his hearers understood the teachings of Scripture, utilizing extensive preparation to make certain of his own understanding of those teachings. Furman explained, “For the discussion of doctrinal truths, he was especially eminent, to which also he was prepared by an intimate acquaintance with the sacred scriptures, and an extensive reading of the most valuable, both ancient and modern authors.” Hart’s preaching was not particularly entertaining, but it was clear: “His eloquence, at least in the middle stages of life, was not of the most popular kind, but perspicuous, manly and flowing, such as afforded pleasure to persons of true taste, and edification to the serious hearers.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷“Doctrinal Preaching,” *Western Recorder*, 15 November 1854, 2.

⁵⁸Richard Furman, *Rewards of Grace Conferred on Christ’s Faithful People: A Sermon, Occasioned by the Decease of the Rev. Oliver Hart, A. M.* (Charleston, SC: J. McIver, 1796), 24. Concerning Hart’s doctrinal perspective, Furman wrote: “In his religious principles, he was a fixed Calvinist, and a consistent, liberal Baptist. The doctrines of *free, efficacious grace*, were precious to him; Christ Jesus, and him crucified, in the perfection of his righteousness, the merit of his death, the prevalence of his intercession, and the efficacy of his grace, was the foundation of his hope, the source of his joy, and the delightful theme of his preaching.” *Ibid.*

The second major duty of pastors was visiting the members and attenders of their churches in their homes. Some pastors, however, refused to perform pastoral visitation and often encouraged candidates for ordination not to do it and for churches not to expect it. Wayland gave their argument:

If he [the minister] does not visit them, they must take it for granted that he is on his knees, studying the word of God, and holding communion with his Saviour on their behalf. He is so much engaged in this holy work that they must not disturb him even by calling upon him. I have heard it triumphantly asked, How can they expect their minister to compose sermons like Massillon's, if he do [*sic*] not consume his whole time in solitary study?

Such reasoning received more than a hint of sarcasm from Wayland's pen: "All this is solemnly said, by grave and reverend divines, as if there were really any danger that the candidate would ever preach like Massillon, and as if the people would not know whether their minister had time enough for general reading and social visiting, though he had none to employ in testifying from house to house repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵⁹

This pastoral visitation, as Wayland intimated, was no mere social call. Indeed, it was seen as a type of preaching, in this case "from house to house" instead of from a pulpit. Inquiries were to be made concerning "the subject of personal religion." If possible, each member of family was to be visited individually, but when this was not possible, the "duty of repentance and faith in Christ" was to be presented before them all.

⁵⁹Francis Wayland, *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1864), 140. The Charleston Baptist Association's *Summary of Church-Discipline* declared: "They [ministers] should often visit the flock committed to their charge, to know the state of their souls, that they may speak a word in season to them catechise the youths, instruct the ignorant, and pray with and for them. They are especially to visit the sick, and those who are otherwise afflicted, *Ezek. 34. 4.*" Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 10. T. G. Jones wrote in support of pastoral visitation: "Some ministers visit too little—others too much. The former, of reserved spirit and retiring habits, or deeply devoted to study, easily persuade themselves that visiting is of little moment. The latter, more fond of society than of books, with equal facility bring themselves to believe that visiting is even more important than the ministrations of the sanctuary—and that they can accomplish, to use the ordinary phrase, more *out of the pulpit than in it.* Both these classes are in error. Great is the good, which he who neglects to visit, fails to give and to receive. And great is the evil he brings upon himself and others, who degrades pastoral visitation into mere *calls of fashion and etiquette*, or into the means of gratifying morbid social tastes, and dispelling the ennui of an unfurnished and inactive mind." Tiberius Gracchus Jones, *Duties of a Pastor to His Church*, 60–61.

Not only could the impenitent be converted as a result of such visitation, but believers could be encouraged and strengthened. The bereaved could be comforted, the tempted could be warned and strengthened, and the young Christians could be disciplined. Pastoral visitation, however, was not restricted to the homes. Men could be found at their places of business and a few words could be shared with them there.⁶⁰

The pastor needed to realize the necessity of personal holiness for the effectiveness of his ministry. Those who failed in their personal living would do no better in their public ministry:

Can you do it [lead the church to greater heights] without the strength of a piety beyond that of the age which is passing away? If ye are carnal, will your churches be spiritual?—If ye are contentious, will your churches be gentle and peaceful? If ye are sordid, will the people that you fashion learn to trample the world under their feet? If your hearts are the seats of narrow and frozen affections, will those bosoms in which they throb catch the sentiments of burning, boundless benevolence?⁶¹

Pastors could not lead others where they themselves had not been.⁶²

Pastors, of course, continued their duties of oversight of the church. The Charleston *Summary of Church-Discipline* stated succinctly: “They are to administer the ordinances of the gospel, in a strict conformity to the word of *God, Heb. 8. 5.* to preside in the affairs of the church, and see that strict discipline is duly executed therein, *Heb.*

⁶⁰Wayland, *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel*, 145–48.

⁶¹“Soul prosperity.—Number lv,” *The Christian Index*, 2 March 1854, 2.

⁶²The example of a godly pastor was often used to call people to faithfulness. Of Oliver Hart, Richard Furman wrote: “A new evidence is hereby added to the truth and power of religion, by his thus persevering through a long life of trial and of labours, and in finishing his course in a manner so becoming the gospel. Let it have its proper influence on your minds, for the confirmation of your faith and hope. Remember the godly example he exhibited while he went out and came in before you, in the pastoral office; and while he broke to you the bread of life: And let the doctrines and counsels he delivered in your hearing, sink deep into your hearts; for by them, he being dead, yet speaketh.” Richard Furman, *Rewards of Grace Conferred on Christ’s Faithful People*, 28. The *Summary of Church-Discipline* intimated that pastoral duties relied upon pastoral godliness: “They are to administer the ordinances of the gospel, in a strict conformity to the word of *God, Heb. 8. 5.* to preside in the affairs of the church, and see that strict discipline is duly executed therein, *Heb. 13. 7. 17.* In a word, they are to be examples to the flock, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, *1 Tim. 4. 12.*” Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 10.

13. 7. 17.”⁶³ T. G. Jones would later write, “He is its presiding officer. And in virtue of his position, he is clothed with high authority. It is very evident from numerous passages of the Word of God, that *to rule the church*, is one of his prerogatives. But not to rule in the absolute sense. He is the ruler of the church only *with its own consent*. The rule he exercises is a *service*.”⁶⁴ This ruling would include the oversight of the ordinances, the examination of candidates for baptism, the reception of members, and the administration of discipline, and the management of church conferences.⁶⁵

Pastors were not guaranteed visible success with conversions, baptism, and the growth of their churches for continued faithfulness to their scriptural duties. For instance, Horatio Gates Jones noted the baptism record of the Lower Dublin, or Pennepek, church of Philadelphia: “The increase in membership by baptism was at first very gradual. Prior to the year 1800, the highest number baptized in one year, judging from the records, was six. From 1798 to 1804—a period of six years—there were no baptisms, but the services of the sanctuary were faithfully kept up under the pastoral care of Dr. Samuel Jones.” Dr. Jones, it appears, had continued faithfully to pastor his church during these lean years. Before he died, though, there was visible fruit. Jones explained: “In the latter year, a glorious work of grace manifested itself and a revival commenced, continuing until the venerable man of God was removed from the Church militant to the Church triumphant. In 1804, twenty-two were baptized; in 1805, twenty-four; in 1806, ten; in 1807, seven-

⁶³Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 10.

⁶⁴Tiberius Gracchus Jones, *Duties of a Pastor to His Church*, 65. Jones elaborated: “The pastor of a church, then, is not its *lord*. Nor is he its *legislator*. He and his people are alike under the laws of Christ.—And it is his duty, as well as theirs, to obey them. It is his province to give instruction with respect to these laws, to enforce their authority by all just considerations, and in cases of flagrant and incorrigible disobedience, to bring the guilty before the church for trial. He cannot of himself *compel* submission, nor in default of it *exclude from church fellowship*. ‘Pastors,’ says Fuller, ‘are that to a church which the executive powers or magistrates of a free country are to the State, the organs of the law. Submission to them is submission to the law.’ Thus it appears that in the government of the church, there is nothing arbitrary or despotic in the power of the pastor. He governs by the consent of his brethren. He governs not by his own will, but by the laws of Christ—the only code they recognize.” *Ibid.*, 66-67.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 68–73.

teen; in 1808, twenty-five; and in 1812, seventeen.” Jones commented, “This precious ingathering of souls seemed a fitting close to the faithful and laborious pastorate of over half a century.”⁶⁶

The church, of course, had responsibilities to its pastor. These responsibilities were not to be fulfilled merely because the pastoral class deserved or required them, but because doing so would, in the words of an 1802 circular letter of the Charleston Association, allow “the members of churches . . . to strengthen the hands of their ministers, and cooperate with them in promoting the interests of vital religion.” The success of the ministry required the aid of church members: “Your ministers, with whom you are united in this work, demand your attention; to them you owe a peculiar duty.” Members were reminded, “You then are not to be idle spectators and leave your ministers to labor alone. What may be your treatment of them, cannot be a matter of indifference; to secure their greatest usefulness, a certain line of conduct towards them is incumbent on you.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶Clark, “. . . *To Set Them in Order*,” 387. Included in the greeting to their churches from “the elders and messengers of the baptized congregations, in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, [meeting] at Philadelphia, September 27th and 28th, 1729, in a solemn Association” was a report and thanksgiving for success: “We find cause to rejoice that God has crowned the labors of his ministers with such success. There have been considerable additions the past year in several churches, and some in most. Praise be rendered to our gracious God, we find the churches generally to be at peace and unity amongst themselves.” Gillette, *Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association: 1707 to 1807*, 29. A similar circular letter of 1731 noted, “We [the elders, ministers, and messengers from Baptist churches “in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys”] met together in love, admitted your messengers, perused your letters, and had cause to bless God that we find the churches in peace among themselves, without distraction, schism or division, or destructive errors, and that in most churches there hath been some addition this last year; *for which we bless the great Husbandman, who gives success to the labours of his poor servants.*” Ibid., 31 (emphasis added). A 1739 circular letter from the same association reported, “Additions have been made in some churches. As we met in love, so we lovingly conferred together, and are now about to depart in peace. Our public opportunities have been so employed, that we hope, *by the blessing of God upon the labors of our ministering brethren, it will be to the glory of God and the good of souls.* . . . Keep close with God, in all gospel duties. Be instant in prayer for the prosperity of Zion.” Ibid., 40 (emphasis added). A 1793 circular letter of the Philadelphia Baptist Association by Rev. Thomas Fleeason reveals the reliance upon divine support for an increase in the witness of the churches: “The accounts from our churches are such as give pleasure and pain; pleasure, when we consider the peace and unanimity which generally prevail; pain, from the consideration of a too general declension, and the small addition to our churches. O, dear brethren, be engaged with the Lord, that he would revive his work, that his threatened judgments may be averted, that we may enjoy his presence, that a spirit of grace and supplication may be poured out upon us, and that we may revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.” Ibid., 293-94.

⁶⁷Wood Furman, *A History of the Charleston Association of Baptist Churches*, 153–54.

Churches were reminded to provide materially for their pastors. Elias Keach's Confession declared: "We believe that it is the indispensable Duty of every Church, according to their Ability, to provide their Pastor, or Elders, a comfortable Maintenance; as God hath ordained, that he that preaches the Gospel, should live of the Gospel, and not of his own labour." Such a requirement, while biblically mandated, had a practical consequence: "That he should wholly give himself up to the Work of the Ministry, and to watch over the Flock, being to be freed from all secular Business, and Encumbrances of the World." Pastors were warned, though, against entering the ministry to gain an income: "And yet that it is abominable Evil for any Man to preach the Gospel for filthy lucre sake, but he must do it of a ready mind." For biblical support, Keach listed 1 Corinthians 9:9-14; Romans 15:27; Galatians 6:6; 1 Timothy 5:15; and 1 Peter 5:2.⁶⁸

Isaac Backus, commenting upon 1 Corinthians 9:14—"Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel"—observed, "This is as plain an ordinance of God as any he ever instituted; and it is as distinct from the ordinances of men, as heaven is from earth."⁶⁹ Submission to the Scriptures and honesty before God required those who had received spiritual things from ministers to aid them in their material needs. Backus noted that the Scriptures taught, "Let the *elders* that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who *labour* in word and doctrine. For—the *labourer* is worthy of his *reward*. 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. Honesty requires a reward for labour, as much as charity does alms for the poor; and it is Babylonian *confusion* to hold them to be one and the same thing." Backus warned, "Our Lord will judge all at last, according to their behaviours in this life towards his members and ministers. Mat. xxv. 31-46. Luke x. 7-16." The New Englander observed, "His ministers are soldiers, as well as labourers. 2 Tim. ii. 3-7. And who goeth a warfare any time at his own

⁶⁸Elias Keach, *A Short Confession of Faith*, 29–30.

⁶⁹Isaac Backus, *The Liberal Support of Gospel Ministers, Opened and Inculcated* (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1790), 3.

charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? if we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing, if we shall reap your carnal things? 1 Cor. ix. 7-11.” Backus counseled, “Let each person consider how he can answer these questions to the Son of God, who only can give us safety and happiness, in time or eternity.”⁷⁰

Financial support was to be by voluntary contributions of church members. Under no circumstances was anyone to be coerced by a civil government to provide maintenance for the ministry. Backus observed, “As the gospel is a pure revelation from God, living of the gospel cannot mean a living by the laws of men, enforced by the sword.”⁷¹

Material considerations were only a part of the responsibilities of members to their pastors. The above-mentioned Charleston Association circular letter exhorted members to protect their ministers’ reputations. The letter stated, “Feel for the cause of God and you will then feel for the reputation of your ministers. You may lessen your ministers’ influence by the want of a proper regard, not only to their moral, but to their ministerial character: unjustly depreciating their abilities and making illiberal remarks on their performances, will greatly injure that influence.” Members were encouraged to “let your general deportment towards them be respectful and becoming the dignity, not of their persons, they are earthen vessels, but of their office; of the trust committed unto them.” Appropriate behavior by members would do much to strengthen their ministers: “Live with them in love, esteeming them highly for their work’s sake, and you will comfort their hearts, strengthen their hands, encourage them to enter with more

⁷⁰Ibid., 35–36.

⁷¹Ibid., 10. To force people to support financially “teachers who will not trust his [God’s] influence for a temporal living,” Backus asserted, is “robbery.” Ibid., 35.

cheerfulness and spirit upon their labours, and open to them a fairer prospect of success.”⁷²

Church members were also encouraged to pray for their pastors. Such prayer was not an option, Baptists were cautioned: “It is a duty incumbent on you. ‘Brethren,’ says the apostle, ‘pray for us.’” Church members were encouraged, “That they [ministers] have the prayers of the souls committed to their charge is an animating consideration to your ministers and cannot fail to attach them to you more tenderly.”⁷³

Baptists were reminded that their leading godly lives would do much to support the efforts of their ministers. Charleston Association Baptists were prompted: “Your exemplary and holy lives will add force and energy to the truths delivered by your ministers. Live then that religion which you would wish recommended to others; maintain a holy communion with God, and keep alive the spirit of religion.” They were reminded that “the enemies of religion will justly ridicule your profession of a change of heart, if it be not connected with a change of conduct. They will say your conversion is a deception, your devotion mockery, & your faith no better than the devils.” Such a lifestyle would irreparably harm the work of ministers: “Your ministers will labour in

⁷²Wood Furman, *A History of the Charleston Association of Baptist Churches*, 154–55. The *Summary of Church-Discipline* from the same association delineated the duties of church members to their ministers: “As ministers are the representatives of Christ, and employed by him in a work that is both useful and honorable, there are certain duties, incumbent on all members of churches towards them. As (1) they owe them distinguishing honor and reverence; and are to hold them in reputation as the ambassadors of Christ, *Phi. 2. 29. 2 Cor. 5. 20.* and to esteem them highly for their work’s sake, *1 The. 5. 13.* (2) They are to contribute, according to their respective abilities, towards their ministers support, *Gal. 6. 6.* that being freed as much as possible, from the cares of life, they may wholly devote themselves to the duties of their holy function; and have it in their power to use hospitality, *1 Tim. 3. 2.* and stretch out the benevolent hand of charity to the poor in distress, *Gal. 20 [sic, Galatians 2]. 10.* which maintenance ought not to be considered as a gratuity, but as a debt due to their minister. The law of nature requires it, *1 Tim. 5. 18.* In the Lord’s grants to *Israel*, there was always a reserve made for the priests; under the gospel, provision is made for the support of its ministers, *1 Cor. 9. 7.---14.* (3) They are to obey and submit themselves to their ministers, *Eph. 6. 18.---20.* (4) They ought to stand by and assist them in all their troubles and afflictions, *2 Tim. 4. 16. Job. 6. 14.* (5) To receive no accusation against them without full proof, *1 Tim. 5. 19.* (6) Nor to expose their infirmities, *Acts 23, [sic] 5. 3 Joh. 10.* (7) To follow their example as far as they follow Christ, *2 Thess. 3. 7. 1 Cor. 11. 1.*” Baptist Association of Charleston, *Summary of Church-Discipline*, 16–17.

⁷³Wood Furman, *A History of the Charleston Association of Baptist Churches*, 156.

vain to convince others of the necessary [necessity] of being born again, if you should be found of an unforgiving temper and conduct, censorious, backbiting, passionate, impatient, indolent, covetous or sensual.”⁷⁴

Baptists continued to hold similar views about the responsibility of church members to their pastor. For instance, P. F. Rainwater, writing in *The Christian Index*, charged that churches had three basic duties to their pastors. First, the church was “to respect and guard sacredly the character of their pastor, for his character is an invaluable part of his power.” Second, the members should exhibit a proper respect for the pastor’s ministry, particularly during the delivery of the sermon. Rainwater charged that “professed Christians instead of listening to the sermon, are seen gazing around the house, whispering and laughing, and making remarks on the appearance of others, while some doze themselves to sleep. To such we say, you are disgracing yourselves, while truly you embarrass the pastor, reproach religion, and dishonor God.” Third, the church was to provide proper compensatory support for the pastor—not “a bare pittance, which may just keep him from starving, but a remuneration for his labor—such an one as will relieve him from worldly care, and the support of a helpless family, and as will enable him to provide himself with suitable books for his mission.” The pastor was to be paid adequately and punctually, with the deacons being charged with the responsibility of making sure that the obligation was properly fulfilled.⁷⁵

The failure of church members to carry out their duties to their pastors was seen as one of the chief reasons for pervasive spiritual dullness. Rainwater’s charge was indicative of Baptist thought throughout this period whenever churches seemed ineffective: “Brethren, there is a lack somewhere. Coldness and baseness pervade the churches. But few are on the walls of Zion, and they are mostly men who have to labor for a tem-

⁷⁴Ibid., 156–57.

⁷⁵P. F. Rainwater, “Duties of Churches to Their Pastors,” *The Christian Index*, 8 July 1857, 1.

poral support, while all their time and talents should be devoted to religious services.” Rainwater asked: “Is it not time for us to covenant together as churches and as Christians, that we will pray for our pastor, and that a succession of ministers may be given us?” He challenged, “Let us love and respect them for their work’s sake. Let us guard and protect their character from all undue reproach. Let us meet them at the sanctuary and attend to their ministrations. Let us help them in building up the Church and preaching the Gospel to lost sinners.”⁷⁶

Conclusion

American Baptists of the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries continued to see the paramount concern for gospel ministers was to be faithful to the Scriptures. The Scriptures determined their understanding of the office of the ministry, the call to the ministry and to the local church, ordination to the ministry, the duties of the minister, as well as the responsibilities of members to their ministers. Baptists saw the gospel ministry as a noble endeavor which none dared enter without an assurance of the call of God. This assurance came from neither pietistic feelings nor educational attainment. While a desire to enter the ministry and a determination that God had laid that desire upon one’s heart were important, the confirmation by fellow Christians was essential. Baptists realized that a man could be deceived into thinking he was called when, in reality, he was not. Consequently, licensing and ordination were seen as the necessary involvement of fellow believers required to ensure that the ministry would have, as certainly as possible, only qualified men. While there was an increasing realization of the importance of a formal, theological education, Baptists realized that such training was not essential. Education could enhance the qualifications for ministry which God had given, but education could not replace or supersede those qualifications.

⁷⁶Ibid.

Baptists continued to recognize that the ministry involved responsibilities on the part of both pastor and church. While pastors were to give themselves to the oversight of the souls of their members through preaching the Word, whether in the pulpit or “from house to house,” the members of the church were to respect their pastors, obey the Word preached, and provide necessary compensation for pastors. Baptists recognized that the ultimate criterion for a gospel minister was to be faithful to the Scriptures, whether such fidelity was rewarded with evident success or not. Indeed, success was God’s concern; fidelity was the pastor’s.

CHAPTER 5

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS FROM 1865-1925: CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST

Postbellum Southern Baptists found themselves in a defeated country suffering from deprivation and humiliation of Northern-imposed Reconstruction. Nevertheless, they rallied to continue and expand the work of the Kingdom of God. The vocation of the minister of the gospel continued to be viewed as a position filled by God with men of his choosing, men who were to be appointed carefully and men who were to fulfill their calling with due diligence.

As one examines the gospel ministry among Southern Baptists during this period, one is struck by the great continuity with the past. Southern Baptists would continue to look to the Scriptures as their authority for what the gospel ministry should be. They would maintain that ministers in the churches were to be called by God, a calling confirmed by the local church. They would believe that the ministry was no profession to be entered because a man had satisfied certain academic requirements—the ministry was God’s work to be carried out by God’s chosen men. Southern Baptists would argue that those whom God called would be equipped with biblical qualifications. While their churches would typically be led by a single pastor instead of a plurality and there was no mention of ruling elders, they would widely acknowledge that the pattern of the early church was a plurality of elders. Baptists would continue to insist that God called men into the ministry, and while there were some who deemphasized the necessity of the confirmation of that call by those who knew the candidate well, most acknowledged the need for the inward call to be confirmed by an outward call. Southern Baptists

would follow the example of their predecessors concerning the reciprocal duties of both pastors and churches.

The Ministerial Office as Derived from Scripture

Southern Baptists continued to look to the New Testament to support their view of the gospel ministry. After referring to Ephesians 4:11-12, J. M. Pendleton¹ asserted that “apostles, prophets, and evangelists filled extraordinary and temporary offices” in the early church. Now, however, “pastors and teachers, the same men, are the ordinary and permanent spiritual officers of the churches while the office of deacon has special reference to the secular interests of churches.” While some denominations would use biblical titles for non-biblical functions, Baptists continued to use the titles of office as the Bible prescribed. For instance, Pendleton maintained,

We must not suffer the term bishop to suggest any such idea as the word in its modern acceptation implies. In apostolic times there were no bishops having charge of the churches of a district of country, a province, or a kingdom. A bishop was a pastor of a church, and the New Testament, so far from encouraging a plurality of churches under one pastor, refers, in two instances at least, to a plurality of pastors in one church. See Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1.

Pointing to Acts 20:28, in which “the elders of the church at Ephesus are called *overseers*, and the word thus translated is the same rendered *bishop*[,] Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii.2; Titus i. 7; 1 Peter ii. 25,” Pendleton concluded, “Thus does it appear that pastor, bishop,

¹James Madison Pendleton, born in 1811, spent almost his entire life and ministry in Kentucky and Tennessee until 1862. Because of his loyalty to the Union, he moved from Tennessee to Ohio in 1862 and to Pennsylvania in 1865, where he ministered until 1883. He died in Bowling Green, Kentucky, in 1891. The role which his *Church Manual* played among Baptists is implied by L. R. Scarborough, who succeeded B. H. Carroll as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In recounting the genesis of Southwestern Seminary, Scarborough wrote, “B. H. Carroll was, as far back as 1880, conducting a sort of embryonic theological seminary in connection with Baylor (then Waco) University. At that time the twelve or fifteen young preachers in the University would gather on Friday nights at his little cottage with Pendleton’s *Church Manual* in their hands. We had the one small textbook, the one teacher, and once a week recitations, but the instruction covered, or, to speak more accurately, touched upon nearly everything taught in the Seminary today.” L. R. Scarborough, *A Modern School of the Prophets* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1939), 19. Baptist church manuals are particularly helpful in understanding the practices of Baptist churches. For an analysis of such manuals, see Bobby Dale Compton, “Baptist Church Manuals in America: A Study in Baptist Polity and Practice” (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968).

and elder are three terms designating the same office.”²

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, W. R. Rothwell, professor of theology at Missouri’s William Jewell College, likewise pointed to the Scriptures as the all-sufficient authority for determining, among matters of ecclesiology, the officers of the church. To believers in Jesus Christ, Rothwell argued, “You cannot be lovingly loyal to Him, and neglect to inquire in His Word whether he instituted a *form of church government* or not. And if you find He did, then you must examine whether you are observing that church government and order or some other.” To Rothwell, the determination of what Scripture teaches about church government and how one responds “will make God’s Word alone spiritual law to your conscience, or it will subject your conscience to some ecclesiastical tribunal.” Before initiating his inquiry, Rothwell challenged his readers to allow the New Testament determine the form of church government instituted by Christ: “Taking the Scriptures of the New Testament, and for the time ignoring all tradition and all subsequent church history, let us make a plain, earnest study of the church of the New Testament. What was the church organization instituted by divine authority as it is to be seen in the written Word?”³

After the turn of the new century, E. C. Dargan, professor of homiletics and ecclesiology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, succinctly stated the essential reason why Baptists adhered to their particular form of church government:

The general argument between Protestants and Catholics, between evangelicals and rationalists, that the Scriptures fairly interpreted and intelligently applied to the different conditions of our modern life are the only sufficient rule of faith and practice in regard to matters of religion, is the one fundamental and all-embracing reason why the Baptists conscientiously prefer to maintain as far as they can the form of government exemplified in the New Testament church. Baptists maintain that apos-

²J. M. Pendleton, *Church Manual. Designed for the Use of Baptist Churches* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1867), 23–25.

³W. R. Rothwell, *Denominational Self-Examination; or, The New Testament Church Order* (Baltimore: R. H. Woodward and Co., 1891), 5–7.

toloc custom, even without a definite command, is a precedent of the utmost value.⁴ Dargan's qualification "that the Scriptures" must be "intelligently applied to the different conditions of our modern life," though, justified the current practice of Baptist churches having only one elder. Dargan acknowledged that "the earliest Christian churches were under the care of several, and perhaps in the case of large churches, even of many elders."⁵ He admitted that "our modern practice has certainly departed from this usage so far as the authoritative pastor is concerned. Often it happens that there is more than one ordained preacher in a church, but this is a very different thing from the plural eldership of the apostolic churches." Dargan pointed out that a few churches had pastoral assistants and others had non-preaching elders who assisted the pastor in attending to spiritual concerns, a practice, he believed, "different from the apostolic order."⁶

⁴Edwin Charles Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905), 173–74.

⁵Dargan had argued earlier that "it appears to be well-nigh certain that in the apostolic churches generally there was a plurality of elders. They are commonly mentioned in the plural. If there be any exception to this it would be the case of Archippus mentioned by Paul in Philemon, verses 1 and 2, and in Col. 4:17. In the first instance Archippus appears as the leader of the church in the house of Philemon, and in Colossians, writing to the church, Paul says: 'And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it,' as if he were the special one in charge of the whole church. The inference, however, is uncertain. There may have been other elders in the church besides Archippus, though no others are mentioned. We cannot say positively, therefore, that there was in all the churches a plurality of elders, but it is more than likely that this was the fact." *Ibid.*, 89–90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 179–80. While Dargan had argued that the apostolic churches almost certainly had a plurality of elders, he saw no evidence for dividing them into teaching and ruling elders. Concerning 1 Timothy 5:17, often used as a proof text for such a division of labor, Dargan wrote, "Now it may possibly be true that some of the elders were charged only with the oversight and were not specially preachers, but this seems quite unlikely in view of many other passages. Rather the meaning is that while the general work of oversight belonged to the elders, there were some who especially distinguished themselves in that part of the work which included teaching; that is, all were both teachers and rulers, but some gave especial attention to teaching. It is said that they 'labored' in the word and the teaching. Now this word 'labored' in the original expresses earnest, hard, toilsome labor, and the idea seems to be that they made teaching especially laborious work." *Ibid.*, 89. While few Baptist churches were led by a plurality of elders during this period, they generally granted that the New Testament recognized a plurality of elders within each local church. For articles discussing plurality of elders, see Milton, "Ruling Elders," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 February 1867, 33; E. B. Teague, "Elders—Pastors and Teachers, or Bishops," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 20 January 1870, 9; E. B. Teague, "Deacons and Deaconesses," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 February 1870, 17; "The Eldership," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 July 1870, 101; "The Eldership," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 August 1870, 121; D., "The Plurality of Elders," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25

Even though Dargan recognized that first-century churches were under the care of a plurality of elders, he nevertheless questioned the viability of such an arrangement for the twentieth century. He acknowledged that several pastors of equal authority within one church, who worked in “perfect harmony and co-operation[,] . . . would greatly promote the efficiency of the church. Such an arrangement would enable the pastors to perform a vast deal more of much needed service in the way of oversight of the flock.” Dargan questioned, though, how a church would be able to provide adequate support for such a plurality of pastors. Because the manner in which early churches were supported or organized was not fully known and because twentieth-century churches were probably smaller than their first-century counterparts and were thereby “not too large to be under the oversight of one man, it does not seem necessary to consider the plural eldership as a

May 1871, 81; “Elders in the Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 September 1878, 2; W., “‘Primitive Usage’—Paris in the Lead,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 27 July 1882, 2; W., “That Plurality—No. Two,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 August 1882, 3.

That most Baptists apparently acknowledged the New Testament model of a plurality of elders did not mean that they knew how to return to that practice. A Dr. Deems, writing in the *Episcopal Methodist*, suggested that “perhaps each church needs three bishops: a pastor bishop, an evangelist bishop and a teacher bishop—one to take care of those who are already enrolled in the church, to keep them toned up and drilled; another to go out, leading forth as many as he can, to bring in those outside, beating up recruits and training them for the service; and a third to preach to those inside and outside the church, giving his whole time to that one work. As it is now, these three functions are expected to be discharged by one man.” The *Index* responded, “‘As it is now’—yes; but not as it was in apostolic times. The New Testament gives us not an instance of a church with ‘one man’ as its bishop, or pastor. In every case, where the facts on this point are brought out, we find the churches ‘which first trusted in Christ’ churches with a plurality of pastors: and we need to return to the ‘pattern shown us in the Mount’ of Holy Scripture. When will this be done? How can it be done? We cannot answer either the one question or the other. But we believe that the time is coming when God will show the answer to his people, and they will do it.” “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 29 May 1890, 1. Texas Baptist pastor J. M. C. Breaker, however, held that the need for a plurality of elders no longer existed during the latter part of the first century: “The early churches seem generally to have had a plurality of elders or bishops. . . . The reason for this probably was, that as they had no church edifices in those days, and hence held their meetings in private houses, several such meetings would often be held at the same time, and each would need a bishop or pastor to conduct it. In later times, the circumstances not requiring a plurality, one pastor to a church seems to have become the practice; as when the epistles were addressed to the seven churches of Asia, in the 20th and 36th [*sic*, 2nd and 3rd] chapters of Revelation, each church was addressed through its ‘angel’ or pastor, the word ‘angel’ meaning a messenger, and indicating the relation of the pastor as the messenger, both of God to the church, and of the church towards God and the world.” J. M. C. Breaker, “Officers of a Scriptural Church and Their Duties. No. II,” *The Christian Index*, 1 September 1892, 1.

permanent apostolic institution.” Some city churches, however, were so large as to be considered “unwieldy.” These, Dargan proposed, should be divided or “recur to the plural eldership of the earlier times.” Dargan concluded, “The point may be left doubtful as belonging under the head of discretionary matters.”⁷

Baptists continued to see the gospel ministry restricted to men. When criticized as being opposed to “women’s work,” *Christian Index* editor I. R. Branham replied that he was supportive of the work done by women in their proper sphere. The problem was that some were using the expression “woman’s work” to apply “to the work of a regularly ordained pastor, or preacher, and to the official work of ruling the churches, and the public preaching of the gospel.” Branham was unequivocal in his opposition to any such practice: “This work is man’s work. It is specially committed to the hands of man and plainly forbidden to woman by the Word of God.”⁸

⁷Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 180–81. For additional writings of Baptists supporting their view of the ministry from the Scriptures, see “Elders—Pastors and Deacons,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 May 1868, 81 [a minority view in which the author maintains that both pastors and deacons are elders—the former teaching and ruling and the latter serving and ruling]; X., “‘Bishop’ Vs. Pastor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 18 February 1869, 25; W. Blewett, “Essay on the Eldership of the Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 29 July 1869, 113; E. B. Teague, “Elders—Apostles,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 December 1869, 197; E. B. Teague, “Elders—Ruling and Preaching,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 January 1870, 5; Williams Rutherford, “Church Organization and Government,” *The Christian Index*, 4 October 1894, 1; G. W. Garner, “The Divine Call and Commission of the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 27 April 1922, 7; “The Eldership,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 July 1870, 101; “The Eldership,” 121; Nathanael, “The Qualifications of a Bishop,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 27 March 1873, 45; Timothy Harley, “What Saith the Scriptures?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 March 1874, 2; H. F. Smith, “Some Suggestions,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 18 May 1876, 2; H. F. Smith, “Correction,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 June 1876, 6; P. H. Mell, “Editorial Contributions on Church Polity. Church Polity—the Church—Its Form of Government,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 8 August 1878, 4; P. H. Mell, “Editorial Contributions on Church Polity. Church Polity—the Officers,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 August 1878, 1; P. H. Mell, “Editorial Contributions on Church Polity. Church Polity—the Officers,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 29 August 1878, 1; J. M. C. Breaker, “Officers of a Scriptural Church and Their Duties. No. I,” *The Christian Index*, 25 August 1892, 1; Breaker, “Officers of a Scriptural Church and Their Duties. No. II,” 2; J. M. C. Breaker, “Officers of a Scriptural Church and Their Duties. No. III,” *The Christian Index*, 8 September 1892, 1.

⁸I. R. Branham, “Two Things,” *The Christian Index*, 31 March 1892, 8. J. M. Stifler, pastor of First Baptist Church in New Haven, Connecticut, wrote, “The relation of female ministry is definitely set forth [in Scripture]. If a *man* desire the office of a bishop. And the emphasis is not in the word, for in the

Professor Gaines Dobbins of the Southern Baptist Theological seminary provided biblical support for such a restriction. He wrote, “Yet, back of the injunction that the women ‘keep silence’ (1 Cor. 14:34) there is a fundamental principle (1 Tim. 2:8-15). It is nowhere inferred that woman is inferior to man, except in certain offices and functions, and over against this is indicated man’s similar inferiority to woman (Gal. 3:28).” He explained that “the divinely appointed place of woman is in the home as mother and home-maker and in the church in personal ministries. To man is given the place of public leadership. This distinction is grounded in human nature itself, and the principle is violated in any walk of life at the peril of social stability and human happiness.”⁹

original it is indefinite—any one—but most strikingly in the context, which goes on to give the bishop’s qualifications entirely in the *masculine gender*. He must be the *husband* of one wife, having *his* children in subjection. There are no qualifications for a female bishop anywhere. This is the more striking, when we remember that, a female deaconship being allowed . . . The New Testament knows no such office as a female pastorate, and in express terms forbids it. The work of teaching is pointedly limited to men. For [support] see I. Cor. xiv.34 and I. Tim. ii.12.” J. M. Stifler, “The Gospel Ministry,” in *Baptist Doctrines; Being an Exposition, in a Series of Essays by Representative Baptist Ministers, of the Distinctive Points of Baptist Faith and Practice*, ed. Charles A. Jenkins (St. Louis: Chancy R. Barns, 1885), 257–58. J. H. Hall used the commonly accepted belief that the gospel ministry was reserved for men as an illustration of the necessity of preaching biblical truth for edification: “And know that the truth not only saves, but ‘edifies,’ ‘builds up,’ ‘establishes,’ the saved. It prepares the pastor’s people for any ‘wind of doctrine’ that may blow over his field. A case in illustration is recalled: A woman preacher went to a certain town and stirred the place from centre to circumference. She passed to the next town. It likewise was swept as by a storm. She went to the third town. Here she preached in vain. There was no stir. She was amazed at what she considered the hardness of the people. She left. Afterward she returned to try it over. Still it was in vain. She could do nothing. Why? Because the people in the last town had been taught upon the subject, and knew that it was plainly, explicitly and positively written: ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches.’” J. H. Hall, “Pastoral Success,” *The Christian Index*, 19 July 1900, 1. See also “Ought a Woman to Preach?” *The Christian Index*, 14 July 1887, 8; W. A. Montgomery, “A Word or Two on the Woman Question,” *The Christian Index*, 29 March 1900, 2; B. J. W. Graham, “A Woman Evangelist,” *The Christian Index*, 19 July 1900, 7; “A Woman Preaching,” *The Christian Index*, 22 May 1902, 6; A. B. Vaughan, “Editorial on Women Preaching,” *The Christian Index*, 24 July 1902, 2–3; “A Woman Preacher,” *The Christian Index*, 2 March 1916, 3; A. C. Wellons, “Women Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 12 January 1922, 26; A. B. Bonsteel, “Women Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 26 January 1922, 30; H. J. Johnston, “Women Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 9 February 1922, 19; L. A. Brantley, “Women Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 2 March 1922, 29–30; A. C. Wellons, “Women Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 16 March 1922, 28–29. In 1889 an inquirer to the *Index* asked: “1. Have the Baptists, North or South, so far as you know, ordained any women to the ministry? 2. Should a Baptist church invite a travelling sister, who claims to be an ordained Baptist minister to preach for it?” The *Index* sharply answered: “So far as we know, there is not an ordained female Baptist preacher in the world. If any church has ordained a woman to the ministry, it has put itself out of the fellowship of all orthodox Baptist churches. A woman so ordained is not to be recognized, either as a minister or as a Baptist.” “Questions,” *The Christian Index*, 7 February 1889, 8.

⁹Gaines S. Dobbins, *The Efficient Church: A Study of the Polity and Methods in the Light of New Testament Principles and Modern Conditions and Needs* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1923), 143.

The Call to the Ministry

Postbellum Southern Baptists continued to express deep concern over the call to the ministry. The office responsible for the care of souls required the most careful oversight in the approbation of men seeking to assume it.

Southern Baptists throughout this era were careful not to overlook the most basic criterion required of those claiming a call to the ministry: a man must be truly converted. W. R. Rothwell stated unequivocally, "In answering the question what constitutes a call to the ministry, I lay it down as my first proposition that only such as are first CALLED TO BE SAINTS, believers in Christ, are ever CALLED INTO THE MINISTRY. . . . As Christ called His Apostles from among His disciples so now He calls His ministers from among those believing in Him."¹⁰ A. T. Robertson noted that "Jesus had definitely laid hold on Paul. Henceforth to 'gain Christ,' to 'know Him,' to learn 'the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,' all this was the 'one thing' which consumed his soul, the single goal of his life-ambition." Robertson's application of Paul's experience to ministers of the gospel elicited the most elemental and essential requirement: "A minister, to whom this experience of Christ is unknown, cannot be considered qualified to tell men about Jesus. He must himself be transfigured by the Spirit of Christ, have the Spirit of Christ in him, if he hopes to see others transfigured by his life and words. This spiritual appropriation is the first result of contact with Christ."¹¹

More was required for substantiating a call to the ministry, however, than merely being a believer in Christ. Rothwell wrote, "They that are called into the ministry are not only themselves Christians, but also such men as have ENDOWMENTS TO MINISTER TO OTHERS—GIFTS both natural and supernatural." Rothwell maintained, though, that these gifts were not uniform throughout the body of ministers. He observed, "Isaiah

¹⁰Rothwell, *Denominational Self-Examination*, 63.

¹¹A. T. Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry: Paul's Exultation in Preaching* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1911), 122.

and Jeremiah, Joel and Amos, among the Prophets; John the Baptist; John and Peter, and Paul and Barnabas, and Mark and Silas, and Timothy and Luke, and Titus and Archippus were very different in natural endowments and spiritual graces, but each had some special adaptedness to the work unto which the Lord called him.” Rothwell, though, did not specify objective traits which should be evidenced in potential candidates. Indeed, he explained, “at the time of the calling these gifts are often undeveloped or little known but they are there. These gifts are wisely chosen of God to meet the wants of His people or the conditions of the lost who are to be saved through their ministry.” What were these gifts? Rothwell did not say, except to assert, “We are taught to esteem and use all these diversified talents of the ministry without rejecting some or unduly admiring and following others. ‘Glory not in men, for all are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, all are yours, and ye are Christs [*sic*].’”¹²

As did the predecessors, Southern Baptists during the latter nineteenth century believed that Scripture taught that the call to the ministry included both internal, or subjective, and external, or objective, elements, with the internal being discerned by the candidate and the external being observed by the congregation. At the beginning of this period, and serving as a transition from the previous era, Basil Manly, Jr., viewed the internal call to the ministry as necessarily coming from God and revealed to men through quite ordinary means. One of the four founding professors of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, Manly questioned the notion that God ordinarily called men into service against their desires in some violent manner. He lamented, “A sort of undefined idea appears to prevail with many . . . , a man must wait, supine, indifferent and unenquiring, till some irresistible force, some strange impulse, which has originated in no prayer, no inquiry after duty, no deliberation, no self-examination, shall thrust him forth into a work for which he has only dread and repug-

¹²Rothwell, *Denominational Self-Examination*, 63–64.

nance.” Manly maintained that “in most cases there is a calm, sober, deliberate persuasion, the growth of prayerful inquiry, which prompts one to enter the ministry.” He conceded, though, that “there are instances of a sudden and overwhelming conviction, which is as a fire in the bones, mastering in an instant all the passions of the nature, and controlling all its powers to this one end.”¹³

That God called men into the gospel ministry continued to be a foundational understanding. Likewise, W. R. Rothwell wrote, “If the Holy Spirit can witness with the believer’s spirit that he is a child of God, He can also bear witness to some believers of the fact that Jesus Christ calls them into His ministry.” Again, this witness did not necessitate anything spectacular: “This needs now no audible voice, nor wondrous vision, nor sensible sign any more in their ministerial call than in their conversion. As the Holy Spirit uses means of grace and sanctified human agency in the one case, why not also in the other?” The call may be manifested suddenly, but usually “the evidences will come in the conscious experience of the soul like those of regeneration, and there will be more or less prolonged deliberation and searching of heart before decision is attained.” Regardless of the particulars of the experience, “the essential thing is sense of a great devotion to Christ and desire to work with Him in rescuing the lost.”¹⁴

Manly saw the internal call and the external call to the ministry as inextricably interrelated. He emphasized, though, the superiority of the discernment of the church of which the candidate for the ministry was a member over the candidate’s personal assessment of his call. Answering the question “What are the qualifications requisite for a minister of the gospel?”, Manly provided criteria for both the candidate and the church to examine. He viewed piety as the fundamental qualification. He explained, “No amount of talent, no extent of education, no apparent brilliancy or fervor, should ever be allowed

¹³B. Manly, Jr., “A Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 November 1866, 182.

¹⁴Rothwell, *Denominational Self-Examination*, 66–67.

to gain admission into the ministry for one whose piety there is reason to doubt, or who has not a more than ordinarily active and consistent holiness.”¹⁵ Additionally, the candidate must possess “good intellect,” “common sense,” and “energy of character.”¹⁶

Manly maintained, “In regard to these qualifications, the church are [*sic*] usually better judges than the individual himself, and must exercise their judgment with prudence and fidelity, under a solemn sense of their accountability, and ‘lay not careless hands on heads that cannot teach and will not learn.’”¹⁷

¹⁵Southern Baptists often echoed the sentiment of this statement. Pendleton wrote, “But it must ever be remembered that piety is the preacher’s first and most important qualification, without which the greatest talents, and the richest stores of learning, will make him as ‘sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.’” J. M. Pendleton, *Church Manual*, 152.

¹⁶Ray later made similar observations. He divided the preacher’s qualifications into two categories: “physical and mental” and “moral and spiritual.” Physical qualifications include possessing “perfect physique.” Ray asked, “Should physical soundness be considered in examining candidates for ordination to the ministry?” He answered, “While admitting that a robust body should not be made a *sine qua non* to ordination, I insist there ought to at least enough attention given to it to impress the prospective preacher with the importance of preserving his health and developing physical strength.” Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office: A Study of the Aims and Claims of the Christian Ministry* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1923), 128. Mental qualifications for Ray included both intellectual and temperamental characteristics. Ray insisted that “a good brain developed by natural human agencies is an essential factor in the making of a real preachers.” *Ibid.*, 131. He argued that “when God foreordains, predestinates and elects a worthy preacher his electing grace always includes a big brain. He is foolish who enters, or tries to go on in the ministry depending on brains; but he is equally foolish who thinks the Lord will supply the preacher with something as a substitute for brains.” *Ibid.*, 131-32. “Temperamental qualifications” included optimism, altruism, sympathy, and moral earnestness: “Not every healthy, brainy, pious, consecrated man would make a good preacher. With the poet, the artists, the musician, the warrior, the scientist, the mechanic, the farmer, success will be largely a matter of temperament. Even so with the preacher.” *Ibid.*, 137-38. Drawing from Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus, as well as Paul’s biographical data in the book of Acts, Ray discussed the following maxims concerning the preacher’s moral and spiritual qualifications: “He is one who will not run from a difficult field,” “He is one who is always on the right side,” “He is one who respects authority,” “He is one whose every relation is marked with courtesy and propriety,” “He is one who is concerned about the doctrines of his people,” “He is one who puts character at a premium—who would rather be than seem,” “He knows how to profit by wholesome example,” “He is one who gives no room for scandalous talk about himself,” “He will be a diligent student of the word of God,” “He is one who exalts prayer, practices the prayer habit, and lives the prayer life.” *Ibid.*, 142-67.

¹⁷Manly, “A Call to the Ministry.” Observant church members would not be caught unawares when approached with the possibility that a man was called to the ministry. They would have been watching him for years as he was among them in the congregation. Pendleton saw among the duties of church members for one another the “*seeking out and encouraging whatever ministerial gifts there may be in the membership.*” He explained, “We doubt not there are many young men in our churches who ought to preach the gospel. They have impressions on the subject. They look on the work of the ministry as so responsible that they recoil from it with trembling. They feel their incompetency; and, in view of ministerial duties and trial, repeat the stereotyped question, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ These are the very men who need

Manly added “another qualification . . . on which the question mainly turns; it is *an ardent and self-denying desire to labor for the good of souls.*” This “desire to labor for the good of souls,” Manly observed, was the internal call.¹⁸ He explained that “this is not a natural quality; it must be implanted by the Holy Spirit, and become an abiding, decided and effective habit of the soul.” How could one know if one possessed this essential qualification and was truly called? One’s calling was not to be ascertained “by voices and visions, not by mere transitory impressions, or confident, yet groundless persuasions—but by positive moral changes produced in the habitual temper, character and desires.” Manly explained:

We should seek for evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work in calling to the ministry, as we seek for evidence of His work in converting the soul. Neither is ordinarily manifested by a token, which admits of no doubt or hesitation, which is incapable of being either strengthened or weakened by subsequent developments; but usually by a number of particulars, which, when compared with the word of God, prove the possession of the characteristics demanded.

We do not deny that the evidence may be instantaneous and overwhelming. It may be; regeneration itself we suppose to be always instantaneous; the evidence of it to the individual himself may be, or it may not. Sometimes it is as the flash of noon-day radiance at midnight. At other times, it is as the gradual coming of the dawn, doubts being dispelled and darkness gradually dispersed; as the morning mists flee and shadows lessen before the advancing sun. So in regard to a call to the ministry. There is diversity of operation, but the same spirit.¹⁹

to be sought out and encouraged. Their views of the greatness of the work of preaching the gospel are correct. Their self-distrust is altogether commendable. The ablest of the Lord’s ministers once felt as they now feel. They need instruction. Let them be encouraged to speak and exhort in prayer meetings, and soon it will be seen that they possess ministerial gifts. It devolves specially on pastors, and the more judicious of the brethren, to train these *future* ministers for usefulness; and, wherever money is needed for the education of any of them, the churches ought cheerfully to furnish it. There is no pecuniary investment so productive as that made in ministerial education.” J. M. Pendleton, *Church Manual*, 151–52. For a similar view, see R. B. Headden, “Young Men and the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 27 June 1907, 1–2.

¹⁸This article in *The Christian Index* has Manly stating incorrectly, “This steadfast and divinely implanted desire to labor for souls is substantially what is meant by ‘the *eternal* call.’” Manly, “A Call to the Ministry,” 182. Emphasis added. In a later article which provides the text of a discourse given before the Edgefield Baptist Association in South Carolina on September 10, 1869, a discourse which includes and expands upon most of the material in the 1866 article, Manly writes, “This steadfast and divinely implanted desire to labor for souls is substantially what is meant by ‘the *internal* call.’” B. Manly, Jr., “A Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 October 1869, 153. Emphasis added.

¹⁹B. Manly, Jr., “A Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 November 1866, 182.

Such evidence would be readily evident to both the potential candidate and the church as they prayerfully sought to determine God's will.

The church's determination of the validity of a call, however, held more weight than individual assertions. No personal claim to a call, regardless how seemingly miraculous the call was said to have been, could offset the church's solemn duty to determine the fitness of a man for the ministry. While some men experienced "instances of a sudden and overwhelming conviction," some claims were "instances of a 'strange fire' on God's altars, a 'zeal not according to knowledge, where men claim to have this sudden, irresistible call, and demand to be recognized as Christ's ministers, on evidences entirely undiscoverable by any but themselves, and assume a sort of infallibility akin to actual inspiration." Manly saw that such claims would eliminate the church's duty to evaluate the legitimacy of the perceived call: "The whole class of notions is utterly at variance with the admitted duty of minister and churches to refuse to ordain those whom they judge unfit." He questioned, "If the Divine call were this semi-miraculous thing, this direct light from heaven, (which so strangely does *not* shine,) how could it be judged by others? How dare any man question, or try, or examine God's ambassador?" Removal of the church's duty to examine the trustworthiness of one's claim would bring about dire consequences: "To make the call to the ministry consist in some supposed indubitable, irresistible, Divine afflatus, of which no evidence is found except the confident impressions and assertions of the candidate, is clearly to open the door to all kinds of extravagance, imposture and fanatical abuses. Nor is it sustained by a single passage of God's word."²⁰

Manly was certainly not alone in his view of the superiority of the church's perspective of the validity of one's claim to a call to the ministry. B. W. Whilden, a former Baptist missionary to China, observed, "There are some persons that are *slow* to

²⁰B. Manly, Jr., "A Call to the Ministry," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 October 1869, 153.

enter upon the work of the ministry, even after their brethren *urge* them to it. There are some, on the other hand, who seem *determined* to enter on it *against* the wishes and opinions of all their brethren.” While Whilden was concerned about both groups, he maintained, “We suppose that the latter ones have more reason to doubt their call than the former.” Whilden represented the historical Baptist view that the local church was in a better position to determine the validity of a man’s call than the man himself. Whilden esteemed those potential candidates for the ministry who revealed a sense of the high calling of the ministry and their own unworthiness to enter that vocation. “We love that spirit which leads one to say, ‘Here am I, Lord, send me,’” Whilden allowed, “but we love also the spirit which leads one seriously to weigh the importance of the work which leads one to tremble under a sense of responsibility as did Moses, who, when God said, ‘I will send thee unto Pharaoh,’ replied, ‘Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt?’”²¹

Baptists sought to provide young men practical help in discerning whether God was calling them into the ministry. Manly posed the following “practical inquiries”:

Do you habitually entertain and cherish the conviction that you are not your own, but, as dead with Christ, are bound to live not unto yourself [*sic*], but unto him who died for you and rose again?

Do you feel willing to serve him in whatsoever employment you can most glorify his name?

Do you watch for opportunities of doing good, and avail yourselves of those that offer, in the Sunday school, in the Prayer meeting, and by the wayside?

Do you sincerely desire to make it the business of your life to labor for souls? Is this desire habitual, disinterested, and prompted by love to Jesus and compassion for the penitent?

Do you find that other employments seem comparatively uninviting, and this delightful—apart from any considerations of worldly ease or emolument?

Does your impression of duty with regard to the ministry grow stronger, at such times as you are most favored with nearness to God, and when you most distinctly realize eternal things?

Is your willingness to engage in such service, connected with a clear and cordial renunciation of self-seeking, and a simple reliance on Him whose grace is promised to be sufficient?

²¹B. W. Whilden, “The Ministry—No. II,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 December 1878, 2.

It is [*sic*] joined with an humble estimate of your own powers, and with a willingness to use all necessary and suitable means for the improvement of those powers?

Is it a desire for this work, not as a temporary resort as a refuge for indolence or an avenue to fame, but as a life-time labor, in prosperity or adversity, in evil report and in good report, that God may be honored and sinners saved?²²

Manly's questions reveal the gravity with which his generation considered the call to the ministry. Because of the sacrifices required and the eternal consequences at stake, potential candidates were to engage in rigorous self-examination.

A. T. Robertson also provided practical counsel for those struggling with a call to the ministry. "The young man who is struggling with the sense of duty that calls him to be a preacher of the Gospel will be wise if he gives himself a chance to get this high view of the ministry as set forth by Paul [in 2 Cor 2:12-6:10] in his moment of ecstasy. The highest is the truest as well as the best." Robertson warned that "the temptation is easy to settle the question of being a preacher on the dead-level of business, expediency, and convenience. I do not believe that many young men will be led into the ministry by mathematical computations on the cost of living and the salary nor on the relations of modern thought to the Bible." The man of God's choosing will not reduce the ministry to carnal considerations: "It is the spiritual view of the eternal values as seen by Paul in this prophetic passage that will win and hold the noblest type of man to the service of Christ. Nothing else will really get its grip on him. Get into close grip with Christ, if He is tugging at your heart to put you into the ministry." Only a divine calling would suffice during difficult times. Robertson advised: "If Christ puts you in, you will stay in and you will not be sorry, but count it your chief glory to have been counted worthy of that high

²²Manly, "A Call to the Ministry," 182. Manly elaborated on these questions in his address delivered to the Edgefield Baptist Association in South Carolina on September 10, 1869. See B. Manly, Jr., "A Call to the Ministry," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 October 1869, 153. Of course, Manly did not consider only the gospel ministry as a worthy vocation of men who were sincerely devoted to the Lord. He wrote, "Every Christian is bought with a price, and bound to glorify God, both with body and spirit, for both are his. All are equally redeemed. All promise unreserved obedience. All owe entire consecration. Can any reason be assigned, why the Christian physician, merchant, lawyer, or farmer, should not select his occupation, and prosecute his chosen pursuit, with as distinct a view to the honor of Christ, as the minister?" Ibid.

dignity.” Robertson believed that the ministry had lost some of the esteem in the eyes of men that it once possessed. He surmised, “This may be due partly to the presence of some unworthy men in the ministry. There was a Judas among the apostles. There have always been unworthy men in every calling. But it hurts more in the ministry than anywhere else.” Ultimately, though, it was not the human perspective which mattered: “But, after all, Paul does not here speak of the appeal that the ministry makes to the world. He gives God’s view of the ministry. If one has that, nothing else really matters.”²³

L. R. Scarborough, then professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, similarly counseled those questioning whether God was calling them into the ministry. Acknowledging God’s sovereignty “in the realm of choosing his prophets, preachers, evangelists and missionaries,” Scarborough asked, “What are the evidences of a Divine call?” He responded, “That is difficult to answer. One cannot be dogmatic here. The evidences are not the same in every experience. Environment, temperament, education have much to do in varying the signs of God’s call.” Scarborough provided some evidences that God used in calling one into the ministry:

1. A strong desire for usefulness in Gospel service.
2. A gift in public speech in religious meetings, or an aptness to teach the word of God.

²³Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry*, 37–39. Robertson commented upon an oft-repeated proposition: “Dr. Johnston Ross concludes his letter on ‘The Christian Ministry’ with the warning that ‘no man should enter the ministry who can possibly keep out of it.’ That depends on what is meant. Certainly no one should enter the ministry without a strong sense of duty compelling him. But men can and do violate their sense of duty, refuse to hear the call of God or to heed when they hear.” *Ibid.*, 221. Jeff D. Ray would later write similarly: “Or if you are a preacher, imagine yourself out of the Gospel Ministry and giving your time and energy to some worthy commercial calling. If, as you imagine it, such a change would bring you no especial embarrassment and no sense of incongruity and no feeling of shame, you will never make the right sort of preacher. It proves that you are lacking in those delicate, undefined, indefinable, intangible temperamental qualities so essential to the ideal gospel minister. I would not say what Spurgeon is reported (perhaps falsely) to have said, that a man ought not to enter the ministry if he can stay out of it, but I will say that if a man finds himself happy or satisfied or even unembarrassed in any other calling he has no proper place in the ministry.” Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office*, 19–20. For a similar estimation of the ministry, see W. H. Faust, “The Business of Preaching,” *The Christian Index*, 30 December 1915, 8. G. A. Nunnally’s sermon to the April 1891 Georgia Baptist Convention revealed the characteristic Baptist understanding of what comprised a good minister. See G. A. Nunnally, “A Good Minister of Jesus Christ,” *The Christian Index*, 23 April 1891, 2–3.

3. Tact in leading young people in the work of the churches.
4. Impressions on the part of Godly associates that one is called to preach. God usually impresses someone else to ‘call out the called.’
5. The Providences of God in directing one’s life, in shutting other doors and opening doors of usefulness in Christ’s service.

While some of the evidences, Scarborough maintained, may be absent, “the following evidence must never be absent:

6. An inner heart longing to win men to Christ, backed and inspired by a *spiritual compulsion*, a soul conviction that God is dealing with your life, urging you to preach or follow Christ across the seas in mission work. It is a strange tugging at one’s heart by day and night, by an Unseen Hand. It creates spiritual unrest. In revival seasons it breaks into your soul with irresistible floods. In worship hours when the Gospel warms and stirs hearts this “strange inner compulsion” masters every thought.

Scarborough exemplified the commonly-held conviction among Southern Baptists that God would make known to men His calling them to the gospel ministry.²⁴

Just as Southern Baptists continued to emphasize the internal call, they also continued to emphasize the external call, encouraging churches to engage in diligent examination of ministerial candidates. G. S. Tumlin, writing in the February 27, 1890 issue of *The Christian Index*, observed that “the ministry is certainly a ‘high calling.’ This is true because it is from God, and because of the dignity and importance of the work in which they are engaged.” Because of the ministry’s high calling, “it is a serious mistake for a man to rashly enter the ministry. It is a sin.” Patterson counseled, “If he

²⁴Lee R. Scarborough, *Recruits for World Conquests* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1914), 33, 35–36. For additional perspectives on ascertaining the inner call to the ministry during the latter nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, see “Marks of a Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 September 1868, 138; B. W. Whilden, “The Ministry—No. III,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 December 1878, 2; S. G. Hillyer, “Reminiscences of Georgia Baptists. No. 38. Our Old-Time Churches—a Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 6 May 1897, 2; S. G. Hillyer, “Reminiscences of Georgia Baptists. No. 40. A Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 20 May 1897, 1–2; C. H. Wetherbe, “A Special Call,” *The Christian Index*, 6 November 1902, 2; “An Address to the Baptist Young Men of America. The Basis for Choosing a Calling,” *The Christian Index*, 13 June 1907, 2–3; “A Divine Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 1–2; Wm. Lunsford, “Is the Call to the Ministry Always Effective?” *The Christian Index*, 27 March 1919, 9; Powhatan W. James, “God’s Call to Service,” *The Christian Index*, 11 March 1920, 4–5; Garner, “The Divine Call and Commission of the Ministry,” 7; J. P. Greene, “The Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 20 July 1922, 5–6; Adoniram Judson Holt, “Why I Entered the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 6 November 1924, 4.

believes he is called of God to preach, let him as fairly as he can, examine himself and see if he has the qualifications of a bishop, or elder. The advice of intelligent, pious, judicious brethren will be of service to him in settling this question. *For what man is a fair judge of his own ability?*” Church members, though, must be careful to use discernment and biblical standards in approving candidates. Tumlin noted that too often candidates were put into the ministry who were only superficially qualified. He lamented, “Because a man can exhort a little, some brother moves he shall be licensed to preach. How many hundreds of idle, inefficient men do we now have who are nominally in the ministry?”²⁵

A. T. Robertson, too, called on churches to be diligent in their examination of young men claiming a call to the ministry. He noted, “Every year one or more young ministers come to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who turn out badly. It is money or women or drink or something.” He recognized that Baptist church polity made it difficult to stop the “easy abuse” of ministers who sin in one place and “turn up in another and play the very same role or a worse one there.” He observed, “Almost anywhere a plausible adventurer can coin a sympathetic hearing and, if exposed, his pose as a persecuted saint will gain adherents and split the church as often happens.” He maintained that “the only real cure for this evil is care in recommending young men for the ministry.” Professor Robertson acknowledged that the “rapid growth” of the Southern Baptist Convention called “for a large increase in the ranks of the ministry. The call is world-wide and pressing.” He argued, though, that “we make a great mistake if we rush men into the ministry prematurely and without adequate knowledge of their characters and gifts.” While one may hope for the best in the young man claiming a call to the ministry, “there is a dignity in the ministry of Jesus Christ that should not be surrendered.” Churches in general and pastors in particular were responsible to make sure that only

²⁵G. S. Tumlin, “A High Calling,” *The Christian Index*, 27 February 1890, 6. Emphasis added.

those men scripturally qualified were set apart for such noble work Robertson warned, “It is sinful, not to say criminal, to push an unworthy young man off on a college or seminary or church just to get rid of him in the home church.”²⁶

Some Baptists, however, questioned the necessity of congregational confirmation of a candidate’s call. Jeff D. Ray, professor of homiletics and pastoral theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, maintained that while the church’s judgment had “some probative value” in aiding a candidate’s discernment of his call to the ministry, “the testimony of this witness is by no means conclusive.” Ray allowed that “if it should become the practically unanimous opinion of a church that one of its members bore the New Testament marks of a preacher, it ought to produce on his mind a very strong presumption that his brethren were correctly interpreting the will of God concerning him.” Ray continued, “I would not, however, put as much emphasis upon the *opposition* of the church to a man’s entering the ministry.” Ray explained, “My reason is the natural tendency to discount the home boy in accordance with the psychological principle enunciated by Jesus when He spoke of a prophet having more recognition everywhere

²⁶A. T. Robertson, “Sudden Laying On of Hands,” *The Christian Index*, 30 October 1924, 3. North Carolinian H. A. Brown was also concerned about the large number of unqualified men being ordained to the ministry: “There are many persons asking for ordination to the gospel ministry who are not prepared scripturally or educationally for the important task which they wish to undertake. The Presbyteries are often embarrassed by these applications because those making them claim that they are called of God. It would be well if members of the Presbytery would remember that there are two calls to the ministry, a perpendicular call and a horizontal call. God calls people to hear as well as to preach. It is always unwise to ordain a man to the ministry if he is the only one who has been impressed that his services are necessary for the conversion of the world. It is said of Dr. Jeter that he used to say that a certain good man called him to preach. It often happens that a man’s friends and brethren hear the call of God for him to preach before he is impressed with it himself.” Unqualified men who become ordained create havoc in the churches: “When such men go out as representatives of the churches and as expounders of the doctrine of Christ they are blind guides often falling into the ditch themselves and causing others to fall in.” Brown recognized the courage required to refuse to grant ordination: “I have known Presbyteries to refuse to ordain after finding candidates unprepared to pass a creditable examination on Christian experience and Scriptural doctrine. Of course, the candidates were humiliated and hurt, for the time, but it rarely happened that they did not live to see the wisdom of it and thank God that the Presbytery had manhood and good sense enough to do their duty in the cause.” H. A. Brown, “About Ordaining Men to Preach,” *The Christian Index*, 6 September 1917, 7–8.

else than in his own country and among his home people.”²⁷

Ray’s holding to the superiority of the subjective call did not mean that he believed that standards for the ministry should be lowered. He cautioned men to “be careful that this longing for the ministry does not grow out of spurious motives.” He urged candidates to examine their motives. Ray posed the following questions,

Does he long for it because from his superficial view the ministry offers an easy life? Does he desire it because it seems to give ample opportunity for the indulgence of literary tastes? Does he seek it because it seems to give the best field for the display of his oratorical talents, real or imaginary? Does he covet it because of the social advantage it is supposed to offer? All these are untempered mortar and the ministerial superstructure built with them is doomed to an early and ignominious fall.

What proper motives, then, would provide the ministerial candidate with the right longing to enter the ministry? Ray answered, “If the desire for the ministry grows out of a hunger to rescue lost souls, to build them up for the glory of God and to promote the reign of Christ on earth, that ministry will probably be permanent, joyous, fruitful, triumphant.”²⁸

Ray’s emphasis upon the subjective as opposed to the objective call did not minimize that the call to the ministry must be recognized as being from God: “If a man goes into the ministry because he wants to, while in it he will conduct himself as he wants to and go out of it when he wants to, but if he realizes that he is put there by the sovereign call of God he will try to please God while in it, and he will stay in it till he receives a divine

²⁷Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office*, 76–77. Emphasis added. Writing fourteen years later, Josiah Blake Tidwell, Professor of Biblical Literature at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, endorsed such a view: “Certainly one’s own church should publicly endorse the conviction of the one entering the ministry. The young man may not see his defects as others do. The church should make known any averse judgment it has. This should be done in great kindness, but done nevertheless. If the church doubts his call, the candidate should re-examine his heart experience with reference to it. *If, after such re-examination, he still believes he ought to preach, he may go on, since he alone can decide the will of God for him.*” Josiah Blake Tidwell, *Concerning Preachers: What All Preachers Should Know* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1937), 25. Emphasis added.

²⁸Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office*, 75.

summons to give it up.” Nevertheless, Ray’s position marked a notable departure from previous generations of Baptists who emphasized the external over the internal call.²⁹

The Preparation of the Minister

Southern Baptists continued to believe in the importance of preparation for the ministry while at the same time maintaining that a man without a formal education could be greatly used of God.³⁰ Whether formal or informal, preparation was indispensable for one who must be “apt to teach.” Pastor W. S. Roger expressed concern that men were being ordained into the ministry who exhibited little ability to teach. He commented, “No church can hope to develop its strength and make itself felt in this world in the fulness of its power without an intelligent and deeply pious pastor. Our churches sometimes stultify themselves by calling into the pastoral office men not sufficiently intelligent for the duties imposed and sometimes men of too low a standard of piety.” Rogers argued that churches who ordain such unqualified men have an insufficient understanding of the divine call: “They excuse themselves by saying that churches must recognize the call of God to the ministry. The divine call should be recognized but it should be evidenced by aptness to teach and consecration of spirit. Our churches are too ready to license and ordain brethren of exhorting powers who are devoid of teaching powers.” He reminded churches “that a desire to be useful, even a desire to preach is not a sure and certain evidence of a divine call.” Rogers maintained that men who refused available training were unfit for

²⁹ Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office*, 83. Ray had written along a similar vein: “If the pastoral office is thus imbedded in the very nature of things every man who feels himself called to this fundamental task ought to enter it with the deepest sense of reverence for the office. To such a man the ministry is not a calling of such superficial nature that it can be taken up and laid down as a matter of personal choice of individual convenience.” *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁰ Indicative of Baptist thinking is this exchange from the *Western Recorder*: “Many of our most eminent preachers entered the ministry without seminary training, e. g., Charles H. Spurgeon, Robert Hall, Alexander Maclaren, Richard Fuller, J. B. Jeter, J. R. Graves, John A. Broadus, George C. Lorimer, P. S. Henson, Russell H. Conwell, B. H. Carroll and others. Great as is the value of a proper seminary training, and we are far from in any way disparaging it, we hope the time will never come that such training will be deemed a condition for entering the ministry, and when such men as those named above will be debarred.” “What the Baptist Editors Say,” *The Christian Index*, 18 April 1901, 5.

the challenging duties of the pastorate: “And we should remember that a God-given desire to preach will be attended by effort to fit one’s self for the high calling and when such called-of-God are reasonably prepared for pulpit and pastoral work it will be time enough to put them in charge of churches.”³¹

Baptists did not believe, however, that a formal education could necessarily overcome certain natural deficiencies. Manly wrote, “*Good intellect, some facility in acquiring knowledge, and some capacity to speak, are obviously indispensable. If a man has not these, in some degree, at the outset, it is not likely he will acquire them, either during the process of education, or in the work of the ministry.*” A good formal education could enhance one’s God-given abilities, but it could not create them. Manly observed, “A man who cannot preach at all, before he goes to a Theological Seminary, rarely learns how afterwards.”³²

During this period, Southern Baptists’ increasing emphasis upon formal ministerial preparation was reflected in institutional changes and charters. They moved their original seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, from Greenville, South

³¹W. S. Rogers, “Elements of Church Strength,” *The Christian Index*, 12 November 1891, 2. Almost two decades later H. A. Brown complained about the ordaining of men who refused available training: “Is it not a fact that the call of God to preach is only a call for preparation for that great work? God called Moses and Paul for special service, but long years of preparation followed. Jesus called the twelve, but years of special [*sic*] training followed. Unless men are known to be ‘apt to teach’ and willing to spend years in studying to show themselves, ‘approved of God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,’ a Presbytery ought to be slow to lay hands on them.” Brown’s assessment of placing untrained ministers in pulpits was sobering: “I am profoundly impressed that most damage has been done to the cause of Christ in many localities by ‘setting apart’ certain men as accredited ministers of the gospel who were unwilling to pay the cost of preparation for that work. I have known men to apply for ordination who were so ignorant of the Scripture[s] that they could not quote half a dozen passages of Scripture bearing on the plan of salvation—could not tell a sinner, in any intelligent way, how to be saved.” H. A. Brown, “About Ordaining Men to Preach,” *The Christian Index*, 6 September 1917, 7.

³²Manly, “A Call to the Ministry,” 153. M. B. Wharton’s estimation of the value of a theological education may have been a bit excessive for most Southern Baptists. Encouraging Georgia ministerial candidates to attend Southern Seminary, he advised, “If you are married, don’t let that deter you, as there are usually eight or ten married students among the number. *Leave your wives at home with their parents or take them with you if you are able. Good board at cheap rates can be obtained in the city.*” M. B. Wharton, “To Georgia Candidates for the Baptist Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 August 1880, 2. Emphasis added.

Carolina, to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1877 in order to find better conditions outside the Reconstruction-ravaged Deep South. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was established in 1908, having evolved out of the Baylor Theological Seminary of Baylor University. The Baptist Bible Institute was chartered in 1917, the name of which would be changed to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1946. In addition, over two dozen junior and senior colleges were established or taken over by Southern Baptists from 1866 to 1920.³³ Even with the increased emphasis and availability of formal education, however, in 1899 only 5.4 percent of Southern Baptist ministers were college graduates and had taken a degree from a theological seminary.³⁴

Calls for an educated ministry continued, but such calls were not allowed to intrude upon local church autonomy. For instance, at the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, the *Index*, while opposing the effort of the Northern Baptist Convention [NBC] to overcome the ordination of unqualified candidates through standardizing the qualifications for ordination, nevertheless was supportive of an educated ministry. The *Index* maintained, "In educational equipment the ministry of today ought to rank above that of men engaged in all professions and business. The preacher of this generation should be without a peer in everything that goes to make up a well-rounded education." The ministry was no vocation for second-rate thinkers and doers: "He should be able to measure arms with scientists and philosophers, and should be at home with bankers and business men." While the *Index* editors viewed the NBC's effort as "unscriptural" and "unbaptistic" because ordination was "the sole right of the local Baptist church," they believed that ministers should have the best training available: "In no wise

³³R. Orin Cornett, "Education, Southern Baptist," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 1:389–90.

³⁴Leo T. Crismon, "Theological Education," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 2:1410. The number of Southern Baptist preachers who had obtained a college degree and seminary training rose slowly during the twentieth century. Crismon writes, "The 'Theological Education Survey' of Southern Baptists in 1949 reveals that less than one third of our ministers had both college and seminary training at that time." Ibid.

would we encourage unpreparedness in the ministry, and under no consideration would we discourage the highest possible preparation for the preaching of the gospel and for ministerial statesmanship in the affairs of the kingdom of Christ.” Southern Baptists echoed their predecessors in arguing that God calls and uses men of His choosing, whether or not they have obtained a certain level of formal education:

It goes without saying that God calls uneducated men to preach the gospel, and that some whom he has chosen cannot secure an education. Among the greatest soul winners in all the land have been and are uneducated men. Some of the most successful pastors in Georgia would not measure up educationally to the standard set by the Northern Baptist Convention. . . . Our own ministry was as richly blessed in leading men and women to Christ before we ever saw a college as it has been since we hold a diploma from Mercer University.

These unlettered men do not know much about German materialism and higher criticism, but they know God, and they know something about his Book. They know it from lid to lid. They may break the rules of grammar, rhetoric and homiletics, but through their preaching God breaks hearts hardened in sin. . . . Many of these unlettered men at the time of ordination become well informed with the years and do a great work. It is hoped that the standardization scheme of the Northern Baptist Convention will fail. On the other hand, we hope that the men within its bounds whom God has called to preach will be ordained by the churches, and that after ordination they will acquire vast stores of information, and then use them for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Education was important, but the lack of it was not a disqualification for ordination.

Additional learning could, and should, be obtained by those whose formal education was deemed insufficient.³⁵

³⁵“Standardizing the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 24 July 1919, 2. South Carolina’s *Baptist Courier* expressed similar sentiments concerning the priority of piety over education: “We fear that the tendency of the times is to attach too much importance to scholarship. Scholarship is highly important in its place, and may afford valuable aid in the promulgation of the truth. But there is something far better than mere scholarship, and it is this: an earnest, consecrated heart, imbued with profound reverence for the Bible, baptized into its heavenly spirit, intimately conversant with its teachings, and all flaming with the ardor of divine love. The man who preaches Christ from the heart, whether with or without the aid of scholarship, will never fail to convert sinners, whether infidels be convinced or not. We may need learning in our ministers, but we need more the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The former is desirable, the latter is necessary. The former will make us respectable, the latter will make us invincible. The former may be acquired by man, the latter can come only from God.” “Spirit of the Religious Press,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 March 1878, 1.

For additional views on the importance of ministerial preparation as well as efforts to aid in ministerial education, see B. Manly, Jr., “Theological Seminary,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 August 1866, 124; J. K. M., “Theological Seminaries,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 December 1867, 162; Wm. Williams, “Theological Schools,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 October 1868, 161; Noah K. Davis, “Theological Schools,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 22 October 1868, 165; J. E. Willet, “Ministerial Education,” *The Christian Index*

Licensing and Ordination

Baptists continued the practice of licensing in order for men to be able to exercise their gifts under the congregation's watchful eye before being ordained to the ministry.³⁶ The practice, unfortunately, was only as good as the vigilance of church

and South-Western Baptist, 16 September 1869, 142; E. T. Winkler, "The Education of Colored Preachers," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 29 June 1871, 101; Reynolds, "An Educated Ministry," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 March 1872, 37; H. M. Wharton, "Students' Meeting at Greenville, South Carolina—Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 May 1874, 1; M. B. Wharton, "Educate the Preachers," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 29 March 1877, 2; Samuel Henderson, "Ministerial Education—the Demand for It," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 October 1882, 6; P. W., "Ministerial Education," *The Christian Index*, 5 June 1884, 4; "Ministerial Education and Supply," *The Christian Index*, 11 September 1884, 8; William R. Morris, "Ministerial Education," *The Christian Index*, 18 September 1884, 2; E. W. Warren, "Ministerial Education," *The Christian Index*, 6 January 1887, 2; J. B. Gambrell, "Southern Baptist Training Institution," *The Christian Index*, 17 November 1892, 1; J. B. Gambrell, "The Education of Ministers," *The Christian Index*, 28 February 1895, 1; J. B. Richards, "Preachers Institute," *The Christian Index*, 12 March 1896, 1; G. H. Simmons, "The S. S. Seminary and Preachers' Summer Bible School," *The Christian Index*, 8 April 1897, 5; "What the Baptist Editors Say," *The Christian Index*, 26 May 1898, 7 [exchange from the *Journal and Messenger*]; J. P. Greene, "Why College Men Should Attend Seminary," *The Christian Index*, 15 September 1898, 1; A. T. Robertson, "What the Seminary Offers," *The Christian Index*, 15 September 1898, 1; E. C. Dargan, "Practical Theology, as Taught in the Seminary," *The Christian Index*, 16 August 1900, 1; "What the Baptist Editors Say," *The Christian Index*, 14 February 1901, 5 [exchange from the *Baptist and Reflector*]; E. Y. Mullins, "The Call to Southern Baptists to Reinforce Theological Education," *The Christian Index*, 17 July 1902, 1–2; E. Y. Mullins, "The Pastor's Course," *The Christian Index*, 7 August 1902, 1; W. O. Carver, "Some Elements in the Preacher's Education," *The Christian Index*, 7 August 1902, 2; E. Y. Mullins, "Perils of Delay in Taking a Seminary Course," *The Christian Index*, 23 July 1903, 1; McGlothlin, "The Value of Church History in the Education of the Preacher," *The Christian Index*, 23 July 1903, 1; A. T. Robertson, "On Learning Theology," *The Christian Index*, 23 July 1903, 2; Wm. H. Smith, "Our Preachers and the Seminary," *The Christian Index*, 23 July 1903, 2; Victor I. Masters, "What the Seminary Has Done for Southern Baptists," *The Christian Index*, 29 April 1909, 5; E. Y. Mullins, "Does the Minister Need a College Education?" *The Christian Index*, 7 April 1910, 3; C. S. Gardner, "A Lesson from the History of Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 4 July 1912, 2–3; E. W. Stone, "Ministerial Self-Respect," *The Christian Index*, 13 March 1913, 8–9, 24; A. J. Smith, "Ministerial Self-Respect," *The Christian Index*, 3 April 1913, 8; "The Georgia Baptist Ministry," *The Christian Index*, 19 October 1916, 2; Arch C. Cree, "Three Big Things for the New Year," *The Christian Index*, 4 January 1917, 9; Arch C. Cree, "Those Twenty Schools for Preachers and Workers," *The Christian Index*, 20 January 1918, 9; Henry S. Jones, "The Call to Preparation for the Ministry," *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 6; Byron H. DeMent, "The Training of Ministers and Missionaries of the Future," *The Christian Index*, 15 August 1918, 10–11.

³⁶For the purpose of this research, ordination is viewed primarily with the pastorate in mind. Baptists were also ordained to the gospel ministry to serve as missionaries and evangelists. See "A Question as to Ordination," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 20 August 1874, 2. Baptists were not all of the same opinion concerning the exact position of licentiates. Whilden posed the question of whether licentiates were ministers or laymen. Whilden illustrated the confusion: "The general opinion among Baptists seems to be, that one not licensed to preach may read a few verses and talk on these verses; but that he is doing improperly to take only one verse as his subject. I heard of a young man not licensed being called to account for using but one verse in this manner. But why should he have been called to account for this? If

leadership overseeing it. *The Christian Index* carried an article from the *Baptist Weekly* which pointed to the loose way in which licensing too often occurred. The *Baptist Weekly* asserted, "One of the evils from which the Baptist denomination suffers today is from men being in its ministry who utterly lack the qualifications the office demands." The *Weekly* provided an illustration which was evidently too common: "When a man wants to be a minister, if he is persistent enough, he is likely to obtain a license from his church, for many churches will see in this the easiest way of escaping the annoyance of his importunity and in the opportunity to 'exercise his gifts,' the best means of teaching him his own incompetency for the work he resolves to undertake." Out of charity eclipsing better judgment and in an attempt to show the persistent man that he "never can succeed as a minister, a church will give him a license." While someone will remember a man who everyone thought should not be licensed but proved successful, the *Weekly* opined: "If, in such cases, some one had the courage to go over the list of men who were believed in the beginning not fit for the ministry, and of whom experience has demonstrated the truth of these early misgivings, it would, though an ungracious, be a very useful service."³⁷

Baptists typically viewed the examination of the candidate as involving not only the local church but also other men who would comprise a presbytery. One Baptist explained, "A Baptist church does not claim the power of calling to the ministry whomsoever it pleases. It deems a divine call to this work to be necessary; and to judge of this

members of the church have the privilege of talking for the Lord (and would to God that all were prophets) I do not see why there is any more impropriety in talking from one verse than from three or four." B. W. Whilden, "Licentiate," *The Christian Index*, 2 October 1890, 12. Another Baptist questioned the legitimacy of a church calling a man as pastor who had only been licensed, a practice he observed as "somewhat common." J. B. H., "Should Men not Ordained be Pastors?" *The Christian Index*, 2 September 1886, 2-3. Not all Baptists agreed with the practice of licensing, as revealed in this assertion: "There is no Scripture to justify the practice of licensing preachers. But if they must be licensed let it be for a specified and limited time, and during that time let them try their gifts and study. They should not be known as 'Rev.' until after ordination." Tumlin, "A High Calling."

³⁷"Spirit of the Religious Press," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 September 1876, 1.

call, it solicits the aid of men who have been so called.” Consequently, most Baptists saw the process of ordination as an essential element in discerning the candidate’s call to the ministry: “This usage, which is in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, makes ordination by the presbytery, in addition to the vote of the church, to be necessary to a regular induction into the sacred office: and both the church and the presbytery, in their inquiry after a divine call, seek to discover the will of Christ, and claim no other power than to execute it.”³⁸

Likewise, W. R. Rothwell maintained, “The appointment of Elders in the churches historically appears as the joint work of the Apostles of Christ and the church in which the Elder is ordained.” Rothwell saw both candidate and church as responsible to ensure that one’s call was certainly a divine call: “There is a three-fold responsibility and check on the possible abuse of the office— that of the brother to be ordained Elder, that of the church that approves or elects him, and that of the Elders who are convened with the church in separating him formally to his office. These Elders so officiating are called the Presbytery. I Tim. iv: 14.” Rothwell continued, “And while Paul urges Timothy, ‘And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also’—he is also careful to caution him, ‘Lay hands suddenly on no man.’”³⁹

³⁸D., “Church Power,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 November 1872, 173.

³⁹Rothwell, *Denominational Self-Examination*, 27–28. In an editorial exchange carried in *The Christian Index*, the *Central Baptist* opined, “A call to the ministry does not mean as much as some people think. It does not set aside the voice of God in the Scriptures or in conscience. The Scriptures say the preacher must have good testimony from them that are without, yet some men whom the whole community doubts think themselves called to preach. . . . The Scriptures declare that the preacher must be without reproach, yet men who abandon their wives, who will not pay their debts, whose word cannot be trusted, who are slaves to envy, and who exercise scarcely any control over their tempers aspire to the divine work of the gospel ministry, and vainly urge the call of God’s Spirit! *Away with the idea that any inward impression we think we have received from the Lord can set aside the plain declarations of Scripture and the positive teachings of conscience. God does not contradict himself.* “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 1 October 1885, 1. Emphasis added. Commenting upon the above argument, the *Index* lamented, “We have known a candidate for ordination who had been unanimously rejected by a competent and conscientious

Concerning ordination, Dargan held, “It must be confessed that the light in the Scripture is meagre.” He noted that “the Apostles laid their hands upon the seven mentioned in the sixth chapter of Acts, some of whom preached afterwards; and when the church at Antioch separated Paul and Barnabas for the special work of evangelizing as missionaries, it was done by the laying on of hands. Again, Timothy is exhorted to ‘lay hands suddenly on no man.’” Regarding Paul’s laying on of hands in imparting a gift to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:6, Dargan wrote, “The most that we can infer from this instance is that there was some solemn ceremony of induction into office; and from a comparison of these various passages [Act 6; 13; 1 Tim 5:22] it seems to have been by the laying on of hands with prayer by the elders or the Apostles.”⁴⁰

Dargan’s explanation of the procedure for Baptist ordination was typical for this period and was essentially the same as practiced by previous generations of Baptists. He contended that, while the local church is primarily concerned and has the authority of ordaining men to the ministry of the gospel, the ramifications of ordinations are of denominational concern. He noted that “the Baptist theory of ordination . . . is only a solemn recognition by the churches of a man’s call of God to the ministry, and a formal authorization of him to perform certain official acts for the Baptist churches and brotherhood.” Those official acts of the pastor included “the public preaching of the gospel as a representative of the denomination, the conduct of worship and business for any Baptist church on request, and the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” While the local Baptist church could, with propriety, simply choose to appoint

presbytery, to take his letter to another church, and get that church to call another presbytery, and ordain him.” Ibid. The confirmation of a church, while necessary and superior to the candidate’s own perspective, was not infallible, especially when carried out without due patience and diligence. For similar concerns, see “Hurrying Men Into the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 November 1874, 3; “The Flight—Its Lessons,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 February 1875, 1; Aleph, “Premature Ordinations to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 October 1876, 2; Samuel Henderson, “Can It be Remedied?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 31 March 1881, 1.

⁴⁰Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches*, 91.

one if its members to perform the duties, “for various reasons it is a well-established practice among Baptists to have these actions regularly performed by a class of officials set apart for that purpose.”⁴¹

To satisfy both congregational and denominational concerns, Dargan explained that Baptist churches would generally call an ordination council or presbytery for the purpose of ordaining a minister. Dargan provided two practical reasons for such a council. First, “the fitness of a candidate for the ministry can be tested far more easily and accurately by a committee of expert and trusted men than by a church in congregational assembly.” The second reason was a matter “of dignity and impressiveness”: “The induction of a man into the Christian ministry is in every way a serious business, and the examination and setting apart of the candidate by a presbytery of his more experienced brethren may and should be made an occasion of deep and solemn interest to all concerned.”⁴²

Dargan explained the usual steps involved in the ordination of a Baptist minis-

⁴¹Ibid., 204–05. Dargan explained that “Baptists seek to avoid two extremes: that of sacerdotal officialism on the one hand and that of looseness and irregularity on the other. By insisting on the authority and initiative of the local church in ordination they effectually discountenance all hierarchical pretensions in their ministry, and by requiring ordination, however simple, as a conventional though not essential qualification for the exercise of ministerial function, they protect themselves as far as possible from unaccredited and self-appointed leaders.” Ibid., 205. In 1919 the Northern Baptist Convention faced the concern of too many unqualified men being ordained to the ministry. At its meeting in Denver, Colorado, the NBC, according to the *Index*, “passed a report on the standardization of the Baptist ministry. It provided for the appointment of State committees on the ordination of ministers.” The *Index*, while sympathetic to the desire to see only qualified men ordained to the ministry, criticized the action of the NBC: “It is unbaptistic for a convention or any other Baptist body to pass upon the qualifications of men to preach the gospel. This is the sole right of the local Baptist church. It can call an advisory council in the matter of ordaining a minister if it elects to do so, or it can set apart one of its own members for the work of the ministry, independently of such councils, and conventions and associations and other advisory bodies have no right to interfere. . . . Pedo-Baptists, by their church law, which is at variance with divine law and apostolic practice, may standardize their ministry in matters of education by the authority of their overlords, but not so in a Baptist church.” “Standardizing the Ministry,” 2.

⁴²Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 206. For support of the Baptist practice of using ordination councils instead of a local church acting on its own without the aid of other ministers, see “Baptist Usage and Ordaining Councils,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 December 1874, 3. For authoritative support, the writer of the article referenced “President Wayland’s” *Principle and Practices of Baptist Churches*, page 114, in which the writer quotes Wayland, “A single church does not ordain. It calls a council, generally representing the churches in the vicinity, who are present by their ministers and such private brethren as they may select.” Ibid.

ter. A man who believed he had been called by God into the ministry would bring the matter before other believers, probably in informal settings. When others became convinced that the man may indeed have been called by God, the church commonly licensed the man to preach or formally approved his purpose to enter the ministry in the future. While some men never pursued ordination and simply exercised their gifts in their own local church in an unofficial manner, most would use this period of license for the purpose of testing their gifts and receiving training in the ministry.⁴³

Dargan provided three basic ways in which the ordination of a candidate could be initiated and conducted. First, when there was a conviction that the man was ready to pursue ordination, the church would vote to call a council or presbytery for the purpose of examining the candidate to determine his fitness for the ministry. After examining the candidate, the presbytery would report its findings to the church, either recommending ordination or not. If ordination was recommended, the church would vote to authorize the council to conduct a public ceremony of ordination. A second way in which the process could be conducted would be for the church at the outset to give the council authority to proceed with the public ceremony if the examination were satisfactory. Dargan pointed out a third way for the process to take place. A church of which the candidate was not a member could request permission from the candidate's home church to call an ordination council. In this case the requesting church desired the candidate to minister in an official capacity among them. The home church could itself take the initiative and request the other church to call a council and proceed with ordination.⁴⁴

While there was not a set number of members comprising the presbytery, Dargan explained that the presbytery should be large enough for a thorough examination

⁴³Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 206–07. Dargan emphasized that “in all these things there is no hard and fast custom, much less law. Churches are free to ordain whom, how and when they will.” *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 207–08.

but not unduly cumbersome.⁴⁵ While the church could call the council only from its own membership, denominational considerations would suggest the appropriateness of securing representation from outside the local congregation. While the council should be comprised, or at least primarily comprise, of ordained ministers, the composition is ultimately determined by the local church.⁴⁶

The examination was the crucial component of the ordination process. While it could be conducted privately, the public examination of a well-prepared and willing candidate could be beneficial to the congregation. After a chairman (or moderator) and secretary (or clerk) had been selected, questions from the members of the council would be presented to the candidate. Questions would be concerned with the candidate's conversion and "religious experience," his call to the ministry and his understanding of its duties, and his theological views. The council would then determine whether to recommend ordination to the church.⁴⁷

⁴⁵A query to the *Index* asked "whether you recognize one as a regularly ordained minister when ordained by two ministers only." W. N. Chaudoin, editor of the Florida Department of the *Index*, answered that such an ordination would indeed be "valid, regular," because the New Testament did not provide a minimum number of men comprising a presbytery. Chaudoin went on to suggest, though, that no fewer than three men should comprise a presbytery in order to reduce the number of unqualified men being ordained. W. N. C. [W. N. Chaudoin], "Query," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 February 1881, 8. Even an ordination in which only one minister acted as the presbytery, while "not usually the custom" or prudent, would be "no violation of Gospel order." The *Index* explained, "The authority to ordain is in the church, and the church calls to ordination, and his credentials should be given by the church. A Presbytery simply acts as at the instance of a church." "Query," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 November 1882, 4.

⁴⁶Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 209. Dargan asked, "Should the council be invariably composed of ordained ministers? It is evidently proper that these should be the principal components, and the name of 'presbytery' often used for these councils shows that the 'elders' have commonly been the members." *Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 210. Pastor F. C. McConnell of First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Georgia, who would later serve as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia, Calvary Baptist Church of Kansas City, Missouri, First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, and Druid Hills Baptist Church of Atlanta and as secretary of the Home Mission Board, claimed that the presbytery's asking a candidate about his conversion experience was "unbaptistic" because "it is violative of the first fundamental principles of church membership." While he acknowledged that the practice was widespread, the local church alone, he insisted, was to ascertain the validity of one's conversion, and for a presbytery to question what the local church had already settled was to impugn the integrity of the church. F. C. McConnell, "Examination by an Ordaining Presbytery Should not Embrace Personal Experience," *The Christian Index*, 9 February 1893, 1. For an

The ordination ceremony itself would include, “along with the usual elements of worship—a sermon, a prayer with the laying on of hands, a charge to the candidate, to which is sometimes added the presentation of a copy of the Bible with appropriate remarks.” While some may question the need for the laying on of hands with a prayer of consecration, Dargan argued that “it was the essential and significant feature of the act of ordination.” He explained: “It does not signify the impartation of spiritual grace nor sacerdotal authority; but it is the traditional and formal way among Baptists of solemnly setting apart a man, believed to be called of God and now approved of his brethren, to the work of the gospel ministry, and of invoking the divine blessing and approval upon the act.”⁴⁸

article written in opposition to McConnell’s position and supporting the common practice of questioning the candidate’s experience, see J. B. S. Davis, “Ordaining Deacons and Ministers,” *The Christian Index*, 23 February 1893, 7. McConnell responded to Davis and to a “Brother Brewer,” in F. C. McConnell, “Explanation for Brethern Brewer and Davis,” *The Christian Index*, 23 March 1893, 1. While questions of spiritual experience and theology usually comprised the questions for examination, Rev. L. T. Reed argued that a question concerning the support of missions should be asked to preclude the ordination of any anti-missionary Baptist—“a hardshell while sailing under the missionary flag”: “To my mind, this should be a question of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, and I have long ago decided never to lay hands in ordination on any man for preacher or deacon, who will not commit himself and family fully to the principle of missions to the whole world.” L. T. Reed, “A Question of Orthodoxy,” *The Christian Index*, 8 January 1903, 1.

⁴⁸Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 211. For reports of the procedures followed in particular ordination services, see L. M. Stone, Jr., “Ordination,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 January 1871, 14; F. C. David, “Ordination,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 March 1871, 34; J. M. Thigpen, “Ordination,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 March 1871, 50; P. L. H., “Ordination,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 September 1873, 3; T. J. Veazey, “Ordination,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 November 1873, 8; V. C. Norcross, “Ordination,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 20 September 1877, 4. For an overview of Southern Baptist licensing and ordaining during the first century of the SBC, see Lee N. Allen, “Methods and Procedures of Ordination Among Southern Baptists, 1845–1945,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 23, no. 3 (1988): 33–41. See also S. G. Hillyer, “Reminiscences of Georgia Baptists. No. 41. The Old-Time Churches—Their Ordinations,” *The Christian Index*, 27 May 1897, 1, and S. G. Hillyer, “Reminiscences of Georgia Baptists. No. 42. Ordinations,” *The Christian Index*, 3 June 1897, 4. For a historical overview of Baptist ordination through the nineteenth century, with a focused examination of the writings of J. R. Graves and R. B. C. Howell, see W. Thomas Lane, “A Baptist Doctrine of Ordination Studied in Confessional Tradition, the Works of J. R. Graves and R. B. C. Howell and Actual Practice in Kentucky” (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1958).

Some three decades before Dargan’s *Ecclesiology*, Alabaman J. J. D. Renfroe, associate editor of the *Index*, believed that there was too little authoritative direction to assist churches in carrying out the public ordination service. He wrote, “We would have no iron rules that are not taught in the Scriptures, but let the things that are generally done, be done with that order and emphasis which which [*sic*] will show that we believe *the thing means something*. We trust that we will be pardoned if we venture a few suggestions:

“1. By private interview before hand, the presbyters should have a distinct understanding of

The Call to a Church

Southern Baptists of this era, following the example of the predecessors and what they believed to be the example of the New Testament, viewed the local church as

how the ordination and every thing connected with it is to be managed, and precisely what part each one is to perform, and the order in which the several parts are to present themselves; and then every presbyter should bestow sufficient thought on his part to be able to do it with readiness, meekness and devout dignity.

“2. We would have the candidate examined publicly—not in some private place, but in the presence of the church and congregation. And this examination would be led by a clear statement of those doctrines on which the young minister is expected to have a sound understanding, and as they are stated, require him to prove them by Scripture quotations, and when he fails, let him be fully aided by the presbytery. It is here that a better impression can be made than in any sermon, because the prejudices of the hearers are laid aside for the reason that they suppose these things to be necessary to the occasion; our principles are brought out with the reasons for them, and the soundness and aptness of the candidate are made to appear to all men. This examination, begun by reading appropriate passages of Scripture and prayer, may well take the place of an ordination sermon.

“3. At the ordination prayer, let the candidate kneel and stand on both knees erect, with the presbytery standing on their feet around him during the prayer, in convenient posture for the imposition of hands. Let them lay on their hands at a point in the prayer which is previously understood; and it seems to us that these hands should not be scattered about over the man’s head and shoulders, but on his head, one hand on another; and let them not bear down with weight as to make him yield under the burden;—we have seen the like.

“4. It would be appropriate if a suitable copy of Holy Writ were purchased for the occasion, to be presented by the presbyter who delivers the charge; and the charge should be of sufficient length to have some sense in it, and not so long as to weary the occasion.

“5. As the presbyters advance to extend the hand of fellowship, each one should have a suitable word of admonition, or encouragement, or welcome, to the young brother. ‘Take part of this work with us.’

“Now, we do not assume that all this is laid down in the Scriptures, but something after this order is consonant with the teachings of the word of God. If any body has a better plan, we are willing to take that.” Renfroe knew from personal experience that not all involved in a presbytery understood proper practice according to Baptist ecclesiology: “At the risk of being tedious, we will call up an old case which cost us much perplexity. In 1856, a church of the Cherokee (Ala.) Baptist Association, remotely located on Lookout mountain, sent a young minister to the meeting to be ordained. Several ministers proceeded [*sic*] with the ordination, and we were one of that number. But to make matters quite perplexing, we had to do it against the modest protest of two distinguished visitors, men who have since passed from earth to glory, and who left blessed memories behind them. These visitors were no less persons than Rev. Platt Stout, of Wetumpka, Ala., and Rev. Dr. J. H. Eaton, of Murfreesboro, Tenn.; the first then agent of Foreign Missions; and the other, President of Union University. Our act of ordination was distinctly declared by us not to be the work of the Association, but these distinguished and moderate men pronounced the whole affair to be irregular and dangerous. We went forward in the face of their mild protest and ordained the man. We now incline to the opinion that they were right and we were wrong.” R. [J. J. D. Renfroe], “Ministerial Ordination,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 14 December 1871, 194.

H. A. Brown, writing some forty-six years later, found acceptable more involvement of the association in the ordination of ministers to ensure better the ordination of qualified candidates: “Sometimes it comes to pass that two or three ministers poorly equipped themselves will continue to ordain others of their kind greatly to the embarrassment of the churches in the years that follow. In some associations the ordained ministers are regarded as the Presbytery and all candidates are urged to present themselves at the association so that there may be a creditable and satisfactory examination and all the ministers may share in the responsibility. In this age when general education is being given to all the people, it is all the more important that men be sent out as leaders and teachers of the people who are ignorant of the first principles of Christ.” H. A. Brown, “About Ordaining Men to Preach,” 8.

autonomous in the selection of its pastor. Dargan provided New Testament evidence that “appointment to the office [of elder] seems to have been by election of the church.”

While one might argue that elders were appointed ecclesiastically, as seen in Paul’s command to Titus to appoint elders in every city of Crete (Titus 1:5), Dargan maintained that “this passage more probably described the solemn investiture, or setting apart to the office, than the original election to it.”⁴⁹

Although Baptists agreed that the local church was the electing authority in calling a pastor, no consensus existed upon the precise method of calling a pastor. Some churches would have a group of candidating pastors come before the church, with the one receiving the largest support being called as pastor.⁵⁰ In other churches the deacons

⁴⁹Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 90. A minority position holding that pastors should arise out of their own churches was expressed by Elder S. G. Mullins of Texas: “A church finds itself without a pastor from death or removal or other cause. What is the proper course to pursue? Go to some neighboring or more distant church and kidnap a pastor? Nay, nay. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Ask him to direct them to the man among them he would have appointed to this work.” S. G. Mullins, “The Call to the Ministry,” *The Review and Expositor* 4 (1907): 552.

⁵⁰One Baptist pastor pointed to a particular abuse of this system, evidently in rural churches which had preaching only once a month: “Let me have a corner, to speak of a danger I see now hovering over our country churches in some localities. It is this: The time for calling a pastor arrives. One is elected, probably by a large majority. The minority may have some means. They then go to their man, whom the majority did not choose, and say to him, ‘We want you to give us a Sunday.’ He replies: ‘Well, if the church is willing.’ The party ask[s] of the church leave for him to preach once a month. Of course the church will not deny the request; and he comes, and thus divides the strength of the church, the sentiments of the brethren and sisters, and often causes confusion. Now, we are all only flesh and blood, and are jealous, and can not help it. This course cramps the pastor elect, and cripples his energies, and causes him to think, ‘I am not the man.’” The writer counseled: “Let all ministers, as a body, refuse to preach to *any church*, under such circumstances. I, for one, do not intend to go as a regular preacher to any church that says by their vote, ‘*We don’t want you;*’ because some will be for Paul and some for Apollos, etc. Now, Mr. Editor, we, as a body of ministers, ought to regard the cause of Christ, and the feelings each of the other, and not crowd ourselves upon a church because a few want us. If the brethren who may perchance not get the man they want, we would say, submit to what the church decides; pray for your pastor; help him, and if you want two Sundays in each month give him your aid, ask him to preach twice a month, and thus cause him to feel at home.” J. W., “Dangerous,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 December 1873, 2.

Writing a half century later, A. T. Robertson condemned the method outright: “Sometimes a pastorless church has a series of candidates who come one after another and are tried out before the critical audience. Dr. W. E. Hatcher used to call this method ‘Trotting them down the pike’ like race horses to see the gait and stride of the various candidates. It is a poor way to find a pastor. As a rule, the best preachers refuse to enter into such a contest and often a man with one good sermon is called on the strength of that ‘show’ sermon while an abler and better man felt timid and embarrassed and did not do his best. And then the church will be fortunate if it is not torn into factions by a string of candidates, for each one is a favorite with somebody. The new pastor will start off with a heavy handicap and lack of loyalty on the part of some.” A. T. Robertson, “Calling a Pastor,” *The Christian Index*, 6 January 1921, 3.

would propose that the church hear a candidate preach a trial sermon, with an affirmative vote putting him into the church's pastorate. A more modern method was for the church to send a committee to hear a potential pastor preach and recommend that the church call that man. Noting that "there are a great many questions involved in this matter of churches finding pastors, and pastors churches," the editors of the *Index* counseled: "No one stereotyped method can assure the right adjustment of such affairs. With much of prayer, the best method is to find the Lord's will, by any, all, or none of the methods devised by men. There is really no reason why there should not sometimes be originality in the matter."⁵¹ Robertson counseled for churches to investigate thoroughly any man before he was invited to candidate, and then entertain the candidacy of only one man at a time: "The preacher should not be invited to come before the church without investigation before hand. Then it should be after due correspondence and the matter should be disposed of fully before any one else comes as a candidate. In this way the harmony of the

⁵¹"Calling Preachers," *The Christian Index*, 17 August 1899, 6. The *Index* was responding to an announcement that "several preachers in New York city, of reforming tendencies, have organized [*sic*] a bureau for supplying churches with pastors. They publish literature showing the evils of the candidating system, and proposing to obviate these difficulties by recommending pastors themselves. We presume they still leave room somewhere for the Spirit to direct, but whether this direction is to come through the church, the bureau, or the preacher, we do not know." *Ibid.* For concerns about pastors seeking new places of service, see T. P. Bell, "Preachers and Their Fields of Labor," *The Christian Index*, 15 October 1900, 6. For critiques of methods for calling a pastor, see "What the Baptist Editors Say," *The Christian Index*, 27 April 1899, 7 [exchange from *The Outlook* criticizing the group candidating system]; "Native Born," "Ministerial Importation," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 November 1871, 169, A Bible Baptist, "Ministerial Importation," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 November 1871, 177, and "Native Born," "Ministerial Importation," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 14 December 1871, 193 [articles debating the calling of pastors from out of state]; Marah, "Unmarried Ministers," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 September 1875, 2 [criticizing a church whose criterion for a new pastor was that he be unmarried]; Aquila Chamlee, "Calling a Preacher," *The Christian Index*, 5 May 1910, 2 [supporting the need for the entire congregation to be involved in the calling of a pastor].

A. T. Robertson likewise called upon pastorless churches to make the call of a new pastor a matter of diligent prayer: "Prayer is a real part of the search for a pastor. Prayer might have held the old one. Prayer can wake up a dead church as nothing else can. Real prayer means contact with God and in touch with the power of God. A praying church is a live church. A praying church can get along without a pastor better than any other sort of church. A praying church can get a preacher that no other church can. A praying church will make a powerful preacher out of almost any man. A praying church can reach out to God and find a man, sometimes in their own membership who can do the work of God. The Lord is never without resources in His people if they will let Him use them. A church should never call a pastor till real prayer has been made. The call should be in answer to prayer. A call like that is a call from God as well as from the church—A call that will be heard and heeded." Robertson, "Calling a Pastor," 3.

church is secured for the final decision.”⁵²

Both pastors and churches were encouraged not to view a call to a local church as a business decision. The *Religious Herald* looked back to a day when pastors exhibited greater faith in responding to a call:

It is the duty of an unemployed preacher to weigh well any invitation which churches may offer; but we do not think he ought to be perpetually weighing and balancing, putting aside one invitation in the hope of a better. We fear that the old-time view, which recognized the divine element in a call to a pastorate as much as in a call to the ministry, is disappearing. A holy recklessness, if we may use so bold an expression, is often positively refreshing. It is a pity to lose all the romance of Christian service, to have it all reduced to a matter of financial arithmetic. Let us go out sometimes in the true patriarchal succession, not knowing whither, save that we are following the leading of providence. Suppose the way is not clear for a great distance ahead. If there is light enough for one step, let that be taken in the name of the Lord, and leave the rest to him.⁵³

Likewise, churches were encouraged to exercise faith by giving reputable candidates, who possessed little experience, the opportunity to lead a local church. The *Index* offered,

We know a young brother, educated at Mercer University, and just married, who desires a *field of labor*. Not an easy sinecure of a pastorate, but a church, where the Lord's people are, and a congregation of sinners with them.

He is a good preacher, and will suit some poor, cold, and inefficient church, provided the deacons, or a few of the best Christians, will promise to secure for him a *small salary*. He is able, ready and will *to work*. He has no city ideas, neither has his wife. They are modest, moderate people, and can set an excellent example, where economy, industry and patience may be necessary qualities in a preacher and his wife.⁵⁴

⁵²Robertson, “Calling a Pastor,” 3. For a short article encouraging churches to investigate the previous work of ministers before bringing them before the church, see Primus, “A Church Seeking a Pastor,” *The Christian Index*, 15 January 1885, 3. Evidently, Baptists at times failed to investigate carefully men who candidating for their churches and, consequently, endured the consequences of having unqualified men as pastors. For articles warning of unqualified or unsavory candidates for the pastorate, see J. G. Taylor, “Ministerial Tramps,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 April 1879, 8; “Bad Men in the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 21 May 1885, 8; “Rev. W. I. Feazell's Debauch,” *The Christian Index*, 28 September 1893, 4; J. H. Spencer, “Tramp Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 28 November 1895, 1.

⁵³“What the Baptist Editors Say,” *The Christian Index*, 20 October 1898, 7 [exchange from the *Religious Herald*]. For similar views, see Samuel Henderson, “A Few Words to Young Ministers,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 January 1879, 1; Layman, “Calling a Preacher,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 November 1881, 2; Clinton Jones, “An Immense Waste of Preaching Power,” *The Christian Index*, 19 September 1901, 1.

⁵⁴“To Churches Without Pastors,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 8 June 1876, 5. Evidently, churches calling pastors and expecting to get free labor from the wife is an old problem.

Churches were also admonished against refusing to call a preacher merely because of old age, opting instead for a younger preacher who would be more attractive in drawing a larger, more robust congregation. The *Index* lamented what seemed to be “an almost wicked waste of all that ministers accumulate [*sic*] of pastoral experience, and of ministerial influence and power.” The editors observed: “At an age when the lawyer and the doctor, the soldier and the teacher are coming to be at their best, the preacher is made to feel that he is too old for service in the best fields, and it, too often, dropped from the ranks of the foremost in the Lord’s service.”⁵⁵

The widespread practice of the annual call, in which the present pastor’s remaining for the next year was decided, received widespread criticism, especially from among preachers. Pendleton revealed no sympathy for annual calls of pastors—“it would be difficult to say too much in condemnation of it. It is injurious both to pastors and churches. Pastors should be chosen for an indefinite period.” Such a view, though, did not mean that pastors were to remain in a church regardless of the effect of their ministry: “If the work of the Lord prospers under their labors, well; if they find after a sufficient trial, that they are not accomplishing good, let them resign.”⁵⁶ W. H. Faust wrote similarly, providing that the annual call should be discontinued because “it is unreasonable,” “it is unfair to the pastor,” “it is unfair to the churches,” “it gives opportunity for minority rule,” and “it has not secured the best results.”⁵⁷

The same article stated, “His wife does not expect to be called unless her salary is also indicated. Neither will she promise in advance to be head of all the sewing societies, picnics, or tableaux, which the young or old people may see proper to organize.” *Ibid.*

⁵⁵“Elderly Preachers and Small Fields,” *The Christian Index*, 26 June 1902, 6. For similar concerns about the disuse of older preachers, see “The Dead Line,” *The Christian Index*, 13 April 1893, 4; Clinton Jones, “Elderly Preachers and Small Fields,” *The Christian Index*, 24 July 1902, 1–2.

⁵⁶ J. M. Pendleton, *Church Manual*, 29.

⁵⁷W. H. Faust, “The Annual Call—the Pastor’s Viewpoint,” *The Christian Index*, 25 September 1924, 2, 27. Pastor Thomas Muse observed that annual calls served only the baser elements of church and pastor alike, and, for all practical purposes, rarely resulted in the pastor’s not being called again:

Baptists commonly expressed a preference for pastorates of many years rather than short pastorates of only a few years. The *Index* asked, “Are not pastoral changes far too frequent here [in Georgia, Alabama, and Florida], and must they not operate against the efficiency of the ministry, the prosperity of the churches, and the social and spiritual power of the denomination?” While the blame the frequent pastoral changes could be placed on both pastors and churches, “we earnestly entreat both to give thought and prayer to the matter, and, whenever consciousness of fault ensues upon a review of the past, to adopt a wiser and more godly policy for the future.”⁵⁸

Almost a decade later, Samuel Henderson, editor of the Alabama Department of the *Index*, also argued for more permanent pastoral relationships. Observing that

“I wish our churches would abandon the unfortunate way of calling their preacher once a year. The church never feels composed. If they have a preacher that they like, it is very uncertain whether they can keep him more than one year. If they have a preacher they do not like so well, they rarely ever get rid of him by calling another. They do not like to hurt the feelings of the minister, and they have not the moral courage to vote against him. The minister who serves churches upon the annual calling system never feels settled; he can’t say what his field will be another year; he can’t feel that interest in the church that he does when called upon the mutual plan. The annual calling is better calculated to form parties in the church than anything that could be done. It intimidates the minister in enforcing good discipline, and is the surest way of losing a minister the church may want. The minister is liberated once a year, and as he must provide for his family, he takes up the first good offer he receives. Ministers are but poor weak men, and some will hold out inducements to the members of the church to supplant the one in charge. The ministers should all turn their faces against the annual calling, for if a church is indebted to him for services already done, and he leaves, the debt is rarely ever paid by the church he leaves. I speak what I have learned in the pastorate in the last thirty-seven years.” Thos. Muse, “How Ministers Should be Called,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 February 1875, 1. For other criticisms of annual calls, see Samuel Henderson, “Annual Calls,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 February 1879, 1; Samuel Henderson, “Annual Calls,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 March 1881, 1; Samuel Henderson, “Itinerate Pastorships,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 April 1882, 4; Fred’k Jones, “Annual Calls,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 November 1882, 4; W. E. Penn, “Definite and Indefinite Calls,” *The Christian Index*, 28 February 1895, 1.

⁵⁸“A Grievous Fault,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 January 1872, 2. An *Index* editorial two years later asserted that “the highest success of the pastorate depends largely on its permanence. Change is, in itself, an evil, and needs weighty reasons to justify and render it expedient. The fruit of labor for years is often thrown away by hasty resignation or removal; and the richest harvest is often reaped only through perseverance against the force of discouragement and despondency. Rev. Franklin Johnson, D.D., in the *Baptist Weekly*, states, as the result of his enquiries into the great religious interest prevailing last winter, that ‘nearly all the larger revivals occurred under the ministry of pastors who had been long settled,’ and that ‘in many instances the pastors had not only been long settled, but long discouraged by apparent failure of their ministry.’ These facts, we hope, will not be overlooked by our readers—especially by those who are weighing the question as to the continuance of the pastoral relation under circumstances seemingly adverse.” “The Pastorate,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 20 August 1874, 2.

people living in the country and eating what they produced on the own farms had fewer health problems that those living in “town and cities and among the travelling public, who are subject to perpetual changes in habits and fare,” Henderson maintained that “a pastor who possesses all the essential qualities of ‘a good minister of Jesus Christ’” would be more effective the longer he stayed in one place. Longevity in one place secured a deeper and wider influence in the church and among the community at large. On the other hand, “these fitful, frequent changes in the pastoral office, recoil upon the character of ministers as well as churches, giving them a short-lived reputation, no matter where they [the pastors] go.”⁵⁹

S. M. Brown, Missouri Baptist pastor and editor of the *Central Baptist* and founding editor of *The Word and Way*, the official newspaper of Missouri Baptists, concurred with the notion that pastors should stay in one place. He argued, “The burden of New Testament teaching is all on the side of the permanency of the pastoral office. There is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that the office of *bishop*, or pastor, was to be less permanent than that of the deacon.” From experience he maintained that “the unsettled condition of pastors, with the custom of remaining only a while in a place, furnishes the occasion for much that is hurtful. No pastor is prepared to do his best work, until he has so rooted himself down in the church, and in the community, as to make it seem next to impossible for him to move.” On the other hand, a short pastorate proves detrimental to both church and pastor: “It cultivates a spirit of restlessness in the membership. There are almost always certain persons in every church who are never satisfied, but are always wanting a change—something new. The custom of frequent change of pastors affords this restless class a fine opportunity to get in their revolutionary work.” A church’s being

⁵⁹Samuel Henderson, “Fitful and Permanent Pastorships,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 November 1881, 1. J. H. Kilpatrick complained, “It often happens that the pastor himself, anxious for quick returns, or impatient of hard work, is unwilling to stay where he is. Permanent church prosperity is largely dependent upon permanent pastorates.” J. H. Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity. IV,” *The Christian Index*, 30 March 1899, 4.

used to short pastorates allowed members chafing under sound preaching to bring about the removal of a faithful pastor. Brown explained, “The faithful preacher of the whole gospel is sure to give offense to worldly and delinquent members. These become restless under the faithful admonitions of the loyal minister of the Word, and go to work to unsettle the pastor, even if they undo the man of God.”⁶⁰

Brown was also concerned with pastors leaving their charge prematurely because of difficulties which they must face. Of the pastor who too easily flees when difficulties arise, Brown lamented, “He does not seem to realize that it is his duty to remain, and settle, and overcome these difficulties.” For those laboring under insufficient salaries, Brown counseled, “The pastor should strive, through the deacons of the church, to increase the salary. If the salary is too small for him, it will probably be too small for the next man. No pastor ought to leave his field on account of these things, until he finds that there is no way to remedy such adverse conditions.”⁶¹ Long-time North Carolina pastor H. A. Brown maintained that, while a long pastorate depended much upon the cooperation and patience of the members, the pastor, too, must be determined to stay, not looking for the easier and more rewarding pastorate: “Many pastors have found by sad experience that they do not always better their conditions by a change of fields. I know there is a sort of fascination about the thought of beginning new work under changed conditions. Distance lends enchantment to the view. ‘Hope springs eternal in the human breast, man never is but always to be blest.’”⁶²

⁶⁰S. M. Brown, *Church Organization and Work* (Kansas City, MO: Western Baptist Publishing Co., 1910), 51–52.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 53.

⁶²Gilbert T. Stephenson, *The Pastor Beloved: An Appreciation of Dr. Henry Alfred Brown* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1925), 58–59. Brown provided a personal illustration supporting a pastor’s remaining in a difficult field: “I know a pastor who had a difficult field and he received a telegram from another church, offering him just twice what he was receiving. It was a temptation, but he said, ‘Some man must put his life-blood into this work here if it succeeds. Why should I not do it?’ He declined the call and it proved the best step of his life. The members to a man rallied around

Some Baptists, though, believed that the length of a pastorate was irrelevant to success or failure. Pastor J. H. Hall maintained, “The length of a pastorate does not constitute success; or does its brevity make it a failure. Years are not the measure of success. Length of days do [*sic*] not make life. John’s long life was not really more successful than James’ short one.” Hall observed, “A pastorate may be long in years, but lean in results; it may be short in duration, but rich in fruitage.” He counseled, “Let the pastor who *goes*, not be oppressed with discouragement; let the pastor who *stays*, not be elated with self-sufficiency. God, in his appointments, is in all life; certainly his purposes must be taken into account in pastoral life.”⁶³

In cases involving moral or doctrinal lapses by a minister, the local church could either determine the matter within its congregation or it could call a council which included Baptists from outside the local congregation to investigate the matter and suggest a course of action. In cases of unfitness for ministry in which a moral or doctrinal lapse has not occurred, the local church itself would decide the case and request the minister to cease his ministry while remaining a member of the church. Cases involving immorality or heterodoxy, especially those involving special difficulties, a prominent minister, “personal or partisan rancor,” or an insistence by the offender or his friends on a

him and they all worked and suffered together. The church became his joy and crown.” *Ibid.*, 59-60. For further support of longer pastorates, see Alpha, “Instability of the Pastoral Relation,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 December 1873, 2; “The Pastorate,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 August 1874, 2; Jesse M. Wood, “Restlessness for Change,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 November 1882, 4 [dated October 26, 1882, page 4, under “The Baptist Banner Department” heading]; I. H. Goss, “Pastorates,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 November 1882, 2-3; H., “Short Pastorates. No. 1,” *The Christian Index*, 19 December 1889, 3; S., “Short Pastorates, Again. No. 2,” *The Christian Index*, 9 January 1890, 2; “A Growing Evil,” *The Christian Index*, 6 October 1892, 4; A. W. Lamar, “Short or Long Pastorates,” *The Christian Index*, 24 November 1892, 2; “What the Baptist Editors Say,” *The Christian Index*, 24 October 1901, 5 [exchanges from the *Biblical Recorder* and *The Standard*]; C. C. Brown, “Length of Pastorates—Calls—Changes,” *The Christian Index*, 1 May 1902, 2; W. J. Barton, “The Restlessness of Young Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 13 December 1906, 2; A. W. Evans, “How to Get Into and Stay in the Pastorate,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 6-7; “Long Pastorates,” *The Christian Index*, 3 July 1924, 12; W. H. Barrett, “Who is Responsible for Brevity of Pastorates?” *The Christian Index*, 5 February 1925, 6.

⁶³Hall, “Pastoral Success,” 1.

council for fairness,” could involve the calling of a council to investigate and make recommendation to the church. The local church, however, would be the final court in deciding the matter.⁶⁴

Duties of a Minister to His Congregation

Baptists continued to be in agreement with their predecessors concerning the duties of the pastor to his congregation. J. M. C. Breaker summarized those duties expected of a Baptist pastor: “ruling or presiding . . . , which implies the exercise of authority in the government of the church”; “to ‘labor in word and doctrine,’ or more properly, teaching; to feed or tend the flock of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, the truth as it is in Jesus, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth”; “to preside at all its meetings and also to administer its ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s supper”; and “to be ‘an ensample to the flock,’ that he exemplify all the virtues he inculcates in his daily and constant deportment, that he thus preach by example as well as precept.” Hardly any, if any, Baptist would contradict Breaker’s synopsis.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 211–12. Dargan added: “Other kinds of cases may be supposed, but it is gratifying to say that the resort to councils for the discipline of ministers is of rare occurrence, the voluntary action of the offenders themselves and the discipline of local churches being commonly found amply sufficient. It is unnecessary to describe the procedure of these councils—they organize, consider, report and adjourn according to what is required in each case.” *Ibid.*, 213. A brief article in *The Christian Index* reveals that such cases did indeed occur and had to be confronted: “Brother H. submits to us two enquiries touching the restoration of an expelled minister. The offense for which he was turned out is one of the most serious known to the law. The accused also left the country secretly, and is in bad odor, because his debts were unpaid and his creditors defrauded. These are the two facts in the case, and, if guilty of them, he should not be restored until after a proper time had elapsed, during which, by a godly life, repentance and reformation is clearly shown. Besides that, also a satisfactory and honest settlement must be had with his creditors. Uncleaness and fraudulent transactions in the business affairs of life, by professors of religion, are offenses so grave that the apostle says: ‘I wrote you not to keep company with fornicators.’” “Some Questions,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 July 1877, 4. See also “Dr. D. M. Breaker,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 September 1878, 1; “Faithfulness—the Pulpit—Warning,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 September 1878, 4; P. S. Whitman, “His ‘Views’ Change; What Then?” *The Christian Index*, 25 October 1883, 4; “Rev. W. I. Feazell’s Debauch.”

⁶⁵Breaker, “Officers of a Scriptural Church and Their Duties. No. III,” 1. Toward the end of this period, Jeff D. Ray would write similarly. Taking his cue from Jesus’ exchange with Peter in John 21:15-17, Ray devoted an entire chapter of his *The Highest Office* to “the preacher’s preëminent title. *Shep-*

The emphasis placed upon the minister's pastoral duties is evidenced by the

herd." From this passage Ray found divine direction for the duties of a pastor to his congregation. First, the pastor is to exercise oversight of the sheep. Ray counseled: "In your congregation are the sick and the wayward and the discouraged and the doubting and the vacillating. It is your God-appointed business to shepherd these sick sheep." A second duty requires the feeding of the sheep. Feeding the church with Scripture "is a crowning duty of the pastor." Ray lamented: "We have preachers who are counted experts in various lines of ministerial activity. Some noble, some ignoble. But they seem sadly indifferent to the matter of feeding the flock. In fact they think, or seem to think, they have found something better for the sheep than feeding them." A third duty is a deep-seated concern over the welfare of the sheep. Ray warned: "If a pastor never loses sleep over his flock he will soon lose sleep because he has none." A fourth essential is to possess a pastoral intimacy with the members of the congregation: "The more intimate the relation between the right sort of pastor and his people the more joy and profit that relation affords." Ray encouraged pastors to be involved personally in the lives of their people: "His hours of study and prayer should, of course, be faithfully guarded, but he should at the same time seek the most vital fellowship with the heart life of his people." The final duty of the pastor is sacrificial service. Ray argued: "One sacrificial, self-forgetful pastor in a community is a more convincing argument for Christianity than a whole library of apologetics. One self-seeking, sheep-fleeing preacher in a neighborhood will do more to invalidate Christianity than a ton of infidel literature." Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office*, 44–62.

Samuel Henderson viewed a minister's pastoral labor as magnifying the pastoral office. Taking his theme from Paul's words of Rom 11:13, "I magnify mine office," Henderson offered that a minister may magnify his office in four ways: "First, by the time and labor, the thoughtful and prayerful care with which he prepares himself for his work"; "secondly, . . . [he] is more concerned as to *how* he shall preach than *where* he shall preach"; "thirdly, . . . [he] is more concerned about the honor of Christ than his own honor"; "finally, . . . [he] will seek the spiritual good of his people, rather than his own temporal interests." Samuel Henderson, "Dignity of the Christian Ministry," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 November 1879, 1. For other articles examining the office and work of the minister, see "Duties of Pastors to Churches," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 31 August 1871, 133; J. H. Campbell, "The Duty of Ministers in Dangerous Epidemics," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 27 February 1879, 2; Robert F. Rogers, "The Duties of Pastors to Churches," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 27 March 1879, 3; S. Landrum, "The Relation of Pastors to Epidemics," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 April 1879, 2; Henry H. Tucker, "Pastoral Work—Its Relative Importance," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 March 1881, 4; Samuel Henderson, "The Institution of Preaching Divine—What is Demanded of It," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 October 1882, 6; Samuel Henderson, "Demands on Our Ministry.—Again," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 October 1882, 6; F. R. Boston, "The Pastor," *The Christian Index*, 29 September 1892, 1, 3; E. J. Forrester, "A Good Pastor. In the Pulpit Feeding His People," *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1901, 1; E. J. Forrester, "A Good Pastor. Healing the Hurts of His People—in Pastoral Visiting," *The Christian Index*, 8 August 1901, 1; E. J. Forrester, "A Good Pastor. Looking After Those not in the Flock," *The Christian Index*, 15 August 1901, 4; E. J. Forrester, "A Good Pastor. Leading His People in Work at Home," *The Christian Index*, 22 August 1901, 1; E. J. Forrester, "A Good Pastor. In His Relation to General Denominational Work," *The Christian Index*, 29 August 1901, 1; L. W. Parrott, "The Pastor. No. 1," *The Christian Index*, 17 September 1903, 1–2; L. W. Parrott, "The Pastor. No. 2," *The Christian Index*, 24 September 1903, 2; L. W. Parrott, "The Pastor. No. 3," *The Christian Index*, 1 October 1903, 2; "A Pastor," *The Christian Index*, 22 October 1908, 2; L. R. Scarborough, "The Dignity and Responsibility of the Ministry," *The Christian Index*, 5 August 1915, 7; L. E. Roberts, "Pastoral Relations," *The Christian Index*, 6 May 1920, 2, 20; L. E. Roberts, "The Pastor's Ideals," *The Christian Index*, 3 June 1920, 4; G. W. Garner, "God's Commission to Preachers," *The Christian Index*, 8 July 1920, 6; Rufus W. Weaver, "The Mission of the Minister in a New Age," *The Christian Index*, 29 December 1921, 2–3, 10–11, 15; L. B. Johnson, "The Preacher and His Parish," *The Christian Index*, 23 March 1922, 7, 9; Geo. W. McDaniel, "When the Standard-Bearer Fainteth," *The Christian Index*, 12 April 1923, 3; A. T. Robertson, "The Young Preacher," *The Christian Index*, 18 December 1924, 7, 27.

outcry created when even positive endeavors intruded upon the exercise of those duties. For instance, concern was expressed about the deleterious effects which protracted meetings had upon the daily duties of pastors. "A. Layman" deplored, "It is painful to admit that pastors have been led, to so great an extent, to ignore their pastoral duties, in their dependence upon these annual outbursts, that thousands of church members, having grown up under this system, do not know that a pastor has any other duties to perform, but to preach." What were these other pastoral duties? The writer explained, "The holy, sacred influence of the pastor upon the individual members and upon the whole community, his pastoral visits, his attention to the sick, indeed, all the influences in the varied relation of pastor, are lost."⁶⁶

Ministers who failed properly to carry out the duties of their office comprised a concern throughout this period. Jeff Ray discussed several weaknesses of ministers in the churches and how those weaknesses lowered the prestige of the office. Preachers who affected a scholarly attitude in their failure to state boldly their beliefs raised Ray's ire. Ray counseled, "The preacher ought to believe his message and deliver it like one who believes it, or he ought to get out." A second weakness was the abuse of books. Ray deplored the preaching of the thoughts of others in the language of others: "[Such a preacher] lives in an atmosphere of books written by men long since dead and his sermons are clothed in the cerements of the grave." A third weakness was professionalism. Seminaries were not to be factories for producing ministers and ministerial students were not to view their calling through materialistic eyes. Ray predicted, "Once let the pastoral

⁶⁶A. Layman, "Protracted Meetings," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 September 1869, 149. The seriousness with which Southern Baptists took pastoral labor is seen in this anecdote from O. C. S. Wallace. Wallace recalled the story of how a group of young men sought out their new pastor to give themselves to the work of the church. The pastor, not much older than they, never gave them the opportunity to lay before him the serious nature of their calling on him while he engaged in frivolous banter and concluded by asking them if they wanted to see his new trousers. They left disappointed and never became engaged in the activities of the church, even though they continued to attend the services and gave financially to its needs. O. C. S. Wallace, "The Young Preacher's Trousers," *The Christian Index*, 25 December 1924, 9-10.

office degenerate to the level of a mere profession, and the people will abolish it, and divide its supposed responsibilities between the doctor, the school teacher, the political reformer and also the undertaker.”⁶⁷ Concomitant with professionalism was what Ray termed “money craze.” Ray acknowledged that a man had to take care of his family, but too many preachers had succumbed to the temptation of letting the largest salary determine their place of ministry. Ray warned, “The preacher who turns his ministry into a money-making machine, or who for money’s sake modifies his course or his message a hair’s breadth, is contributing his part toward undermining the office into which he claims to be called.” The fifth weakness was termed “wanderlust.” Preachers unable to remain in one church for an extended period of time caused people to doubt that God actually called men to serve as pastors. Ray forewarned, “The more they [the members of churches] are led to believe that the pastor in his official relation is fickle, unstable, unreliable, the more they will doubt the divine origin of the office. Faith in its divine origin gone, their willingness to perpetuate it goes also.” Ray also saw a problem with pastorates which were too long. For biblical support he maintained that “we have no New Testament examples of long pastorates except perhaps James at Jerusalem. During his long pastorate, the church nearly died of dry rot.” On the other hand, though, “Antioch, under the brief, but brilliant joint-pastorate of Saul and Barnabas displaced her as queen of the churches.”⁶⁸ How could a preacher know how long he should remain at a particular church? Ray answered, “A pastorate ought to continue just as long as the relation is evidently blessed of God.” The last weakness which Ray listed concerned the pastor’s engaging in petty politics in the denomination in order to gain promotion to a larger

⁶⁷For similar concerns, see also P. H. Mell, “Official Preaching,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 28 October 1869, 165; T. P. Bell, “Love in the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 3 March 1900, 6.

⁶⁸Ray reads more into the biblical text than exists. One may well ask for support that the Jerusalem church nearly died “of dry rot.” Indeed, one must ask for proof that James had an “extended pastorate” or that Paul and Barnabas were joint-pastors at Antioch.

church. While such cases would indeed lower the prestige of the pastorate, Ray observed that “a lifelong intimate and somewhat extensive acquaintance with preachers leads me to believe that this folly is not common among them.” Although Ray was concerned that the above-mentioned weaknesses on the part of some pastors, as well as other competing cultural pressures,⁶⁹ would endanger the prestige of the ministry, he was convinced of its permanence because Jesus saw the gospel minister still busy at the consummation of the age (Matt 28:19-20), because much attention had been given in the New Testament to its development and support, because there existed an “ever increasing need” for the ministry, and because no impropriety on the part of ministers in the past has been able to destroy it.⁷⁰

Preaching

The focus of the pastor’s duties was upon his preaching. Indeed, often the pastor was denominated “the preacher” because his public role was the proclamation of the gospel. In addition to the conversion of sinners, Samuel Henderson argued that

we are indebted to the pulpit for whatever the enlightened public sentiment of our people can do, in the way of enforcing the common decencies and proprieties of life, in exacting those social penalties when these decencies and proprieties are outraged, and in infusing into our whole moral and intellectual atmosphere all those kindly influences that contribute so largely to the happiness of this world.⁷¹

⁶⁹Ray listed the following “friendly competitors of the pulpit”: “cheap, abundant and wholesome literature,” “the developed educational and social life of the church,” “the multiplicity of other more or less wholesome opportunities of entertainment and instruction,” “the multiplicity of lodges and other benevolent orders,” and “the increasing expense of attending public worship.” Concerning the “educational and social life of the church,” Ray observed, “The time was when the pulpit with its accessories was almost the sole channel of church activity. Now apart from the pulpit, the church life functions in the Sunday school, the young people’s organizations, the women’s societies, the men’s brotherhoods, etc. In nearly every church there are those who are active in one or another of these organizations and do not care for the ministrations of the pulpit. If you have any doubt here, listen next Sunday to the preacher’s pathetic plea with his Sunday-school forces to ‘remain for church,’ and then notice how many of them, indifferent to his appeal, file out and go hence.” Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office*, 95–98.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 86–99.

⁷¹Samuel Henderson, “Unrecognized Effects of Preaching,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 February 1879, 1.

A. T. Robertson maintained: “The demand for ministers of the Gospel to-day is just the same as it was in the first century. Nor has preaching lost its power over the hearts of men. That is a cry that comes in each generation.” Robertson acknowledged that the manner of living had changed, yet preaching remained essential:

Human life takes on new phases. The printing press brings the newspaper, the magazine, and the novel. The telephone, the automobile, the electric car revolutionize the habits of men. But no printed page can permanently supply the place of the man who has looked into the face of God and now looks into the face of sinful men and presses home with burning words the sense of sin and the redemption in Jesus Christ.”⁷²

George W. Truett, similarly, saw great power in preaching and, consequently, believed that preaching should have as its chief end the conversion of sinners. He mused, “Think of the new spell that would come over our churches, in city, town, village, and country places, if for the next twelve months the burden of every sermon should be that precious souls might at once turn unto Christ and receive him as a personal Savior.” Pointing to the example of “the incomparable Mr. Spurgeon,” Truett noted that “the burden of his preaching, from first to last, always and everywhere, was that the lost might be saved through the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Conversely, he lamented, “It seems to us a pity that so much of Mr. Moody’s preaching, in his later years, was to Christians, rather than to poor, lost sinners. The results, too, of such preaching, were markedly noticeable, when compared to those years when the supreme burden of his preaching was that the lost might be saved.”⁷³

⁷²Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry*, 68–69. See also “The Pulpit’s Power,” *The Christian Index*, 21 February 1901, 6.

⁷³George W. Truett, “Back to the Main Thing,” *The Christian Index*, 6 October 1910, 3. For additional views on preaching for the conversion of sinners, see also Cornelius Tyree, “The Preaching That This Age Demands,” *The Christian Index*, 15 January 1885, 2. J. L. D. Hillyer, though, believed that Tyree and would have believed that Truett had gone too far in the restriction of preaching to the conversion of sinners: “If there be a failure among Baptists to preach the whole gospel, it has been rather in urging too strongly its invitation to sinners. The great number of unconverted people I have found in our churches have made me feel the need for earnest preaching of the inexorable necessity for a change of heart; and that the strength and faith of the churches should be built up, there should be a more general discussion of the doctrines of grace. If we expect to do good service for our Lord, we ought to learn more fully our relations to

When asked about his plan for church work, T. T. Eaton of Petersburg emphasized the role of preaching.⁷⁴ He wrote, “I try to preach the truth to the edification of my people. I *work hard* over my sermons, and pray over them.”⁷⁵ He admitted that “selfishness and laziness are my two greatest enemies. And by laziness I mean mental as well as physical.” Because he did not want to “weary” his congregation, he never preached longer than thirty minutes. He saw this apparent brevity as no problem because, he explained, “As I talk very rapidly I have no trouble in saying what I want to say in that time.” He endeavored to preach his best when his congregation came out in inclement weather: “It is well to save a sermon, but better to save a congregation.”⁷⁶ J. H. Hall

him. If we would avoid preaching salvation by works, we must preach more earnestly salvation by grace. If we would make the need for repentance appear in all its bearings, we must preach about the sovereignty of God. And if we would reach the nearest border line of the vast extent of God’s mercy to sinners, we must preach of eternal election, particular redemption and final preservation of those who have been redeemed. We need the whole gospel preached. No one man, probably, can do it all, but all ought to preach the cross. So far as I know Baptist preachers, they all do.” J. L. D. Hillyer, “Preaching That the Age Demands,” *The Christian Index*, 5 February 1885, 3. Expressing similar views to Hillyer were Henry H. Tucker, “The Object of Preaching,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 28 October 1880, 4.

⁷⁴Eaton would become pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1881 and editor of Kentucky Baptists’ *Western Recorder* in 1887.

⁷⁵Baptist preachers were exhorted to “work hard” over their sermons. Speaking of the pastor’s study, A. T. Robertson argued, “This is the place where he succeeds or fails. The study is usually a tell-tale sort of a place, not primarily because of the confusion on the table, but because of the books in the library and on the desk and the marks of use they show.” He maintained that “great preaching calls for great thinking, not for big words, but for big ideas that touch the depths of the human soul and rise to the throne of God.” Robertson’s observation is timeless: “The pastor’s study reveals the preacher’s habits of work. If he is making exegetical study of a book of the Bible, Philippians, for instance, or Acts, you will see on the desk the open Greek Testament, the lexicon, the grammar. Near by will be also a half dozen of the best critical commentaries on the Greek text. Perhaps a copy of the Vulgate will be open. In the midst of it all will lie the sermon notes, the fruit of long and diligent study of the whole book that now bristles with texts for sermons. Each sermon out of such a study will have the full force of the rich knowledge of the book as a whole like water coming over the dam with plenty more behind. There are preachers who use the study as a veritable workshop where with anvil and hammer and forge the sparks fly and electric energy is germinated that beats through the sermon.” A. T. Robertson, “The Preacher’s Workshop,” *The Christian Index*, 18 August 1921, 6. See also Joseph Robinson, “What Shall the Minister Read?” *The Christian Index*, 25 August 1921, 6.

⁷⁶[X.], “What Rev. T. T. Eaton, of Petersburg, Says,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 September 1877, 3. For other articles dealing with the length of sermons, see Samuel Henderson, “Long and Short Sermons—Our Old Authors,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 October 1822, 6.

maintained, “Let a pastor succeed in every other department of his work, and fall short in his pulpit ministrations, and, sooner or later, failure comes.”⁷⁷

The doctrinal content of preaching was an often-expressed concern during this period. Lamenting the lowered doctrinal awareness among Southern Baptists, the editors of *The Christian Index* charged, “In one part of our country the declension in doctrinal strength may be owing to the unfortunate habit, fallen into by many preachers, of preaching of subjects with which the Scriptures have nothing to do, and of advancing theories and fanciful notions of their own, in place of the wholesome instructions of the sacred Word.” The fault lay in preachers’ allowing their hearers to determine the content of sermons: “People have itching ears, and desire something new; and the preachers gratify their wish, but alas! what is new is not true, and that which is true is lightly esteemed or lost sight of altogether.” This situation, though, was not the prevalent problem in their “part of the country.” “Here the preaching is not sufficiently didactic; it degenerates too much into mere exhortation; and the idea seems to prevail, that religion is merely a matter of emotion.” Because of these and other reasons, “we think it may be said with truth, that there has never been a time, within the last fifty years, when there has been as much of what may be called laxity of doctrinal discipline as there is at this time.” What was needed? The editors yearned for a genuine revival, “but the kind of revival of which we *now* speak, is a revival of sound doctrine, a revival of instructive preaching, a revival of Scripture study, a revival of interest in the pure Word of God, a revival which will lead us to search the Scriptures, and to cling to their teachings.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷Hall, “Pastoral Success,” 1.

⁷⁸“Has the Time Come?” *The Christian Index*, 9 July 1885, 8. In order to preach accurately the text of Scripture, preachers were exhorted to study diligently. See Henry G. Weston, “The Pastor’s Study of the Bible in the Original Tongues,” *The Christian Index*, 20 July 1893, 4. In answer to the question of the pastor’s theme in preaching, J. H. Hall maintained, “TRUTH. What a great question was Pilate’s: ‘What is truth?’ It is answered: ‘I am the truth’—‘Thy word is truth.’ Preach Christ, which is to ‘preach the Word.’ Be faithful, loyal to the Word of God.” Hall, “Pastoral Success,” 1. See also an exchange from the *Examiner* which received a positive comment from the *Index*: “While Baptists believe in absolute religious lib-

Some Baptists, though, began viewing preaching which targeted the heart as more effective than preaching concerned with theological precision. Commenting on an article which had appeared in the *Atlanta Monthly*, Rev. A. J. Moncrief applauded the

erty, including the liberty of teaching, they do not believe, and have never believed, that the liberty should be stretched to cover teachings which they regard as unscriptural, by men called to minister in their own churches and teach in schools of learning founded by them. All liberty has its limitations. It must have, or it will degenerate into license. So, while Baptists concede to every man liberty to think and speak and worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, they do not relinquish their own liberty to decide who shall do their preaching and teaching in their own churches and schools. Liberty of conscience is for all men, not for a chosen few." [Editorial Comment], *The Christian Index*, 27 January 1910, 1. For additional articles concerned with the doctrinal content of preaching, see A. M. Poindexter, "Young Preachers—the Study of the Bible," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 October 1866, 162; "Doctrine in the Pulpit," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 February 1868, 26; Judson, "Doctrinal Preaching," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 May 1873, 73; "Preaching the Doctrines," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 22 November 1877, 4; H. C. Hornady, "Introductory Sermon," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 April 1878, 2; "Doctrinal Preaching," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 14 November 1878, 1; Samuel Henderson, "Practical Preaching," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 January 1879, 1; Samuel Henderson, "Practical Preaching," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 February 1879, 1; "Sensation Mongers," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 August 1880, 4 [primarily a quote of J. B. Gambrell of Mississippi's *Baptist Record*]; Samuel Henderson, "Unconscious Errors in Preaching," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 October 1880, 1; Samuel Henderson, "Anecdote," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 June 1881, 1; "Religious Press," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 September 1881, 1 [exchange from the *Baptist Reflector* and accompanying comment from the *Index*]; J. C. C. Black, "Our Baptist Laymen," *The Christian Index*, 30 October 1884, 2; L. O. Dawson, "The Pastor in His Study," *The Christian Index*, 16 November 1905, 1–2; Henry H. Tucker, "Prevalence of Heresy," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 July 1882, 8; "How to Preach," *The Christian Index*, 4 January 1883, 12; S. Henderson, "Letters to a Young Man Preparing for the Ministry," *The Christian Index*, 28 February 1884, 8; S. Henderson, "Letters to a Young Man Preparing for the Ministry," *The Christian Index*, 3 April 1884, 8; "The Preacher," *The Christian Index*, 2 July 1885, 8; "Preach the Word," *The Christian Index*, 1 October 1885, 2; C. Tyree, "The Defects in Modern Evangelistic Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 18 July 1889, 5; J. C. Hiden, "The Lost 'Liberty' of the Modern Pulpit," *The Christian Index*, 13 February 1890, 2; I. R. B. [I. R. Branham], "Doctrinal Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 20 August 1891, 9; "A Word to Baptist Preachers," *The Christian Index*, 14 January 1892, 9; William Ashmore, "The Home Share of the Responsibility," *The Christian Index*, 14 January 1892, 9; C. H. Wetherbe, "Pew Drawers," *The Christian Index*, 5 July 1894, 7; "The True Test of Successful Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 7 March 1895, 4; E. V. Baldy, "The Art of Judging a Sermon," *The Christian Index*, 12 December 1895, 1; "We Must Preach Them," *The Christian Index*, 5 August 1897, 6; "The Pastor and the Teaching of His People," *The Christian Index*, 7 October 1897, 6; T. P. Bell, "Preaching a Power," *The Christian Index*, 19 April 1900, 6; Robert Stuart MacArthur, "Pulpit Authority Today," *The Christian Index*, 3 August 1911, 1–2; "Courageous Pastors in Matters of Doctrine and Missions a Present Need," *The Christian Index*, 10 April 1919, 2; E. H. Jennings, "Needed: More Doctrinal Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 9 March 1922, 9–10; J. M. Haymore, "The Benefits to be Derived from Doctrinal Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 23 November 1922, 7–8; A. T. Robertson, "Disloyalty in the Preacher," *The Christian Index*, 12 July 1923, 6.

The dissemination of truth through preaching was to be supplemented with the pastor's own teaching ministry outside his Sunday sermons. See W. W. Gaines, "The Pastor and Teaching," *The Christian Index*, 12 December 1909, 2; William Russell Owen, "A Pastor's Instruction Class," *The Christian Index*, 20 October 1910, 1–2; J. S. Hartsfield, "Teaching Them to Observe All Things," *The Christian Index*, 7 September 1922, 12.

recognition that changing times required preachers to change with them. Contrasting the preacher of the past with the needed one of the future, Moncrief maintained, "There is a marked transition here. The first type was a man of seclusion, of intimacy with God and familiarity with the Word of God; a man who could speak with authority as having peculiar knowledge of divine things; a mystical type." The preacher of the future, Moncrief maintained, "is a man of affairs; one eschewing priestly authority and declining priestly office, empirical in its nature; a practical type." Noting that present-day preacher was somewhere in the middle, Moncrief observed that he was "but 'an experiment,' marking the drift, as it were. He is a transitional type, having neither the clearly defined character of the old nor that of the future." Should Baptists be worried about the transition taking place? Moncrief believed that God in His sovereignty would superintend for good the transition taking place. He asserted:

There is no cause for alarm. The preacher may be losing some of his solemn airs and sanctimonious dignity, but he is finding access to the heart of manhood and childhood. He may be neglecting theological lore, but he is learning how to minister to the actual need of human life. He may be less sectarian, but he loves the Word of God more intensely and is applying it more practically to the living problems of the race. The cause is safe in his hands, the kingdom is secure and the prospect is not discouraging. The new type is not bad.⁷⁹

While Moncrief may have represented a growing position within the SBC, he did not yet speak for the majority, and he really was not seeing anything new. More than two decades previously, the *Index* critiqued the editor of a secular journal published near its office who suggested that "the broad views of modern life which comprehend the needs of to-day" required more than "the narrow conduits of doctrine." The secular editor was quoted as suggesting "a more bountiful harvest of useful and unselfish lives would be the outcome of a patient and intelligent sowing of the Word, planted and watered with a proper knowledge of the conditions of the soil to be cultivated." The editor suggested the following topics as themes for sermons: "the duties and responsibilities of

⁷⁹A. J. Moncrief, "'The Minister of the Future,'" *The Christian Index*, 16 January 1908, 2.

citizenship, kindness to animals, best courses of reading, parental responsibility, the observance of the Sabbath, moral and intellectual culture, sacred history, the wonders of astronomy, the amenities of home and society, and kindred topics of an interesting and instructive character.” The *Index* responded: “The ‘modern life’ of which our neighbor speaks, is exactly the same as the life of eighteen centuries ago.” Modern technology had brought about many changes, but “human nature is always essentially the same. God is always the same, our relations to him are always the same, and the religious instruction given by Christ and the apostles are as appropriate now as when they were first delivered.”⁸⁰

More than correct doctrinal content or a certain method and an ability to speak, however, were required for successful preaching.⁸¹ N. B. Williams, writing from Canton,

⁸⁰“Themes for the Pulpit,” *The Christian Index*, 15 July 1886, 8. Preaching which removed the difficult truths of the Scriptures was likewise condemned in Samuel Henderson, “Apologetic Preaching,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 November 1880, 1. A. T. Robertson lamented, “Some ministers find a wider breach between the currents of modern life and the message of Christ [than between Judaism and Christianity]. Some, alas, find that the Gospel of Christ no longer charms their own souls, that they have an unresponsive people whose hearts are dead to the spiritual appeal, who are slaves to mammon and greed and who do not love God nor fear man. The light has gone out and the glory has faded from the hills. God pity that preacher and turn his face towards Jesus.” Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry*, 81–82. Robertson exhibited little patience with ministers who would reduce biblical Christianity to that which was acceptable according to the mood of the day: “Dr. Sanday is patient with the Ritschlianism type of ‘reduced Christianity’ since it is that much positive gain over mere negation. Ritschlianism is proudly independent of historical facts and processes content with giving Jesus the ‘worth’ of God as a practical matter. He very probably was not God in any metaphysical ontological sense according to this view, but one may find comfort in treating Him so. That is at bottom a make-believe doctrine and unworthy of the great issue involved.” *Ibid.*, 116.

⁸¹This is not to say that Baptists were unconcerned about effective communication—such a concern was simply not the most pressing one. For articles dealing with effective communication, see J. M. Gregory, “Philosophy of Pulpit Eloquence,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 October 1866, 161; A. M. Poindexter, “Extempore Preaching—to Young Ministers,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 22 November 1866, 185; “Extemporaneous Preaching,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 January 1868, 4; Milton, “Subjective Reaching,” *The Christian Index*, 30 January 1868, 17; J. H. K., “Profanity in the Pulpit,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 February 1869, 29; “Expository Preaching,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 8 July 1869, 105; R. S. Storrs, “Preaching Without Notes,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 April 1875, 5; “Reading Sermons,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 December 1875, 4; Anti-prejudice, “Reading Sermons—Hear the Other Side,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 December 1875, 2; “How to Preach,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 December 1876, 4; “Reading Preachers and Preachers’ Reading,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 June 1878, 1; Samuel Henderson, “Then and Now,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 March 1881, 1;

China, in 1872, maintained that, often overlooked, was the requirement that a preacher must understand the real needs of men and be able to meet those needs in his preaching. Williams wrote, "In his public ministrations, he must show to men their needs, and preach a living, personal Saviour. He must preach *Christ*—not *of Christ*. The Godman must be set forth [as] the light and life of the world." Williams pointed out that "the mere enunciation of a precept will never win a soul to God, unless there is presented along with it a living Saviour. . . . Men need a Saviour—not a Code of morals."⁸² While careful not to denigrate the importance of doctrine, *Christian Index* editor David Shaver pointed out that sermons must be adapted to the spiritual needs of the hearers or will fail even with the most accurate exegesis, sound doctrine, conclusive argument, and appropriate illustration. He observed, "They [sermons] may not grapple with the enquiries that stir or the difficulties that darken the minds before him. The problems in theology which their study, or stage of experience, or every day surroundings invest with interest or involve in perplexity, may be left unsolved, and even untouched."⁸³

Henry H. Tucker, "Tears in the Pulpit," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 10 August 1882, 8; "Written and Extempore Sermons," *The Christian Index*, 24 May 1883, 5; W. H. Felix, "Expository Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 12 June 1884, 2; "Extempore Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 6 February 1890, 8; A. T. Robertson, "Some Elements in Effective Expository Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 8 July 1897, 1; L. T. Reed, "Some Elements in Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 23 April 1903, 1–2; S. M. Provence, "A Plea for Expository Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 14 March 1907, 2; J. S. Hardaway, "The Gospel Minister's Relation to Truth," *The Christian Index*, 12 December 1907, 2–3; "A Veteran Preacher on Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 14 January 1915, 6; W. H. Faust, "Prominent Preachers," *The Christian Index*, 13 May 1915, 9; "Psychology and Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 6 June 1918, 2; M. E. Dodd, "Expository Preaching in Revivals," *The Christian Index*, 10 June 1920, 3; E. Y. Mullins, "The Mechanics of Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 1 February 1923, 3–4; E. Y. Mullins, "The Dynamics of Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 8 February 1923, 4, 9; E. Y. Mullins, "Recollections of Three Great Preachers," *The Christian Index*, 15 February 1923, 3–4; E. Y. Mullins, "American and British Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 22 February 1923, 6–7; E. Y. Mullins, "Savonarola—Preacher and Prophet," *The Christian Index*, 1 March 1923, 4–6; A. T. Robertson, "Expository Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 25 October 1923, 10; A. T. Robertson, "The Menace of the Sermon," *The Christian Index*, 1 February 1923, 7.

⁸²N. B. Williams, "What is the True Standard of Preacher Excellence?" *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 December 1872, 189.

⁸³D. Shaver, "Adaption of Sermons," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 18 January 1872, 10. See also E. Y. Mullins, "The Experiential in Preaching," *The Christian Index*, 2 October 1902, 1, who valued the experiential but cautioned against the pastor's taking his themes primarily from his own experience. Mullins, though, viewed doctrine as necessarily being understood through one's experi-

Pastoral work

Pastoral labor was deemed essential by most Southern Baptists.⁸⁴ Pastors were to provide care for anxious souls. This soul care made many men hesitant to accept the call to the ministry. An editor of the *Index* commented, “Both physically and intellectually (for intellectual effort is convertible with physical exhaustion,) what Paul calls ‘the care of all the churches’ still further oppresses and burdens the pastor. He is everybody’s man—called upon here, there and everywhere for all sorts of unremunerated service.” More than these anticipated, as well as unanticipated, services weighed heavy upon the sensitive minister’s heart: “But the severest strain upon the pastor, so far as his moral nature is concerned, is in his strictly pastoral work. The individual who is called, occasionally, to some household of sorrow, returns home worn and jaded by his personal contact with grief.” The editor continued:

And not only in sympathy with the sorrowful, but in sympathy with the sinful, does this strain come upon the faithful minister of Christ. He must be convicted with the convicted and exultant with the new-born soul. He must know what it is to feel that he could be accursed from Christ, or the soul for which he yearns might be saved. He must know the pangs of disappointment. He must feel the chilling frost of ingratitude. The burden of sins which the sinner himself does not feel must weigh the pastor down. He must forecast evils which the evil doer does not anticipate, and infuse his own vitality into the evil-doer’s nerveless will. In a word he must—to borrow Paul’s startling words—“make up that which is behind of the suffering of Christ for his body’s sake, which is the church.”⁸⁵

ence: “You will not be surprised at all for me to say that I believe in doctrine. Perhaps not in the old sense of the word in which the word dogma was used, the old conception of it as an authoritative promulgation enforced upon the consciences of men, which is contrary to the genius of the New Testament, and to the genius of our religion. What I mean is rather that conception of truth, which is but another name for doctrine, which comes into the conscience of the thinker as he passes through the experience of life, and the great tragedy of the individual, and the tragedy of nations. Lives there a man who would eliminate the doctrine, who would eliminate the great expressions of truth, and formulations of human thought?” E. Y. Mullins, “The Preacher’s Vision and His Tasks,” *Bulletin of the Crozier Theological Seminary* 10 (1918): 65–66.

⁸⁴To those who sought to argue the superiority of preaching over personal pastoral labor or the converse, Samuel Henderson asked, “What God has joined together, how prone are we to put asunder? . . . Now why should we seek to array one duty against another? Why not exercise our ingenuity in harmonizing them? Is it not possible for a ‘good minister of Jesus Christ’ to do the one and not leave the other undone?” S. H. [Samuel Henderson], “The Pulpit or the Parlor—Which?” *The Christian Index*, 26 March 1885, 2.

⁸⁵“The Moral Strain on the Pastor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16

The pastor was, indeed, a physician of souls, a care that could not be provided with only the public preaching of the Word.⁸⁶

E. W. Warren, widely sought after for Baptist pastorates, wrote a series of articles on the subject of pastoral labor at the request of a young minister.⁸⁷ Warren supported the practice of pastoral visiting by examining the testimony of the apostle Paul in Acts 20:18-21.⁸⁸ He noted that Paul exhibited a “self-sacrificing and fearless spirit” in going from house to house and place to place in the face of Jewish opposition. Paul’s

February 1877, 4. While realizing that the work of the ministry was difficult, A. T. Robertson provided this word of encouragement: “It is just because Jesus can save the worst of men that the preacher has the heart and hope to go on with his work. The self-conscious religionist often rejects Christ when the vilest sinners joyfully repent and put the ‘righteous’ to shame.” Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry*, 109.

⁸⁶A writer to the *Index* maintained that success in reaping often failed to occur because pastors were too content to preach the Word from the pulpit—sowing—without being personally involved in seeking the salvation of persons in their homes—reaping. The writer reasoned, “The work of the Christian ministry is both a sowing and a reaping. . . . Why, then, are there periods in which no reaping appears—no sowing *with effect*? . . . To imbue mind and heart, in the seclusion of study, with the spirit of some Scripture truth, and then to declare that truth in the congregation with simplicity and fervor,—this is what sowing requires. But much more than this is necessary to reaping. It demands that we should grapple with the conscience, assail the stronghold of a will rebellious against God, and effectively urge present action under the supreme claims of righteousness; demands that we should do this when perhaps ‘the physical executive’ already flags through the tension of thought and feeling and labor of public speech. It calls us, day after day, to the homes of the people, with tender concern for the salvation of sinners and anxious longings for the glory of the Saviour; calls us there to find where salutary impressions have been made, to deepen these impressions, and to bring them to a decisive issue. This private dealing with souls makes a heavy draft on our energies; so much so, that a faithful minister once represented a single pastoral visit during the week as more exhaustive to him than the two sermons of the Sabbath. . . . There needs a wiser course in this regard [than generally practiced]. The success of our best evangelists is largely due to the thought they give to reaping—to immediate results. We have been especially struck with this in the labors of Mr. [T. J. ?] Earle. He begins by reaping the harvest of the sowing done in a community by pastors before his coming—in many cases, doubtless, better done by them than he could do it. He sows with effect because he reaps. If pastors generally would copy his example in this respect—if reaping were as faithfully and earnestly attempted as sowing—we are persuaded that his success would be far less exceptional than at present. They would be blessed even as he is.” “Sowing and Reaping,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 June 1873, 94.

⁸⁷Ebenezer Willis Warren, who lived from 1820 to 1893, pastored several churches in Georgia, including Cuthbert, Lumpkin, First Macon, First Atlanta, and Tattnell Square in Macon, as well as First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia.

⁸⁸Acts 20:18-21 (Authorized Version): “And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: [and] how I kept back nothing that was profitable [unto you], but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

teaching the Ephesians “publicly and from house to house” was objectionable to the Jews because of the message of the cross. Warren found support in John Gill, Matthew Henry, and J. P. Lange for his contention that the phrase “from house to house” denoted pastoral visiting. Warren cited the Baptist Gill:

As he visited the saints at their own houses, to know their personal cases, and the state of their souls, he instructed them privately and personally one by one; he taught the same publicly as privately, and privately as publicly; and took every opportunity of instilling the gospel truths into them, and of enriching them with a larger knowledge of them; which shows his affection and zeal, his laboriousness, industry, and indefatigableness in the ministry.

Alluding to these esteemed commentators, Warren wrote, “This concurrent testimony is sufficient at least to justify me in saying Paul certainly made pastoral visits. If so, we may concluded that he was so directed, and therefore pastoral visiting is apostolic in its practice and Divine in its origin.”⁸⁹

Warren spoke for most Baptists in noting that “the obligations of the minister demand pastoral visitations.” Warren provided three reasons. First, as a “spiritual steward,” the minister is to provide the spiritual food which his church members need. Warren asked, “But how can the steward do this, if he is unacquainted with each one? and how can he be thus acquainted without personal intercourse and conversations with every one. [*sic*]” Second, because the minister is an overseer, “he must do more than have a

⁸⁹E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], “Pastoral Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 8 October 1874, 1. Concerning personal evangelism in visiting, see E. W. Warren, “Pastoral Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 22 October 1874, 5. Not all Baptists agreed that Scripture either mandated or illustrated pastoral visitation. Though not opposed to such practice and though having done it with profit, one Baptist pastor wrote: “If our Lord visited from house to house for the purpose of having pleasant chats with the neighbors, to prevent them from feeling that they had been overlooked; that He, in summing up his labors for a month, might say, ‘Pastoral visits in May, 97,’ the evangelists have failed to record it. ‘He went about doing good,’ you say. Granted, but there are other ways of doing good as you ‘go about,’ beside pastoral visiting so called, and we gravely doubt if the average pastor in his average visit does much good anyhow. If he will go as ‘the man of God,’ and make a religious visit and leave the fragrance of Christ behind him, well: but does he not always do that? We would not be understood as conveying the idea that pastoral visiting as practised by many is an evil, but we seriously doubt if it is the wisest way of spending one’s time. We don’t believe it accomplishes the greatest good to the greatest number. If a pastor spends all his time riding on street-cars, pulling door-bells, bowing himself in and bowing himself out the families of his flock, how is he to give them the oil of the sanctuary well-beaten when Sunday comes?” Scrutator, “Pastoral Visiting,” *The Christian Index*, 25 June 1885, 2.

general oversight of those over whom he is placed.” The minister must take heed to “every separate one,” knowing which are “babes” and which have “arrived at the full stature of men and women in Christ.” Again Warren asked, “But how can this be done without knowing the persons composing ‘the flock of God,’ and how can this knowledge be obtained ‘without pastoral visitations.’” Third, Warren noted that “ministers are to ‘watch for *souls*.’” He maintained, “When Paul exhorted the brethren to ‘obey them that have the rule over you,’ the reason he gave was: ‘For they watch for your souls.’” Warren probed,

How many persons of our congregations have earnestly desired such a watch-care for their souls? How many doubting saints, how many sad hearts, how many tempted ones, have looked long and anxiously for the manifestation of pastoral interest for their comfort and welfare. That thoughtful man of the world, that young mother whose heart yearns for a better knowledge and fitness to train her children for heaven, and that seemingly thoughtless and indifferent young man and woman, have often wondered if the pastor cares for their interests; they are *waiting* to be informed that you are watching for their souls.

Warren recognized that ministers “may never be able to fully satisfy their congregations” at this point, but such efforts would be pleasing to “the Master.”⁹⁰

Warren saw laboring in personal pastoral work as an essential task for the minister. He wrote that “the success of most of our ministers bears testimony to the value of pastoral visitations.” He provided five benefits for pastoral visitation: “It acquaints the pastor with the spiritual condition of the members of his church and congregation, so that he can adapt his sermons to their wants”; “it enables the pastor to bring his personal religious influence to bear, for reclaiming any who may be backslidden in the heart or life, to strengthen any who are weak and wavering, to confirm the doubting, to comfort those who are perplexed and sorrowing, and to instruct such as may be ignorant”; it makes evident “the affectionate regard of the pastor for his people”; it provides the pastor with “a deeper sympathy with his people when he is made acquainted with their every-day

⁹⁰E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], “Pastoral Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 October 1874, 8.

trials and struggles”; and it provides a loving relationship with the family members which contributes to their personal piety and faithfulness to the church.⁹¹

While the biblical and experiential reasons for pastoral visiting were widely accepted among Southern Baptists, how to make pastoral visits remained a question from younger pastors. Warren maintained “that *preparation* is as necessary for pastoral visitations as for preaching.” Preparation must be both of the mind and of the heart. The preacher’s mind must be filled with appropriate Scripture for the particular persons whom he visits. His heart must be “exercise[d] in faith and love, which” accompanied by ‘the spirit of adoption,’ gives him a tenderness of heart, gentleness of manners and earnest spiritual sympathy with the people, that will make him always welcome and generally useful.” After proper preparation, Warren offered that the preacher should visit with a joyful demeanor, should with the family “be dignified without reserve, intelligent without ostentation, sociable without undue familiarity,” should offer prayer appropriate to the situation, and should remember that “short conversations, short readings, and short prayers, will make short visits easy.” Warren viewed brief visits as useful—“they are more agreeable to families, and enable the pastor to make more of them.” Even evangelistic encounters should be short: “Conversations with unconverted persons, whether at their homes, on the streets or at their places of business, need not exceed two minutes, unless there be an explanation asked, or discussion introduced, and the latter is scarcely ever edifying.” The pastor should so arrange his daily schedule to have ample time for study in the mornings while leaving a part of every afternoon for visitation. Warren warned: “His congregations will soon become tired of him as a preacher if he fails to bring forth things new and old from the treasury of truth, and the most elegant orthodox

⁹¹E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], “Pastoral Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 November 1874, 2.

and able sermons will fall on deaf ears, very soon, if the families are neglected and souls uncared for in the private ministrations.”⁹²

Oversight of the Church

Southern Baptists, as seen above, viewed their pastors as the overseers of the church. In addition to presiding over worship⁹³ and occasions such as weddings and funerals, responsibilities of such spiritual oversight included their role in the admission of members, the discipline of members, and, as will be focused upon in the latter portion of this chapter, putting the church’s members to work.⁹⁴

⁹²E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], “Pastoral Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 November 1874, 2. For additional articles examining pastoral labor, see J. H. C., “Family Visitation: Reminiscences,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 February 1871, 22; J. H. Kinnebrew, “Pastoral Visits,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 27 August 1874, 1; E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], “Pastoral Visiting,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 September 1874, 1; J. H. Kinnebrew, “Pastoral Visits,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 September 1874, 3; “Pastoral Visiting Again,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 November 1874, 5; E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], “Pastoral Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 December 1874, 1; “Pastoral Work,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 28 February 1878, 4; “About Pastoral Visiting,” *The Christian Index*, 6 November 1884, 3; “Pastoral Visiting,” *The Christian Index*, 22 December 1904, 6; E. R. Pendleton, “Pastoral Visiting,” *The Christian Index*, 22 April 1909, 2–3; Bryan W. Collier, “The Preacher’s Work Cut Out for Him,” *The Christian Index*, 7 March 1912, 1–2; Carl A. De Vane, “Pastoral Evangelism Effective,” *The Christian Index*, 1 April 1920, 7; John R. Sampey, “The Non-Resident Pastor Visiting His People,” *The Christian Index*, 19 January 1922, 10; “The Pastor with His People,” *The Christian Index*, 28 August 1924, 10; W. Y. Hunt, “The Pastor With His People,” *The Christian Index*, 6 November 1924, 6.

⁹³While not much was written concerning the presiding over worship, E. C. Dargan charged that “pastors have many faults and shortcomings, not the least of which is their failure suitably to discharge their duty as the conductors of the public worship of God’s people.” Failure to conduct worship properly may stem from a lack of conviction as to the importance of worship apart from the sermon, from a lack of knowledge about how to conduct worship, from a deficiency in skill and ability necessary to conduct worship, or from simply doing what they know needs to be done. Dargan explained, “Sometimes a pastor may have conviction and knowledge in regard to worship, and yet through mere indolence, or shrinking from responsibility, or dread of criticism, or something of the sort, he lets things go on in their old ruts without having a godly purpose and determination to take hold of this matter of worship and improve it, so far as in him lies.” E. C. Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 669. See also A. T. Robertson, “The Public Reading of the Scriptures,” *The Christian Index*, 10 May 1923, 5; A. T. Robertson, “Preliminary Exercises,” *The Christian Index*, 9 August 1923, 15; A. T. Robertson, “The Minister and the Hymn Book,” *The Christian Index*, 30 August 1923, 10.

⁹⁴Being viewed as the overseer of the church required pastors to supervise the church members’ work. E. W. Warren instructed, “The pastor, then, is the superintendent of the church. He watches over all its interests; he begins by setting a Godly example to the church, in all things—in word, in conversation, in charity, in zeal, in consecration, etc. Then, he overlooks the general interests of the church,

Baptists did not simply admit members into their churches upon the request of the candidate. Rather, because of their belief in a regenerate membership, Baptists required those seeking membership to provide evidence of having been converted. A. S. Worrell,⁹⁵ who had served as a professor in the Baptist College in Mississippi and in Union University in Tennessee and as editor of the *Western Recorder*, observed that “another fearful responsibility has to be met in the admission of new members, ‘by experience.’” Worrell noted the gravity of the duty:

The question is one under which an archangel might well tremble: ‘Has the applicant an experience of grace?’ If the pastor decides that an applicant for membership has (in his judgment) an experience of grace, when in fact he has not such experience, his influence inflicts a terrible calamity on the church, in bringing in an unconverted person, and probably a much greater calamity on the poor, deluded man himself—a calamity which, quite likely, will involve the loss of his soul! For when one has the voice of the pastor and of the church, encouraging him to believe that he is a child of God, when in fact he is not, the probabilities—humanly speaking—of his final overthrow are, to say the least, greatly increased!

Worrell advised that Baptist churches be fully convinced of an applicant’s being converted before voting him into the membership, with the pastor insisting “on the aid of the church in trying definitely to ascertain, as far as possible, the real condition of every applicant; and no one should be admitted so long as there is good reason to doubt his regeneration.” Such a matter was too important to be resolved hastily: “Wait and see,” Worrell counseled.⁹⁶

including its discipline, its pious labors, its general religious progress, etc. ‘Lay agency is of incalculable moment.’ A minister cannot undertake everything himself; he must not widen too much his field of personal effort; he must concentrate, he must influence; he must be the centre to a hundred hands and minds, moving around him. . . . Wisdom must be exercised. Others must be set to work, and a machinery be set to work, of which he takes the general guidance. Indeed, how else can a minister in a wide field of labor, acquit his own conscience of the responsibility of thousands of perishing mortals, except he do *per alium*, what it is impossible for him to do *per se*. . . . We must wield the power of our people, or we shall soon exhaust our own strength. The minister must use the word of command and *take the lead*.” E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], “Pastoral Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 December 1874, 2.

⁹⁵Cathcart spelled his last name “Worrall.” William Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 2:1278.

⁹⁶A. S. Worrell, “Responsibilities of the Pastor,” *The Christian Index*, 6 February 1890, 2. Worrell complained that too many pastors and churches were too interested in numerically growing church-

Baptists looked to their ministers to lead in the exercise of corrective church discipline of wayward members.⁹⁷ Samuel Henderson noted the challenge of this essential duty: “Perhaps there are no duties pertaining to the pastoral office more difficult to perform, more delicate in relation to all parties, and yet more important to the purity and efficiency of the church, than those which arise out of the pastor’s relation to its discipline—I mean to say its corrective discipline.” Henderson explained, “These duties bring him in direct contact with the weaknesses and infirmities of his brethren; and not infrequently large family connections become involved in such questions, so that the danger is that in rooting up the tares no little of the wheat may share the like fate.” Henderson counseled that the pastor recognize that the church is the ultimate court in the matter of discipline, and that the minister who would lead best must not become a combatant in the ensuing battle:

“Blood is thicker than water,” and where that becomes involved in a contest it is apt to blind the parties in one eye. They only see that side where their instincts are strongest. And that is a happy combination of qualities in a pastor which can preserve the unity and integrity of the church under such embarrassments. How often have whole churches been disrupted by this fell spirit of discord arising out of some of these vexed questions, simply because the pastor became the “prosecuting attorney” against some recusant member. And it matters not if the offence is a flagrant one. The pastor, in presiding over the conference in which the case is up for consideration, sustains somewhat the relation of a Judge upon the bench. He is there to preserve order and expound the law. The church acts in the capacity of a jury to decide the case according to law and evidence. If he cannot yield gracefully to the decision of the church, he can at least resign his position, and thus preserve the

ches than with doing their best to ensure a regenerate membership: “Yet many pastors are ready to report to their churches the names of persons, and recommend their admittance to membership, on very inadequate grounds. There is too great a rage for numbers. Better get fewer, and have better ones. It is highly criminal to admit the unconverted, when a pastor or a church might by reasonable diligence and fidelity, prevent such a calamity. The moral of this is, that the pastor should be a man of spiritual discernment. The responsibility is indeed fearful, if he be not such! May not ‘the blood of souls’ be found on his skirts at the judgment?” Ibid.

⁹⁷The *Index* carried the following excerpt from the *Christian Neighbor*: “We recently heard of a member of the church who paid more money in a year for liquor than he did for the gospel. No wonder there are deficiencies in salaries.” The *Index* replied: “There *ought* to be deficiencies in some salaries—the salary, for instance, of a pastor who allows such members to remain in the church undisciplined. They are sinning, not merely against the financial prosperity of the church, but still more against its purity and spirituality; and if he takes no steps to reform them, and none to secure their exclusion when efforts for their reformation fail, he makes himself a partaker of their sin. The non-laborer is not worthy of his hire.” “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 12 July 1883, 1.

equanimity of his character and the sincerity of his convictions; for the very moment he sinks his exalted office into that of a mere partizan, he forgets the esteem and confidence of the opposing party and its adherents. And where exclusion from the fellowship of the church becomes the only alternative, the very last act of exhausted love, love crossed and defeated in its efforts to restore the wanderer, I have found it a happy expedient, after pronouncing the solemn decision of the church to ask the whole body to join in prayer to Almighty God to grant repentance to the erring one.

Henderson noted, as had Baptists before him, that discipline included more than only corrective: “It is formative, reformatory, and then in the last resort, punitive, restricting this latter word to the final act of expulsion from the body, for this is the highest punishment the church of Christ has ever been commissioned to inflict.” The pastor’s wise exercise of formative discipline, Henderson noted, would often preclude the necessity of exercising punitive discipline.⁹⁸

Henderson noted the lessened emphasis upon discipline in his day: “While we have never joined in that morbid, sentimental *Jeremiad* that depreciates the present in contrast with the past, at least in the general outlook of Christian morality, we should nevertheless stultify ourselves if we said we did not see and keenly feel that church discipline has become deplorably lax.” Henderson complained, “Things are now silently tolerated that twenty-five years ago would have excluded multitudes of members from

⁹⁸S. H. [Samuel Henderson], “Letters to a Young Man Preparing for the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 13 March 1884, 8. Henderson went on to distinguish between “disciplinable” and “nondisciplinable” offenses: “I do not know that I can suggest any principle that will always and invariably distinguish the one from the other. But I have adopted this as a rule, with occasional exceptions: Those duties which are merely advisory, that is, which are not exacted by law in the New Testament, and which, regarded or disregarded, leave the great cardinal principles of Christianity intact, even though they may involve much of the interest and prosperity of individuals and churches, I would classify as undisciplinable offences—offences that are most easily corrected by the milder means of instruction and admonition; while those offences which involve the very integrity of Christian character—such as are classed among the several ‘abominations’ enumerated by Paul—these certainly may not be tolerated with impunity. Still one can well imagine how offences of the milder type—such as I have indicated as undisciplinable—may, by being long and persistently committed, forfeit church fellowship and demand exclusion, exclusion for the want of Christian character. Good common sense, however, will always suggest the line of duty in this respect.” *Ibid.*

E. C. Dargan later provided a similar perspective: “The pastor’s relation to discipline is one of greater delicacy and difficulty. He ought not weakly to tolerate sins and inconsistencies in his flock; yet if he is a rigid disciplinarian, or makes himself busy in looking out for cases, he is sure to render himself obnoxious to many good people, and to run the risk of being a mere censor. He should not be wholly inactive on the one hand, nor officious on the other. Hardly any part of the pastor’s work demands so much of delicacy, tact, courage and firmness as the discipline of his church.” Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 567.

our churches.” Much of the decreased emphasis, he allowed, was due to a lowered standard of morality in the country as a whole. Henderson believed that “it is the glory of a Baptist church that it can exist only to do good. So soon as it ceases to do this, it ceases to be.” Only if Baptist churches sought to be pure could they sustain their existence. “We boast of a converted membership. Converted from what to what? From darkness to light—from sin to righteousness—from profanity to purity of speech—from drunkenness to sobriety—from dishonesty to honesty—and so on through the whole duality of vices and their opposing virtues.” Such boasting should be followed with the corporate effort to aid each other in growing in those virtues: “The churches of Christ are grand schools of discipline—discipline in the higher and nobler sense of that term—to develop and mature those virtues that adorn the character of God’s elect.” Such discipline, though, was positive as well as negative: “We degrade the word discipline, by confining it to the bare infliction of penalties. The moment a man unites with a church, he places himself under that ‘formative discipline,’ that moral training, which is to fit him for ever-enlarging spheres of usefulness.” The very witness of the church depended upon that body to engage in corrective discipline, and to neglect such discipline “involves a dereliction too manifest to be thought of.” Henderson asked, “With what propriety can a minister appeal to the unconverted to become Christians, when the church pews are filled with men not a whit better than they are? If our piety does not attract them, what will they gain by enrolling their names with ours?”⁹⁹

⁹⁹Samuel Henderson, “Church Discipline,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 October 1879, 1. Indeed, answering questions related to church work, Dr. J. W. M. Williams of Baltimore wrote, “We go over our church [roll] once a year. If we find a name that has done nothing, given nothing, or neglected the meetings, and if we can find them we wait on them. If we cannot restore them, we discipline them. If we learn they are not in the city, we put them on a drop list. Our aim is to carry no dead-heads, or honorary members, to report only *in numbers* to our association.” X., “Church Work. What Dr. J. W. M. Williams, of Baltimore, Says,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist Says*, 30 August 1877, 2. During a “Union Meeting in the eastern part of the Mercer Baptist Association, held with Redland church, Lowndes county, Georgia, embracing the fifth Lord’s day in February, 1880,” the following question was posed: “Why is it that the efficiency of Baptists does not keep pace with their numerical strength and increase?” The reasons reported were “1. *We have too many unregenerated members in our churches.* 2.

The concern about decreased discipline could be heard in the twentieth century. W. H. Faust observed, “Yes, it’s the business of a Baptist Church in a community to see that the teachings and spirit of Jesus Christ is shot through and through the very social warp and woof of that community, to destroy Pagan customs, ideals and forms, and to break down all the forces of sin and evil.” Too often, though, such influence was impossible because of the lax living of professing Christians: “Alas for any community where the leading members of the church engage in the same things that the outside people engage in. Here comes up the question of discipline, both formative and punitive. *And the weak spot in rural Baptist church life lies just here.*”¹⁰⁰

For a pastor to oversee discipline required that he himself lived according to the standards he taught.¹⁰¹ Samuel Henderson recalled “a very vivid recollection of a

There is not enough consecration of the part of many of our educated ministers. 3. Too many of our ministers are not intelligent. 4. So many of our churches have unsuitable houses, poorly furnished, when they could do better; and fail to support their pastors as the Gospel requires. 5. The want of a better agreement among the workers in Zion.” J. H. Spann, “Union Meeting Discussions,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 April 1880, 2. Emphasis added. The *Index* editors later complained, “There seems to be in these latter days a general debility of thought in regard to the standard old doctrines of the Christian system.” While there may have been other reasons for such a “debility of thought,” they offered, “It may result, in part, from an ‘over-production’ of professed Christians; that is, from receiving so many into the membership of the churches who have no part nor lot in the matter. Like watering the stock of a company, the volume is increased, but the value is let down.” “Has the Time Come?” 8. For additional articles emphasizing the necessity of a regenerate membership, see “Converted Church Membership,” *The Christian Index*, 26 September 1895, 4.

¹⁰⁰W. H. Faust, “The Mission of the Rural Church,” *The Christian Index*, 17 June 1915, 9. Emphasis added.

¹⁰¹“Naomi” saw the relationship between the pastor’s overseeing discipline among his church members and his own pattern of living: “The line of distinction is obliterated [between the church and the world], and the church mingles with the world with impunity; and she partakes of its spirit, its pleasures and pastimes, conforms to its images, and adopts its fashions, *regardless* of her responsibility, and the *probability* that she is a stumbling-block over which many are plunging into everlasting night. The church desecrates the Sabbath; *few* remember to ‘*keep it holy*,’ and its desecration will *surely* bring the judgments of God. ‘They have profaned my Sabbaths, and I have poured out my indignation upon them and consumed them in my wrath, saith the Lord.’ ‘Be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.’ But instead of the renewed mind, and ‘the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit,’ we see the *professed* followers of Christ adorned in the gaudy trappings of the foolish fashions of the day. The votaries of Christ and the devotees of fashion, often *appeal* without distinction. Church members attend the theatre. Alas! I fear *their* lamps have gone out, and *sometimes*, ‘like people like priests,’ the pastor of the flock *goes* and takes, or *sends* his family, setting the example *for*, and leading those committed to his care in dangerous by-ways, when by precept and *example* he should lead them in the straight and narrow way, turning neither to

dear old uncle, a Baptist minister” who found himself in almost insurmountable debt. The uncle realized that he had preached about giving to the Lord’s work but had failed to practice his teaching. Henderson asked, “Cut off the conn[e]ction between profession and practice—between praying and giving—between doctrine and duty—between saying and doing, and what is either worth? It is only in combination that either is any thing more than as ‘sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.’” Henderson pointed to the elements comprising salt—sodium and chlorine. Separately, neither was good for preserving, but combined they were effective. He maintained, “But unite profession and practice, and the Christian becomes just what our Lord declares, ‘the salt of the earth.’” Only pastors who lived the doctrines they taught were effective servants of God.¹⁰²

the right nor left, to cull the flowers of sinful pleasure. . . . Should not the minister who bears rule, hold inviolate the laws of the church, and bring to account its offending members? or is ‘Ephraim so joined to idols that he is let alone?’ Is there no responsibility resting on the minister? Does he ‘watch over souls with a Godly jealousy,’ warning, reproving, rebuking sin fearlessly, saying as Nathan to David, ‘thou art the man?’ Or do they ‘heal the hurt of the daughter of my people *slightly*,’ saying ‘peace, peace, when there is no peace?’—‘one build the wall, and another daub it with untempered mortar.’” “Naomi” challenged pastors: “Being called of God to the holy work, you have the *promise* of the Holy Spirit to guide and assist you to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and as ambassadors for Him, to reconcile the sinner to Christ, and to teach the law and ordinances, and if your ministry is *weak* or powerless, if you are shorn of your strength, it is not unfaithfulness on the part of our covenant-keeping God, but some loved ‘Delilah’ has enticed, and you have temporized and violated your vows of consecration, and *thereby* lost your power.” Naomi, “The Declension of the Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 April 1868, 69.

¹⁰²Samuel Henderson, “Doctrine and Duty,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 October 1881, 1. A. S. Worrell observed, “The members will, for the most part, live on the plane in which their pastor lives. If his is a low-grade life, such will most of theirs be. If he lives on a high plane, he will be in a position to elevate them.” Worrell, “Responsibilities of the Pastor.” For other articles dealing with the minister’s personal life and example, see “Beecher: Ministerial Discretion,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 January 1870, 2; W. H. W., “Ministerial Piety,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 March 1871, 45; T., “The Preachers’ Financial Wisdom,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 October 1873, 1; Samuel Henderson, “Ministers Considered as Patterns,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 December 1881, 1; Samuel Henderson, “Closet, Pulpit and Pew,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 November 1882, 6; “The Fall of a Minister,” *The Christian Index*, 11 February 1886, 8; “Ministers and Money,” *The Christian Index*, 18 January 1894, 4; W. E. Hatcher, “Pastoral Sovereignty. No. 1,” *The Christian Index*, 12 March 1903, 2; W. E. Hatcher, “Pastoral Sovereignty. No. 2,” *The Christian Index*, 19 March 1903, 1–2; “The Pastor and Missions,” *The Christian Index*, 3 September 1903, 6; J. B. Brooksher, “The Preacher and His Message,” *The Christian Index*, 28 July 1910, 2; Andrew J. Cobb, “Ministerial Ethics,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 13.

A. T. Robertson provided this counsel: “A story is told about a famous preacher to the effect that, when he was in the pulpit, the church wished he would never leave it; but, when he was out of it, they wished that he would never enter it. The only way to have a permanent glory [as opposed to Moses’ vanish-

The Responsibilities of the Church to Its Pastor

As did their predecessors, Southern Baptists of this period viewed their congregations as having responsibilities toward their pastors. Church members were not mere consumers who did nothing but the pastor's service. Rather, they were expected to submit to his biblical leading, support him with affection and prayers, and provide support for his material needs.¹⁰³

Submission

Because the pastor was the overseer of the church, church members were taught to follow their pastor's teaching and example. The following provided the typical biblical support:

That a pastor sustains the relation of an *overseer* to the church, is implied in the term itself. The word ποιμήν, translated pastor, means a shepherd. The verb ποιμαίνω, from which the noun is derived, means, "to feed or tend a flock;" "to perform the office of a spiritual shepherd, to *rule*, to *govern*, to *restrain*." Hence, to discipline. The Greek word ἐπίσκοπος, translated bishop, except in Acts twenty, twenty eight, means, primarily, overseer. Its definitions run thus: "An overseer,

ing glory when he came down the mountain] is to continue beholding the glory of the Lord. If we cease looking at Him, we cease to reflect His glory. . . . A preacher is often tempted to hide his own person and weaknesses out of sight in order to concentrate attention on what he is saying. To a certain extent this is justifiable, but people will not allow a clear divorce between preaching and practice on the part of the minister." Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry*, 67. Robertson also maintained that ministers needed to learn how to behave in public. He recounted several, often disgusting, situations in which ministers revealed a complete disregard for the sensitivities of others. He wrote, "I have heard of a minister who failed to receive a call that he wished because, when on a visit to the church he blew his nose with his hand rather than with his handkerchief in the presence of one of the prominent women." He continued, "I once saw a blind preacher who actually smoked a pipe in the pulpit. Even a blind man ought to have known better than that. I have seen preachers cough into other people's faces as many other folks do." Robertson was especially concerned with the relationships which ministers had with each other: "It belongs more to ministerial ethics than to ministerial etiquette, but I wish to put in a word about preachers who do not practice the golden rule to each other. It is bad etiquette and ethics for a former pastor to go back for a wedding or a funeral save in very special and well understood circumstances. It is bad etiquette to let people tell you of the shortcomings of the new pastor as compared with you. It is bad form for preachers to stir up trouble in a church and then to accept a call to it after the pastor has left. It is bad form to ask another preacher to supply for your without pay while you draw the salary and get a special fee for the service for which you are absent." Robertson summed up the rules for good etiquette: "All unkindness is bad etiquette. It is selfishness. Good etiquette is concern for others and it is precisely this fact that makes it worthwhile." A. T. Robertson, "Ministerial Etiquette," *The Christian Index*, 21 August 1924, 4.

¹⁰³For other articles on the responsibilities of church members for their pastor, see "Reciprocal Duty of Pastors and Churches," *The Christian Index*, 8 September 1887, 2.

inspector; the highest superintendent in a church or assembly of Christians; a bishop," and, as would be said now, a pastor.

The relation under consideration, is sustained by other Scriptures. In Heb. xiii: 7, the Apostle makes this exhortation: "Remember them that have the *rule* over you." In the seventeenth verse he makes his language stronger: "*Obey* them that have the *rule* over you. *Submit* yourselves." The word translated "rule," has the same meanings, pretty much, as those considered above. It means, "to lead, the chief, to preside, to *govern*, to rule."¹⁰⁴

Pendleton lamented that one of the abuses of congregational church government was the lack of deference due to pastors. After quoting 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Timothy 5:17, and Hebrews 13:17, Pendleton commented, "In these passages pastors are referred to, and there is claimed for them an authority not belonging to other church members. They are to be esteemed highly for their work's sake. . . . On account of this work they are to be regarded worthy of 'double honor,' that is, special honor." Because a pastor serves at the congregation's behest and the congregation acts voluntarily out of love for the pastor, Pendleton argued that the congregation should give the pastor "reverential respect in the performance of his duties." "The words *rule*, *obey* and *submit* in the foregoing quotations" did not mean that pastor possessed "unrestricted" authority, and the obedience and submission of members had limits as well. Pastoral leading which is to be obeyed must be "*in accordance with the law of Christ*. No other kind of rule is legitimate or obligatory; but when he rules in accordance with the will of Christ, obedience and submission on the part of the members of the church, are imperative duties."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴F. M. D., "The Pastor an Overseer," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 May 1872, 85. Baptists cautioned their pastors that, though such rule was necessary, it was not autocratic: "Let it be further borne in mind, that it is not the pastor's prerogative to rule of himself, and independent of the church. But he must rule or exercise discipline through the church. The church is God's judiciary upon earth. Before its bar all questions of doctrine and polity must be decided. *To see that the church recognizes its responsibilities, and discharges the same according to the instructions of the God's Word, constitutes the pastor's calling*. The pastor is an overseer, not to do his will, but to execute the will of Him who hath called him to his office. He is an overseer to superintend, according to prescribed laws, the interests of the Master—the Great Head of the Church." Ibid.

¹⁰⁵J. M. Pendleton, *Church Manual*, 26–28. Such pastoral authority is not without restrictions. Pendleton wrote, "While the proper exercise of pastoral authority is essential to the spiritual welfare of a church, pastors must beware of assuming a power which does not belong to them. They must remember the words of Peter: 'Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.' There must

Dargan later noted a general exhortation to the people to respect their elders in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and a stronger one in Hebrews 13:17. Because pastors are held accountable for the souls of their members, Dargan reasoned that “the responsibility of the office is urged as a reason why the people should be easily led, not contentious, but reasonably submissive to the guidance of their teachers.” Dargan recognized, though, that “the elders are exhorted to exercise their authority with great moderation.” He explained, “Inasmuch as their office was one of election by the church they were officers over it by consent, and hence their rule could not be independent nor rigid.” Nevertheless, Dargan noted that “the very name of elder among the Jews and that of *episcopos* or overseer among the Greeks carried the notion of some degree of authority.” This authority “was not, however, despotic, which would be contrary to the spirit of the gospel, but a mild rule or leadership, and hence the high character and superior wisdom of the elders were to be accepted [*sic*] by the church in the spirit of love and confidence, not in fear or unseemly submission.” Dargan concluded that “the authority was executive and moral rather than arbitrary or severe.”¹⁰⁶

Provision of Support and Affection

The *Index* viewed much of the success of the local church dependent upon its members being submissive to the preached Word and supportive of the pastor:

Success in work depends on the steadfastness of those who hear the Word. Are you ready in the van, or are you so entangled with the affairs of this life that you cannot please Him who hath chosen you to be [a] soldier? If the pastor rightly divides the word of truth, surely you can have no excuse for not putting on the whole armor of God. Stand by the ordinances, seek God in the sanctuary, strengthen [*sic*] the hands of pastor and people by your godly walk and devotional habits, and

be, in the exercise of pastoral authority, nothing like priestly lordship or clerical despotism; but the influence of pastors must grow out of the fact that *they* faithfully obey the will of Christ, the great Shepherd, and thus set an example worthy of imitation. There is nothing which gives a pastor so much influence as unre-served consecration to the work of the Lord. As the influence of judicious pastors increases, the more they are know, the pastoral relation should be rendered as permanent as possible. It should not be dissolved for any slight cause.” *Ibid.*, 28-29.

¹⁰⁶Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 94.

you will find before the season closes that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, opposition to a pastor's faithful preaching was seen as providing a barrier to the evangelistic efforts of the church. The *Index* commented upon the negative influence of church members who opposed their pastors: "The life of church members, if its influence is against the truth, may well undo in six days the work wrought by the preaching of the pastor in one day. It has so much more time to make itself felt; and then it takes the form of action, which is more potent than speech in its effect." Church members were warned that "when the pews practically oppose the pulpit, they should bear the blame of its apparent and alleged barrenness." Such church members, evidently, too rarely received the reproach which their actions deserved. For the pastors, though, the story was different: "And yet, how often is the pulpit arraigned at the bar of the pews and condemned by them—condemned for the mischiefs which their own inconsistencies occasion!"¹⁰⁸

To "a brother [who] laments that his pastor does not edify him," Shaver questioned, "But is not the brother in question, under obligation, before he judges the ambassador of Christ, to enquire whether no blame lies at his own door? May he not have lost sight of the great principle, expressed on one occasion by Crozer, that '*private*

¹⁰⁷"Fall Work," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 October 1874, 1. For additional articles stressing the importance of church members' support of the pastor for church prosperity, see J. W. M. Williams, "How to Enlarge Congregations," *The Christian Index*, 9 December 1886, 2; "The Summer Vacation," *The Christian Index*, 30 August 1888, 8.

¹⁰⁸"The Religious Press," *The Christian Index*, 3 January 1884, 1. Pastor J. G. Gunter of Louisville, Kentucky, wrote similarly in an article carried by the *Index*, "We talk about great pastors, but we should also talk about their great congregations. Great congregations go far toward making great pastors. 'Like people like priest,' is a proverb among us, and much truth exists in the saying." Gunter wrote his article "to point some of the ways in which the congregation may increase the pastor's efficiency and remove stumbling blocks from his path." How could a congregation aid its pastor? By providing sympathy in times of distress or discouragement, by bringing "the starving multitude" to hear the gospel preached, by finding new-comers to the community, and by faithfulness to "the invaluable auxiliaries to the pulpit," especially "to the Sunday school and the prayer-meeting." J. G. Gunter, "How the Congregation Can Increase the Efficiency of the Pastor," *The Christian Index*, 22 July 1920, 7. C. N. Donaldson, D.D., maintained, "The deacon never serves his church better than when he does so wholly, for the purpose of conserving the highest efficiency of his pastor, and in this service, gently and wisely given, he is conserving efficiency of his church." C. N. Donaldson, "What Deacons Are for, Anyway," *The Christian Index*, 23 March 1916, 6.

devotion is essential to the profitable exercise of *public worship*?" Shaver counseled, "Let all of us, when we derive no benefit from pastoral instruction, beware lest we tax the ministry with unprofitableness, when only *our own* neglect of religious retirement intercepts the blessing which a preached Gospel always brings to those who throw up no barrier against it!"¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Samuel Henderson offered, "Let every private Christian who desires to hear good sermons, able sermons from his pastor, give him his sympathies and prayers instead of his carping criticism, and he will be astonished at the result. The change will beat any substitute of a new for the old pastor, we rather think, that could be effected."¹¹⁰

Financial Support

Baptists continued to hold that churches should provide for the material needs of their pastors.¹¹¹ Dargan found biblical support for the financial maintenance of pastors

¹⁰⁹"Why Pastors May not Profit Us," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 December 1869, 194. See also "Religious Press," *The Christian Index*, 30 June 1887, 1, in which the following charge is made by the *Index* editors: "Many of the most signal failures of our pastors are the fruit of the neglect of the church-members." Commenting upon an article in Boston's *Watchman* reporting the success Dr. R. S. MacArthur at Calvary Baptist Church in New York City, the *Index* stated, "While pastors differ in gifts and attainments, yet their success [*sic*] depends largely upon the help that they receive from their churches. They are, to a large extent, what their helpers make them. And church members have grave responsibilities in church work that they cannot transfer to the pastor—they are also largely responsible for their pastor's success or failure. . . . The church members who fight a godly pastor are usually a serious disadvantage to the church, to the cause of Christ, and to the pastor. Pastors must not depend upon genius, brilliancy and spread-eagle oratory, but upon earnest study, constant toil, and genial and pleasant associations among their people. With these, and a helping church, and the favor of the Christ, a pastor of moderate gifts can do a wonderful work for the good of soul and the glory of the Master." "Successful Pastors," *The Christian Index*, 4 August 1887, 9.

¹¹⁰Samuel Henderson, "Reciprocal Power of Faith," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 November 1882, 6. For other articles concerning the effect of church members upon pastors, see Jesse M. Dodd, "Weakness in the Pulpit. No. 1," *The Christian Index*, 28 October 1909, 2; Jesse M. Dodd, "Weakness in the Pulpit. No. 2," *The Christian Index*, 4 November 1909, 2; Jesse M. Dodd, "Weakness in the Pulpit. No. 3," *The Christian Index*, 11 November 1909, 2.

¹¹¹Joseph Baker maintained that, while a church should provide for the needs of its pastor, even paying a large salary if it had the means to do so, the pastor should not demand such provision in order to serve and should not demand the recompense that his abilities should bring forth. Baker warned, "He who refuses to serve a church, unless he is insured a salary commensurate with his abilities, sooner than obey the above divine command, would abandon all pastoral labors, (it is to be presumed,) seat himself in

in 1 Corinthians 9:1-18, Galatians 6:6, 1 Timothy 5:17-18, and 1 Peter 5:2. From this evidence he asserted, "It seems, therefore, very plain that the elders were rewarded, and some of them even entirely supported by the brethren."¹¹² He went on to note that "as the illustration used by Paul is drawn from the support of the priests in the Old Testament¹¹³ we infer that the support was not to be scanty; for we know that the Old Testament priests and Levites were amply provided for by the regulations of the Mosaic law."¹¹⁴

After the Civil War, churches experienced greater difficulty in providing for their pastors and, consequently, in keeping them in the South. M. T. Sumner lamented, "It may not be generally known, that many of our most pious, efficient, and successful ministers are leaving the South, or are making their arrangements to leave, because they are not sustained by the churches, and cannot secure a livelihood for themselves and families." He recognized, during this period of Reconstruction in the South, "that our people

the velvet cushioned chair of a president or professor in some College, or in the great arm-chair of the principal of an academy, or, if he can do no better, in the hide-bottomed chair of an old-field schoolmaster; preferring even the latter to the hard bench of a poor church. I cast no reflection upon presidents, professors or teachers. Some are called to be pastors, some to be teachers. 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he is called.' I Cor. vii: 20. But woe to the man who, for *worldly gain*, shifts from one to the other, or seeks to unite the two in one." Jos. S. Baker, "The Rights and Duties of Ministers," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 December 1871, 197. For additional articles by Baker dealing with this matter, see Jos. S. Baker, "The Rights and Duties of Pastors," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 December 1871, 189; Jos. S. Baker, "Rights and Duties of Pastors," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 January 1872, 1; Jos. S. Baker, "Rights and Duties of Pastors," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 January 1872, 13; Jos. S. Baker, "Rights and Duties of Pastors," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 8 February 1872, 21; Jos. S. Baker, "Rights and Duties of Pastors," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 April 1872, 65. J. H. Allen, however, believed Baker's principle left no recourse for preachers serving churches unable or unwilling to provide for their pastors: "Under his [Baker's] theory, it would be no unusual occurrence to find a pastor, in the vale of poverty, as to this world's goods, yet rich in the power and demonstration of the gospel, faithfully preaching to some very poor or very stingy church, with no other hope than the ravens to support him. While, on the other hand, we would find another preacher rich in worldly goods, yet weak as the writer of this article, as a minister, preaching to a very rich church, yet sustained outside of his own wealth, in the most comfortable and respectable style." J. H. Allen, "The Rights of Pastors," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 February 1872, 17.

¹¹²Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 93.

¹¹³Dargan had compared 1 Cor 9:8-14 and 1 Tim 5:17-18 with Lev 25:4. *Ibid.*, 92.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 93.

are greatly reduced in their circumstances, and that the churches find it difficult to meet promptly their current expenses.” The deprivation, however, should not prevent churches from taking care of those who ministered to them. Sumner asked, “But are we so poor that we cannot divide our bread and meat with the ministry, that they may remain among us, and *preach the gospel* to our people? Have we made sacrifices already and find it impossible to maintain the worship of God in our midst?”¹¹⁵

Throughout this period, the issue of the financial support for pastors continued to be addressed. After the turn of the century, A. T. Robertson noted that the pastor “does not enter the ministry to make money, to get honour, power, fame. . . . The minister receives most of his [compensation] in glory, and most of that in the next world. But just this difference is all the difference between the material man and the spiritual man.” Nevertheless, Robertson argued, “The minister is entitled to a decent competency and a church should be ashamed to stint the man who breaks to them the bread of life.”¹¹⁶

Similarly, Jeff D. Ray taught that God’s calling a man into the ministry meant that God would provide that man’s support. The preacher was, therefore, to rely on divine provision and not get entangled in the snare of making money through secular means. While a possible exception could be made for a man preaching the gospel in a pagan land, preachers should rely upon their churches for their entire support.¹¹⁷ Ray argued, “From these Scriptures [especially 1 Timothy 6:9-10 and 1 Corinthians 9:6-14] and many others of like import it is easy to see that the New Testament ideal is that the

¹¹⁵M. T. Sumner, “Shall They Leave?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 January 1868, 15. Emphasis added. For similar concerns, see Wm. Howard, “Alabama—Its Ministerial Removals,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 10 September 1868, 141.

¹¹⁶Robertson, *The Glory of the Ministry*, 169–70.

¹¹⁷Jeff D. Ray, *The Highest Office*, 100–12.

preacher shall have no other means of support than his ministry and that the churches must ungrudgingly supply this means of support.”¹¹⁸

Ray observed that one of the primary reasons why churches and preachers alike violated scriptural principles of ministerial maintenance was because of a dearth of teaching on the subject. He argued that “some [preachers] neglect to teach the duty of pastoral support because they are so obsessed with iridescent dreams and Utopian theories that they cannot come down to a thing so practical. Others neglect it because of a spurious timidity lest they seem to be preaching for money. Still others neglect it because they do not realize how fundamentally the doctrine is grounded in Scripture teaching.” Ray warned, “The preacher or the church wantonly disobeying or thoughtlessly disregarding this reasonable and clearly enunciated Scripture law will come to speedy and irretrievable disaster.”¹¹⁹

Conclusion

The period from 1865 to the mid-1920s saw Southern Baptists continue to promote a view of the gospel ministry which, for the most part, their Baptist forefathers would have accepted. They stressed that Scripture alone was the authority for their understanding of the ministerial office. The only officers authorized by the Scriptures were pastors, or elders, and deacons. While the practice of having a plurality of elders rarely existed, they did acknowledge that such was the biblical practice, and many believed that they should return to that practice if it were possible. The ministry was an esteemed office, and only those candidates providing biblical qualifications should be approved for

¹¹⁸Ray, *The Highest Office*, 106.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 112. Concerning the church’s budget, Dobbins wrote: “The most suicidal policy ever adopted by a church is to underpay the pastor. Remember that his financial standing and credit determine to a large extent his spiritual influence with many men; that he usually has no other means of support; that his manner of living must be in keeping with the standards of the middle class of citizens; and that his efficiency is seriously crippled when financial difficulties continually distress him. Let the pastor be provided for generously and well, and if he is the man for the place, almost everything else will be easier to accomplish.” Dobbins, *The Efficient Church*, 190–91.

such weighty responsibilities. After all, the souls of persons were at stake—unworthy ministers could lead many to perdition. Ministers should undergo preparation for the ministry, and this period witnessed the establishment of denominational theological seminaries and colleges to train those who would become and who already were gospel ministers. Training, though, did not have to be formal. A man could learn much under the tutelage of an accomplished pastor. The office of pastor carried grave responsibilities for its occupant. He was to care for the souls of his hearers, preaching the true gospel for conversion and for growth. He was to know their spiritual needs by being among them. As throughout Baptist history, church members had their responsibilities. They were to esteem their ministers, provide for their material needs as much as possible, and follow their biblical instructions.

In one area, however, a noticeable shift would take place from the pattern of earlier Baptists. The following chapter will examine a new responsibility for pastors as churches sought to grow numerically and increase their influence. No longer would it suffice for men to carry out the biblical duties which their predecessors had delineated and depend upon God to bring about conversion and growth as He willed. Pastors would be encouraged to organize their churches for efficiency, a task which would assure numerical growth.

CHAPTER 6

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS FROM 1865-1900: THE PUSH TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Despite the fact that the Baptist view of the gospel ministry during this period remained virtually the same as that of previous generations, one notable shift did take place. While most emphases continued in the call to the ministry, in the choosing of ministers, in their responsibilities to their churches and the responsibilities of the churches to them, one notable addition was made to the pastor's responsibilities: he was now seen as the executive officer of an increasingly complex organization, and his leadership in this new capacity was often seen as the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful ministry. While Baptists historically had viewed a successful pastor as one who faithfully carried out his biblical mandate to care for the spiritual welfare of his members and to evangelize the lost, many Baptists during this period became more focused upon observable results. Although the pastor had always been seen as the overseer of the church, a position which comprised watching over the administration of the ordinances, the reception of new members, and the exercise of church discipline, the function of overseer took on a new role. Now he became the church's executive officer, seeing that the members of the church functioned like an efficient machine.

This focus upon observable results does not mean that Southern Baptists now rejected biblical fidelity—all would acknowledge that biblical fidelity was paramount. As seen in the previous chapter, Baptists continued to look to the Scriptures to determine the office of the gospel minister within the church. During the latter third of the nineteenth century, though, Baptists believed they could see greater results in fulfilling their

biblical mandate to evangelize and disciple by organizing the members of their churches into more efficient bodies. The man responsible for organizing and leading his members to greater, observable results would be, of course, the pastor. No longer would pastors be deemed accomplished only by their faithful proclamation of the Word and their diligent care for the souls of their congregation. With the increased emphasis upon observable results came the increased emphasis upon pastors leading their churches to greater numerical growth and influence through organizational efficiency.¹

Baptists began seeing lay persons as the great untapped source for church workers. Getting them involved in the work of the church, therefore, was the secret which would increase church efficiency. Writing in 1879, Samuel Henderson, the Alabama editor for *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, noted, “Within the recollection of many of our brethren, say the last twenty-five or thirty years, the lay element in our churches has developed into a power of no common magnitude.” While much of this new involvement of laypersons was most noticeable in association and convention meetings, some of it was evidenced in local churches: “We know of churches which possess an array of effective piety and talent in their private members equal to every emergency, and who promptly fill any lack of service the pastor may not be able to perform. They read and expound the Scriptures with a zeal, ability and power alike creditable to themselves and profitable to their brethren.” What was true for some churches could be true for every church, Henderson maintained. He urged, “The cause of Christ is entitled to the very best service there is in every member of his spiritual body, and suitable methods ought to be adopted to call out this vast latent power.” While such involvement may have seemed fairly novel to many Baptists, Henderson argued that “the New Testament is replete with evidences that this is the normal condition of Zion—a condition

¹For a succinct and informative summary of this new emphasis upon efficiency in Georgia Baptist churches, particularly as efficiency related to church discipline, see Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785–1900*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131–34.

in which every member is swayed and impelled by one spirit.” Henderson saw world-wide evangelistic ramifications resulting from the involvement of all Christians: “Whenever those occasional periods of revival in our churches, which compass the whole working power of all the membership, shall become habitual rather than spasmodic, then, and only then, will Zion be equipped for the conquest of the world.”²

While this involvement of laypersons in the work of the church was not in itself revolutionary, this period would see an ever-increasing interest in finding a job for every member in order to create more efficient churches. Consequently, pastors who desired to be successful ministers would increasingly be exhorted to organize efficiently their membership to carry out the work of the church. One must recognize, however, that the move toward organizational efficiency did not occur immediately and was not uniformly accepted by Southern Baptists. Rather, the move occurred gradually during the latter third of the nineteenth century and not without strong opposition. Indeed, Southern Baptist apologists for organizational efficiency often found themselves under attack from other Southern Baptists who believed that the church was going down a path without scriptural or historical support.

Once again, one must recognize that the move toward organizational efficiency was not viewed by its promoters as a clean break with the older understanding of biblical fidelity. To be sure, Baptists advocating organizational efficiency also voiced concern for fidelity to the Scriptures and a dependence upon God to work through their methods. They viewed this new understanding of organizational efficiency as providing a more effective way for churches to fulfill their mission in the world.

²Samuel Henderson, “Lay Power in Baptist Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 October 1879, 1. For other articles dealing with the importance of lay workers, see “Individual Responsibility,” *The Christian Index*, 20 September 1888, 8; S. G. Hillyer, “To the Baptist Churches of Georgia,” *The Christian Index*, 24 April 1890, 2.

Biblical Support for Organizational Efficiency

Southern Baptists supported the move toward organizational efficiency by maintaining the Scriptures required them to organize the local church's membership to carry out the church's mission. One writer to *The Christian Index* summarized the denominational justification for such work. Before Christ ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He had commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel in all the world. This promulgation of the gospel for the salvation of men was to be the work of all disciples. When the disciples were gathered into churches, this commission became the commission for the churches. While the work preaching and teaching is focused primarily on the pastor and those commissioned as missionaries, the church members themselves were to serve as a secondary, but in no way unimportant, means of spreading the gospel. The writer concluded: "And now, if the work appointed of the Master to the churches, has been correctly stated, it follows that the disciples of Christ, and members of the churches, are in duty bound to sustain and further this work by their *prayers*, by their *earnest co-operation*, and by the *stated contribution of their substance*."³

³B. W. I., "The Work of the Churches," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 March 1875, 2. An anonymous Baptist gave a similar view: "The duty of laymen in the active labor of building up and sustaining the local establishments of God's work, will be apparent when it is remembered that our Saviour said, 'Ye are the light of the world, the salt of the earth,' 'Let your light shine before men,' *i.e.*, not only in your own family but before the outside world. Again, 'Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candle-stick.' In these injunctions to labor [*sic*], the sacred text makes no difference between *preacher and people*, shepherd and flock, but they are obligatory upon all alike. If there be any difference in degree, in the work to be performed, it is a question whether the greater call to labor *is not to the laity*—their opportunities being greatest. Are any Christians excused from active participation in the evangelical work of the church, as laid down in the New Testament? We think not, and argue, first, That every Christian has or can easily exercise an influence for good in his example, in his character, in his intellect, and in his religion; but most of all in his labors and charity; 2d. This influence and these powers are criminally misused if allowed to remain inactive. . . . 3. While the active ministry of the Word may be and is properly committed to very few, owing to the many and exalted qualifications required of one set all [?] to teach and to go in and out before the people; yet all are part of the great temple of Christian work and Christian usefulness. . . . 4. It so happens, in the economy of God's providence, that the humblest Christian may often do a work for God, which the most exalted in position cannot venture upon or approach." The writer concluded, "the end of the argument is, that we find no Scripture text or New Testament rule which relieves any Christian from participation to the extent of his time, talents, means, and opportunities, in the active preparation of Gospel truth, by example, by word, and work, in the community where God has placed him. And that every one should seek, by prayer, study, and self-discipline, with a faithful reading of the

G. A. Nunnally, then pastor of the Baptist church at Rome, Georgia, and later president of Mercer University, held that Ephesians 4:15-16 required church members to be involved in the work of the local church. Noting that Christ was the head of the church, Nunnally taught that members themselves were the parts of His body. Consequently, *“each part of the body has its specific functions to perform, and each member of the Church has his special duty to discharge.”* Because each member had his special duty to perform, work would be left undone if each did not meet his responsibility. Nunnally explained, “Substitution is unnatural and morally impossible. The eye cannot hear for the ear, the hand cannot walk for the foot—nor is such a requirement made in nature, nor is it expected in the Church, but each is alone to do the thing for which he is qualified.” Therefore, Nunnally maintained, “the greatest good is accomplished, the best harmony prevails and the greatest power is manifested, when every man finds his work and then does with all his might what his hands find to do. Individual effort, under a wise distribution of labor, is the grand secret of success in all corporations.” Nunnally insisted that this notion of a “wise distribution of labor” was not derived from business world but from the Bible: “Jesus knew this, and hence as is shown in the parable of the householder, *He gave to every man his work.*” The local church, then, was not merely an organization of which one was a member; rather, it was a place for believers to work and fulfill their responsibilities as members of Christ’s body. Nunnally argued, “The Church of the Lord Jesus is not a nursery for children to play in, nor simply a gymnasium for spiritual exercise; nor a hunting ground for sports with an occasional report of game. But it is a field and *work*, and work is the word of command. It is a workshop full of machinery and there is no place for loafers.” Consequently, *“the full strength of the body and its well-being are dependent upon each member faithfully doing its part.”* Conversely, “diseased

Scripture, to find his appropriate place and work, and in the fear and love of God do that work with his might.” “Lay Work,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 14 January 1875, 1. See also “What Can I Do for My Church?” *The Christian Index*, 18 June 1885, 6; J. E. Willet, “The Position and Duty of Laymen,” *The Christian Index*, 7 January 1886, 2–3.

or unfaithful members of the church enfeeble the whole organization, retard its progress and mar its beauty.” The church that would be successful in accomplishing its task will be the church in which all its members do their work: “*The unity of effort, the co-operation of all the members and they [being] healthy and directed by one head will insure success.*” For the effort to be a success, though, there must be peace among the members, with each satisfied to do the work assigned to him. Nunnally explained, “The honor of a work is derived from the majesty of Him who commands it, and the motive of him who performs it. A doorkeeper is equal to a general, for their commissions issue from the same office and bear the same seal.” An individual’s position is unimportant: “And all the while learn and know that you are an important factor to the great result we are trying to accomplish—the glory of God and the good of men.”⁴

Calls for Organizational Efficiency

Baptist concern for their churches to become efficient organizations grew as they sought better ways to carry out their biblical mandate to evangelize the unconverted and train their members. Responding to their congregationalism, Baptists came to believe that they were failing their own system of government when they failed to organize churches to their greatest efficiency. For instance, the March 5, 1868 edition of *The Christian Index* carried excerpts of two articles from its exchanges, one from the *Congregationalist & Recorder* and the other from the *Examiner & Chronicle*, describing the value of fellowship meetings for the members of individual churches. Efficiency was seen as related to congregational government, as revealed in this statement from the first of the articles: “Now, we profess to have inherited the identical church system of the Apostles; and, in theory, our Churches are Christian *households*, like those founded by Paul and John. Is it not time that, throughout the country, we were trying to realize more

⁴G. A. Nunnally, “Diversity of Talent and Co-Operation of Effort,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 15 February 1877, 3.

worthily these high professions?” The *Index* offered a hearty endorsement of the reasoning in the exchanges: “There can be no question that a sense of acquaintanceship and sympathy, prevailing among the members of a church, enters, as an indispensable element, into the characteristics which make up the highest efficiency in Christian work.”⁵

Indeed, David Shaver, editor of Virginia’s *Religious Herald* from 1853-57 and *The Christian Index* from 1867-74, held as axiomatic a Baptist church’s responsibility to be organized to carry out the work of God because of its structure. While churches in other denominations could have their actions overridden by the hierarchy over them, Baptists saw the congregation as the only divinely-appointed organization “for the diffusion of His truth and the extension of His kingdom throughout the earth.” Shaver warned,

If, therefore, we should fail to kindle their [the congregation’s] zeal, to enlist their energies and to develop their resources for the conquest of the race to Christ,—to make the most of each congregation, to train it, employ it, ‘organize’ it, for this end,—there is nothing else, with the explicit sanction of Heaven, on which we can fall back: we have neglected what by our own confession is the one single agency ordained of God for the accomplishment of human salvation. Does not special guiltiness, therefore, cleave to such a course *in us*? Are not *we* above all men, reprehensible for the lack of ‘congregational organization,’ since no other organization wears, in our judgment, the robes of express Divine *appointment*?

Because Baptist churches were voluntary organizations into which members were received based upon evidence of regeneration, as opposed to other denominations into which members were born, Shaver asked, “Now, must we not be, in a preëminent measure, blameworthy for the inactivity of the churches—their want of thorough organization for Christian work—inasmuch as we alone, in theory, adhere throughout to the true Scriptural ideal of these churches, as *beginning from* and *abiding on* the inward fellowship of the believer with Christ?” Again, because each congregation was required to be “a pure, spiritual body—a body of ‘saints and brethren,’ instinct with the divine life and breathing the spirit of the Saviour,” Shaver asked, “are we not culpable, beyond all

⁵“An Element of Church Efficiency,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 March 1868, 37.

others, if our congregations are defective in the well-ordered, vigorous and unwearied labors through which spirituality obtains its outward manifestation and its legitimate, thorough development?" The failure of Baptists to be actively involved congregationally in the work of the Lord contradicted their doctrine of a regenerate church. Shaver argued pointedly:

Limiting the church by "the boundary line of belief and of actual holiness"—recognizing it as true, only according "to the vitality of the faith possessed by the individuals of whom it is composed"—demanding of every such individual that he should be, in credible profession, a "partaker of the heavenly calling"—and teaching that he who is called of God, receives that new heart by which we are "*fitted*" and impelled to good works:—standing alone in these respects, we must be in the highest degree, false to ourselves and false to the truth of Christ, if we do not abound in church action for our Saviour and for souls.⁶

Lest some argue that such activity should be left to denominational efforts, Shaver noted that God's blessings rested upon individual believers, not upon denominational organizations. Shaver asked, "Might it not be naturally expected, therefore, that where the centre and the life of the promises are, as we conceive, *there* should our energy principally expend itself, and our efforts prove most diligent, systematic and untiring?" He continued his line of thinking, "But, if this were so, would we not give ourselves, with special zeal and ardor, to the work of the Lord in the *personal* sphere—that is, in the congregation? And would not such labor there, ensure the most thorough *congregational* organization for Christian work?" Shaver brought the argument to its conclusion with a final penetrating question: "Where that organization is wanting, then, must we not be accounted peculiarly guilty, as having failed to carry our distinctive principles out, *in*

⁶D. Shaver, "Congregational Organization," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 August 1869, 118. For a careful delineation of the ramifications of the spiritual nature of Baptist churches, see also A. S., "New Testament Churches Spiritual Organizations," *The Christian Index*, 12 August 1869, 121.

practical effect?” According to Shaver, congregations which merely met for preaching were, in essence, denying Baptist ecclesiological distinctions.⁷

Other Baptist leaders challenged pastors and other church leaders to arouse their congregations to do greater work. Speaking to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting at Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, Rev. J. L. Burrows of Richmond, Virginia, questioned fellow Baptists, “Brethren, do you know any single church, in this year of grace, 1870, that may be truly said to be fully awake?” He charged, “Even our activities are often somnambulistic. Many have a sort of dreamy, half-consciousness that they ought to be doing something for Christ’s kingdom, but just what it is, what degree of responsibility rests upon them, are questions concerning which they have very sleepy conceptions and return very drowsy answers.” While Burrows did not provide the plan for the needed awakening of members, he maintained that definite actions needed to be taken: “How to bring out the unused power in these thousands of Christians is an intricate problem for the solution of which we are now to study and work and pray.” He delineated the need:

To develop, and practically use, the immense might which lies slumbering and resting in these 8,663 churches [comprising the Southern Baptist Convention], to train them into efficiency, each in its own sphere, and all into coöperation for still further and grander results—this, I conceive, is the work which lies next before us. To instruct, influence, encourage these churches “to put on their strength,” is an object worthy of the profound investigation, wise planning, pious ingenuity of pastors, deacons, editors, secretaries, boards and financial Christians throughout our whole land.

In one long sentence Burrows cast a vision of what “wide-awake” churches would produce:

When all our town and city churches shall be as practically organized and managed for the prosecution of the legitimate work for which they were founded, as are the commercial, banking and manufacturing establishments of which the members of these churches are directors, for practically accomplishing their work—when each of our country churches, in which our greatest strength lies buried, shall each occupy a neat, attractive house of worship, ample rooms for Sunday schools and prayer meetings—“a God’s acre”—within a handsome enclosure, that fences in the sacred spot from common ground, connecting even the tender social associations of death

⁷ D. Shaver, “Congregational Organization,” 118.

with the house of God; a pleasant parsonage, with grounds sufficient to furnish a part of the pastor's support—each, too, its own settled working bishop, unseduced from his own wedded bride into ecclesiastical concubinage, each with its own adapted, elastic methods of church work—fixed by settled principles, and not contingent upon sensational impulses; then each, coöperating with neighboring churches for the evangelizing of its district, with all in the State for the evangelizing of the State, with all in the other States for evangelizing the whole territory, and with all in the whole territory for sounding out the word of the Lord into regions beyond; and all this, not more blind machinery, but, like the wheels of Ezekiel's vision, self-moving, instinct and quivering with spiritual life: Then, when these possibilities become actualities, will our Zion have "put on her strength."

As Burrows indicated, "not more blind machinery" was needed, but an efficient organization comprised of church members leading holy lives would bring power to convert the lost: "Purity as well as power, is essential to Christian efficiency. Nay, the church must be pure in order to be powerful. Her holiness is her strength."⁸

Calls for greater church efficiency continued, with the admonition given that each member was to do his religious duty through his local church. The *Index* observed: "It is self-evident that the harmony and efficiency of the church depends on the *conduct* of its members—the *doing* by *each* of *his* particular duty. Here appears the *responsibility*

⁸Burrows, "The Church Awake," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 June 1870, 85. For the church to be an efficient organization did not yet mean the more complicated, society-laden organization which would become more widely introduced by the turn of the century. Many saw the church as an efficient organization if members were growing in usefulness and able to assist the pastor in his work or help the meetings of the church continue in his absence. Samuel Henderson wrote that the spiritual gifts of the members of the church could be developed by returning to "meetings for mutual edification and instruction, in which each member should feel it his duty and privilege to participate. . . . This was unquestionably a common practice among the primitive churches; and our older members can well remember the time when they were resorted to with great profit by our churches. These spiritual conferences were common among saints under the Jewish dispensation, for it is said of them, that 'they that feared God spake often one to another, and a book of remembrance was written before him, even of them that thought upon his name.' . . . We would earnestly exhort our brethren to revive this primitive practice, and thereby 'strengthen the things that are ready to perish.' The absence of the pastor, or the being destitute of a pastor, is no reason why our churches should suspend the worship of God. Let them meet at their respective places of worship, and 'admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,'—let them exhort one another to love and to good works,—let them 'not forsake the assembling of themselves together as the manner of some is.' The Apostle in the chapter we have been considering (12th of 1 Cor.) speaks of '*helps*' or *helpers*, by which he evidently means those who speak to the edification of the church, who by their superior endowments, are fitted to *assist* the pastors and teachers in their works, and so *help* the faith and joy of others. In a word, let every gift of the church be developed so as to answer that sublime description of an efficient, working body, in Ephe. 4:15-16." Samuel Henderson, "The Church Equipped for Usefulness—How to Develop Its Gifts," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 August 1879, 1.

of each member of the church.” The writer indicated what he meant by “duty” and “responsibility”: “But see one member here and another there, failing to do their duty—‘forsaking the assembling of themselves together’ with the body—‘coming not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty’—neglecting the prayer meeting, the Sunday school—contributing not even their ‘mite’ to support the pastor or missions, or any good cause.” Such failure made churches inefficient: “By so much as each one fails of *his* part, is the good work hindered, efficiency prevented and harmony destroyed.”⁹

What kind of Christian work did Baptists see the need for which to organize? Though such work appears rudimentary when compared to the more complex church structure of coming decades, one can nevertheless see an awareness that organizing the members of the churches would increase the efficiency of those churches. The *Index* of August 5, 1869, provides insight into the thinking of the day:

ORGANIZE! ORGANIZE!! For the approaching season of District Meetings, Association and other religious occasions, let every church organize its live material into effective working hands. By the selection and appointment of church and neighborhood colporteurs, Bible readers, and canvassers for their religious papers, an immense amount of good might be accomplished. Why not appoint some good sister in every church, with the special object of soliciting subscriptions and forming clubs for the INDEX. News has reached this office, that a number of clubs are in a formative state in sundry places. Large clubs, and a number of them, is what the INDEX would suggest.¹⁰

Another writer summarized the work of the church through its members:

I mean the distribution of the Bible, and of leaflets or tracts containing portions of Scripture, or the writings of holy men; the circulation of religious papers and other products of a sanctified press; the maintenance of meetings for prayer and exhortation in destitute neighborhoods; the support of Sunday-schools in which the

⁹“The Responsibility of Individual Members of the Church for the Influencing of Their Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 November 1871, 181. For similar concerns, see E. B. Teague, “The Necessity of Organization and System,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 February 1871, 25; Alpha, “To the Private Members of the Baptist Churches of Georgia,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 April 1874, 1; Savannah, “Our Private Membership,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 April 1874, 1; A Pastor, “Unofficial Members,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 July 1874, 2.

¹⁰“Organize! Organize!!” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 August 1869, 119. Because there were good plans which invariably failed due to a lack of workers, Shaver, with tongue in cheek, issued a plea for “a self-working plan” which needed no human effort. D. Shaver, “Wanted,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 November 1869, 182.

youthful mind is to be instructed in the truths of God's word; and, indeed, every means which in any degree serves the grand purpose of bringing men under the power of the Gospel of Christ.

This work includes, of course, the holy living of each disciple or member of the church. Without this all other means will be of but little effect.¹¹

“Observer,” writing in the April 13, 1876 issue of the *Index*, reported the prayer meeting of one north Georgia church which trained men to lead in the meeting, after a year of which they were able to do extended work in neighboring mission stations. He exhorted:

The advantages of this system above the ordinary system is apparent to every one who will give it that thought it should have; and, as the working season is now at hand, it is important that churches should begin to adopt measures for more successful work. Brethren, fight for Jesus, your inactivity and cowardice does not make the enemy of souls less vigilant.¹²

The *Index* of September 29, 1870, cited two churches featured in unnamed religious newspaper exchanges as examples of the congregational organization which “is necessary to its [the church’s] efficiency.” Shaver explained that congregational organization “finds a sphere of activity for every member, and combines the efforts and

¹¹B. W. I., “The Work of the Churches,” 2. W. W. Chaudoin, corresponding editor of the “Florida Department” of the *Index*, gave a similar exhortation to put young converts to work in the church: “Pastors, put your young members to work. Give them something to do, put responsibility upon them, and let them feel that they are of some account. Encourage them to meet for prayer, and singing, and not sing as a frolic, but to worship God. Our voices are the gift of God, and we all should try to cultivate them, improve them, and use them to the glory of God. Organize Sunday-schools, and let those teach who can, and let the others try to learn. Teach them all to give some money as often as they can, even if only a cent or two cents, or five. Let each convert buy a Bible or testament, at least write his name in it, and try to read it through, once or oftener, by Christmas. . . . Then, pastors and missionaries, by all means, induce them to read *Kind Words*, and *THE INDEX*.” W. N. Chaudoin, “Florida Associations,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 September 1879, 8. G. A. Nunnally provided explicit, practical suggestions for involving new converts in the church’s work: “Give them something to do. If you can find nothing else appoint them to go from house to house and invite the citizens to church. Place your [contribution commitment] lists in their hands and send them on a collecting tour. Put them at the door and let them act as ushers. Have them to build a fire in the church stove, hand the books around, bring a pitcher of water, unhitch the preacher’s horse, assist some old sister out of her buggy, raise a tune or lead in prayer—anything—anything that is needed to be done—rather than let them feel they have no mission in the world. Give them a start at work, but then it is work for the Master and His church, and there is no telling where they will stop. Some of them may be Whitfield’s [*sic*], or Luther’s [*sic*] or Spurgeons.” Referring to Jesus’s raising of Lazarus, Nunnally counseled, “Loose him and let him go.” G. A. Nunnally, “What Shall We Do with Them?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 November 1879, 2. See also “How Can a Young Christian Make Himself Useful to the Church?” *The Christian Index*, 24 April 1884, 2; “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 14 November 1889, 1.

¹²Observer, “The Model Prayer-Meeting,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 April 1876, 2.

develops the capabilities of all.” He used the reports of these churches “as explanatory of its [congregational organization’s] nature and as an argument for its adoption.” Shaver restated the account of the first church:

It is said that one year ago the Beach street Presbyterian church [*sic*], Boston, was struggling for existence, with a congregation of about one hundred, and a sum total of \$1,900 raised during the year. Since that time, two hundred and fifty members have been added; their house is crowded; \$8,000 have been raised for current expenses and a debt of \$30,000 paid; while from four to six hundred are present at the prayer meeting. They think the change has been effected by giving each member something to do in one of these departments of committee work: *Relief*, which renders material aid; *Care of the Sick; Strangers*, (the ‘hand-shaking committee;’) *Domestics*, to look after the working girls and hired men; *Music*, to be responsible for the singing; *Sociable*, to provide social entertainment; *Sabbath School*, to visit the sick and look after absentees; *Devotional*, (a prayer meeting committee;) *Young Women’s Devotional*; and *Spiritual*, to assist the pastor. All are expected to be employed. A superintendent directs the work of each committee, and the pastor looks to the superintendent and works through him.¹³

The report of the second church was similar:

The Tenth Baptist church [*sic*] in Philadelphia publishes every month a neat little eight-page paper, called *The Shepherd’s Crook—A Guide to Work and Worship*, from which we learn that the whole church is organized on a working basis. The congregation is divided into committees on Sunday Schools, Visitation of Members; Mission Work; Hospitality to Strangers; collecting Systematic Benevolence; Tracts and Religious Literature; Temperance, etc. Circulars are sent to every member of the church, requesting him or her to consider in which committee they would prefer to work; a blank is left at the bottom of the circular to be filled up with the number of the committee each prefers, and properly signed and returned to the officers of the church, who lay out the work to be done.¹⁴

Baptist churches as a whole had not as yet adopted the concept of organizational efficiency, but many desired to convince them of its usefulness and their need to adopt it.¹⁵

¹³“Working Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 29 September 1870, 150.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵One matter of special concern during this period was the establishing of efficient methods of collecting the contributions of church members. For instance, see Wm. Henry Strickland, “Circular Letter,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 October 1870, 169. For another example of a church’s being put forth as models deemed worthy of emulation, see X., “Church Work,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 May 1877, 2.

The Pastor as Executive

As indicated above, an emphasis upon pastoral leadership in organizing their congregations to accomplish the work of God began to be evidenced during this time. The March 9, 1868 issue of the *Index* approvingly summarized an article entitled “The Pastorate for the Times” in the latest issue of the *Princeton Review*. The article had made three propositions:

1. In the Church of God, and its entire membership, are to be found the human energies that are to be directed to the accomplishment of God’s work in the world. Every Christian must be a personal worker for Christ.
2. The prerogative and duty of directing these energies inhere in the Church in its organized capacity. Independent individual effort must be organized, not by voluntary associations, but by the Church.
3. The pastorate holds, under Christ, the chief place in that work of direction. The pastor is not a *priest*, but he is a shepherd to guide as well as feed the flock.

Besides the necessity that men of the highest spiritual caliber must be demanded for the pastoral office, “*a larger administrative ability to develop and direct the work of the Church is needed in the pastor for the age.*” A new age required more than a godly minister proclaiming the gospel from the pulpit: “Whatever his character, the pastor cannot alone overtake this steam driven world. The laity are awakening to the duty of Christian effort, and *the pastor must be able to direct them to the various departments of Christian activity.*”¹⁶

¹⁶“The Pastorate for the Times,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 April 1868, 57. Emphases added in latter quotations. Over two decades later, J. B. Gambrell, while president of Mercer University, sounded a similar theme: “I would urge that we must find methods to reach and utilize our vast numbers. According to a law of grace, resources unused become a burden. How are we burdened? Look at our numbers and then look at our doing. In Georgia we have approximately 150,000 white Baptists. I risk nothing in saying that there are 1,500 among us who might give more for missions and education than all of us are doing and never miss a comfort. Is this because our churches are full of unconverted people? I do not believe it. It is because of a lack of correct teaching, and mainly because we have no reasonable method of reaching them. We obviously need organization and system, and steady driving at it. Nothing can be done with great bodies of men without organization and method. Take some of our city churches with 500, 600, maybe 1,000 members, what can the pastor do with them, except through trained leaders? In most of them a few do all that is done, to the great detriment of the many. Any church can be organized, so that, practically, every member will be brought into action. The term Bishop implies, in common sense, just this. He oversees the work. To tell the people to work and lay out no work to suit the experience and strength of workers and appoint no leaders, is just what the common run of Southern preachers do, but they ought to quit it. Nothing so urgently demands the attention of Southern Baptists, of Georgia Baptists, as to devise

The essential position of the pastor as executive was promoted by *Index* editor David Shaver. Seeking a precedent from history, he wrote, "It is the profound remark of Sallust, that 'the greatness of the Romans must be ascribed, neither to their superior policy—for in that the Carthaginians excelled, nor to their valor—for the Gauls were preferable in that, but to particular *men* who were born for the good of their country and formed for great attempts.'" Shaver saw in the Roman historian's observation "a law of national stability and progress" which characterized "every epoch." Any people who have achieved great success did so because "some leader, grand in intellect, grander in heart, appears, to occupy 'the forefront,' shaping their counsels and wielding their forces." Shaver maintained that "enterprises in the spiritual sphere" followed "the same principle." He stated:

These, all need *men* to carry them forward and crown them with success. They languish until the Thinker and Organizer rises up, and takes the helm in hand: then, as though a new life breathed through them, they develop into wider and more masterful activity. "Get your man," said Dr. Chalmers once, in reference to a work of this class, "get your *man*, and you've got *everything*." The idea was strongly phrased; but scarcely too strongly. Whatever else spiritual enterprises may or may not have, they must have *men*, (in the sense already indicated;) and having these, "every thing" besides comes with them.

Shaver asserted that "this is the philosophy of the pastoral office." God has chosen to use pastors to lead His people. The people will not labor effectively unless effective leaders are in the front, and leaders can have little success unless they organize and motivate others to do their best. Of pastors, Shaver wrote, "In the intent of their office, they are pre-eminently organizers—inspirers of activity—guides of concerted movements—administrators, where unity of aim must knit the multiplicity of working forces together." Shaver claimed that this task "chiefly distinguishes them, in function and responsibility, from the Evangelist—this call 'to find something for every man to do, to mark out each one's place, and to rouse an individual interest in specific Christian work.'" The impor-

some way to utilize our real strength. How it would solidify the churches, revive the personal piety of now lukewarm, and, in many cases, disorderly members, and fill the treasury of all the Boards with money." J. B. Gambrell, "Our Supreme Problem," *The Christian Index*, 22 February 1894, 2.

tance of their effectiveness as organizers of church members could not be overstated:

“The success of pastors is in proportion to the recognition which this department of official activity secures, in practice, at their hands.” After providing some contemporary examples, Shaver commented, “When, after this pattern, throughout Christendom pastors *lead* and their flocks *follow*, the Millennium will have dawned. Will it dawn before?”¹⁷

Another writer to the *Index* called for plans to get members to work in the church and for pastors to lead the way to organizational efficiency. “A Pastor,” writing in the July 2, 1874 issue of the *Index*, displayed this concern: “There is much learning and talent among the private membership of our churches; there is a vast amount of dead capital, of unutilized power. The giants are sleeping.” With not a little optimism he saw the churches as filled with members who would become actively involved in church work were they only asked and directed:

There is wisdom much needed in the councils of our churches; zeal, now dormant, that needs only to be stirred into action; influence for good that waits to be invited and directed; love for God and His cause that requires only the encouragement of the pastor; moral and spiritual force that can be controlled and made mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; an army of courageous men and women able and willing to do valiant service for the Master, but who want to be enlisted directly into service and trained for the conflict. They will not have to be drafted or conscripted, but only invited to do so and they will volunteer at once.

This writer saw the organizing efforts of the pastor as essential to awakening this sleeping giant from its slumber. He suggested:

Suppose every pastor, in city, village and country make the experiment. Suppose we endeavor to put forth in Georgia an active army of twenty thousand laymen, to go forth and battle in the kingdom of the Master. Let the army be well-officered. Have captains of fifties, captains of tens, captains of five, and captains of threes. Let the army in each church be a complete organization in itself. *The pastor is in command of all the forces, under the Captain of our salvation. He must divide the effective force, and see that every division is properly officered, and then all go forth under his direction or in co-operation with him.* Consultations ought frequently to be held to discover defects and improve the effectiveness of the organization.

What type of work should each member be assigned by the pastor? The writer counseled:

¹⁷D. Shaver, “Pastors and ‘Laymen,’” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 January 1872, 2.

1. After the members are organized into companies, say of two or three each, with a permanent chairman, specific duties should be assigned to each committee.
2. Visiting the sick, the poor, the worldly-minded, the pious and zealous of the church, as well as those who are not Christians, and who are willing to receive them, and also the "fatherless and widows in their distress." Two such visits by each committee will aggregate a large amount of work.
3. Rotary prayer meetings in destitute communities, led and sustained by these committees, as missionaries, where they find they can be made profitable.
3. [*sic*] Brief conversations on religious subjects with one another, and also with the unconverted, and invitations to all acquaintances to attend the services of the sanctuary.

The writer provided an example illustrating how such directives would be given by the pastor to committee chairmen:

Each chairman of a committee should be furnished on each Sabbath morning (for most of these laymen are men of business and will not labor save on Sabbath afternoons) with a list of the persons he is to visit, and specific mention made of the labor to be performed. Something like the following:

SABBATH, June 27, 1874.

John Smith, Chairman—Your committee will please visit Mrs. James K. Selden and family and Mrs. Swain, keeping account of your labors. Perform any other work indicated by Providence.

TIMOTHY PIETY, *Pastor*.

One Sabbath afternoon in each month should be given to reports, suggestions, and general consultation.

A separate organization with different duties is necessary for the development of female zeal and usefulness.

The above plan of labor has been adopted and is in successful operation in one of our Georgia churches, and is here elaborated by request. There may be better plans, doubtless there are, and if so, it is earnestly hoped those in possession of them will give them to the Baptist public.¹⁸

Two observations may be deduced from this pastor's article. First, such organization of individuals was a relatively new phenomenon among Southern Baptist

¹⁸A Pastor, "Unofficial Members," 2. For additional examples of churches organizing for increased efficiency, see W. B. Crawford, "The Madison Baptist Church," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 22 February 1877, 2; "Plan of Church at Work," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 October 1877, 4; "Church Work—What Dr. S. Landrum Says," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 September 1877, 3; "Church Work," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 February 1878, 4. In an exchange from the *Standard* to the *Index*, another writer likewise compared the pastor to a military leader: "Mr. Pastor, do not get discouraged because the best plan you knew how to make has proved a failure the first month after it was put in operation in the church. Other well-trained and thoughtful people make mistakes, too. The army officers who ordered the balloon taken to the front at Santiago thought they had found the means by which the Spanish position could be fully discovered. Instead of this it pointed out just where our own soldiers were massed and the fire of the enemy's guns was accurately directed into our ranks with fatal effect. *If your church balloon plan does not succeed, try something else. Do not let your army go to sleep in the trenches—or they may be stampeded off the field or get religious malaria.*" "What the Baptist Editors Say," *The Christian Index*, 13 October 1898, 7. Emphasis added.

churches. The writer indicated as much when he put forth his challenge for “every pastor . . . [to] make the experiment.” Second, now incumbent upon pastoral success was the ability to carry out such effective organizing. What had been inferred earlier in the article is stated explicitly in the writer’s concluding statement, “A pastor succeeds just in proportion to the amount of co-operation he is able to command among his private members.”¹⁹

That Baptists saw this organizing of workers as something relatively new is confirmed by other articles in the *Index*. An unnamed contributor to the *Index* charged that “much of the indifference and coldness to be found in our churches, is attributed, doubtless, to the pastor’s neglect of the important duty of organizing and using his members.” Not only was the pastor to preach, but his responsibility as an overseer required that the members of his church be given appropriate tasks: “The characters and capacities of the members should be studied, and every one assigned to some appropriate part of the work. Organize the power of the church, as a general arranges the strength of his army.” The writer admonished pastors, “If you desire to see your members ‘grow in grace,’ brethren, put them to work. *The most successful pastors are not always the hardest workers, but generally the best organizers.*”²⁰

¹⁹A Pastor, “Unofficial Members,” 2. That this emphasis was throughout the state of Georgia is seen in the report of the 1878 Georgia Baptist Convention. The Committee on the State of Religion was encouraged to see “pastors and churches more awake to the importance of organization in church work than last year.” “Georgia Baptist Convention. Fifty-Sixth Anniversary,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 May 1878, 4.

²⁰“An Important Part of a Pastor’s Work,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 February 1876, 5. Emphasis added. Similarly, Samuel Henderson, editor of the “Alabama Department” of the *Index*, wrote, “Nor is it every good preacher that will make a good bishop or pastor, any more than every good lawyer will make a good judge. There are certain administrative capacities essential to the pastor’s office that every worthy preacher does not possess; we mean those capacities that can organize and develop the working power of churches as well as indoctrinate them. . . . There are multitudes of little things on which your successful pastor keeps his eye, and which are essential to his efficiency, that the mere evangelist would never see. There are aptitudes on the application of the divine law to recurring cases that a mere preacher never has time to acquire. They are the result of constant contact with his people, and a patient study of the living oracles.” Samuel Henderson, “Inconsiderate and Hasty Ordinations,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 October 1879, 1. Writing from Greenville, South Carolina, to the *Index*, W. H. W. [William Heth Whitsett?—Whitsett had pastored in Georgia before being elected to the Chair of Ecclesiastical History at Southern Seminary in Greenville in 1872] praised the practical

An exchange from the British *Baptist Union* carried on the front page of the *Index* was deemed “eminently practical” by the Georgia editors. The article charged that idleness of church members was due to a lack of pastoral leadership. “Members are received, and exhorted to do their duty, to be faithful, and then left to themselves, without direction or plan,” the *Union* argued. “If a manufacturer should send his employes into his shop in that style, similar results would follow. There would be more idleness, waste and wrangling than work. *The service of Christ is a trade, requiring skill and instruction.* Leadership and organization are necessary to attain it.” The article maintained that “those pastors who know how to work, and how to set others at work, always succeed in gathering abundant harvests.” While some pastors put forth plans to get the members involved in the work of the church, the plans were ineffectively carried out. Other pastors did all the work and allowed the members to remain inactive. Still “others fret and scold, exhort and entreat, but fail to lead the way to activity.” Pastors needed to pray for the Spirit to give them “genius for organizing and leading.” The article concluded, “Pastors need to

emphases for the upcoming Georgia Baptist Pastors’ Conference proposed by the Committee of the Atlanta Baptist Pastors’ Conference: “Men of every other calling assemble at stated periods to consult with regard to plans and methods. They experience large and varied profit from this course. Why should not pastors likewise adopt it? Is a knowledge of the onerous, multiplied, intricate and delicate duties of that office acquired by instinct? Or do men need instruction concerning them? Is every able preacher, by virtue of this fact alone, a skillful organizer and a good pastor. Could not the most successful pastor learn something from a scrutiny of the operations of other successful pastors? Would he not, perhaps, be of advantage to many of his brethren by a full and candid statement of his own methods? . . . *May we not, therefore, hail this movement with enthusiasm, as the harbinger of increased efficiency on the part of our ministers as well as our churches.*” W. H. W., “The Georgia Baptist Pastors Conference,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 10 September 1874, 1. In order successfully to carry out the Great Commission, “X” argued that “much of the pastor’s time must be given to the arrangement of *work* and the appointment of *workers*. Officers and members should recognize his right to do this, and heartily co-operate with him, accepting any appointment which he has planned.” X., “Church Work—The Right Theory,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 July 1877, 8. Similarly, “I.” encouraged, “Let the pastors begin to plan and arrange the work of the church so as to give each one something to do, he will see rapid growth, God will bless the work of his hands, saints rejoice and sinners be converted. Would you have success in your church work, then try the above suggestions.” “I.” maintained, “Let it not be forgotten, church work is essential to success both in the individual member and the whole membership.” I., “Necessary to Success,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 29 June 1882, 2. See also F. [Robert W. Fuller], “The Pastor and the Preacher,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 November 1878, 4; “Church-Work for 1886,” *The Christian Index*, 14 January 1886, 9. Again, one notes in these quotations the growing approval of the notion that the pastor is the executive over a religious organization. That organization would only flourish if the workers were efficiently organized to do its work.

study, seek for skill to lead, as well as wisdom to teach. *Overseeing is quite as important as preaching.* And skill to follow is as desirable as skill to lead.”²¹

In an article reprinted from New York’s *Examiner and Chronicle* and endorsed by the *Index* editors,²² Rev. H. G. Mason answered the question “How shall a church in the afternoon of the nineteenth century do her work, or apply her forces to her assigned field of labor?” He acknowledged that Scripture was silent concerning the mechanisms of church work, but maintained that one could use “general hints from the word of God and the wisdom of the past” in order to “construct a system simple and flexible, adjusting it naturally and liberally to the peculiarities of the field and the idiosyncrasies of the age.” After examining that which Scripture stated clearly,²³ Mason examined the role of the pastor. Echoing other Baptists of the period, Mason maintained that “overseer” encapsu-

²¹“Spirit of the Religious Press,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 10 February 1876, 1. Emphasis added. See also A. J. Kelly, “What Are the Baptists of Georgia Doing?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 July 1877, 2; “What Are the Baptists of Georgia Doing?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 July 1877, 4; Z. D. Roby, “The Pastor with His Church,” *The Christian Index*, 15 August 1889, 6. After providing Dr. D. W. Gwin’s plan for church work at the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, “X.” commented, “Dr. Gwin’s theory is (a very correct one, too) that the pastor is the leader and director of the whole working force of the church, and that his efforts are to be spent, not in doing the work himself, but in getting each individual member to do his or her part.” “Church Work. What Dr. Gwin, of the First Church, Atlanta, Says,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 18 October 1877, 2. Commenting upon an exchange from the *Indiana Baptist*, the *Index* editorialized, “Of useful pastors, he is the least useful who does all the church work he possibly can himself—for he tempts others to be non-workers, by mapping out nothing for them to do, and making them responsible for nothing. He trains the members for uselessness by not setting them to work; and his diligence to that extent puts a premium upon their inactivity. A pastor should largely work *through* his flock—his example giving them an impulse along all lines of Christian endeavor.” “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 11 December 1884, 1. An exchange from the *Standard* cited in the *Index* maintained, “The pastor who estimates correctly the type of the church which he is called to lead will not fail to study the especial needs of his people. He will endeavor both in his pulpit and in his pastoral work to learn whether they stand most in need of arousing, or training, or direction: he will learn what they know about the Bible, and what they do not know: he will discover whether prayer is a form or a reality to them. *Thus it will become possible to organize the church for greater efficiency. . . . No new organization should be started until the need for it is evident.*” “What the Baptist Editors Say,” *The Christian Index*, 17 June 1897, 7, emphasis added.

²²“Church Work,” 4.

²³“The qualifications of its members—they ‘must be born again.’ The end or aim of the church organization—the salvation of the world. The laws by which the church is to be governed—the statutes of the New Testament. The number of offices—the pastorate and the deaconship. The number of ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s Supper.” H. G. Mason, “The True Plan of Church Work,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 28 February 1878, 2.

lated all the New Testament titles for the pastor in relation to church work. Consequently, “he is moderator in her councils, and foreman in her worship. He presides over her deliberations and plans, and gives out work to her workmen. He is supervisor of the *whole* church. Every department should be under his eye.” Because of this view of the pastorate and the needs of the age, Mason argued, “The time is coming, and now is, when ministers who are only capable of preaching and working—working and wearing themselves out singlehanded and alone, with no ability to lay out work for others, will find it difficult to secure pastorates, especially in the more populous towns.” According to Mason and others, the pastor’s ability to organize the church’s members to work was now seen as essential. Mason observed, “The more intelligent churches are beginning to demand pastors of *executive ability*—men capable of methodizing work for others, as well as skilled in personal effectiveness.” No longer would “our best churches . . . judge ministerial ability” by “the amount that a pastor can do, the number of sermons he can preach, the number of visits he can make, and the number of good dinners he has the capacity to devour in a week’s time.” Mason admitted that this line of thinking arose out of the business world. He noted, “Capitalists will discharge, in the most summary and abrupt manner, a foreman who goes to his bench and performs manual labor which a man under less pay can do as well, or better than he, while there are workmen in the shop idle for the want of something to do.” He acknowledged that “this worldly wisdom is being transferred to the church. There has been a great change in this regard during the last few years. Shrewd business men are now put into official relation to the pastor, and the result is, the snap of the factory and rolling-mill begins to crackle and jar along the grand and hitherto silent corridors of the Lord’s temple.”²⁴

²⁴Mason, “The True Plan of Church Work,” 2. Supporting the wisdom of using business methods in the work of the church, see also H. R. Bernard, “Essentiality of Business Methods in the Lord’s Work,” *The Christian Index*, 5 April 1894, 9. Because many rural churches had preaching only once a month, others noted that the success of churches relied on the working of lay members. See “A False Notion,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 June 1878, 8.

After having moved from Georgia to Richmond, Virginia, some six months previously, William Landrum, pastor of Second Baptist Church, reported in 1883 to the *Index* some observations concerning his new home. Among them was the organization of the churches. Landrum announced, "Organization is the distinguishing characteristic of these Richmond churches. *I never saw anything like it. . . .* A pastor in Richmond is pre-eminently an executive officer. In the Second church, which has gained the praise of being the most thoroughly organized in the South, we have no less than five societies." After listing the societies, Landrum pointed to the system of accountability incorporated into the organizational plan, "The entire membership is divided into committees for separate work, the chairmen of which report once a month, at prayer meeting." Evidently, the news about Second Baptist's organizational efficiency had spread throughout the nation. Landrum stated, "Brethren from a number of States have written to me asking for a copy of the register of the Second church, with the avowed purpose of modelling their congregations after it." Putting such a plan into place would not happen quickly, however: "It took years to bring up the church to its present high degree of efficiency, years of patience and prayer. I found this state of things when I arrived, and so may speak of it without incurring the charge of egotism."²⁵

J. B. Gambrell was unequivocal in his maintaining that the pastor's duty required that he oversee the work of the organizations in his church. Gambrell declared, "Large bodies of people cannot be directed without sufficient organization. One of our great needs is the wise classification of work and workers." Necessarily, he viewed this directing of work and workers as a chief duty of pastors: "The Pastor is also Bishop or overseer. As overseer, he must overlook and direct the workers." This overlooking and directing could not be done with a few general pronouncements: "To say once a week in a general way that all must do something, but stop at that is to waste time. The internal

²⁵Wm. W. Landrum, "Round-About in Richmond," *The Christian Index*, 7 June 1883, 4.

organization of our churches requires judgment.” Pastors must use wise discernment in dividing the work of the church’s members according to age and gender. He maintained, “There are certain kinds of work for women to do and some for children and some for young men.” He illustrated, “An overseer on a large farm who did not classify his hands and the work and put the different workers under wise leadership could not hold his place a month.” Evidently, though, too many churches were without the organizational leadership needed. Gambrell observed, “But the Lord will put up with what men will not hear.” Nevertheless, what the Lord would “put up with” did not necessitate the ideal. Gambrell challenged his readers to do better: “Every organization in a church, whether called a Sunday-school, society, union, or what-not should be under a safe leader and do its work in the church.”²⁶

An example of a progressive Southern Baptist pastor seeking to put into practice more detailed church organization to improve his church’s efficiency is seen in a letter dated January 16, 1872, from A. T. Spalding, pastor of Second Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia, to his congregation. His letter details the type of changes many Baptists believed were needed to be effective churches during the latter third of the nineteenth century:

Dear Brethren and Sisters: By appointment of the church at its last session for business, I, your pastor, present you the following plan looking to a more efficient organization of our church. At present, you have your *Deacons* to make provision for the wants of the poor, and your *Pew Committee* to secure a revenue for the expenses of the church, and your *S. S. Workers* to advance the interest of the Sunday school. Each of these departments is in a good degree efficient. But we need *other departments* of Christian labor, and other laborers at work in the vineyard. The larger portion of the church is unemployed, and yet is doubtless ready to lay hold and help in any enterprise that seems to be feasible and in accordance with the will of God. I propose the following DEPARTMENTS: —1. Of Finance; 2. of Benevolence; 3. of Sunday Schools; 4. of Social Religion; 5. of City Missions and Church Extension; 6. of Discipline. Let me define the duties of each of these Departments.

1.—THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT has for its specific duty these two things: —1st. To devise and use the best methods for raising funds for the expenses of the church, and —2d. To expend these funds as the church may direct. The pastor’s salary, sexton’s wages, insurance, gas, fuel, repairs, and whatever else may be necessary to maintain and carry forward our regular Church services, —these come within the

²⁶“Chips from Mercer’s Work Shop,” *The Christian Index*, 7 February 1895, 8.

scope of this department. Your Pew Committee would make an efficient *Ex. Committee* of this department, and its chairman would be an efficient head of the department.

2.—THE DEPARTMENT OF BENEVOLENCE:—The collection of money for *Foreign and Domestic Missions*, for *City and S. S. Missions*, would be the special duty of this Department. Through their *Ex. Committee*, they would endeavor to promote the general interests in which our brotherhood is engaged. Perhaps it would be best at present, for this purpose, to adopt the “Envelope Plan,” as it is called:—that is, to provide each and every member of the church and congregation with envelopes, in which they might bring their gifts for the treasury of the Lord.²⁷

3.—DEPARTMENT OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS.—The object of this would be to increase the interest and efficiency of our home school; and to begin, if necessary, other schools, which should be under the fostering care and control of this department. Our present Sunday school working force already forms the nucleus of a strong branch of service, and our present superintendent is to be, we trust, the Head of a Department for which there is to be a glorious future.²⁸

4.—THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL RELIGION is a most important one. Most of our members come to us from churches in smaller places, where each is known and recognized by the others. The transition to a city and to a large membership among which they are strangers—forms a *crisis* in their religious life. This critical stage must be met. We must cultivate a mutual acquaintance and “good-will.” A *large Social Reunion* at James’ Hall would contribute to this end. Neighborhood prayer-meetings should be begun. Social visits, as among brethren and sisters, should be

²⁷For additional articles showing Baptist efforts at increasing the efficiency of church finances, see J. C. Hiden, “Church Finances,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 8 May 1873, 69; J. G. Taylor, “Minutes of the Columbia (Fla.) Union,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 February 1876, 3; Kelly, “What Are the Baptists of Georgia Doing?” 2; “What Are the Baptists of Georgia Doing?” 4; “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 July 1881, 1; G. W. Gardner, “The Best Method of Raising Church Finances,” *The Christian Index*, 21 June 1894, 8; Geo. E. Brewer, “The Best Way of Managing Church Finances,” *The Christian Index*, 7 March 1895, 1; T. J. Beck, “A Good Plan,” *The Christian Index*, 12 October 1899, 5; “Practical Financial Plans as Used in Our Churches,” *The Christian Index*, 2 November 1899, 1; “Practical Financial Plans as Used in Our Churches,” *The Christian Index*, 9 November 1899, 1–2. For many Southern Baptist churches, there was little, if any, system of finances. One writer complained, “There are many of our churches which have no treasurer; some have treasurers but no treasury. *It would seem that because the first treasurer of the first Baptist church turned out so badly, Baptists have had no use for treasurers or treasuries since. They have put their foot on it forever.* All our brethren are not Judases, and besides, Christ did not abrogate the office on that account.” G. H. Phillips, “System, System,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 April 1876, 3. Emphasis added.

²⁸Southern Baptists saw the Sunday schools as being instrumental in efficiency of local churches. See S. P. Callaway, “The Sunday School as Promotive of the Prosperity of the Church,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 14 August 1873, 2; S. P. Callaway, “The Sunday School as Promotive of the Prosperity of the Church,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 August 1873, 2; Country Preacher, “A Country Preacher; Or, Organized Effort,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 April 1874, 2; “Sunday-Schools,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 January 1875, 2; S. Boykin, “Our Sunday-School Work; And the Best Plans for Accomplishing It,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 May 1879, 3; T. C. Boykin, “Sunday-School Work in Elbert and Hart Counties,” *The Christian Index*, 10 March 1887, 5; F. P. Davidson, “The Pastor in the Sunday School,” *The Christian Index*, 31 January 1895, 1.

made. Strangers should especially be regarded. Members by letter should at *once* be secured as *workers* in one or more of these departments.²⁹

5. DEPARTMENT OF CITY MISSIONS AND CHURCH EXTENSION.—Their work would be *Chapel Building*: supplementing the salaries of the pastors of these chapels: *Colportage*: *Tract*-distribution: *Card*-distribution: Bible Readers: Hall-preaching: Food and Medicine for the Sick and Needy: Industrial Schools, &c., &c. The time seems propitious for the work of *Colportage*. This should be a distinct branch, needing a President, Secretary and Treasurer, and an Executive Committee to buy the books and receive the Report each week of the Colporter, which Report should contain—Money from Sales: No. of Families prayed with: Children not attending Sunday schools, and Names of very needy families. The money with which to carry on all this is, of course, to be provided for by the *Benevolent Department* already referred to.

6. DEPARTMENT OF DISCIPLINE.—The Elders and Deacons can do much to promote fellowship and holy-living among the members, and they should be sustained in their efforts in this direction.

The Church by vote has requested the whole membership to assemble in mass meeting on *Tuesday, the 23d inst.*, to organize as above. In the meantime, let each one solemnly ask the question—“In *which* of these Departments can I serve my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?” Come, brethren, and sisters, let us heed the Master’s word—“Go, *work* in my vineyard.”³⁰

More progressive than most Southern Baptists of his day, Spalding gives evidence of being the successful executive which would make a place for every member of his church to have a place of service.

As Southern Baptists sought to involve more of the lay membership in the work of the church, they developed more organizations, or societies, in which members could be involved. While many Baptists welcomed the increase in the number of societies, others viewed them as dividing the unity of the churches and distracting the pastors from their primary duties. Southern Baptists saw woman’s missionary societies, having begun during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, as being particularly beneficial to the efficiency of the local churches. While there were detractors of the movement, a majority of Baptists viewed such societies as eminently beneficial in encouraging churches to do their missionary duty by sending and providing for missionaries. One such proponent,

²⁹Concerning the social care of Christians, see also “The Power of Social Life in the Church,” *The Christian Index*, 17 May 1888, 8.

³⁰A. T. Spalding, “Church Organization,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 February 1872, 19.

J. L. D. Hillyer, argued, “When we make a woman the advocate of a cause, we gain the family, in all probability, at once, and certainly in a few years.” Hillyer maintained that “the influence of wives, sisters and sweethearts over those whom they love is always great, and is doubly so when they represent a cause that is itself grandly worthy; but how much greater the influence of the mother over the children, when hearts, and hands and head are filled from the cradle up, with her own holy zeal.” To Southern Baptists’ self-designation as “Missionary Baptists,” Hillyer countered, “It is a mistake; only a few are really such.” That false appellation, however, could become a true one: “But let there be a Woman’s Missionary Society, earnestly at work, in every church, and the next generation of Baptists will deserve the appellation.” To those who argued that such societies would harm the churches, Hillyer argued, “The efficiency of every church is about in proportion to its efficient members. Every committee and subordinate society, of the kind spoken of here, increases the number of its efficient members.” He observed that “every zealous member of the society, if a Christian, will be more zealous for the church, and wherever you find a church that has a live Missionary Society, you will find a live church.”³¹

The Christian Index, noting the positive effect of organizations for children and for women in the churches, endorsed the move toward establishing organizations for young men. If there were sufficient reasons for women to “get together and talk and pray and plan for the interests in Zion” and for children to “be joined in a goodly fellowship of training and effort,” then the young men should be organized also. Plenty of young men wanted “to work for Christ” but were not called to the gospel ministry; only a lack of leadership hindered their organization. The *Index* commented, “If the old proverb is true,

³¹J. L. D. Hillyer, “Woman’s Missionary Societies,” *The Christian Index*, 19 June 1884, 2. The byline incorrectly substituted an “x” for the “y,” hence giving the author as “Hillxer.” In the July 17, 1884 issue of the *Index*, his name is correctly spelled. For another positive presentation of woman’s missionary societies, see Mrs. Stainback Wilson, “Plans for More Effective Work,” *The Christian Index*, 14 June 1888, 4. For an opposing view to the positive value of such societies, see C. D. Campbell, “Is It Best to Organize Missionary Societies in Our Churches?” *The Christian Index*, 17 July 1884, 2.

which distinguished old men for counsel and young men for action, possibly we may understand why we have so much strong counsel and so little action."³²

Questioning the Move Toward Organizational Efficiency

The move toward increased organization was not without its detractors. When Atlanta's Second Baptist Church organized a society known as the "Working Brotherhood," a Baptist questioned if such an endeavor would ultimately violate Baptist principles if the group were not limited to the geographical territory of that local church.³³

³²[Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 20 February 1890, 8. The *Index* later carried an article from the *Baptist Teacher* which held that the formation of Baptist societies for young people was a sign of revival in the land: "No mighty magnetic leader has arisen among them whose words of power have waked them, but they have waked and gone to work with an energy and unanimity so exemplified that we cannot fail to believe it is a divine inspiration, and as we watch the development of it, we cannot but rejoicingly cry, 'What hath God wrought!'" The writer lauded the movement with unrestrained approval, "Accordingly, we hail the new movement with profoundest satisfaction, and cry, All Hail! to the Young People's Baptist Societies that have already been organized in so many sections of our country. In every town and city, in every State and territory, let the cry be sounded, Fall in! Fall in! and presently we shall see marshaled a Baptist host 'fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.'" "Baptist Young People's Society," *The Christian Index*, 29 January 1891, 6. Baptists favored the push toward the establishing of young people's societies as long as the societies functioned within and under the authority of the local church. See I. R. Branham, "B. Y. P. U. A.," *The Christian Index*, 28 April 1892, 4; "Work Among the Young People," *The Christian Index*, 7 December 1893, 4; A. B. Vaughan, Jr., "The Organization of Our Young People," *The Christian Index*, 22 March 1894, 2; "Paper Read by Dr. H. M'Donald at the Same Meeting on the Same Subject," *The Christian Index*, 22 March 1894, 2; "State Convention," *The Christian Index*, 18 April 1895, 1, 8; Eri B. Hulbert, C. Perren, and O. W. Van Osdel, "Statement from the Executive Committee," *The Christian Index*, 9 October 1890, 5; R. A. W., "The Pastor and the Union," *The Christian Index*, 10 October 1895, 3.

That young people's societies were not to be a means of gathering and keeping youth through entertainment is clear from the inclusion of a quote from *The Examiner*: "The church must be a joyful place for the young. Of course, in saying so, we do not mean that it is to be turned into a scene of social rout, and by harlequin entertainments made a competitor with the theatre. Legitimate entertainments there are, which may be provided. But there are churches in which even these, so far from being occasional, appear to be the distinctive feature of the young people's work. Indeed, the two aims of some churches would appear to be entertainment and financial success. What are the effects on the young people of such churches? Paralyzing doubt, in many cases, of the church's sincerity. Its second-rate imitation of the world's amusements and methods destroys reverence; and, in the spirit of incredulous roysterer, not a few have turned their backs on churches that have assisted them to become such, to find more hilarious pleasures elsewhere. To make the church joyous it must be made a spiritual home. Let the young feel not that they are the church—for there is danger on that side, too—but that the church rejoices in them and cares for them. Flood the service of Christ with the spirit of gladness. The church emerged from the Catacombs many a year ago, and if there are dismal brethren who want to go back there, that is their affair; but let them not insist that young hearts which should live in the sunshine shall follow them into the tombs." "What the Baptist Editors Say," *The Christian Index*, 23 February 1899, 7.

³³J. B. Chevis, "Is It a Good Precedent?" *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2

Having received four questions related to church work, T. T. Eaton, a Baptist pastor in Petersburg, Virginia, displayed, at best, an ambivalence over the move towards increased organization in order to achieve efficiency. He wrote, "I am at a loss to know how to answer your questions. I have no special method, no peculiar machinery, and was not aware that I had got more work out of my members than is generally secured." He emphasized sermon preparation and pastoral visitation, the help of his wife whom he called "the best pastor's wife on the continent," the help of "religious papers" to his congregation, the use of religious tracts, a weekly missionary prayer meeting for young men, a mission Sunday school, a Sunday afternoon prayer meeting, and the use of the envelope system for finances. He acknowledged his indebtedness to divine blessings for any success: "The Lord has blessed my labors, but it has not been because of any special ability He saw in me. Whatever success I have had has simply illustrated the old saying, 'God can hit a straight blow with a crooked stick.'"³⁴

After providing a sketch of the organization which he had led his church to implement in order to gain increased efficiency in church work, Z. D. Roby, pastor of

September 1875, 8. While Chevis acknowledged that the "Working Brotherhood" could very well be a good thing and while he was enthused about "a working membership," he questioned, "Has that society a jurisdiction in other churches, or what right has it to invade the territory of other churches in the person of one or two individuals? Do these individuals, who, in the ardor of youthful enthusiasm, thrust themselves upon the churches, come of their own accord, or is it a recognized feature in that society to send forth two by two? Do these individuals, who, in the ardor of youthful enthusiasm, thrust themselves upon the churches, come of their own accord, or is it a recognized feature in that society to send forth two by two? If the latter, would it not be well for the *church* to endorse the act, and send them forth qualified? But if it be true, that they go of their own accord, would it not be desirable for the church to first examine and see that they are the 'called of God.' Certainly the church of which they are members has jurisdiction in the case. Would it not be well for the church to see who goes out, and where they go to?" Chevis was seeking information and not accusing Second Church of doing anything wrong; yet he exhibited a desire to engage in church work according to Baptist principles of church autonomy and the church ordination of ministerial candidates. He continued: "I simply desire to call attention to the fact that such workers have gone out. Now it is a plain question; it is either right or wrong. There is a work that such can do *legitimately*, and there is a work that *such* cannot do legitimately. Did not the great *Methodist church* (?) begin in a Christian brotherhood—a body of associated workers? Where will this 'working brotherhood' of the Second church drift if this is its tendency. Twenty-five years may make sad havoc of some noble old Baptist principles. Whither are we drifting as Baptists?" Ibid.

³⁴[X.], "What Rev. T. T. Eaton, of Petersburg, Says," 3.

Salem Baptist Church of Tuskegee, Alabama, expressed his belief that such organization, ultimately, was unnecessary for an efficient church. His church was doing little, so he devised a plan in order to get the members to work. When he believed that the members were prepared to receive the plan, he put it forth and the members enthusiastically embraced it. Roby noted, "And we worked it long enough to get out of the old, well-worn rut of doing nothing." Having acknowledged the effectiveness of the plan, however, Roby warned, "Do not think any church will keep up any such plan permanently. They will either go to work as a church, or else they will let the plan die. The only idea I had in introducing it was to induce some idlers to do something long enough to find out the advantage of obeying Christ." He maintained, "A good church does not need any such plan; and, a real low-down, lazy church will not be benefited by it, for a plan is good for nothing unless it is worked." Roby, showing his reticence to embrace fully the notion that church efficiency could be obtained only through organization, commented, "Thus you see I attach no importance to anything of this sort. Jesus Christ has given His churches pastors and deacons, and with these offices properly filled the Christian part of the membership will be put to work by some means or other." To those who believed that his own church was evidence of the importance of wise organization of church labor, Roby countered, "That church at Salem would have become as efficient without committees as it did with them. Possibly it would have taken more time to have accomplished the same object without committees, but we would have reached it after awhile." The pastor, however, is responsible to lead his members to work, "a responsibility that cannot be transferred by any plan—a responsibility that he cannot divide out amongst committees nor delegate to deacons—a responsibility which he, and only he, can meet."³⁵

³⁵[X.], "Church Work. What Rev. Z. D. Roby, of Tuskegee, Alabama, Says," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 October 1877, 2. Over a year later a report was provided to the *Index* concerning, among other things, the ministry of Rev. Roby: "Our brother, Rev. Z. D. Roby, is still the much respected pastor of the church. Several years of service has greatly endeared him to his church and congregation; for he is one of our most able and efficient ministers. This is saying nothing more than is due any

G. M. Provence cast great aspersion upon the rush to organizational efficiency. Acknowledging that “this is an age of machinery,” he pointed out that “even in our church work we are expected to be ‘up with the times,’ and full of the ‘spirit of the age.’” Consequently, “we are continually devising new plans, new machinery, to insure progress in the Master’s kingdom.” Machinery, though, could do only so much. As farm machinery could do nothing to thaw the winter ground or ripen the harvest, so church machinery could do nothing to hasten the Spirit’s work in human hearts. One of the great problems with church machinery was that failures were simply being replaced with new machinery. Provence observed, “The latest craze in church work is the ‘society.’ There must be in every well-managed church a society for this, that and the other, until the whole field of operations is covered, and each division is tagged off to its own place.” That the pastor was now considered the key to the success of this new machinery: “The pastor must see to it that everybody has something to do, and must keep a sharp eye on each separate machine; for, like all other machinery, the society refuses to run of itself; it

man, who, in such a community, constantly grows in the confidence and esteem of his brethren.” Such esteem did not mean, though, that the church was growing great in numbers: “Owing to an unusual number of deaths and removals for the last ten or twelve years, the membership has been greatly reduced; still, the congregations are large; the Sunday-school numbers, in regular attendance, about one hundred.” “Tuskegee Baptist Church-Its Pastor and Sunday-School-The Town Schools, Male and Female, Etc,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 December 1878, 1. During the 1883 meeting of the Alabama Baptist Ministers’ Conference, “Rev. Z. D. Roby read an essay on the subject: ‘What can ministers do to vitalize their churches in religious work?’ The something to be done, is to control the will so that they will desire to do work for Jesus; hence comes the question, how can we control the will? God only can give the disposition to work by the Holy Spirit. How can church members find the way of best advancing the work? This seems to be the question before us. In reply we say: 1. Church members should be encouraged to go to Jesus and ask, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ 2. Place before your members the necessity of the work.” How was this to be done? A summary of Roby’s message was provided: “1st. The ministers must be profoundly impressed with the truth of God. 2d. They must preach with earnest convictions. 3d. They must preach boldly. When the Gospel is preached boldly and faithfully, the members will be persuaded to try to work for Jesus, and in trying, they will be vitalized.” Summaries of other ministers’ contributions to the conference are provided, with not a word mentioned about organizing the members to work. T. H. Stout, “Alabama Baptist Anniversaries,” *The Christian Index*, 26 July 1883, 4. The *Index* maintained that a revival in the teaching of doctrine and the study of Scripture “would soon be followed by renewed zeal in good works, and in increased efficiency; and in this travail of Zion we might look for many souls to be born, and we might confidently expect that the Lord would add to the church *daily* such as are being saved. Acts 2:47.” “Has the Time Come?” 8. For another example of pastors expressing reticence about putting too much trust in plans and organization, see X., “Church Work. What Dr. J. W. M. Williams, of Baltimore, Says,” 2.

has its own friction and resistance to overcome, and nobody is responsible but the pastor.” Societies within churches, Provence maintained, were especially useless. They were mostly for show without any substance. While their purpose was “to increase the sense of individual responsibility, . . . it seems inevitable that the average church member’s sense of duty would become limited to the special work put into his hands.” In addition, “the habit of waiting for instructions would certainly narrow his sense of responsibility to times and seasons and routine. It would diminish his ideal of the Christian life, dwarf his spiritual growth, and tend ultimately to dull his conception of the true aim of Christian living.” Provence counseled, “What is most needed in the Lord’s work is not new machinery but the continual presence of the Holy Spirit, which we may have for the asking.” The work of the Lord was not to be done by the methods of the world: “The local church is a divine institution. Nothing can surpass it in simplicity, freedom, or efficiency, when formed and worked on the original plan. That plan contemplates, not minute subdivisions, but the compactest unity in organization, and the constant devotion of every member in loyal and loving service to Christ.”³⁶

Editor Branham of the *Index*,³⁷ while not opposed to churches’ being organized

³⁶G. M. Provence, “Machine Work,” *The Christian Index*, 18 October 1888, 2. Lansing Burrows, a prominent Southern Baptist pastor who would serve in several prominent denominational positions, including being elected president of the SBC three times—1914, 1915, 1916, believed that better methods were not needed to reach “the masses.” He saw their destitution as a theological problem: “It is not for the want of interest on the part of Christian people. It is not for the absence of kind invitations to the house of God. It is not for the want of excellent example, and in some cases, it is not for the want of pious training on the part of parents passed into the skies. There they are, some of them, ‘business men,’ who have godly porters whom they would never think to ask a question on religious grounds while they were in health. No, no; the trouble is with the carnal mind that is at enmity with God, it is with an old and unrenewed nature that rebels at Christ’s demands, it is with a wicked and stubborn will that refuses to bend before the convinced judgment. That is the trouble with ‘the masses,’ as that question affects us in Georgia. With the mixed populations in the crowded cities of the North, it may be different; but the solution of the trouble with us is not in church methods and ministerial demeanor, but with the old heart of unbelief and with the wicked and godless nature of men.” B. [Lansing Burrows], [Editorial inclusion], *The Christian Index*, 30 April 1891, 1.

³⁷Branham became an editorial associate at the *Index* in 1890, was named office editor in late 1891, and rose to editor in 1892. He resigned on May 26, 1892, “because of a weakened physical condition.” Jack U. Harwell, *An Old Friend with New Credentials: A History of The Christian Index* (Atlanta: The Christian Index, Executive Committee of the Baptist Convention of the State of Georgia, 1972), 110.

for increased efficiency, complained in the early 1890's about the number of societies outside the church which were organizing societies within the local churches. They had become so numerous that they were hindering pastors from doing their own work. Approvingly, he quoted a Professor T. Howard Pattison who maintained that "societies within societies seem to be of the growing ailments of our churches. One single church, and that not a strong one, will use up all the letters of the alphabet and exhaust every evening in the week with organizations of one sort or another." What did Pattison see as the problems with such a proliferation of societies? Pattison asserted, "For one thing, it wears a minister out. He is so busy at the retail counter that he has no time for the wholesale business." Pattison observed that "the American pastor is weighted down by trifles, like Gulliver overrun by the Lilliputians. It is amusing to hear him struggling through the Sunday notices, which he is expected to give out, and to say a pleasant word or pressing word about each one." Branham added, "To speak plainly, these 'societies within societies,' are, indeed, 'growing ailments,' [']Egyptian plagues,' that 'weigh down pastors with trifles' and fritter away the energies of the churches." Branham counseled, "Let the church claim, and diligently use, her own material, and refuse to allow any other organizations to lay their hands on what legitimately belongs to her. The world is stealthily creeping into the church through these agencies, robbing her of her God-given power and dragging her down to its own level."³⁸

Others criticized the direction of the churches with their proliferation of societies. One writer complained, "During the last few years there has sprung up a great

³⁸I. R. Branham, "Wheels Within Wheels," *The Christian Index*, 12 March 1891, 9. Branham expressed similar reservations about societies in I. R. Branham, "Build up the Church," *The Christian Index*, 5 February 1891, 8-9. In an editorial exchange from the *Biblical Recorder*, the *Index* maintained, "'A well organized and properly conducted Baptist church' includes all the societies needful for successful Christian work. The pastor of such a church has as much as he can do to plan, direct, and develop the energies of his members, inside its bounds." The *Index* continued, "Whatever is beyond abstracts just that much from the power, efficiency and influence of the church." "The Religious Press," *The Christian Index*, 11 February 1892, 1. Baptists were encouraged to emphasize the work of the church as opposed to attempts by outside organizations and revivalists to do gospel work. See "A Tidal Wave," *The Christian Index*, 11 June 1885, 8.

craze for societies of various kinds, until it has come to pass that but little church work can be done except it is done through the existing societies within the church. These things have been multiplied to a great degree, and yet it seems that the end is not yet.” Although he accepted that some societies, such as the “Boy’s Brigade,” had done some good, he lamented the “existing circumstances” which brought even it into being: “Perhaps the real answer will be found in the fact that the training of the boys in their homes, by their fathers and mothers, is defective.”³⁹ Another writer viewed societies as “suckers,” superfluous shoots growing from a plant. He wrote, “Like the plague of frogs, ‘they cover the land.’” He explained, “We have the ‘Sunbeams,’ ‘The Little Workers,’ ‘The Gleaners,’ ‘The Willing Bands,’ ‘The Holy Daughters,’ ‘The Pearl Gatherers,’ ‘The King’s Brigade,’ et. al. Having quite exhausted the vocabulary of catching names, recourse is had to the alphabet. Hence the Y.M.C.A’s, B.Y.P.U.A’s, Y.P.S.C.E’s, etc., attract by their great letters our attention.” He asked, “Could not all the work—the *same* work—by the *same* persons, be done without organic suckering?”⁴⁰ Still another editorial

³⁹G. H. Carter, “Societies,” *The Christian Index*, 2 March 1893, 5. Carter later maintained that the church had been successful in carrying out its mission prior to societies and would continue to be successful without them. Carter pointed out two problems with societies. First, he viewed the reliance upon societies as being disloyal to Christ because churches were rejecting the model put forth in Scripture. He argued, “There is nothing clearer than that Christ taught the gradual growth of His cause in the world, and its success so far has come through the persistent efforts of Christian people to honor His church. But it seems that there are many people now who think the Lord’s way is too slow, and that the church as an organization is incomplete, therefore new organizations are demanded and as they spring up and flourish just so much does the church, as an organization, subside into obscurity, as a means for the evangelization of the world.” This new view led to a second problem—disrupting the unity of the church. Carter continued, “The society craze has come and many good meaning people contend that if we do not respond to this outside feeling and multiply these foreign excrescences [*sic*] in our churches, we shall be left behind and many of our people will drift into other communions. That is equivalent to saying that the church is a failure and the wisdom of the world is greater than God’s. In many places in the Scriptures God’s people are exhorted to unity, and this is the very thing that the multiplication of these societies cannot promote. The inevitable tendency of these things is to produce classes in the church, and as these are encouraged each class works to promote its own interest, and the church is ignored. The promotion of these societies strikes a fatal blow at the very root of church fellowship, and lays aside the law of love which should be found in the church.” G. H. Carter, “The Church[:] The Ground and Pillow [*sic*] of the Truth,” *The Christian Index*, 31 January 1895, 1. One assumes that Carter intended for the word *pillow* in the title to have been *pillar*, according to the content of the article.

⁴⁰J. H. Hall, “SAP,” *The Christian Index*, 10 January 1895, 1. Hall went on to display his dis-

in the *Index*, in answer to its title “Where Will It Go?,” explained, “We mean the disposition to form new organizations in connection with church work.” The article was responding to a suggestion from a Universalist pastor urging the establishing of boys and girls clubs in Sunday schools. The pastor, a Rev. J. Coleman Adams, “proposes to double or treble the attendance of any Sunday-school in six months, if allowed to organize the boys into brigades with brass bands and red uniforms, and the girls into bicycle clubs with bloomer costumes.” After providing an explanation of the plan, the *Index* noted with apparent disfavor, “Mr. Adams said his first step would be, if he were allowed to carry out the plan as outlined, to chain down the old fogies who might oppose the plan.”⁴¹

While evidently not opposed to societies themselves, the *Index* expressed concern over the practice of increasing the number of societies in churches,

While the judicious use of machinery may be helpful in applying power, we must not forget that mere machinery can never create power. We sometimes wonder if we are not multiplying societies and church machinery more rapidly than we are increasing the working power of the church. Mere organization can never produce life. Organization as the result of life is very good—but organization without life, or to produce life is a failure. The number of societies in a church is no measure of its vitality. It is equally true that change is not always progress. Under a new administration of church affairs, the hours of different meetings are changed, a new financial

tain toward the proliferation of societies, “This ‘fad’ of church suckers has led to the ludicrous suggestion that we proceed to the end of the thing, and have the churches completely divided up into societies—have separate societies of old men, of young men, of middle aged men, of baldheaded men, of redheaded men, etc. Likewise have the women organized into societies of old women, middle-aged women, married women, single women, handsome women, ugly women, et al. The idea is ludicrous, yet in this way the craze might be surfeited and rebuked.” He counseled, “Meanwhile let us remember that an excess of religious sap produces religious suckers, that these draw out the life of the churches, and that the wise husbandman pulls them off.” Ibid. An exchange from the *Florida Baptist Witness* noted the increasing busyness of the modern preacher and his dilemma finding enough time to satisfy expectations: “The sphere of the preacher is constantly widening. An hundred years ago he had little to do except make sermons, visit his members and preach. To-day he is a potent influence in educational (public), hospital, literary (newspaper, magazine, and book), missionary and civic life. To-day he is the busiest man in his community. In many instances he must limit his time for callers, in order to meet other demands for his counsel, or sacrifice his health in a few years. The busiest of business men cannot cope with him in this matter. In fact, instead of the pulpit declining, the problem of its occupant is how he may find time for its multitudinous demands. “What the Baptist Editors Say,” *The Christian Index*, 14 June 1900, 7.

⁴¹“Where Will It Go?” *The Christian Index*, 30 May 1895, 4. For additional articles questioning the proliferation of societies within churches, see J. G. McCall, “Religious Machinery,” *The Christian Index*, 7 July 1898, 1, and J. G. McCall, “Back to the Churches,” *The Christian Index*, 7 September 1899, 5. For a response to McCall’s “Back to the Churches,” see Member of the B. Y. P. U., “No Departure From the Church,” *The Christian Index*, 21 September 1899, 5.

plan is adopted, which from its mere novelty catches a few more nickels and dimes; and brethren say what wonderful strides we are making! how we are growing; just as if change was progress and novelty success. Change does not necessarily mean progress, for often the old is better than the new. It is not so much new plans that we need, as a better working of the old ones. Not more organizations but more life in those we already have. Not more machinery, but more power behind that which we already have.⁴²

Although change was not necessarily good or bad, the rush to add new organizations was viewed as a hindrance to the work of the church.⁴³

Those who questioned the proliferation of societies, however, were counseled to change their attitudes for the good of the churches. The *Index* included an exchange from the *Central Baptist* which encouraged pastors to welcome and lead the societies which arose in their churches. The article maintained that “a wise preacher will welcome the Sunday-school, the young people’s meetings, and the missionary society as adjuncts to his pulpit work and will put himself as much as possible into these meetings too.” Those who stood in the opposition could not miss the warning: “He cannot do himself and his people a greater harm than to frown upon these organizations or parade their many defects. If he wants to paralyze [*sic*] his helpers he need only put into their hands such papers and books, all too easily found, which count it their chief mission to object and obstruct and criticise.” While the societies were not without problems, there was a better way than simply opposing them: “Instead of finding fault the wise pastor will throw himself cheerfully and enthusiastically into these movements, guide them past any perils

⁴²“Too Much Machinery,” *The Christian Index*, 20 December 1894, 4.

⁴³For additional articles debating the value of societies, see N. A. Bailey, “Young Men’s Christian Association,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 July 1877, 2; B. W. Whilden, “The Young Men’s Christian Association,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 July 1877, 2; S. T. Clanton, “Undenominational Organizations,” *The Christian Index*, 8 January 1891, 2.

which beset them, and secure for himself and for those under his care the magnificent advantages which they offer.”⁴⁴

The Successful Pastor

That the efficiency of the church was related to the efficiency of its pastor was a natural correlation. The pastor was, after all, the acknowledged leader of the local church. Basil Manly, Jr., had explained such a relationship at the beginning of this period:

Ordinarily, a church is rated according to its ministry. If that is small in number, inactive, indolent, devoid of enterprise, uncultivated, illiberal, gross—such, it is naturally inferred, will be the body formed and directed under its leadership. If the ministry is energetic, zealous, improving; if it lays its plans with wisdom, prosecutes them with fidelity, and adheres to them with steadfastness; if it shows a cordial interest in whatever pertains to the education and general advancement of the people; if, above all, it is earnestly and obviously consecrated to the great work of saving souls—all this will indicate, or produce, a corresponding state of things in the church.⁴⁵

⁴⁴“What the Baptist Editors Say,” *The Christian Index*, 12 October 1899, 7. See also J. B. Parrott, “Have Baptist Churches Too Many Organizations?” *The Christian Index*, 13 December 1894, 1, in which the writer argues that the new Baptist Young People’s Union will increase the churches’ efficiency in saving souls through the training of young people in the work of the church. Baptists were concerned that a failure to secure young people for the church would lead to an inefficient church. See J. C. Burkholder, “The Preacher’s Source of Power,” *The Christian Index*, 11 June 1891, 2–3. Indeed, some Baptists saw those standing in the way of progress, a group which would include, in their eyes, those questioning the rush to organizational efficiency, as being subjects for discipline. In an editorial exchange, the *Index* quoted the *Baptist Argus*: “In a church, an association, in larger bodies, a man may sometimes clog the wheels of progress. He may kill all efforts to organize a Sunday-school, all plans for mission efforts, all training of the young for better church membership, all efforts to reach outside of the groove the body has been accustomed to run. He may kill all hopes for better music, for more than one Sunday preaching, for supporting a pastor, for harmonizing the bodies to which he belongs. Why is not such [a] belated, disturbing, clogging brother a subject for discipline? How far short does he fall of being ‘unsound?’ It is not wise to go too fast. Neither is it wise to go too slowly. Sometimes it is a sin and a shame to do either. Hearing and following the leading of the Holy Spirit will make us go according to God’s will. But we will go.” “What the Baptist Editors Say,” *The Christian Index*, 16 February 1899, 7.

⁴⁵B. Manly, Jr., “A Call to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 October 1869, 153. Writing against what he saw as widespread abuses in protracted meetings, “A. Layman” also indicated that the pastor was to provide administrative leadership for a well-organized church, though this leadership did not yet entail the more complex organization of later decades: “To secure such a spiritual condition [the healthy spiritual condition of a church required for a religious meeting], the proper organization of the church is necessary. The pastor and other officials are in position, and in the regular and systematic performance of their respective duties. Added to this, every member is a regular ‘soldier of the cross,’ and has his or her respective duties to perform. *The pastor is the executive and keeps this organization at work.* Under such an administration we have reason to expect a continued outpouring of the Spirit of God,

The question, though, was what comprised an efficient church and an efficient pastor. Was the pastor who gained the most members, built new church edifices, and oversaw growing budgets the efficient minister, or were less objective criteria—such as faithfulness in preaching the Scriptures, courage in leading the church to carry out biblical discipline, and caring for the members’ spiritual needs—to be used in assessing the pastor’s success?

As indicated above, the increasing emphasis upon organizational efficiency did not correspond with a conscious decrease in emphasis upon biblical fidelity. During this period ministers continued to be judged according to faithfulness to their God-given tasks. M. T. Sumner, Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions of the Southern Baptist Convention, held that an efficient minister was one who faithfully preached the gospel and led the people of God in worship.⁴⁶ “Vindex,” writing in the March 26, 1868 edition of *The Christian Index*, applauded the pastor of the Baptist church in Americus, Georgia: “The Baptist Church here, under the faithful and laborious pastorate of our excellent brother, Dr. G. F. Cooper, has increased in numbers, during the last two years, and can boast of good congregations.” Why was this pastor esteemed so?

because it is the legitimate use of the Divinely appointed means of grace. Such an organization, working in its legitimate sphere, never fails to reap a continued harvest of spiritual blessings. It is not a protracted meeting that such a church proposes, but it is a constant use of the means of grace, and a constant effort to promote ‘daily growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord.’ The whole tenor of gospel teaching and apostolic example, points to a constant effort on the part of the church as a whole, and of the members individually. It is compared to a ‘race,’ to a ‘fight;’ it is called a ‘struggle,’ for which we are to ‘gird on the whole armor of God;’ that we are ‘to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.’ It is needless to refer to passages, to show that the work of the Christian church is a constant work, for such passages will rise unbidden by the score to the mind of very Bible reader. Nothing is more necessary to show that such an organization and such an administration of its affairs, are in accordance with Scriptural authority and apostolic example; and it is equally obvious that a different course is both unscriptural and unapostolic.” The writer added, “That there are examples of such working churches and working members in modern times, the reader need only refer to the churches under the administration of Spurgeon and his compeers; and there are hundreds of churches on this side of the Atlantic, to whom the ‘Sun of Righteousness’ never goes down. They have taken the gospel and the apostolic example as their guide, and hence they reap a constant harvest.” Layman, “Protracted Meetings,” 149. Emphasis added.

⁴⁶M. T. Sumner, “Shall They Leave?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 January 1868, 15.

“Vindex” answered, “Whatever of good there is, whatever of growth, whatever of zeal there may be—it is due, under Providence, to the consecrated labors and untiring assiduity of him who goes in and out among us. As a diligent laborer, as a fearless, faithful expounder of the word, as an able minister of the Gospel and teacher of the truth, he is without a peer in this region.” Contrasting the fidelity of this pastor, the writer lamented the growth of infidelity among the nation’s churches in the North and West in the form of Unitarianism and Arminianism, two maladies which differed only in name: “The logic of both is the same; and their practical teachings are only intellectual divergences from a common stand-point. Both acknowledge man’s power and ability—both appeal to his pride and strength.” “Vindex” warned, “The great doctrines that underlie our polity—that form the base of our organization—upon which rest our hopes of salvation—God’s free, unmerited grace—have to pass through the ordeal of a terrible conflict.” He appealed to the churches’ watchmen: “We will need strong arms, stout hearts, and Spartan courage to maintain our vantage ground in the heat of the strife that is drawing on apace.”⁴⁷

Other Baptists lauded their pastors for biblical fidelity. Elder T. H. Stout, pastor of the Baptist church at Talbotton, Georgia, received the following resolution of appreciation after his brief pastorate: “That in brother Stout we found a faithful pastor, a consistent and valiant soldier of the Cross, and a zealous servant of the Master. . . . While we offer this as a feeble expression of our appreciation of his labors with us, and our regret at having to part with so faithful an undershepherd.”⁴⁸ Elder W. D. Atkinson, preaching at the Piedmont Association’s ministers and deacons meeting, claimed that “the first element of church prosperity . . . is piety. This I will define in the strictest sense to be genuine religion, earnest devotion to the cause of Christ.” Church prosperity required

⁴⁷Vindex, “Our Church at Americus,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 March 1868, 50.

⁴⁸R. J. Willingham, “[Resolution] Adopted by the Baptist Church at Talbotton, GA,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 January 1879, 8.

“thorough consecration to the cause of Christ,” the fostering of the Sunday school, the continuation of prayer meetings, “a sound and faithful ministry,” “the maintenance of church discipline,” and “earnest prayer to God” by the individual members.⁴⁹ Pastor J. H. Hall, while refusing to define “success,” nevertheless argued for three essential prerequisites: faith—depending utterly upon Christ; preaching—proclaiming the Word of God only; and wisdom—possessing an unsullied reputation.⁵⁰

⁴⁹W. D. Atkinson, “Elements of Church Prosperity and Means of Its Promotions,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 31 January 1878, 3. For articles emphasizing the biblical fidelity of pastors and piety among church members even as the calls to greater efficiency were being heard, see S. Henderson, “How Shall Power be Restored to the Pulpit,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 April 1866, 71; “Spirit of the Religious Press,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 April 1878, 1; J. M. B., “Individual Growth in Grace Essential to True Church Prosperity,” *The Christian Index*, 11 December 1890, 8; G. A. Nunnally, “Pastors and Schools,” *The Christian Index*, 18 December 1890, 8.

⁵⁰J. H. Hall, “Pastoral Success,” *The Christian Index*, 19 July 1900, 1. Vigilant fidelity to the Scriptures was a recurrent theme in the pages of *The Christian Index*. For instance, Samuel Henderson, noting the increasing influence of city churches, enjoined them remain faithful to the Scriptures in the face of heterodoxy and worldly amusements: “Our city churches, and their pastors, must be bulwarks of our faith in this day of trial. They have the learning, the libraries, the social position—in one word, the influence under God, to do us great service. Let them follow the ‘old paths,’ let them abide by the long established standards of our faith; especially let the gifted men, who stand upon these elevated walls of Zion, ‘cry aloud and spare not,’ in behalf of evangelical truth. . . . Again, while so much depends on them in the matter of sound doctrine, no less depends upon them in the matter of a pure Christian morality. The discussion of this topic may expose the point of greatest danger. It is a fact, the country imitates the city, and country churches imitate city churches. If therefore, our city churches relax their discipline, and tolerate irregularities of behaviour, inconsistent with a pure christian [*sic*] morality, these irregularities will be sure to find apologists and even advocates among the people of the country. Sooner or later, discipline will be relaxed everywhere, and the greatest disorders will disturb the peace of our Zion.” S. G. H. [S. G. Henderson], “The Responsibility of City Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 April 1868, 49. John A. Broadus recommended Rev. A. Jaeger to churches in need of a pastor: “There is something very fresh and striking in his thought; his words are exceedingly well chosen; he has a vivid imagination, and intense earnestness. As a German, his accent in speaking English is not perfect, but one soon gets used to that, and his delivery, in general, is good. Most important of all, he preaches the *real Gospel*, and in a singularly interesting way.” John A. Broadus, “Rev. A. Jaeger,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 May 1874, 5. For other articles emphasizing fidelity to the Scriptures in the ministry, see S. Henderson, “Spiritual Power—Means of Promoting It—a Consecrated Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 April 1866, 67; S. Henderson, “The Ministry the Times Demand,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 May 1866, 75; “Secret of Ministerial Success,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 December 1866, 197; “The Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 January 1867, 6; M. P. Lowry, “Ministers Should be Men of One Work,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 10 January 1867, 9; G. A. N. [George A. Nunnally], “Why So Few?” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 November 1878, 2; Samuel Henderson, “Useful Ministers,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 30 September 1880, 1; Samuel Henderson, “Earnestness Considered as an Element of Success,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 14 October 1880, 1; Samuel Henderson, “Ministerial Department,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 16 December

Pastors were commended not only for their faithfulness to the Scriptures but also for preaching ability, increasing church prosperity, and leading their members to engage in church work. A writer in Mississippi described a successful pastor as one who had “induced the ungodly masses to become pious, or the careless crowd of professors to become faithful workers, or the multitudes of sprinkled Christians to be baptized.” These were “men who have found the lambs of Jesus and gathered them into His fold and kept them there, and nourished them for the Master.”⁵¹ Rev. C. C. Bitting, “the new pastor, or supply” of the Second Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, “is full of zeal and energy, has already attached his flock warmly to him, and is winning golden opinions as a faithful preacher of the gospel.”⁵² N. W. Wilson, pastor of Grace Street Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, was commended because “the church, under his administration, has grown in numbers and influence. He attracts and holds large congregations, and is, probably, the most popular pulpit speaker in the Baptist ministry of this city.”⁵³ Rev. Joseph R. Hand, recently deceased in Alabama, was remembered as a “preacher of no mean ability” and as “an active and efficient laborer” during the revivals of the late 1830’s.⁵⁴ S. G. Hillyer, preaching at the centennial celebration of the Botsford church

1880, 1; “More Useful in 1887,” *The Christian Index*, 13 January 1887, 9; “Ambitious Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 10 October 1889, 9; W. S. Rogers, “Elements of Church Strength,” *The Christian Index*, 12 November 1891, 2; J. H. Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity,” *The Christian Index*, 9 March 1899, 1; J. H. Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity. II,” *The Christian Index*, 16 March 1899, 1; J. H. Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity. III,” *The Christian Index*, 23 March 1899, 1; Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity. IV,” 4; J. H. Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity. Conclusion,” *The Christian Index*, 20 April 1899, 1–2; Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity. Conclusion,” 1–2; “The Imperishable Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 26 October 1899, 6.

⁵¹Theo. W., “Pastoral Work: Mississippi News,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 January 1871, 14.

⁵²Theron, “Churches and Education in Richmond,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 October 1871, 158.

⁵³Theron, “Churches and Education in Richmond,” 158.

⁵⁴J. H. Campbell, “Rev. Joseph R. Hand,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 March 1871, 37.

near Savannah, maintained that the pastor's faithfulness to the gospel was the essential criterion of an efficient church, because the gospel itself was efficient in accomplishing its purpose.⁵⁵ Upon his resignation, Rev. George F. Cooper, pastor of the Baptist church in Americus, Georgia, for nine years, was lauded for a pastorate that had been "eminently successful": "Nine years ago the church was feeble and the congregation small, now the church is strong, numerically, morally, and financially—perhaps as strong, if not stronger than any church in Southwest Georgia." He was characterized as "a faithful minister, full of zeal, and one of the very ablest preachers in the state[,] . . . a most devoted, active worker, and fully in accord and sympathy with all the leading movements of our denomination[,] . . . and one of the very ablest expounders of the Gospel truth."⁵⁶ When J. M. Brittain resigned the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Conyers, Georgia, he received this commendation: "That for fifteen years of uninterrupted services as pastor of

⁵⁵Hillyer illustrated his point by noting the fidelity of the church's founder, Edmund Botsford, and his successors: "One hundred years ago, Edmund Botsford, bearing in his hands this same gospel, landed at New Savannah, not a dozen miles from the very spot where we are now assembled. In a little while he made his way to this place, and here planted the banner of the cross, and preached to the scattered settlers of the neighborhood, Christ and the resurrection. He soon saw the fruit of his labors. The gospel was the power of God unto salvation. In 1772, a little band of baptized believers were organized into a church bearing the name of its devoted founder. For six years, he was its beloved and successful pastor. Then came the Revolutionary War. Georgia was overrun by bands of hostile marauders. The church was dispersed, and Botsford himself was compelled to leave the scene of his labors. He sought refuge in a distant State. After the war had ended, the scattered flock returned to their homes, and to the house of worship from which they had been driven. Again they began to keep house for God. During all the succeeding years, it has never failed to hold forth the 'word of life.' A long line of earnest pastors has supplied its pulpit. They were men not gifted with much of this world's learning. But they were pious, devoted, faithful men. Their power was in the gospel which they preached. *The power which the Holy Spirit made efficient, through the 'foolishness of preaching.'* The treasure was in earthen vessels, that the glory might be of Christ. What an illustration of the gospel as the 'power of God unto salvation!'

"And now, my brethren, see what God has done for us as a people. One hundred years ago, this little church, and its sister upon the banks of the Kiokee creek, in Columbia county, were the only Baptist churches in all this Commonwealth. They may have included a hundred members! Now we number perhaps 1,000 churches, and 145,000 members! This, too, in the face of the fact over all the Southwest, as far as the Rio Grande, Baptists from Georgia may be found in sufficient numbers to swell the aggregate outgrowth from this small beginning, to more than 250,000! Surely THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION. Amen." S. G. Hillyer, "The Efficiency of the Gospel," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 13 March 1873, 37. Emphasis added.

⁵⁶Americus, "Rev. George F. Cooper, and His Resignation as Pastor of Americus Church," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 November 1874, 1.

our church, his walk and example have been such as to draw others to Christ, and he has failed not to rebuke evil and to warn sinners of the danger of sin, and to encourage Christians to a more active exercise of faith and love.”⁵⁷ J. F. Culpepper, pastor of the Baptist church in Fitzgerald, Georgia, was recognized for his leadership under which the progress of the church had been “especially marked”: “Under his administration the cause has prospered and accessions to the number of about twenty have been made to our membership; six of them will receive the ordinance of baptism on next Sunday evening, when this dear brother will preach his farewell sermons.”⁵⁸ The First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee, upon the resignation of Dr. Thomas E. Skinner as pastor, expressed appreciation for his “*efficient ministrations*” and further resolved that “we as a body, and individually, bear testimony to his earnest piety, unflagging zeal in the cause of Christ, and his intelligent, faithful and constant labors in the pulpit, in the prayer meeting and in the Sunday school. His Christian character, as well as his labors of love in and out of the sacred desk, will ever be cherished with affectionate regard.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷“Rev. J. M. Brittain,” *The Christian Index*, 29 July 1886, 3.

⁵⁸D. B. Jay, “[Correspondence from Fitzgerald],” *The Christian Index*, 27 October 1898, 9. The prosperity of the church did not always affect the material prosperity of the pastor: “The resignation of brother Culpepper leaves us without a pastor. This field should be occupied by a strong man, and *one who can afford to accept a small salary*. There is not another field, possibly, in the State that presents as great opportunity for the right man.” *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

⁵⁹Aug’s Larcombe, “Rev. T. E. Skinner, D. D.,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 October 1896, 162. Emphasis added. For additional examples of tributes to pastors and reasons for their success, see “Ministers and Churches,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 January 1867, 7; “A Successful Minister—Sketch of Rev. A. T. Spalding, D. D.,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 April 1873, 60; J. J. D. Renfroe, “History of the Baptist Church in Talladega, Ala.,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 5 June 1873, 88; G. A. L. [G. A. Lofton], “Letter from Pastor Lofton,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 July 1873, 103; J. D. Ellington, “Pastoral Resignation,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 21 August 1873, 1; L., “Sabbath in Atlanta,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 June 1874, 5; “Oncken’s Success, and the Secret of It,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 28 January 1875, 5; “Rev. Richard Fuller, D. D.,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 November 1876, 4; S. Boykin, “Our Macon Letter,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 February 1876, 2; J. H. Campbell, “Rev. A. Sherwood, D. D.,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 April 1878, 2; “Rev. J. F. B. Mays, D. D.,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 March 1881, 8; M. E. F., “A Work of Grace,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 September 1881, 2; John O. Hixson, “Rev. S. A. Goodwin, D. D.,” *The*

The interrelatedness of biblical fidelity and organizational efficiency is seen in G. A. Nunnally's discussion of pastoral success. He maintained that "pastoral success and church prosperity are correlative." The pastor is to make sure that the church membership is spiritually healthy and that new converts are added to their number. In the gathering of "scattered sheep," though, the pastor "must use discrimination." Nunnally warned that a church may increase in numbers without increasing in true converts. Nunnally illustrated, "The accession of goats and razor-back hogs and barking curs and crippled cows and sick hyenas would add nothing to the value of the flock. On the contrary, the introduction of animals with such varied habits and appetites would be disastrous to the peace, life and well-being of the flock." In addition, the flock must be well-fed. The successful pastor will provide his congregation with the needed Word of God. Pastoral success, in addition to gaining new converts and providing needed spiritual food, required that the members were involved in good works. Nunnally maintained that "fat mutton is

Christian Index and South-Western Baptist, 15 December 1881, 1; E. W. Warren, "South Macon Church," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 October 1882, 3; "Resignation of Rev. Dr. Jones," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 14 December 1882, 6; J. W. Souter, "Rev. T. J. Bell," *The Christian Index*, 11 January 1883, 5; Charles Waters and William L. Duncan, "Rev. T. J. Bell," *The Christian Index*, 25 January 1883, 4; E. W. W. [E. W. Warren], "Rev. Rufus E. Murrow," *The Christian Index*, 7 February 1884, 2; "Rev. J. L. Vass," *The Christian Index*, 10 July 1884, 8; "David G. Daniell," *The Christian Index*, 11 September 1884, 4; W. B. Bennet, "Rev. Charles S. Gaulden," *The Christian Index*, 30 October 1884, 4; "Death of William R. Williams," *The Christian Index*, 16 April 1885, 8; T. B. C., "Rev. Moses Nathaniel McCall, Sr.," *The Christian Index*, 14 May 1885, 5; J. W. Stanford, "Rev. W. H. Cooper," *The Christian Index*, 7 January 1886, 5; "Baptist Workers," *The Christian Index*, 1 April 1886, 9; L. A. Brantly, "Rev. J. M. Smith," *The Christian Index*, 13 May 1886, 4; Geo. W. Garner, "Griffin Baptist Church," *The Christian Index*, 22 July 1886, 3; A. W. Carswell, "To the Waycross Baptist Church," *The Christian Index*, 4 November 1886, 3; W. L. Pickard, "Alabama Baptist Items," *The Christian Index*, 1 March 1888, 4 [author's name mistyped as Piokard]; "Rev. E. B. Carroll," *The Christian Index*, 9 February 1888, 4; "Elberton Church," *The Christian Index*, 3 February 1887, 4; Thomas Nichols, "Rev. J. S. Meynardie," *The Christian Index*, 10 February 1887, 2-3; J. A. French, "The Kentucky Baptists," *The Christian Index*, 10 February 1887, 5; J. L. D. Hillyer, "A Faithful Pastor's Recognition," *The Christian Index*, 28 April 1887, 5; G. A. Nunnally, "Rev. W. H. Strickland," *The Christian Index*, 8 May 1890, 9; A. E. S., "Reeves Station," *The Christian Index*, 21 August 1890, 3; S. C. Dobbs, W. B. Steedly, and Geo. H. Hulme, "Pastoral Resolutions," *The Christian Index*, 11 December 1890, 2; "Dr. Jeffrey," *The Christian Index*, 29 August 1889, 8; Jesse E. Torbert, "Mt. Olive Church," *The Christian Index*, 12 September 1889, 4; S. B., "Baptist Workers in Nashville," *The Christian Index*, 18 February 1892, 2; B., "Throughout the State," *The Christian Index*, 21 May 1896, 5; V. A. Ham, "Resolutions of Central Baptist Church, Newnan, GA," *The Christian Index*, 13 October 1898, 9; A Member, "Pastor J. I. Oxford," *The Christian Index*, 27 October 1898, 9; A. C. Ward, "A Model Pastor," *The Christian Index*, 3 May 1900, 9.

good, but a full fleece is better.” The members are to be productive: “that church is prosperous which, actuated by proper motives, is doing the will of God in spreading Christianity abroad, in illustrating the power of a godly life at home and in building up their faith in the gospel in their own hearts.” Nunnally concluded, “And the pastor who is imbuing his people with this spirit and implanting this principle in their minds and is directing their energies to this great work is not a failure.”⁶⁰

Although Baptists had not turned away from biblical fidelity, they were at least accused of becoming less vigilant in following biblical principles as they became more enamored with growing their churches and increasing their influence. In applauding one young pastor, John A. Broadus admonished others. Broadus, one of the founding professors of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, wrote: “An efficient young pastor in Barnwell, S. C., writing the other day to the *Religious Herald*, very quietly made a most striking and timely utterance. He said there had been two revivals this year in the church to which he ministers, the first resulting in the exclusion of eight members, and the second, some time afterwards, in fifteen additions.” Broadus knew, as had Baptists for over two centuries, that merely accumulating members did not make for an efficient church. The professor exclaimed, “A revival that resulted in eight exclusions! How many, O, how many of our churches need just such a revival!” Why did “many of our churches” need “such a revival”? Broadus observed, “They have been tolerating members, perhaps for years, who ought not to be in the church, some of whom utterly neglect all the most obvious duties of a church member, while others are even grossly wicked.” Broadus knew what such churches needed to do: “If they would rise up and exclude these, what a burden it would take from them, and how greatly it

⁶⁰N. [G. A. Nunnally], “What is Pastoral Success?” *The Christian Index*, 18 January 1883, 9. Introducing the relationship of the successful promotion of missions and pastoral interest, one writer maintained, “The efficiency and success of a church depend very largely upon the pastor. He is the divinely ordained leader of the Lord’s people.” A. J. Rowland, “The Pastor and Missions,” *The Christian Index*, 26 March 1891, 9.

would increase their moral power!” Such a stance, Broadus realized, would not occur unless a revival took place: “They must have a new love for Christ, a new zeal for the honor of His name, a deeper feeling of personal responsibility to Him, and then they will overcome all considerations of social position, family influence, personal friendship, etc., and fearlessly purge out the old leaven.” The outcome of such a revival may bring new members: “When this has been done, in such a spirit, it is likely enough to happen that before long there will be a second revival, resulting in additions.” On the other hand, there may be a net loss in members, but the gain or loss of members was not the ultimate issue. Broadus maintained, “*At any rate, the church will be far more efficient by getting rid of all those who manifestly have no true spiritual life.* When one or two horses of an artillery team have fallen dead, they do not go on dragging the dead bodies, whether there are any fresh horses or not.” That he believed that such revivals were widely needed is indicated in his counsel to fellow Baptists: “Brethren, let us preach and pray for revivals which shall result in exclusions.”⁶¹

⁶¹J. A. B. [John A. Broadus], “A New Use for Revivals,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 September 1872, 141. Other Baptists, as well as Methodists, concurred with Broadus’s position. A brief article a year later in the *Index* stated: “Rev. J. A. Stradley has expressed the opinion, ‘that if the Baptists of North Carolina would, during the present year, exclude from their churches 10,000 unworthy members, they would do far more to increase their real strength and true prosperity than if they were to add the same number.’ And Rev. Dr. Pierce, in the *Southern Christian Advocate*, says: ‘You are all the time whimpering after a revival of religion, by which most of you mean accessions to the church. This looks all right, but it is all wrong. It is depletion, not plethora we need. The revival of religion we need is the purging of the church, and nothing but this will be a revival of religion.’ These venerable divines seem to be of the same mind with the pastor, who, when urged to hold a series of meetings, with the hope of gathering fresh members into a church which neglected godly discipline, refused, on the ground that the best form of *addition* to the church in that state, was—*subtraction*.” A later correspondent to the *Index* complained, “There is no cause from which Baptist churches suffer so much as the presence [*sic*] of thousands of names of persons who are Baptists only in name. They do not understand the fundamental principles of Baptists, and care less about them. They never make any effort to inform themselves, and when they speak of Baptist doctrine, it is only to misrepresent the faith. . . . They take no interest in the organization to which, in their excitement, they have attached themselves; and seldom, if ever, contribute of their substance to the support of pastor, or the expense of worship.” W. R., “Attendance on Church Assemblies,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 22 July 1880, 2. Concern about growing numbers of unregenerate church members continued to be expressed. An unnamed Baptist in San Francisco wrote to Henry Tucker, the editor of the *Index*, about a decision card which a “brother Witt,” an evangelist, was using in meetings. The correspondent explained, “Brother Witt circulates a printed card, of which I send you one, and any one who will sign this card is considered as converted, and brother Witt tells him so, and

Although they continued to laud the importance of biblical fidelity, Southern Baptists increasingly viewed numerical growth as a measure of church efficiency. They intended, though, that growth would come through the faithful declaration of the Word of God and diligent effort at securing converts through efforts of evangelism. After a protracted meeting at the Baptist church in Trenton, Arkansas, one of the visiting preachers wrote, "The church at T. is very much revived, its membership enlarged and its efficiency

he estimates the number of converts by the number of cards he receives so signed. I would like to know what THE INDEX thinks of it." A sample of the card, entitled "SALVATION A FREE GIFT," was provided. Three verses, Rom 6:23, John 3:36, and 1 John 5:1, were printed below the title, and the following statement indicated the decision being made: "So far as I am able to know, I do accept this free gift, and forsaking my sins, will 'take up my cross daily and follow Christ.'" The card was then signed, along with the "convert's" address of residence, and returned to the evangelist. Tucker responded in no uncertain terms: "We most heartily disapprove of this new-fangled piece of machinery for engineering people into the church. Many would sign this card mechanically without the slightest appreciation of its import. We can scarcely conceive of a more ingenious contrivance of Satan for destroying the churches by filling them with unconverted people. If, on *personal interview*, a man shows that he *understands* in its far-reaching significance, and in his *heart of hearts appreciates* that portion of God's word which is printed on this card, and gives good evidence of his sincerity in his promise to take up his cross, he would be a fit subject for baptism, but the off-hand method of receiving into the church any man who signs this paper, must be mischievous beyond expression." Henry H. Tucker, "From California," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 March 1880, 2. Samuel Henderson stated: "Mere additions of members to churches may be anything else but progress. Not unfrequently [*sic*], depletion of members, brought about by any means, is rapid progress. The most substantial progress our denomination ever made, in all directions, was, as some of our older brethren may remember, immediately after the anti-missionary party withdrew from us forty-five and fifty years ago. It relieved our churches of a mass of dead material that locked up all avenues to progress. But so soon as that obstacle was removed, the piety, intelligence and zeal of the denomination broke forth in all directions. The achievements of the next succeeding twenty years, which were but the evidences of progress, are perhaps without a parallel." Samuel Henderson, "Progress," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 4 November 1880, 1. For expressions of similar concerns, see R., "Importance of a Converted Membership," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 28 July 1870, 114; H. [S. Henderson], "Shall Members Add to Our Strength?" *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 7 November 1872, 174; Timothy, "What Can be the Cause?" *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 July 1873, 101; "Removing Church Members," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 10 September 1874, 2; Layman, "Some of the Evil Practices of Baptists," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 9 August 1877, 2; "Receiving Members Into the Church," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 September 1878, 2; Henry H. Tucker, "Startling and Suggestive," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 11 December 1879, 4; Henry H. Tucker, "A Pastor Seeking Light," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 12 February 1880, 2; "The Religious Press," *The Christian Index*, 25 September 1884, 1 [exchange from the *New York Examiner*]; "Evangelists," *The Christian Index*, 9 April 1885, 8; "The Old Style," *The Christian Index*, 9 July 1885, 8; "Prayer for Unconverted Church Members," *The Christian Index*, 1 April 1886, 8; "Religious Press," *The Christian Index*, 19 January 1888, 1 [exchange from the *Gospel Age*]; J. M. Hurst, "Fidelity to God and His Church," *The Christian Index*, 1 October 1891, 1; S. G. Hillyer, "A Converted Church Membership," *The Christian Index*, 18 February 1892, 12; J. H. Kilpatrick, "Wherefore So Many Unconverted Persons in Our Churches?" *Christian Index*, 1 February 1900, 1; B. P. Mitchell, "The Unconverted Members," *The Christian Index*, 26 April 1900, 1.

greatly increased.”⁶² A report from Virginia commended the Richmond’s Second Baptist Church: “The Second church, lately made so conspicuous for fidelity to principle, has been long distinguished for its efficiency and activity in Christian labor. Its late pastor is a good organizer for work, devotedly pious, and, by no means, an open communionist, in the broad acceptance of that term.”⁶³ F. M. Daniel, pastor of the Baptist church in Dalton, Georgia, was credited with aiding in the progress of a formerly “cold, demoralized and scattered” church “by his untiring energy, zeal and great tack in concentrating material and systametizing [*sic*] labor.” He was able to gather “cold, scattered members,” assigning them “to suitable work as pupils in the Sabbath-school or as teachers, and to collecting missions, and were made to feel at home, and soon loved to labor in their respective spheres.” After listing material and spiritual benefits of Daniel’s pastorate, the writer concluded, “Summing up all these and adding the fact that more than twenty additions, of which fifteen were by baptism, twelve of the fifteen being pupils of the Sabbath-school, have been made to the church, and it aggregates such a gain we feel our cause has prospered, and thank God for all these results.”⁶⁴ From Baltimore it was reported that “Dr. Gregory is doing a grand work at High Street—his people are delighted with his preaching, with his pastoral work and his zeal. *The large and increasing congregations, flourishing Sunday-school, frequent additions by baptism, and advance in contributions, prove that he is the man for the place.*”⁶⁵

Baptists were warned, though, not to confuse statistics with success. Commenting upon the supposed strength of the Roman Catholic Church due to its member-

⁶²J. K. Murphy, “Revival News from Arkansas,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 18 August 1870, 126.

⁶³Theron, “Churches and Education in Richmond,” 158.

⁶⁴Q., “The Baptists in Dalton, Georgia. A Prosperous Church and Sabbath-School—A Good Pastor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 10 August 1876, 2.

⁶⁵J. W. M. W., “Baltimore Letter,” *The Christian Index*, 17 February 1887, 5. Emphasis added.

ship and money, *The Christian Index* noted, “Numbers and wealth do not give strength to a church. Holy zeal—the love of Christ in the hearts of the members, constraining them to labor for the salvation of souls with persevering earnestness, is that which gives a church power. . . . Being endued with power from on high, such a church is mighty through God to the pulling down of the stronghold of Satan.”⁶⁶ Editor Shaver held that total consecration to the work of the ministry was “the path to efficiency: and no one can strike out any other path.” What was ministerial efficiency and success? Shaver indicated that success was evidenced by the effectiveness of the minister’s efforts in seeking the salvation of others: “May we affectionately urge our brethren in the ministry, then, to seek increasingly the spirit of their office—intense devotion to the work of God in saving men?”⁶⁷ Indeed, a pastor could labor faithfully and experience no observable success.

⁶⁶“The Strength of a Church,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 17 September 1868, 145. Indeed, to the following exchange from the *Christian Advocate*—“One soweth and another reapeth. Reaping to most persons is the most exhilarating employment; but where there is equal fidelity, the wages will be the same for both”—the *Index* replied, “We are not so sure of this. It may be so, but it appears to us that those who fell the forest, and clear up the new ground, and break it up, and put it in order, and sow the seed, will receive higher reward than those who have nothing to do but the enjoyable work of harvesting the crop. The faithful preacher who sees but little result of his labor here, may at the last day be credited with most of the sheaves which have been gathered by others. One thing we know, and that is that Judge of all the earth will be sure to do right, and we shall be satisfied with his appointments, whatever they may be.” “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 8 March 1883, 1. An *Index*-endorsed exchange from the *Baptist Courier* stated, “A prominent educator recently remarked in our hearing, that he greatly preferred a student to study a lesson diligently and not know it than to know it without studying it. The idea is, that the training and discipline the mind receives from close application is worth more to the student than the knowledge gained from the text-book. And so it is in the school of Christ. Our benefactions, our sacrifices, or exertions for souls may not bring immediate visible rewards, but they are not in vain: the direct benefit to the individual laborer is all the greater, as it calls for the exercise of the strongest faith and teaches him to rely implicitly upon God. It is the *faithful*, not the *successful* servants to whom blessing is promised. There is comfort in this thought for trustful and faithful laborers who may not behold such results from their efforts as they had hoped for.” “Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 24 February 1887, 1.

⁶⁷D. Shaver, “Consecration to the Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 1 October 1868, 154. Shaver illustrated his contention by pointing to a Dr. Kennard, about whom was written, “His soul habitually travailed with thoughts and desires for men, that yearned for utterance. His mind was like a wondrously vital soil, which, beneath those warm showers he constantly enjoyed from on high, put forth perennial and luxuriant vegetation. The pulpit was, therefore, to him never a terror—preaching never a task. He loved it; his whole being was married to it.” Shaver also indicated that the failure of churches to provide adequately for their pastors contributed to ministerial inefficiency: “May we ask the churches, too, to consider well, whether they do not needlessly and guiltily hinder this ministerial consecration, by a failure to fulfill the divine appointment—that those who preach the gospel would live of it?” Shaver, “Consecration to the Ministry,” 154. See also D. Shaver, “Ministerial Popularity and Usefulness,” *The*

Shaver maintained, “Even when unsuccessful, Christian labor has all the felicity which resides in the doctrine underlying it—in the motive prompting it—in the activity discharging it; and how large a portion is *that* in the peculiar, spiritual joy of the saints!”⁶⁸ Henry H. Tucker, who had served as President of Mercer University from 1866-1871 and became editor of *The Christian Index* in 1878, wrote that Baptists of the South were ill-advised to boast against Northern Baptists because of the South’s larger membership: “If fifty thousand Baptists in one State there do more to promote that cause than one hundred thousand in one State here, we submit that it is not wise in us to institute such comparisons. It will be time enough to do this when our efficiency shall bear some correspondence with our numbers.”⁶⁹ Samuel Henderson, editor of the Alabama Department of the

Christian Index and South-Western Baptist, 24 March 1870, 46, in which Shaver commented that, in addition to “the spirit of *personal* piety and the discharge of *official* obligation,” “the minister who has a wife helpful in his labors . . . is like a doubling of his efficiency, if *she* catches the spirit which impels him to prayer and toil, and, in her private sphere, abounds, as opportunity allows, in good works.” Similarly, H. C. H. elaborated upon the following four essentials of a successful ministry: certainty of a divine call, strong piety, growing in piety, superior acquisition of knowledge. H. C. H., “An Unsuccessful Ministry,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 March 1870, 45. “A Bible Baptist,” analyzing the secret of a Mr. Earle’s success, maintained, “Does not Mr. Earle’s power, under God, lie mainly in his *plain, familiar and clear presentation of the truth*? The truth affects the heart *only when it is understood and clearly apprehended*.” A Bible Baptist, “The Secret of Mr. Earle’s Success,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 May 1870, 81. Concern that too little prayer and consideration of biblical directives were being exercised in the calling of pastors, the *Index* charged, “It is much to be feared that there exists, even among Christians, very erroneous estimates of the requisite qualification for the ministry. There is too little reliance upon the Holy Spirit, and too feeble a sense of indispensableness of active co-operation betwixt Pastor and people. Culture is a less potent element of ministerial success than Christian character. Zeal, piety, common sense faith, earnestness, loving manners, often win that which learning and eloquence fail to secure. *Statistical tables are not the conclusive proofs of church prosperity. A better way may be found than the baptisms in a year.* Baptisms are to be desired, labored for, but a church is to be instructed and trained. *The greatest preacher is the one who does the most good. The most successful Pastor is the one who gets his members to work and keeps them at it.* I suspect that our churches need much instruction in reference to the ministry, and obligations of Christians, individually acting in association.” “Tests of Pastoral Efficiency,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 May 1871, 81. Emphasis added. See also Hugh F. Oliver, “Formation of Ministerial Character,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 November 1873, 2; “Dialogue on Church Prosperity,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 3 April 1879, 4; “Methodist Success,” *The Christian Index*, 4 June 1885, 8.

⁶⁸D. Shaver, “Unsuccessful Labor,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 6 May 1869, 70.

⁶⁹Henry H. Tucker, “Baptists North and South,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 8 May 1879, 4. After quoting an exchange from the Methodist *Zion’s Herald* which questioned the practice of using the number of converts as the primary criterion of pastoral success, Tucker commented,

Index, held that ministerial success was not to be judged by large accessions to the churches. Rather, the faithful feeding of the church's members was paramount. He asked, "What can be more important than to develop the piety and call out the gifts and resources of our churches, as the means of evangelizing the world?"⁷⁰

Other Baptists exhibited great consternation with the increasing tendency to equate success and numbers. An Elder P. Paul Smith wrote to the *Index* displaying his disdain for numbers. He included an article from an evidently fictitious Elder Jonas P. Moss. Smith wrote, "Elder Moss is deeply moved in spirit concerning the 'deadbeats,' or 'deadheads,' in our churches, as he terms them, and he says that they come largely from our over anxiety to 'count' numbers." "Moss" acknowledged that persons learn to count at an early age and continue counting throughout life. He declared, "We are a wonderful people for statistics; in almost every avocation success depends on *numbers* and our popularity, reputation and livelihood depend upon success, and hence we are very careful to 'count.'" He observed that "a general's reputation depends on the *number* slain and captured, the sportsman's upon the *number* bagged, the speculator's upon the *number* of dollars made in trade, and the preacher's upon the *number* of converts reported." Examining the New Testament, "Moss" found that numbers, when provided, are given in an

"We have been estimating our success by our growth in *numbers*. Suppose we change our plan, and estimate success by growth in *grace*, and by growth in *Christian activity*, what an immense difference it would make in the power of our denomination for good! The trouble in our way is this, that the right way is hard, and the wrong way is easy. It is easy to multiply numbers; almost anybody can persuade people to be baptized. It is *not* easy—it is very hard—to promote growth in *grace*, and in consecration of life. So we suppose we must expect to see the easy-going way continue; but THE INDEX will forever point in the opposite direction." "The Religious Press," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 23 September 1880, 1.

⁷⁰"What is Ministerial Success?" *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 25 December 1879, 1. Responding positively to an exchange from the *N. C. Baptist*, *The Christian Index* commented, "The mere fact that a preacher 'draws' is no evidence either for him or against him. All depends upon how and why he draws. If he draws because he presents clearly, forcibly, earnestly and affectionately, the truths of the Gospel, with an evident and sincere desire to glorify God and do good to men, it is a certain sign that God is with him. If he draws because he presents other themes than those of the gospel, or by showy declamation, or by manner gotten up for stage-effect, or by outlandish rudeness, and vulgar jokes, or by any of the tricks and clap-traps of a mere sensation monger, it is a sure sign that the Lord is *not* with him." "Religious Press," *The Christian Index*, 3 March 1887, 1.

almost indifferent and general manner, and often no numbers at all are given: “I have read the account of John the Baptist’s labors as given in the four Gospels, and yet I am profoundly ignorant of the *number* that he baptized. We would count them and tell it with great precision.” After providing evidence from the New Testament and from personal experience, “Moss” concluded:

(1) The Holy Spirit does not report results in exact numbers. (2) Our zeal for numbers will be our ruin as a denomination unless it be cured. Let us work and let God count, if *He* sees proper to do so. (3) Real, humble, true laborers can afford to fail, as men call it failure. They are dependent upon God and he is all and above all. (4) Let us bring out in our meetings more freely man’s depravity, his absolute helplessness, God’s sovereignty and the full merits of Christ. Keep these and kindred doctrines before the people and let us wait on God, and we may not report such *numbers*, but our converts will be genuine and hold on till death. We need now some of the hold-on kind and such as will do to *weigh* as well as to count; we have enough of the eelish kind that slip in and out at every meeting.

“Moss” represented many Baptists who believed that too much emphasis was being placed upon numbers as a barometer of success.⁷¹

Such warnings continued. The *Index*, while desiring to see churches grow with new converts, cautioned against equating pastoral success with conversions. Noting that “our churches” are “too restless,” the *Index* observed, “Because their pastors do not see daily conversions attending their ministry, they begin to doubt the efficiency and usefulness of their undershepherds.” Pastors themselves often doubted their own effectiveness in the face of few conversions. Efficiency was equated with conversions: “It is too usual to think of the church and ministry as existing for the one sole purpose of soul winning. We are prone to estimate the worth of a ministry or church by the number saved during the year. We estimate a pastor’s success by the number baptised. The successful man or church is that one that adds the most, year by year, to the muster roles.” Though numerical growth was desirable, if converts were not being built up in the faith, the pastor was certainly unsuccessful. The *Index* lamented: “A most mischievous mistake is that which

⁷¹P. Paul Smith, “Elder P. Paul Smith Finds a Feeble Saint of the Strongest Type—He Has a Notion, Etc,” *The Christian Index*, 16 July 1885, 2–3.

supposes the office of the minister is to ‘entertain;’ and a very low idea of the church is that which makes it merely a club where one may find ‘enjoyment.’ Sam Jones is accustomed to tell his ‘converts’ to join that church in which they will be the happiest. Out with the thought!” By the work of the Holy Spirit, pastors were to work for the edifying of believers. “The only successful pastor” is the one who “builds up his people.”⁷²

Rev. G. R. Bisby questioned the practice of basing pastoral success upon numerical strength, “a condition that is found in many churches, and in the minds of many pastors.” Bisby observed, “Among the first questions asked by committees and churches concerning a candidate, or the man whom they are thinking of calling as pastor, is, ‘will he draw?’ ‘can he build up the church?’—in a word, ‘is he a success?’” Bisby viewed such questions as indicative of appropriating worldly standards for the church. He cited an article from a Methodist periodical, the St. Louis *Christian Advocate*, as a warning to Baptist pastors and churches:

The world is in the Methodist church, in it as big as an elephant, as ravening as a lion, as offensive as a skunk, as poisonous as a viper. . . . All sorts of good and bad things get into the church through the folks that come in. The original gate into the church is narrow. . . . But we, in our lust for members, by our carnal revivals, by superficial preaching, by personal pressure, by social attractions, by worldly baits, have widened the gate and brought great numbers of unconverted men, women and children into the church, and these unregenerate, unbroken ones always have the world with them. In many churches these form the majority, are active and controlling, and the world then gives direction to the church; and alas for the direction! By our superficial views of piety, by our desire to attract and conciliate money, position and fashion, we have, in short and in long, by wholesale and retail, filled the church with the unconverted.

Bisby viewed evaluating pastoral success by the size of the church membership or the

⁷²“Edifying the Church,” *The Christian Index*, 4 August 1892, 4. For additional articles which cautioned against viewing large numbers as indicators of success, see T. [H. H. Tucker], “Two Pictures,” *The Christian Index*, 15 February 1883, 8; “Hasty Baptisms,” *The Christian Index*, 20 May 1886, 9; “Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 8 July 1886, 1; “Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 6 October 1887, 1; “Two Pictures” in “Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 13 October 1887, 1; W. M. Davis, “Two Ways of Managing a Church,” *The Christian Index*, 10 September 1891, 1; and Brother Timothy, “Preachers’ Miscellany,” *The Christian Index*, 23 June 1898, 1–2, in which “Brother Timothy,” concerned as a young man about his lack of “success,” received this counsel from an elderly minister: “My young brother, where do you find in your commission the divine command to be successful? You will never convert the world, nor turn it upside down. All that God requires of you is faithful service. Faithfulness is our part; results are with God, and success is often only a delusion.”

appeal of the church building as harmful: “It leads to the measuring of men by what they seem to be able to accomplish rather than by what they really are, and leads men to seek to furnish what the market demands rather than what will be acceptable to the Lord.”⁷³

Not only was evaluating pastoral success on such criteria harmful to the churches, Bisby noted that it was wholly without biblical support. He asked, “What has the pastor or church to do with success? Who has required this at our hands? This is something our Master never speaks of. Have you ever found a place in his life where he seemed anxious for success? Did he ever intimate that he required his servants to succeed?” Bisby used an illustration from the ministry of Jesus: “When he sent the twelve out on their special mission, and they returned boasting how that the devils were subject unto them in his name, did he commend them for their success? Did he not rather rebuke them and bid them rejoice, not over their success, but that their names were written in heaven?” For Bisby, the pastor is to be “faithful to his Master, faithful to his Master’s word, in study, in exposition and application.”⁷⁴

Others were concerned that an undue interest in numbers was modifying the purity of the gospel message. George A. Lofton, for instance, maintained that the Baptist ministry was being unfaithful to its divine calling in its pursuit of gaining a larger following.⁷⁵ He charged, “How many of us teach our churches their confession of faith, according to the gospel? There is baptism, and communion, and election, and predestination, and church government, and a number of other Baptist peculiarities, we never hear of being presented or discussed, except occasionally in the papers. All this is a part of God’s ‘counsel.’” While these doctrines were not to be preached all the time, they were

⁷³G. R. Bisby, “Pastoral Success,” *The Christian Index*, 20 September 1900, 1.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵During his ministry Lofton (1839-1914) served as pastor of Baptist churches in Georgia, Tennessee, and Missouri, and was president of the Southern Baptist Publication Society in Memphis, Tennessee, for two years.

now neglected, Lofton maintained, because they had grown unpopular. The preaching of such doctrines “will run off the outsiders who come to hear you!” Lofton believed the very strength and effectiveness of the church were at stake, “How can a church grow strong and substantial without understanding and accepting its creed by indoctrination? How can an outsider join a Baptist church upon conviction, unless he knows and believes what Baptists hold?” Lofton did not mince words in his criticism of the present-day Baptist ministry:

Ah! but we have changed tactics. We emulate other denominations now, by trying to be most attractive. Let us have fine music, eloquent preachers, and elegant churches! Let us beat the other people at their own game! Yes, it obviates the cross of sound and faithful preaching! You will not have to talk about baptism and church government and communion, and election then! Get nice people in your church! Secure the first-class young men, and the prettiest ladies, and the finest accommodations, and the most inviting appointments, and you will catch the world! Vinegar never catches flies! Molasses does! Sugar pills! that’s the way—and keep your mouth closed on whatsoever is unpopular or unpalatable to the public taste.

Lofton saw the continuation of such trends as being a threat to the viability of Baptists: “If our denomination is built up after this fashion, for fifty years, it will go to pieces. We have almost gone to seed in England, with the ‘New Theology;’ and in some quarters in this country, we are as loose and slipshod as it is possible to be, without losing our denominational status.” Lofton encouraged, “Let us, as preachers, shun not to declare ‘all the counsel of God.’ Let us ‘cry aloud and spare not’ upon the sins of the church and of the world. Let us discuss our peculiarities, and hold up our doctrines to the masses.” Lofton realized that such an approach to the ministry would not please everyone and would cause Baptist churches to lose numbers, but it would create churches “morally and doctrinally stronger than we are at this very time. I believe we could lose one-fourth of the Baptist denomination and be better off—be more effective—and do more good than we are doing.” For those who considered the costs of such a ministry too high, Lofton countered, “Let us remember that splendid churches, and liberal giving, and great revivals, and magnificent display mean nothing, denominationally, when half our churches

grow from pride, instead of principle, and live in the indulgence of worldliness, instead of godliness.”⁷⁶

Regardless of such warnings, however, Baptists continued to measure success with statistics. The annual report of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta provided for *The Christian Index* is typical of the growing tendency among Southern Baptists to find church prosperity in their financial and membership statistics. Prefacing a summary of the report, the anonymous writer stated that “every Christian heart was made glad by the cheering reports that were made, *showing a year of unexampled prosperity in the history of the Church*, and the enthusiasm of the Pastor was fully shared by all his members.” The amount of funds collected, the number of new members received, the average worship attendance, the average Sabbath-school attendance and enrollment, and the amount of money given to missions were delineated. The concluding paragraph revealed the importance of such positive numbers: “The financial exhibit and the prosperous condition of the church shows a remarkable amount of Christian activity and is another evidence of the immense power of *littles*.” The writer elaborated: “When hundreds of people work together in harmony, marvelous results follow. The young men, the young ladies and the little girls have their organizations and their active work goes to swell the grand aggregate and make that grand word, *success*, the conclusion of their labors.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶Geo. A. Lofton, “The Whole Gospel,” *The Christian Index*, 22 March 1888, 2.

⁷⁷“A Prosperous Church,” *The Christian Index*, 9 July 1885, 9. At times the equating of church and pastoral success with numerical increase was implied but not directly stated. A church’s statistics may be provided for information and to thank God for his blessings. Still, one is able to see the increase in numbers as a barometer of success. For instance, a report from Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, provided “the work of the church for the past year, from May 1, 1885, to May 1, 1886.” Numbers were provided showing members received into the church, losses to membership, the present number of members, the number received at the main church and at the mission churches, the total number of members at the main church and at the mission churches, the amount of money provided “for various objects,” the number of new members received into the church over the previous five years (which comprised the tenure of T. T. Eason’s pastorate to that point), and the total contribution “to religious objects” during that time. The final sentence stated that “the Walnut-street Baptist is probably as large as any white church of any denomination in the South.” “Dr. T. T. Eaton, in Louisville,” *The Christian Index*, 13 May 1886, 4. For a similar example, see S. Boykin, “The First Baptist Church at Macon. A Brief Historical Review,” *The Christian Index*, 12 November 1885, 2.

During this period books dealing with church efficiency were promoted in the pages of the *Index*. The *Index* observed, "Many a minister in these times would lose caste with his people, if it were found that his library contained no works designed specifically to assist him in discharging the duties of his office." Not only ministers, however, were to become well read concerning church work: "And we suppose the times are coming when works guiding church members in Christian work, will be considered equally necessary to the highest reputation for acceptable membership." Of Washington Gladden's edited work, *Parish Problems: Hints and Helps for the People of the Churches*, the *Index* wrote, "When such men as Drs. G. R. Leavitt, Reuen Thomas, H. M. Scudder, Josiah Strong, J. H. Vincent and Lyman Abbott (to pass by other names of equal celebrity) speak, and speak on themes vital to the efficiency and development of the churches, they ought not to lack for hearers." The reviewer suggested, "We hope they will find many [hearers] among the intelligent, active and liberal laymen and laywomen, to whom the *INDEX* pays its weekly visits."⁷⁸

While many placed responsibility for the numerical growth of churches upon pastors, others pointed to the church members themselves. Introducing an article from the *Christian Intelligencer*, the *Index* noted, "True, there are times when some short-coming of the pastor occasions a falling off of the attendance, but it is oftener the case that the blame rests with the members. It matters not how great the 'drawing powers' of the pastor may be, it will prove of little benefit, unless there is a 'holding power,' evinced by the people to whom he preaches."⁷⁹ J. H. Kilpatrick, longtime Georgia Baptist pastor

⁷⁸"Literary," *The Christian Index*, 6 October 1887, 11 See also the short review of Gladden's *The Christian Pastor, and the Working Class*, in "Among the Books," *The Christian Index*, 21 July 1898, 4.

⁷⁹"The Religious Press," *The Christian Index*, 14 November 1889, 1. The *Index* included the following quote from the "well written and interesting article" of the *Intelligencer*, entitled "The Drawing Power of the Pew": "The best way to keep a church full is for every member to attend regularly every service. That will help; then let every member bring as many people as possible with him. Draw them in. There is a great deal of nonsensical talk now-a-days about getting ministers that will draw. A man came up to my study the other day from one of the churches near Murray Hill that is vacant, and he said, 'I wish you could

and denominational leader, also complained that church members were looking to their pastors to bring about church prosperity instead of church members themselves working in reliance upon the Holy Spirit. Kilpatrick counseled: “My brother, my sister, in Christ, esteem your pastor; esteem him highly; esteem him very highly in love for his work’s sake—this is the divine command; but when you place such reliance upon him—when you look to him to do your work, and even that of the Spirit, too, you lay on him a load of responsibility that may well crash him to the earth.”⁸⁰

While Southern Baptists were becoming increasingly conscious of utilizing organizational efficiency for church growth, they were unanimous in their condemnation of the use of novelties to effect increased attendance. With disapproval the *Index* communicated the “‘bitter rivalry’ between two Methodist churches in Norfolk, Va.,” reported by the Methodist *Southern Christian Advocate*. One had gained the upper hand in attendance with an excellent choir director, so the other added a fifteen-piece brass band. The *Index* described such “a state of things [as] equally ludicrous and painful.” The Georgia paper charged, “It grows out of an error which we fear is very widespread in these times—the error of not relying, in the spirit of faith, on the attraction of the gospel and of a holy life for the success of ministers and churches, but resorting to worldly, sensational

recommend us a minister for our church.’ I said, ‘I can recommend a dozen!’ He seemed rather bluffed at that; thought that was a large number, and said, ‘Won’t you suggest a name?’ And I went on suggesting one name after another. I suggested one man, and he said, ‘I understand that man has not a very strong voice.’ I suggested another. ‘Well, I understand that man wears a black cravat in the pulpit!’ Another man. ‘Well, I understand that man is not a very good reader!’ And another man. ‘Well, I understand that man has a very stiff and formal delivery!’ Finally, he said, ‘Well, what we want in our church is a minister that will draw.’ ‘Oh, no, my Christian friend, what you want is a church that will hold. You haven’t got it. Twenty congregations have passed through your church in the last twenty years, and they have passed through because you have not had a church that will hold. You want a church that will hold the people when they get into it. The minister cannot hold. Success depends not half so much upon the minister, as upon you, the church.’” “The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 14 November 1889, 1.

⁸⁰Kilpatrick, “No Royal Road to Church Prosperity. IV,” 4.

and fashionable influences to eke out that attraction, at the peril of impairing and displacing it.”⁸¹

I. R. Branham, then an associate editor of *The Christian Index*, commented upon a sermon entitled “The Church of the Future” delivered by John L. Scudder, pastor of Tabernacle Congregational Church in Jersey City, New Jersey. Branham maintained, “We hope it is ‘the church of the future.’ Not of the ‘near future,’ but of the far, very far future.” While some of what Scudder proposed was well received, other items were seen as bringing the world into the church. Rev. Scudder is quoted as proposing, “She [the church] must have attractions for the youth by billiard tables and other games which are at present sought in the saloons. All these amusements can be sanctified. In less than ten years the athletic department will be recognized in the church, and the time will come when you will see the church having her baseball team.” Rev. Scudder maintained, “There are too many barriers around the church, and I would like to see some of them come down. Fanatics have ruled her long enough. Every department can be so made as to lead to Christ.” From what was evidently the original article telling of Scudder’s sermon, Scudder’s “success in reaching the masses was applauded: “In connection with

⁸¹“The Religious Press,” *The Christian Index*, 29 May 1890, 1. For other articles denouncing novelties, see “Brass in the Church,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 19 October 1876, 4; “An Age of Progress,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 26 October 1876, 5; “Brass in the Church,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 November 1876, 4; “A Fashionable Calamity,” *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 2 August 1877, 1.

Even attempts to do gospel work by those unaffiliated with organized churches would receive aspersion by Baptists. The *Index* editorialized against Atlanta meeting in which “professional ‘revivalists’ have taken up the work. Meetings are held daily and nightly, not in the churches, but in a large warehouse which has been rented and fitted up for the purpose. These meetings are largely attended; it is said that sometimes there are four or five thousand persons present. We have attended none of them, but we have heard all about them from reliable witnesses, and are constrained to say that we do not approve of the proceedings.” The *Index* was unmoved by arguments justifying the meetings because of their reported positive results: “It may be said that the thousands who crowd the warehouse would not attend the churches. Quite likely. This shows that novelty and mere love of excitement have more to do with the attendance than genuine religious feeling; and deducting the number of those who attend from those unworthy motives, there are probably not so many in attendance as would be found in the churches. So the great tidal wave is not altogether a *religious* wave. It is largely a curiosity wave, and a sensation wave.” The *Index* counseled, “Dear brethren, dear friends of Atlanta, be sober, be circumspect, go to your churches, listen to your pastors, seek your closets, and there on your knees, and with the Book in your hand ask God for light and blessing, and walk diligently in the way of his commandments. Is not this good advice?” “A Tidal Wave,” 8.

his church at Jersey City, he has an orchestra, a brass band and Sunday-school drum corps, a gymnasium, club rooms for young men, reading rooms and an amusement hall for boys, sewing schools for girls, and a vigorous athletic association, whose baseball team is one of the strongest in the State.” After proposing amusements which he felt were a logical extension of Scudder’s proposal, Branham lamented, “Then the Dr., thus equipped with church amusements, would reach the masses, or the masses [*sic*] would quickly reach him with a rush.”⁸²

Conclusion

The latter third of the nineteenth century saw the development of a remarkable shift among Southern Baptists in their views of the gospel ministry. As seen in the previous chapter, most of what they believed about the gospel ministry—the call to the ministry, preparation for the ministry, the call to a particular church, and the mutual responsibilities of pastors and church members—remained, for the most part, consistent with their Baptist forefathers. The one area in which noticeable and verifiable change occurred was in the work of the minister. Pastors began to be viewed as executives over the organization of the church. Effective churches were those whose members were most efficiently organized to carry out the work of the church, and the most effective pastors were those who most efficiently organized their churches.

The ever-increasing ecclesiastical call among Southern Baptist leaders was for pastors to find something for everyone to do. At first, the organizational structure was simple, but as the period progressed, the church structure became more complex with the addition of new organizations and societies within the local churches. More complex structures increased the areas in which church members could find their place, and, it was

⁸²I. R. B. [I. R. Branham], “The Church of the Future,” *The Christian Index*, 28 August 1890, 8–9. One pastor commented that “the want of this element of strength [personal piety among the membership] cannot be atoned for by fine church edifices, drawing buffoonery and clap-trap stuff and funny methods in the pulpit and enchanting choirs.” W. S. Rogers, “Elements of Church Strength,” 2.

believed, would bring about more growth in the churches. The motive for organizational efficiency was doubtlessly noble. Pastors became convinced that their effectiveness could be multiplied if they were to organize their memberships to carry out work in the church. More people could be evangelized and added to the church and, consequently, all of society would benefit from these changed persons. Even church members who had not been faithful in worship attendance would now be aided in their own Christian growth by working in the church, thereby encouraging their attendance and, consequently, their own spiritual growth.

That pastors would be seen as the executives of these more complicated structures was to be expected. Throughout Baptist history, pastors had been viewed as the spiritual leaders and overseers. As the pastors went, so went their churches. Now, though, more weight was placed upon the organizational and leadership skills of pastors to bring about numerical growth. Pastors were successful if their churches were growing numerically, and success could be assured through organizational efficiency.

This view of success marks a significant departure from the perspective of earlier Baptists. Before, the fidelity of pastors to the Bible and to their calling brought the greatest approval. Now, leading their churches to numerical growth, finer buildings, and increased budgets signified that pastors were successful. Before, quantifiable fruit of the effort of pastors was something left in the will of God. Equally diligent pastors could see varying results of their efforts. Now, evident fruit could be virtually ensured through leading churches to become efficient organizations.

One area that suffered from the concept of organizational efficiency, however, was the spiritual state of church members themselves. A central Baptist identity was that the church was comprised of regenerate members, and even proponents of organizational efficiency warned of bringing the unconverted into the church's membership. One who was regenerated by God no longer sought to live according to the standards of the world.

Such a one would not have to be coerced to attend worship meetings because of his changed nature. In earlier days church members who were lax in worship attendance would have been confronted and disciplined because they were living as the unregenerate. Now they were “put to work.” The idea now was that those who were busy in the work of the church would be faithful in their attendance. Unfortunately, the root spiritual cause of their unfaithfulness was left unexposed.

Not all Southern Baptists were pleased with the increasing emphasis upon organizational efficiency. Some Baptists viewed the trend with mild concern, noting that their plans actually had little to do with the evident fruit—God had increased their numbers as He had chosen. Other Baptists expressed considerable concern, believing that too much emphasis was being placed upon numerical success and that the pastor was being distracted from his primary duties of watching over the souls of the members of his church.

Nevertheless, the shift toward organizational efficiency was becoming more ensconced in Baptist thinking. Despite questions on the one hand and forthright opposition on the other, the pursuit of growth made organizational efficiency too attractive to resist. During the next twenty-five years, as will be seen in the following chapter, the transition of the latter nineteenth century would become accepted practice among progressive Southern Baptists.

CHAPTER 7

THE GOSPEL MINISTRY AMONG SOUTHERN BAPTISTS FROM 1901-1925: THE ACCEPTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY

While the move by Southern Baptists toward organizational efficiency took place over the latter third of the nineteenth century, the concept of organizational efficiency became the accepted way of thinking by denominational leaders and progressive pastors by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century. Many Baptists announced during the early twentieth century that churches had entered a new day. Looking at the cultural landscape, Baptists saw a world much more complex than that of their predecessors. No longer could the church merely be a preaching station if it was to grow and impact society. Businesses no longer operated by the laissez-faire attitude of the past, and neither could churches if they were to remain relevant in changing times.

Consequently, churches increasingly viewed business practices as worthy of emulation in their spiritual enterprises. After all, businesses had proven that the best way to achieve efficiency in their operations was to organize their workers to do specific tasks which would contribute to the overall success of the enterprise. Because such methods worked in business, so they should work in the church. The basic criterion for adopting a method was whether it worked.

Advancing the progressive mindset of the latter decades of the nineteenth century, Southern Baptists maintained that the only way for churches to reach a high level of efficiency was to find a job for everyone. Members who had tasks to do in the church would be happy and faithful members, while those members who were not given something to do would become disinterested and fall by the wayside. Consequently, the num-

ber of organizations or societies within the churches increased in order to provide a place of service for everyone. Testimonies from “successful” churches encouraged others to strive toward organizational efficiency if they wanted to grow and be effective.

The key person, of course, continued to be the pastor. He alone was given the biblical authority to serve as the overseer; therefore, he alone would be responsible to see that each of his members was involved in some specific organization within his church. He would be responsible for drawing plans and devising methods to increase the efficiency of his church. He would be responsible for leading his church to achieve greater statistics and meet quantifiable goals. In a word, his leading his church to achieve such growth would reveal that he was successful as a minister.

Even with the acceptance of the legitimacy of organizational efficiency, pastors were warned not to place their faith in plans and methods. Their work, after all, was a spiritual work. Plans and methods were inefficient if the missions of evangelism and discipleship were forgotten. Organizational efficiency was simply a means to an end. Even with this caveat, however, there could be no return to the past. The preacher had to do more than preach and teach and watch over the souls of his congregation. Complex times required a religious business manager, not a soul physician.

The Perception of a New Day

After the turn of the century, the move of Baptist churches toward organizational efficiency had progressed too little to satisfy progressive leaders. Developing and implementing more advanced organizational structures would produce greater efficiency in both churches individually and the denomination collectively. Speaking of the denomination as a whole, one Baptist complained, “We Baptists lack organization. . . . The only rational reason we can assign for the rapid growth of Romanism in this country is the unswerving loyalty and complete organization of its votaries. They doubled their number of communicants during the last decade, while we [Protestants] increased a little over

seventy percent.” More could be accomplished were Baptists to become better organized: “This is the day of vast organizations, of achievements, surpassing the wildest fancies of the days in which even some of us were lusty lads. There never has been a time when men and means so limitless were so easily amassed. *The greatest of opportunities is here, and no loyal Christian will remain heedless.*”¹ Later in this period, well-known Baptist pastor W. H. Faust argued, “We are living in a period of organization. . . . The great corporations of the United States are organized from the president down to the humblest employee. *Efficiency is greatly promoted by well-nigh perfect organization.*”²

Again, characteristic of the position of progressive Baptists was this statement by Gaines Dobbins, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary’s professor of church efficiency: “The one word which most nearly characterizes our modern world is efficiency.”³ Churches organized into different departments in which every member had a role were deemed efficient, and the pastor overseeing such an organized church was deemed an efficient pastor. Churches which failed to become more organized were counseled to do so in order to be more efficient in their work. One must be reminded, though, that this acceptance of organizational efficiency did not denote a conscious rejection of

¹Jason Scarboro, “Business Methods in Missions,” *The Christian Index*, 13 April 1911, 2. Emphasis added. For similar views, see G. L. Yates, “Big Kingdom Business,” *The Christian Index*, 10 April 1919, 9; B. S. Railey, “Georgia Baptists and Big Kingdom Business,” *The Christian Index*, 9 December 1920, 11, 22; H. D. Johnson, review of *The Business of Missions*, by Cornelius H. Patton, *The Christian Index*, 28 February 1924, 31.

²W. H. Faust, “Preachers’ Conference,” *The Christian Index*, 2 February 1922, 19.

³“Remarkable Remarks,” *The Christian Index*, 28 October 1920, 8. Merely doing what had been done in the past would no longer suffice in this age of progress. J. T. Miller, a professor and dean at Bessie Tift College in Georgia, wrote, “Progress in the past has been, in a great measure, a ‘hit or miss’ process—blind, lacking in a well directed aim and carefully organized plan. . . . That we are living in the dawn of a new era, probably no one would seriously question. . . . Growing out of the results of the World War, the individual has been forced to formulate a somewhat new philosophy of life—in its nature more specific, definite, and democratic than hitherto existed. This spirit is making itself sensibly felt in every form of our institutional life, and especially in the life of the church.” J. T. Miller, “Progress Consciously Directed,” *The Christian Index*, 29 April 1920, 5. See also H. R. Bernard, “The Program of Texas Baptists,” *The Christian Index*, 21 January 1915, 8; “A Commendation,” *The Christian Index*, 7 January 1915, 1; William Russell Owen, “The Consecration of Change,” *The Christian Index*, 11 March 1920, 3, 6–7.

biblical fidelity on the part of its proponents. They believed that they were remaining true to biblical mandates for the ministry as well as to their Baptist heritage.⁴ Nevertheless, there continued an articulated recognition that life was now more complicated than during the time of their predecessors, and churches, as well as their pastors, could no longer function in the simple ways of the past.⁵ Their acceptance of organizational efficiency, however, would raise concerns from Baptists who feared that the main work of the ministry—conversion and the care of souls—was being sacrificed on the altar of greater and more intricate local church machinery.⁶

That the concept of organizational efficiency had become a part of Baptist life is indicated by a February 2, 1907 *Index* editorial which pressed for greater organization.

⁴One must recognize that every use of words such as *efficiency* and *efficient* did not mean *organizational* efficiency. For instance, effective teaching in the Sunday school was deemed necessary for the Sunday school to be efficient in the students' acquisition of biblical truth. C. H. S. Jackson, president of Bessie Tift College, wrote, "I suppose that all know that the Bible is the most known of and the least understood of any current literature. Everybody is supposed to own a Bible, but one in a thousand may be called a Bible reader. The Sunday schools are fine, when considered from the standpoint of Sunday school or no Sunday school; *but when considered from the standpoint of efficiency, they are a joke.* The lack of information among church members of the history and the doctrines of the Bible is understood and winked at by the real student of the Bible." C. H. S. Jackson, "How May the Churches Make the Free Schools More Efficient," *The Christian Index*, 7 May 1914, 8. Italics added. Jackson's point is obvious—his concern is not with organizational efficiency but with intellectual efficiency. For another example of the use of the term *efficiency* other than organizational, see "Efficiency in Service," *The Christian Index*, 7 October 1915, 9.

⁵The perceived need of the times helped to bring about the move toward organizational efficiency. In response to a question from Brother S. W. Gresham of Duluth, Georgia, concerning the biblical authority for a board of trustees in a Baptist church, the *Index* responded, "We do not know of any authority in the Bible for a board of trustees. *Neither do we know of any for a clerk or treasurer or ushers or superintendent of Sunday schools or presidents of W. M. S.'s or B. Y. P. U.'s. Experience has seemed to prove the need of such offices in our local churches.*" [Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 15 February 1923, 25. Emphasis added.

⁶Those who promoted organizational efficiency were themselves quite aware of detractors. One supporter wrote, "Frequently we see those who seemingly think that having method in things religious is placing spiritual things on too much of a basis of sordid commerce, failing to grasp the fact that of all beings God is the most perfect example of method in every application." H. J. Thomas, Jr., "How to Engage the Young Christians in Service for the Lord," *The Christian Index*, 24 August 1911, 2. W. W. Gaines answered those who criticized the growing number of organizations in churches. He acknowledged, "It is true that we have a good many organizations; perhaps too many." Nevertheless, organizations were needed and were providing a necessary service: "And yet, has it ever occurred to you that underneath each and every one of these organizations is one and the same basic purpose, that of using the unused?" W. W. Gaines, "Our Many Organizations," *The Christian Index*, 29 August 1907, 2–3.

The editor⁷ recounted changes in church organization which had taken place in Baptist churches since 1875 with the organizing of the Central Committee of Woman's Missionary Societies in South Carolina ("the first state organization in the South") in that year, the "enlistment of Sunday schools in the work of missions," the organizing of children "into bands, whose chief duties were with reference to the spreading of the kingdom of God in all the world," and the enlisting of "the youth of the churches, those of an age between the Sunday-school scholars and the adult church member" for missionary and benevolent enterprises. With these new organizations, though, the "grown male members of the churches in the specific work of missions" had been largely overlooked. New organizations, though, were now arising to overcome this failure: "But a *new day has dawned*, and now the men of the churches are awakening to a realization of the great responsibilities that rest upon them to do this work, and the great privileges that they have in the work." Here the editor revealed an awareness that the churches had changed considerably during the previous decades with their additional organizations designed to increase the effectiveness of the work of the churches, in this case with missionary efforts. Now men were being organized to do their part.⁸

⁷The editors of the *Index* at this time were T. P. Bell and B. J. W. Graham. The writer is doubtlessly Bell because the first sentence of the article states, "In 1875 we were ordained to the ministry in a large country church in South Carolina, which we continued to serve as pastor for several years." According to the *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*, Bell "was educated at the University of South Carolina and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, attending the seminary at Greenville, S. C., 1874-76, and graduating from it at Louisville in 1880 He was ordained in 1875 and was pastor of rural churches while a student at Greenville." Homer L. Grice, "Bell, Theodore Percy," in *Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), 1:155.

⁸"Some Changes," *The Christian Index*, 7 February 1907, 6-7. Out of this multi-denominational movement would arise the Laymen's Missionary Movement of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1907 which would be renamed the Baptist Brotherhood in 1950. See also "Consensus of Opinion on the Georgia Baptist Laymen's Movement," *The Christian Index*, 3 March 1910, 1; "The Laymen's Movement," *The Christian Index*, 17 March 1910, 3; "The Laymen's Movement," *The Christian Index*, 17 March 1910, 2; and "A Moveless Movement," *The Christian Index*, 18 May 1916, 2, for endorsements as well as concerns over the new movement. Three weeks after the initial editorial referenced above, an editorial inclusion in the *Index* appears to lament the beginning of another new men's organization: "Of the making of new organizations there is no end. The last of which we have received notice and which we are requested to exploit, is 'The Baptist Brotherhood,' which was organized in Boston on the seventeenth

That a new day in church organization was perceived to have dawned is also indicated in E. C. Dargan's *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches*, with its second edition published in 1905. Among the reasons for the study of the subject of ecclesiology, Dargan wrote: "*The remarkable and apparently increasing attention that is paid in our times to activity in all the varied methods of church work, together with the vast interest of the age in social problems, makes it necessary that the pastor and preacher should give careful study to church work in all its phases and relation.*"⁹ H. J. Thomas, Jr., was concerned about getting young converts busy in the local church. He wrote, "in referring to method here, I wish to stress *the great need of scientific method in all that we undertake to accomplish*. All the world's work is being brought more and more to a recognized

inst. In its constitution it says: 'The object of the Brotherhood shall be to organize the men of our congregations with reference to spiritual development, social fellowship, a closer relation to the church and a cooperating sympathy with all Christian progress.' Dr. F. E. Marble, 2 Arlington street, Cambridge, Mass., was the chairman of the meeting at which the organization was launched." [Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 28 February 1907, 1. J. Marcus Kester, Educational Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the SBC, proposed in 1923 that each church organize a "Church School of Missions," recently recommended by the Workers' Council of the Woman's Missionary Union. Such schools would be organized into graded classes similar to the Sunday school, include not only children but also adults, and could meet during the mid-week prayer meeting. J. Marcus Kester, "The Church School of Missions," *The Christian Index*, 19 July 1923, 10. See also J. M. Kester, "A Fundamental to Worthy Kingdom Extension," *The Christian Index*, 27 September 1923, 6.

Southern Baptists, for the most part, remained opposed to organizations within the church which were ultimately under the control of a parachurch body. One such organization was the "Win-One Classes," a movement "to organize the boys from fifteen to twenty years old" in the Sunday schools. The *Index* characteristically maintained, "The church is a sovereign body, and it is incompatible to have any kind of an organization within it over which it has no control." "A Mule Named 'Circumstance,'" *The Christian Index*, 14 October 1915, 3. For a similar view, see P. E. Burroughs, "Berean and Fidelis Bible Classes—How and Why They Came," *The Christian Index*, 20 August 1914, 8–9, 17.

⁹Edwin Charles Dargan, *Ecclesiology: A Study of the Churches*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Charles T. Dearing, 1905), 11. Emphasis added. This quote is not meant to imply that Dargan viewed such church duties as comprising the pastor's primary focus. For instance, Dargan added, "Nor should the weighty matter of worship escape his [the pastor's] thoughtful and reverential notice. Neglect of the worship of God, even on the part of professing Christian people, is a painful phenomenon of our times. The earnest pastor of today faces no more momentous question than that of restoring worship to its rightful place in the thought and life of his people." *Ibid.*, 11-12. W. D. Weatherford likewise saw the need for greater efficiency, albeit in the development of young people in extending Christian influence in their college or community: "The problem of efficiency in Christian work is a pressing one. How to so organize the Christian activities in the local community so that they shall deliver the maximum power to the lives of men and women, must be faced and answered by every earnest young person." W. D. Weatherford, "Christian Training During the Summer," *The Christian Index*, 15 May 1913, 5. W. W. Landrum, at the time pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, described his effectiveness as an older pastor through his organization of his church. W. W. Landrum, "After the Dead Line is Passed," *The Christian Index*, 23 June 1910, 1–2.

standard of a methodical course of procedure, and *surely in the work of evangelizing the world there is a need for the very highest efficiency in agency and talent.*"¹⁰

The desire for greater efficiency among Southern Baptists was being addressed at both national and state levels. The Centennial Committee of the SBC recommended to the convention in 1900 that Southern Baptists devise more efficient ways to fund its benevolent causes. In 1914 the Efficiency Commission suggested measures which would enable the Southern Baptist Convention better to advance its causes in a more effective manner. In 1916 the SBC constituted a committee of five leaders "to prepare 'A Manual of Baptist Church Organization and Methods', which may form a working basis for a uniform program of methods for our churches by which they may pattern their work in the hope of all getting together on similar lines of highest church efficiency and financial uniformity in denominational support."¹¹ The work was published the next year under

¹⁰Thomas, "How to Engage the Young Christians in Service for the Lord," 2. Emphasis added. Baptist churches would see value in establishing standards to measure efficiency. See "Standard of Excellence," *The Christian Index*, 13 March 1919, 14; "New AA-1 Standard of Excellence for Baptist Young People's Unions of Georgia," *The Christian Index*, 7 July 1921, 1. Baptists, though aware of the changes in their culture, cautioned against changes in their message. W. J. McGlothlin, professor of church history at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, acknowledged that "there is at present much discussion of the special characteristics of the age in which we live and the difficulties which these conditions create for the modern preacher. The age is thought to be marked off sharply from all preceding ages in many ways. Its knowledge of and power over material nature; the gradual disappearance of the wonder and mystery of the world through the explanation of natural phenomena; its materialism and secularism; its passion for testable knowledge and palpable reality; its historical and critical spirit; its skepticism and doubt—these and other characteristics are thought to be markedly pronounced at the present time and to generate an atmosphere that is particularly uncongenial to Christianity." To those who implied that "a new gospel and a new preacher and a new preaching" were needed, McGlothlin asserted, "Whatever superficial modifications have been wrought in the characteristics of men, fundamentally they remain the same. Those common qualities that make them human beings have continued and will persist substantially unchangeable." W. J. McGlothlin, *A Vital Ministry: The Pastor of To-Day in the Service of Man* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1913), 26–27.

¹¹Item 71 in the Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1916, cited in Selsus E. Tull et al., *Church Organization and Methods: A Manual for Baptist Churches* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1917), 4.

the title *Church Organization and Methods: A Manual for Baptist Churches*. In 1917 the Convention created its Executive Committee to direct and oversee the work of the SBC.¹²

Texas Baptists in particular were lauded for reorganizing their state convention. One Georgia Baptist deemed their streamlining the several Texas boards into an executive board as “the most significant movement I have ever seen in the religious world.” He exclaimed, “The hand of the God of order is upon the Texans. These brethren, among other things, are through with beating the tom-tom and going on dress parade. Under the program, *efficiency will cream to the top*, where it belongs, but where it does not always get.” He chided Georgia Baptists for being too slow to pursue a like-minded course in efficiency. Revealing how influential organizational efficiency had become, he wrote, “I have been called upon to write and read a paper on ‘Some Baptist Heresies,’ at Memphis, Tenn., in the near future. *Our heresies as to doctrines of grace do not disturb me as much as heresies in practices.*”¹³

The Spirit of Pragmatism

Baptists accepted the concept of organizational efficiency because it produced tangible results. The *Index* editorialized: “‘What can it accomplish?’ is the question that meets every man today who presents to the world for its consideration either some new invention, or some new theory of social, civil or political activity; or some religious belief and practice.” That which applied to individuals also applied to organizations: “‘What are you accomplishing for the betterment of men and of society?’ is the question which every organization of men has to meet and answer. *And the higher the claim of such organization the more searching the investigation that then will make into the results it is*

¹²McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 610–14. For articles concerning the Efficiency Commission, see “A Call to Prayer,” *The Christian Index*, 26 March 1914, 3; J. F. Love, “The Efficiency Commission and a Word of Admonition,” *The Christian Index*, 27 August 1914, 8–9; W. O. Carver, “The Present Pressure,” *The Christian Index*, 10 December 1914, 8–9; “The Efficiency Commission’s Report not Satisfactory,” *The Christian Index*, 27 May 1915, 1–2.

¹³Bernard, “The Program of Texas Baptists,” 8. Emphasis added.

achieving.” Obviously, then, those churches which were producing tangible results were the ones which had satisfactorily answered the question. For support, the work of the Salvation Army was presented:

Some years ago, the Salvation Army began its operations, and by its strange, bizarre [*sic*] methods, shocked the sensibilities of the thoughtful. It had to run the gauntlet of suspicion, ridicule, contempt, and misrepresentation. But it stood the test. It has done a great work where no one else was working. In the parlance of the day, it has “made good;” and now men of every creed and nation recognize it as a great power for good. Its officers get a hearing anywhere and purses open to its pleas that remain closed to those of regular churches.

Neither the doctrine nor the methods of the Salvation Army were examined for biblical fidelity. The criterion for approving the Salvation Army’s methods was that they had “made good.” The *Index* found support in the words of Jesus: “‘By their fruits ye shall know them’ is as true of churches and denominations as it is of individuals.”¹⁴

¹⁴“A Trend Among Christians. No. 4,” *The Christian Index*, 25 April 1912, 6. Emphasis added. The *Index* opined: “In business, method is the principal thing. It must be employed in every detail if the highest degree of officency [*sic*] is to be acquired. . . . Sane methods are essential to success in every department of life, as much so in denominational life as anywhere else. *The rapid growth of Baptists during the past fifteen years is in the main due to the methods that have been employed.*” “Methods Made a Menace,” *The Christian Index*, 27 January 1916, 2–3. Emphasis added. One finds the spirit of pragmatism pervasive throughout churches during this period. Charles C. Davison, Jr., encouraging other churches to adopt, as his church had, “the Duplex envelope system,” introduced his article with this maxim: “The test of our day is: Will the thing do what it is made to do? Does it succeed.” Chas. C. Davison, Jr., “It Works,” *The Christian Index*, 13 February 1913, 8. For another article lauding the effectiveness of the envelope system, see Arch C. Cree, “Stewardship Solves the Problem,” *The Christian Index*, 17 April 1924, 19. Pointing to results as justification for means was even used to support biblical doctrine by some early twentieth-century evangelicals. For instance, the *Index* carried an article from *Missions* entitled “The Religion That Brings Results,” by Francis E. Clark, D.D. Clark had visited mission stations throughout the world for more than twenty years. Based upon his experience, he wrote, “I have no hesitation in saying that the more thoroughly evangelical the type, the more earnest I find the workers, and the more successful the work.” Doctrines were important, he maintained, because of the results which they produced: “But there are doctrines that cut the nerve of missions, as has been proved in more than one or two solitary instances. The belief that sin is regrettable but not fatal, that man’s fall is always a ‘fall upward,’ that our Lord is an admirable pattern to follow and an excellent teacher but not a Divine Savior; these are all doctrines that cut the nerve of missions, and there are mission stations today that are suffering and dying because the early belief in the great evangelical doctrines has been lost or at least obscured.” Interestingly, Clark stated: “I am not arguing for or against these beliefs. I am simply stating facts as any traveler may observe them. But these are facts which are worthy of consideration, not only by the boards that send out missionaries to the foreign field, but facts that concern the rank and file of our churches, who give their hard-earned dollars for the support of missions.” Admittedly, Clark did care about doctrine and probably, when pressed, would very well have said that evangelical doctrines were true regardless of visible results. The point, however, is that the entire article is a justification for adhering to evangelical doctrines because of the results produced. Francis E. Clark, “The Religion That Brings Results,” *The Christian Index*, 7 August 1913, 10. An exchange in the *Index* from *The Examiner* contended: “The church that is not awake to the changed condition of things to day, that

It was not enough, though, for churches to be successful in seeing conversions,

is relying upon old methods, that is waiting for a more favorable outlook, will soon find itself out of service." "What the Baptist Editors Say," *The Christian Index*, 10 October 1901, 5. For a view challenging the assumption that evangelicals needed to change their methods because they were losing their influence among the people, see an exchange from the *Journal and Messenger*, "What the Baptist Editors Say," *The Christian Index*, 23 January 1902, 2.

Some Baptists even viewed New Testament churches as providing unsatisfactory examples for modern churches. C. H. Wetherbe wrote, "Well, those ancient churches were not nearly so perfect as some of our croaking Christians imagine, nor such models of propriety and piety as some of our folks think. The fact is, they were not such patterns as should be imitated in these days, and in our land. One may readily see this fact, if he will read New Testament history. The apostles and other leaders had a great deal of trouble from the conduct of many of these churches." Wetherbe pointed to "divisions," "bitter contentions," and "rank heresies" which had infected the first-century churches. He continued, "Their methods of church work were not always exemplary. Their missionary methods were not as well organized as many in our land are. Remember also that Christianity was in its infant state. There was great room for growth and necessary movement. *The composition of the churches was of a lower order and quality than is the case in most of the churches in our land now.* No, it is not wise to completely copy the New Testament churches. They were only beginning. *Great progress has been made since those days.* Let us be very thankful." C. H. Wetherbe, "New Testament Churches," *The Christian Index*, 11 March 1915, 8. Emphasis added.

Even preaching itself was unable to escape the spirit of pragmatism. Wetherbe, in another article, maintained, "If it be a true Christian church, then there should be a constant addition of regenerated members to the body. This implies the use of suitable methods. It is permissible to employ methods which many would call novel, and perhaps not according to the letter of the Bible. *But I am sure that any method which is not contrary to the spirit and principles of the Bible, and which has for its object the salvation of people and the honor of God, is commendable.*" He goes on to retell a story by Dr. Conwell concerning a young, uneducated preacher who was sent to pastor a church consisting of only a few people. Only five attended worship the first Sunday and only twelve were present the second Sunday. A friend of the young pastor suggested a different approach: "'Why do you not undertake a new idea, and strive to make the church of *some material benefit?* Christ was a benefit wherever he went. He healed the sick, taught the ignorant, and fed the hungry. Why not make a church like that?' The young man was impressed by the idea, and the next Sunday he preached on 'corn.' He had thoroughly studied the subject, and even wrote to an agricultural college for information. There were but nine people in attendance. At home they talked about the subject, discussing the best method for planting corn. The preacher used the sermon to illustrate a great gospel truth." The preacher successively preached on potatoes and beans, each time illustrating "some great spiritual truth." Wetherbe recounted the success of the method: "The congregations grew large, the church becoming so prosperous that it was not only self-supporting, but it helped less prosperous churches. Besides, the entire community made great advancement in material and moral prosperity." Wetherbe concluded, "I am not much in favor of church novelties, *but I commend this example because the method was used for noble purposes. It was a direct aid to spiritual prosperity.*" C. H. Wetherbe, "Methods of Church-Building," *The Christian Index*, 16 May 1912, 2. For a similar rationale concerning the use of propositions to elicit decisions in revival meetings, see T. S. Hubert, "Revival Propositions," *The Christian Index*, 20 November 1913, 8–9. The same reasoning is evident in the call to discontinue or change the traditional Saturday conference of Baptist churches. See W. H. Faust, "The Saturday Conference," *The Christian Index*, 20 February 1913, 8–9.

All Baptists, of course, were not convinced that the end justified the means in spiritual matters. One Baptist decried the growing method of using games for purposes of evangelism: "Whenever the story of the cross fails to attract men and women to Christ and the church, it is folly to resort to any other methods to win souls to Christ. I do not believe that we have to resort to any new fangled plans, such as foot-ball, base-ball, tacky parties, and checkers to win souls. . . . If we indulge with the sinner in the less harmful things in order to win his soul, is it not reasonable and logical that we would have to indulge with some in the more harmful things in order to win them to the Lord? There are many who love the dance, the brothel,

baptisms, and other numerical benchmarks. The churches must look beyond their normal activities in order to help reform society:

But today there is before the Christian world a new and tremendous task. Nay, rather should we have said tasks, "for they are many." There are wrongs to be righted in the social life of the people. There are evils to be driven out of our civic life. There are reforms to be inaugurated that will mean the saving of the young from a thousand snares that Satan and his human imps are setting for them. There are poor and distressed to be relieved. There are ignorant to be educated under Christian influence. There are fields, at home and abroad, teeming with human souls who must be made acquainted with Jesus Christ. And all these, in their manifold forms, are tasks that must be accomplished by those who name the name of Jesus and profess allegiance to him.¹⁵

No longer could pastors simply preach the gospel so that people would be converted.

Now they must also be involved with the reforming of society in general, and only the efficient pastors could lead their churches to accomplish efficiently the tasks set before them. New methods would have to be developed if Southern Baptists were to "make

the card table, the saloon, and many other vices, that care little or nothing for the less harmful things, such as base-ball, foot-ball, and checkers and many other of the less harmful games. . . . To this, I say no—a thousand times no." C. L. Ledford, "Innocent Games in Soul Winning," *The Christian Index*, 18 September 1913, 9. Opposing Ledford's reasoning was Rev. A. J. Smith, writing from Atlanta. Smith denied that the old methods were necessarily better, and that such reasoning had been used to oppose Sunday schools and the W. M. U. He asked, "Why not let the young people know that religion is not meant to be endured, but rather to be enjoyed." A. J. Smith, "Innocent Games in Soul-Winning. Why Not?" *The Christian Index*, 9 October 1913, 6. Writing in support of Smith was A. C. Ward, D.D., who said, "I fully agree with Bro. Smith and cannot refrain from quoting: 'Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.'" Justifying his new methods, Ward wrote, "Our present methods may be new, but for my part I am well pleased with the interest manifested by the young members in my church work. *What we are after is results.* Like one of old I have learned to be 'all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.'" A. C. Ward, "New Methods Effective," *The Christian Index*, 6 November 1913, 8. Emphasis added. Undeterred by Smith's reasoning, Ledford wrote, "I answer his [Smith's] question [Innocent games in soul-winning. Why not?] by saying, because it is not in keeping with God's word, plan and methods. I do not recall a single instance, in God's Word, where he introduces or commands a single game, in order to win a soul. We have no right to introduce any method in soul winning for which we do not find, 'Thus saith the Lord.'" Ledford further explained, "I do not oppose any of the organizations in the church, such as the Baracas, the B. Y. P. U. and the W. M. U. I am opposing the method of social gaming in soul winning. I understand that the organizations in the church are for the spiritual development of the church, rather than for the social development of the church." He concluded, "It is true that our aim is to reach men, but we should reach them by legitimate and Bible methods, and not by methods that cater to the carnal nature of men." C. L. Ledford, "Innocent Games in Soul Winning," *The Christian Index*, 13 November 1913, 8–9. To be sure, pragmatism had its limits. The use of secular means to raise money for the church was rejected by most Baptists. See G. W. Seay, "Box Suppers, Old Maids' Shows, Etc., Used to Raise Money for Church Purposes, Wrong," *The Christian Index*, 16 April 1914, 8–9.

¹⁵"A Trend Among Christians. No. 4," 6.

good.”¹⁶

Model from the World of Business

The business world provided the impetus and the model for organizational efficiency for twentieth-century Baptist churches. F. J. Paxon, president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, suggested to Baptist ministers that the success of his civic and business organization served as proof that better-organized churches would achieve greater success than they could otherwise. He observed,

The gospel of commercial Atlanta is “push,” “get underneath and lift.” What is the gospel of our churches? Commercial Atlanta says: “As soon as a man lands here, land him in the Chamber of Commerce, put him to work, give him some congenial task to do for the city’s good.” Commercial Atlanta looks at the hotel register, and spotting a man, invites his trade, makes him feel at home; and does this daily. Commercial Atlanta sends to a given number of interested subscribers the names, addresses and families of all new-comers, so that these new arrivals can be looked up, invited to trade, etc. All this is legitimate advertising. Now, what are the churches doing along similar lines? Anything? Commercial Atlanta is doing this daily, day in and day out. Are the churches keeping pace spiritually, with the same spirit, with the constant looking after new-comers? Are they? You answer my query. No, I fully believe you will admit that commercial Atlanta is rapidly out-growing spiritual Atlanta. Our churches are too self-centered.

The answer was not to establish a choir, especially one comprised of non-church members, or to bring in a celebrated vocalist. The answer, Paxon offered, was to utilize the church’s membership to lighten the load of the pastor. He observed, “The men in our

¹⁶The direct effect of the church upon society was a theme often heard. D. W. Key approvingly quoted “a widely known writer and student of social order” in establishing how country churches could help rural people appreciate the advantages of rural living, particularly on the farm: “There is no question that the rural prospect is now most inviting. There is opportunity for farm homes that approximate ideal conditions to an alluring degree. *The affinity of this idyllic prospect and the kingdom of heaven is very close.*” D. W. Key, “The Country Church—Some Observations,” *The Christian Index*, 11 January 1912, 2. Emphasis added. In an address to the Georgia Students’ Missionary League, November 10, 1911, E. C. Branson, president of the State Normal School in Athens, similarly stated, “The Country Church Needs a New Ideal, in order to grow in efficiency as a country-life defense. It must still be a center for community worship; it must become the center of social service. For instance, it must generously mother the nearby public school, and fervently concern itself in behalf of better buildings, better fixtures, furnitures and equipments, longer terms, better teachers, and better teaching, rewarded by a better salary.” E. C. Branson, “The Church as a Country-Life Defense: A Study of Home Missions,” *The Christian Index*, 2 May 1912, 2. For similar views, see “For Country Churches to Think About,” *The Christian Index*, 8 May 1913, 8; Faust, “The Mission of the Rural Church,” 9. For a perspective concerning the pastor’s involvement in “racial, industrial, political, educational, and intellectual” cultural factors of the South, see S. C. Mitchell, “The Preacher for the Present South,” *The Review and Expositor* 4 (1907): 86–93.

churches are not organized. The women are, but not the men. . . . Consider the church as the battle-ship of the gospel, and you have the ship ill-manned. The pastor, the pilot—first, but no men behind the guns.” Again, Paxon compared the church to his Chamber of Commerce: “As president of the Chamber of Commerce, I have under me a certain number of active directors, and under them are grouped some sixty active chairman, the most representative men that the city has, professionally, or in business life.” These men were organized for a common cause, “and that the building of Atlanta.” The men of churches should likewise be organized: “an assignment of congenial work, and whole church membership actively at work. Advertisement? What better could you ask for?”¹⁷

The business world also provided a model for Baptist churches in carrying out their denominational financial obligations. Rev. W. H. Faust¹⁸ encouraged his readers to follow accepted business practices in securing and distributing collected monies from their congregants. Many pastors, particularly rural ones, were not leading their churches to contribute their part to denominational causes. Faust offered, “If the rural preachers can be led to see that they are expected to help finance the kingdom, and they are to do it systematically and Scripturally, they will get busy and do it; but under the present methods these unenlisted churches will be hard to reach.” Instead of having special denominational appeals throughout the year, churches should be made aware of the needs and collect and distribute systematically through a budget. Faust wrote, “The ‘Budget Plan’ has business sense behind it. Let the people know exactly how many dollars the State

¹⁷F. J. Paxon, “A Business Man’s View of Church Publicity—the Reason Why,” *The Christian Index*, 20 January 1911, 2–3. Rev. J. A. Bell endorsed Paxon’s suggestions with one caveat: “I believe that the greatest need today in these churches is a regenerated membership.” J. A. Bell, “Assignment of Congenial Work,” *The Christian Index*, 10 February 1911, 2.

¹⁸A fellow Georgia Baptist praised Faust in an article emphasizing the needs of country churches: “W. H. Faust, pastor at Sandy Cross, Oglethorpe county, is said to be one of the best country pastors in the State. His new house of worship at Sandy Cross, seated with nice pews of the circular type furnished by the factories, and other furnishings, indicate that he is efficient. He is being considered by Dr. [J. D.] Mell and others as the man to be sent out as a financial missionary in the Serepta [Association]. It is the beginning of great things for the denomination and for country churches in that section.” Key, “The Country Church—Some Observations,” 2.

proposes to raise. Let them know exactly how every penny is to be spent, systematize the giving and make it proportionate. Don't have seven men clamoring for the privilege of making financial appeals at the same date from the same church." He encouraged, "Let the people know what you want to do and how much money it will take, and then get the pastor and people to give it. If the pastor does not back up the appeal, nothing will be done." Faust believed that the times called for a more systematic method than the haphazard ways of the past. He exulted, "The signs of the times are optimistic. Our business men are beginning to pull in the yoke with the preachers and good women, and *these business methods are going to get us out of the valley and pull us up onto the mountain top, just as sure as business is business.*"¹⁹

By the mid-1920s, pastors were expected to utilize business principles of efficiency if they hoped for their churches to be successful. In March 1927, Dr. Austen Kennedy de Blois, editor of New York's *Watchman-Examiner* and president of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered the Holland Lectures at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. To his seminary audience he put forth, "Few of our ministers have been trained for the peculiar type of hustling business management that a modern church demands. . . . Many of them [theological seminaries] . . . are at the farthest possible remove from the intense activities of the mad world and its standards of productive efficiency." De Blois observed, "Yet this very same productive efficiency is exactly what

¹⁹W. H. Faust, "Business Baptists," *The Christian Index*, 30 April 1914, 8–9. Emphasis added. For other articles supporting the use of business principles and plans, see "With Our Baptist Exchanges," *The Christian Index*, 28 August 1902, 5; Chas. C. Davison, Jr., "It Works," 8; "The Call of the King's Business," *The Christian Index*, 9 January 1913, 2–3; H. A. Brown, "From North Carolina," *The Christian Index*, 4 February 1915, 6; Robert Stuart MacArthur, "The Allotted Task," *The Christian Index*, 11 January 1917, 7–8; Annie Durham Methvin, "Programs," *The Christian Index*, 12 April 1917, 11; "Three Fourths of War is Business," *The Christian Index*, 16 August 1917, 2–3. A. J. Fristoe's method of discovering the needs of the people living within the geographical community of the local church by taking a census of the area was supported by F. H. Kerfoot, corresponding secretary of the Home Mission Board of the SBC, not only because it was actually obeying the command to "go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in," but also because "it reduces the matter of doing the Lord's work to the most common sense, business principles. It is doing business for the Lord as men do business in their daily avocations." A. J. Fristoe, "The Story of the Census," *The Christian Index*, 5 December 1901, 1.

the churches of today most strongly and sternly demand.” Upon the pastors, therefore, fell this responsibility of “productive efficiency”: “He [the youthful pastor] is everywhere called upon to organize, to administer and to execute. His wise control is expected to manifest itself in all quarters. He must learn to be a master mechanic, a corporation head and an efficiency expert.” One could not protest that one has little time or desire to deal with such matters: “Many churches, critical enough before, are now obsessed by this new idea. At all risks they must have a pastor who can make the machine run at the lowest possible cost, and produce the greatest possible output.”²⁰

The Key to Efficiency: Putting Everyone to Work

The key to success was finding a place in church life for everyone to work. A particular concern was finding a place for young converts. One Baptist offered, “Of first importance in getting the young to work, is to give them something to do. Means should be devised whereby the inherent activities of youth may find employment in channels of usefulness, else they will go to waste.” Giving youthful converts something to do would keep them out of mischief as well as reap benefits for the church. Readers were reminded, “The homely adage that an idle brain is the devil’s workshop, is about as true as the language is capable of devising. Give the young something to accomplish, and make its execution a sign of honor, and a healthy sentiment can be built up that will lead them on by the magnetism of delight, for doing things.” In keeping with the spirit of the

²⁰Austen Kennedy de Blois, *Some Problems of the Modern Minister* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1928), 124–25. That these lectures positively resonated with many Southern Baptist hearers is evidenced in the book’s introduction written by Southwestern’s president, L. R. Scarborough: “Dr. de Blois is a pastor of wide, successful experience, a journalist who stands at the top of the field of religious journalism, and an educator of considerable experience and notable success. . . . For the period of these lectures delivered in March, 1927, he gripped with the hand of a master the hearts and wills of the faculty and students of the Southwestern Seminary. He made deep and permanent tracks for glorious good in the life of this institution. The speaker and author has most discerningly found and triumphantly exposed the heart of the preacher problem in these modern times. He never wobbled on the truth of the New Testament. . . . The book will make a great textbook for seminaries and Bible departments in schools of religion. It ought to be in every preacher’s library. The ministry of the whole world would be lifted and helped by a careful study of this remarkable volume.” *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

times, the writer maintained that efficient organization was a requirement for a successful church: "I am persuaded that our churches would reap a harvest far beyond their fondest dreams were they to form in [the] congregation a board whose special duties would be to make the work of the church so attractive as to draw all its members into active work."²¹

G. W. Garner suggested that each church have at least one church workers' council to increase the efficiency of the organizations. Attesting that councils have proven a success in the world and noting that Jesus observed that "the children of the world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," Garner maintained that the absence of workers' councils in churches revealed that "we have not given the kingdom of God our very best thought and endeavor." He held that "the slogan of every church should be: Plan your work and work your plan." Communication among the organizations would be increased and divisions which would have arisen in church conference would be solved in the smaller council. The council would include all officers of the various departments or organizations within the church, with "a chairman, generally the pastor, and a secretary to record all decisions and deliverances." A church with a large membership could have more than one workers' council, "but each would have the same *great object,—planning to enlist every member in the great work of the kingdom.*" Garner claimed, "Aside from the pulpit ministrations, the workers' council is the largest factor for kingdom success known to the writer. There is a distinction to be made between a preaching place and a church. No church can properly and progressively function without some kind of council for its leaders."²²

The concept of organizational efficiency was introduced by some to the mid-week prayer service in order to train the laity for service. In 1915 D. W. Gwin noted, "Not many years ago Sunday-schools were more or less in a comatose state, but what

²¹Thomas, "How to Engage the Young Christians in Service for the Lord," 2.

²²G. W. Garner, "A Church Workers' Council," *The Christian Index*, 27 December 1923, 26. Emphasis added.

marvelous growth and fruitage have come to them during the fifteen years of this 20th century.” As to the reason for the progress, Gwin observed, “Many are the causes and sub-causes; the wide-spread and co-operating appreciation and application of the principles, purposes and possibilities of the Sunday-school appears to be fundamental sources of its beneficent [*sic*] advancement.” Gwin believed that the same attention to organization could enliven the mid-week prayer meeting, “now in a comatose state.” Gwin predicted, “Do for this what has been done for the other and out of an anaemic and anaesthetic state its prayer meeting gathering into its arms the forces trained in the Sunday-school, in the B. Y. P. U., in the Laymen’s and Women’s organizations would spring like David with his sling into surprising efficiency and hallowing victory.”²³

A month later Gwin wrote that his proposed plan for involving the various church organizations in “a practical, potent prayer meeting” had been presented to and adopted by “the accomplished and progressive Dr. Alderman,” pastor of the First Baptist Church of Spartanburg, South Carolina. “Through the agencies of trained minds from the Sunday-school, the B. Y. P. U., Laymen’s Movement and other such agencies,” the prayer meeting was to have an “organization, flexible, adaptable.” There would be “a steering committee of advisers: Pastor, Ex-officio chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, Recording and Corresponding (one or two) Committees.” Included in the service would be “short and varying prayers, talks and requests; committees report personal work outside, everywhere and every way, following Christ’s outline, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges’, ‘Inasmuch as ye did it—to sick, strangers, prisoner, poor,’ etc.” Gwin noted that “experience will adopt and perfect working methods.” Gwin concluded, “May the time speedily come when every evangelical church will have an organized weekly prayer

²³D. W. Gwin, “A Problem of the Church,” *The Christian Index*, 19 August 1915, 9.

meeting! Now, 'Let thy servant depart,' rejoicing in hopeful prayer for church power and growth."²⁴

Despite the great emphasis which had been placed upon organizational efficiency, however, some Southern Baptist leaders believed that more should be done to help churches become more efficient and that too many church members were not being utilized. L. R. Scarborough, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was pleased with the denominational organization of Southern Baptists in their associations, state conventions, and general convention. He observed, "But our weakness in this line is mainly in the local churches. Many of our stronger churches

²⁴D. W. Gwin, "The Organized Prayer Meeting," *The Christian Index*, 23 September 1915, 9. When asked about his church's prayer meeting, Pastor J. E. Dillard of Southside Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, responded that he no longer designated the mid-week service "prayer meeting": "The most successful plan that I have ever tried was in calling the Wednesday evening service 'Church Night,' asking all committees to hold their meetings at this time; serving a light supper in the dining room, followed by a devotional about fifteen minutes long; then having departmental meetings with my Sunday school teachers and each group of teachers using a study book and then sometimes, having a series of brief lectures by the pastor. I had the city divided into districts with one or more automobiles going to each district so that ladies unaccompanied could be taken to their homes from the meetings. In every instance, when we have tried this plan, we have filled our assembly room and great good was accomplished." Dillard strongly defended his different approach to the mid-week service: "I have gotten out of patience with the criticism brought against the mid-week service. Some wiseacre will tell you that the prayer meeting is the spiritual thermometer of the church and my judgment is that there isn't a word of truth in it. Someone else will tell you that the attendance at prayer service indicates how much the people love the Lord and some one else will tell you that the small attendance at the prayer service indicates the low spiritual life and the worldliness upon the part of the people, etc. *Though the whole truth of the matter is that the organizations and activities of the modern church result in more prayer and more devotion than was ever had in all the prayer meetings. We have some forty organizations in our church, every one of which [sic] begins and ends with prayer, many of them have from ten to thirty minutes devotional service and there is a spirit of reverence and devotion pervading the entire church work.*" J. E. Dillard, "How Do You Conduct Your Prayer Meeting?" *The Christian Index*, 13 April 1922, 7. Emphasis added.

While Pastor Claude W. Duke of First Baptist Church, Tampa, Florida, conducted a more traditional prayer meeting than did Dillard, he displayed the complexion of the era with his periodic use of the prayer meeting for membership enlistment: "At this time we have been discussing for some weeks in our prayer meeting the subject of evangelism, and are this week engaged in a one-week campaign, seeking to add at least a hundred members to our church. We think we shall succeed. Last fall we engaged in a campaign for a hundred members, at the regular services, and secured them exactly during the three-months period. We are not inviting an evangelist to assist us this season, but we believe in them and usually invite them." Duke adopted different measures to increase attendance at the prayer meeting: "I should have said that one time *we adopted a 'contest' for attendance at prayer meeting, and for the time ran it up considerably.* I am greatly interested in your [the *Index's*] proposed discussion of methods, and *stand ready to adopt any new things that appeals to us as worth trying.*" Claude W. Duke, "How Do You Conduct Your Prayer Meeting?" *The Christian Index*, 20 April 1922, 8. Emphasis added. For an article promoting the value of the mid-week prayer meeting and the duty of the pastor to prepare diligently for it, see A. T. Robertson, "Making the Prayer Meeting Worth While," *The Christian Index*, 15 May 1924, 6.

have a very effective and practical organization encompassing the whole task of the church.” The number of efficiently organized churches, however, were too few: “By far the majority of our churches have very little, if any, workable system for its administration. In many cases there is no system about collecting [the] pastor’s salary, no organization for soul winning. Even the Sunday school, usually the best organization in the church life, is loose and slack.” Some aspects of local church life were fairly well organized. For instance, “it will be agreed that the W. M. U. organization is the most effective and efficient organization in the local churches. In many cases the organization of the young people is very effective.” Much more organization in the local churches, though, was required. Scarborough maintained, “*The great mass of our churches need a systematic, well-worked plan that they may better function in the administration of the task committed to them by Jesus Christ.*”²⁵

Baptist state conventions sought to help their churches achieve higher levels of efficiency. The May 17, 1923 issue of the *Index* included a proposed church program put forth by the Enlistment Department of the Georgia Baptist Convention. The program was arranged under four main headings: stewardship, organization, evangelization, and education. Concerning the organization of the local church, the department put forth the following suggestions:

²⁵L. R. Scarborough, “Combining Against Our Weakness,” *The Christian Index*, 16 December 1920, 20. Emphasis added. Similarly, William Russell Owen, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Macon, Georgia, wrote: “The Christian Church will be beaten to its knees unless it drops voluntarily upon them and questions its own spiritual integrity. *There is perhaps not a single church in the world with more than half its efficient [sic] utilized.* The discipline of armies will teach the church to account for all its resources.” Owen, “The Consecration of Change,” 7. Emphasis added.

Scarborough also echoed the concern of many concerning the large number of churches without pastors. As indicated in the above title, Scarborough believed that country churches could combine their resources in calling one pastor to serve several small churches, a plan which did not require infringing upon local church autonomy. L. R. Scarborough, “Combining Against Our Weakness,” 20. The idea of combining resources in calling a pastor had been sounded for a few years. For similar views, see G. W. Garner, “The Organized Pastorate,” *The Christian Index*, 23 January 1913, 8, and Phil W. Davis, Sr., “Our Country Churches,” *The Christian Index*, 8 February 1923, 8–9. For a dissenting view concerning the grouping of churches, see W. E. Franklin, “The Country Church,” *The Christian Index*, 22 February 1923, 26. For a cautious view concerning the grouping of churches, see A. J. Garner, “The Problem of the Country Church,” *The Christian Index*, 29 March 1923, 19.

I. Laymen's Organization:—The Laymen Organized for definite work in each Church. Special occasions, recognition of laymen, using them for leaders of prayer-meeting, study classes using all available literature. The laymen should take care of pastorless churches supplying pulpits, assist in church development rallies, S. S., B. Y. P. U. and W. M. U. Institutes and Conventions.

II. Woman's Missionary Society:—Special DAYS emphasizing the work of the women. Publicity given to "Weeks of Prayer" and their study classes. Co-operation of the W. M. S. in every phase of Associational development and extension.

III. Sunday School:—Survey and religious census, semi-annual teacher training institutes. Special Days: Missionary Day in March, Christian Education Day in June, State Mission Day in September, Orphan's Home Day in December, Cradle Roll Day, Annual installation of officers and teachers.

IV. B. Y. P. U. Occasions:—Semi-Annual installation of officers, study course months. Co-operation of Unions and organizing new Unions.

Overseeing such an involved organization required a great deal of the pastor's time.

Added to that would be the pastoral oversight required under the heading of evangelization:

I. Revival Season:—Revival period, preceded by careful preparation, publicity, and prayer. Making full preparation for Macon Conference and Associational Echo Conferences over the state. Evangelistic sermons by pastor, special prayer meetings in church and homes; every department of the church cooperating; simultaneous meetings in Association when practicable.

II. Calling Out the Called:—A month or Sunday used as a Special Day emphasizing definite decision in answer to God's call. Publicity should be given to these occasions; urging seasons of prayer in the home; Spiritual preparation; a day or season of victory.

Again, the pastor would be expected to invest much of his time overseeing the preparation for these activities, as well as conducting some of the activities themselves. The department promised that if the pastor would emphasize family worship and daily Bible reading, "it will be easy for him to ENLIST every member in active kingdom work."²⁶

²⁶"The Enlistment Department Church Program," *The Christian Index*, 17 May 1923, 18. For an apology supporting the use of programs, see A. J. Johnson, "Should Baptists Have a Program and Stick to It?" *The Christian Index*, 27 April 1922, 8-9. See also B. S. Railey, "Georgia Baptist Stewardship Program," *The Christian Index*, 10 January 1924, 14, for a campaign intended to increase church efficiency. Of the "present campaign of Stewardship," J. W. O'Hara wrote, "It will mean greater loyalty and efficiency on the part of all our workers. . . . Unquestionably, the proposed study work planned will produce both efficiency and loyalty. The forces will become acquainted with the why, how and what of service. An inventory will be made of individual gifts and a survey of places for investment. Latent powers and energies will be discovered and utilized for Christ, our king. Friction and waste will be eliminated. Training secured will make possible not only thirty and sixty, but one hundred fold results in service. Pastors will be reinforced with informed, capable, consecrated leaders. Churches will be strengthened by a host of active, willing, efficient workers in every department." J. W. O'Hara, "Meaning of Stewardship," *The Christian Index*, 10

Country churches, in particular, were considered inefficient. J. Fred Eden, Jr., a field worker with the Enlistment Department of the Georgia Baptist Convention, observed, "The 'church of the open country' is both the greatest problem and the greatest prospect of our Southern Baptist Zion." More surveys would only reveal how far the country church fell behind its city counterpart. Eden maintained, "The rural church needs overwhelmingly (1) systematic and regular finances; (2) pastor rendering worthy service, and sufficiently remunerated; (3) the requisite teaching and training organizations; (4) an adequate church plant; and (5) a year-through program of definite aims and activities." Eden was optimistic about improving country churches' efficiency: "Only a twelve-month [period] is necessary for this handful of points to be presented and 'put-over' in multiplied hundreds of churches, and that to be done in a mighty simultaneous campaign of organization, publicity, information and enthusiastic co-operation." Eden believed that the country church problem could, "but only through the aggressive organization and co-operation of all our forces; with the great simultaneous effort to be an annual affair, the association and its districts to continue insistently 'month in and month out,' and the favored leading churches of each association to have organized, trained workers ceaselessly active in extension work."²⁷

January 1924, 25–26. The effectiveness of stewardship campaigns was praised in G. S. Dobbins, "Cheering News from Kentucky," *The Christian Index*, 8 May 1924, 40–41.

²⁷J. Fred Eden, Jr., "The Rural Church Task," *The Christian Index*, 29 March 1923, 18. For other articles concerned with country or rural church efficiency, see "For Country Churches to Think About," 8; W. H. Faust, "The Country Church Again," *The Christian Index*, 1 October 1914, 8–9; Faust, "The Mission of the Rural Church," 9; Wade H. Parks, "Country Churches in Pastoral Field," *The Christian Index*, 17 August 1916, 9; John D. Mell, "The Work of the Country Church," *The Christian Index*, 5 February 1920, 6; A. T. Robertson, "The Country Preacher," *The Christian Index*, 11 March 1920, 2; John R. Sampey, "The Non-Resident Pastor Visiting His People," 10; John R. Sampey, "Valuable Helpers for the Non-Resident Pastor," *The Christian Index*, 16 March 1922, 3, 5; Norman W. Cox, "The Prominence of the Country Pastor," *The Christian Index*, 20 April 1922, 7; John R. Sampey, "The Non-Resident Pastor Grouping His Members in Units," *The Christian Index*, 4 May 1922, 8; W. J. Stockton, "The Great Need of Systematic Giving," *The Christian Index*, 18 January 1923, 19; Phil W. Davis, Sr., "Our Country Churches," 8–9; J. E. Hudson, "No Difference," *The Christian Index*, 8 February 1923, 18; T. W. Stone, "The Problems of the Country Church," *The Christian Index*, 15 February 1923, 18, 28; R. H. Dudley, "The Country Churches," *The Christian Index*, 24 May 1923, 27; H. C. Cowart, "The Country

In the next issue of the *Index*, Eden reported on the positive transformation of Sandy Grove Baptist Church in Dodge County, Georgia. The description of the church prior to its renewal was unattractive: "The church-house was not much 'bigger than a chicken coop,' and 150 people in it would have packed it like sardines. The little 'gospel light-house' was on a sand hill that was elevated above the surrounding country for many half-miles, and thither came the saints of that community for once-a-month preaching and a barely-alive Sunday school." The pastor, concerned about the state of the church, requested help from the state convention. Eden continued:

Pastor O. A. Grant besought the Field Worker to give his people a rousing all-day enlistment rally, but for two or three weeks beforehand that self-same pastor had accompanied the worker over the association in similar efforts, until he was ablaze with the development passion. So when the appointed day came an expectant and aroused people assembled, and what a delightful occasion it was! Finances, organization, efficiency and development were intensely discussed; and about 4:30 in the afternoon, when the meeting adjourned, a small group of men were seen in animated discussion, near the church.

Eden reported the successful conclusion of that meeting:

That day over 20 people had agreed to begin tithing, and that group had "figured" that they could (and should) build a modern rural church, and employ the pastor for half-time, to do pastoral work; he agreed.

In less than 60 days that church had 2 B. Y. P. U.'s, 4 W. M. U. organizations, had taken one or two Sunday School and B. Y. P. U. study courses, and had started raising money to build a departmental church; besides asking the pastor to become pastor, instead of once-a-month preacher.

Now, some three to four years later, the pastor reported that a 6,000 dollar building had been erected, the church had fifty tithers, the church included all organizations of Baptist

Church," *The Christian Index*, 19 July 1923, 2; G. F. Tyner, "Problems of the Country Churches Discussed by Pastors of Country Churches," *The Christian Index*, 2 August 1923, 26; "The Country Church," *The Christian Index*, 27 December 1923, 20. In 1920, of the some 25,000 Southern Baptist Churches, over 20,000 were rural and 18,000 had preaching services only once a month. R. W. W. [Rufus Washington Weaver], "The Ministry of the Country Church," *The Christian Index*, 5 February 1920, 2-3. At least as early as 1872 the common practice of once-a-month preaching in rural churches was questioned and critiqued. See J. S. B. [Joseph S. Baker], "Once-a-Month Preaching," *The Christian Index and South-Western Baptist*, 24 October 1872, 165.

churches, he was still pastoring half-time, and the church had purchased four acres of land, perhaps for expansion. The pastor concluded, "Organizations all flourishing."²⁸

Representing a minority of voices was Pastor J. W. McWhorter of Georgia's Appalachian Association. McWhorter maintained the increased attention to efficiency for country churches was misplaced. What worked in city churches may not work well at all in country churches, he insisted. The fact that country churches were not as well organized as city churches did not mean that the country churches were not thriving: "She [the country church] may not be as well organized as the city church, but she may be more spiritually minded. She may not be as well trained in methods but she may love the great fundamental truths of life a little better and cling to them a little closer. She may not DO as big things as her sister church in the city, but she may BE as big." McWhorter did not claim that organization was not useful, but he did maintain that an emphasis upon it would produce ill effects. He observed, "City churches stress organization, methods, social functions. Country churches stress the development of character, solidity, depth, strength. . . . The city church would rush God in His plans and purposes and be through with the whole thing. The country church would realize that 'haste makes waste,' and would go forward slowly." While most voices sounded out the need for greater efficiency, McWhorter represented those who questioned the rush toward a more complex organizational structure.²⁹

As seen above, statistics were used to reveal the efficiency of religious bodies, whether they were churches, associations, or conventions. For instance, the State Baptist Convention of Alabama celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 1923. How had the state convention proved to be a success? L. L. Gwaltney, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*,

²⁸J. Fred Eden, Jr., "A Rural Church Transformation," *The Christian Index*, 5 April 1923, 18. See also Eden's praise of Fairview Baptist Church in J. Fred Eden, Jr., "Stewardship Paragraphs," *The Christian Index*, 13 March 1924, 18. Eden found praiseworthy country churches' ability to possess various Baptist organizations and statistics which revealed the churches' efficiency.

²⁹J. W. McWhorter, "The Country Church," *The Christian Index*, 12 July 1923, 23.

wrote, "From the small beginning in 1823 on and up through great struggles they have grown in numbers and influence until to-day there are in round numbers 253,527 Baptists in the state. These contributed last year \$442,866.35 to benevolent objects. Since the 75 Million Campaign was inaugurated they gave \$2,088,247.60 up until October 31st, 1923." Additional statistics were provided:

During the last few years there have been from 12,000 to 15,000 souls baptized annually. Progress in church and Sunday school has been so great that many of the Alabama churches have found themselves wholly inadequate in physical equipment. The result is that there is a general building campaign going on in the state and many up-to-date structures, well executed for modern church and Sunday school work, are being erected. In the Birmingham Association alone there are eighteen churches that are either building or preparing to build this year.

The "phenomenal growth" of Baptists in Alabama revealed the success of their endeavors, success which was acknowledged to be "due to blessings which God has poured out upon our people." Gwaltney concluded, "The Baptists of Alabama are just brethren and sisters in the Lord, working along for the common cause and wishing for the success of the cause, not only in Alabama, but throughout the length and breadth of our Convention."³⁰

The Key Person for Efficiency: The Pastor

Upon the pastors fell the responsibility of organizing their churches for efficiency. Contending that the church's primary responsibility is the evangelization of the lost, the *Examiner*, in an exchange in the *Index*, maintained that each member of the church was to be about the business of evangelism "by his sympathy and prayers, by his gifts and to some extent, by his personal ministry." Consequently, "the wise pastor will,

³⁰L. L. Gwaltney, "The Baptists of Alabama," *The Christian Index*, 8 May 1924, 29. For other analyses of denominational statistics, see B. S. Railey, "Georgia Baptists Facing Facts," *The Christian Index*, 7 February 1924, 18; Spencer B. King, "Some Interesting Figures," *The Christian Index*, 28 February 1924, 11, 27; L. R. Scarborough, "What Victory Will Mean," *The Christian Index*, 13 March 1924, 3; J. W. Mitchell, "Florida Speaks for Florida," *The Christian Index*, 8 May 1924, 69; L. E. Roberts, "Atlanta Baptist Association in the Role of Spiritual Leadership," *The Christian Index*, 6 November 1924, 2, 21-25. John W. Ham, pastor of Atlanta's Baptist Tabernacle, appealed to statistics to reveal the renewed vibrancy and enthusiasm of his church. See John W. Ham, "Doubling a Church Membership in Four Years," *The Christian Index*, 15 December 1921, 15, 21.

as far as possible, have something for every member to do; that ‘all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building of itself in love.’”³¹ The *Index* viewed new converts as soldiers enlisting in the army. It asked, “Are these newly enlisted soldiers in the army of the Most High to be just raw recruits through the years? As unfit for service at the end of twenty years as they are at the end of twenty days? Or are they being trained to keep step with the advancing army of the Lord, ready fighters in the conflict with the powers of darkness?” While other believers were responsible for the training of these new converts, “more than all others, the pastors must answer these questions. They are the undershepherds of the sheep, the overseers of the flock, the ensamples, the instructors, the inspirers, the teachers.”³²

Concerned about local church involvement in missions, T. B. Ray observed, “Every one knows that if a church reaches its highest degree of efficiency in missions, the pastor must lead it to that goal. He cannot delegate this responsibility to any one else. His leadership in missions will determine the degree of enthusiam [*sic*] felt in his church upon this subject.” Ray suggested, “He [the pastor] ought to plan for the organization of one or more mission study classes with a precision *that would insure the success of the*

³¹“The Church is the Evangelist,” *The Christian Index*, 27 August 1903, 4. For other articles stressing the role of the pastor in feeding and organizing the church’s membership, see also “The Converts,” *The Christian Index*, 5 October 1911, 6–7; Jesse M. Dodd, “Value of a Definite Church Program,” *The Christian Index*, 8 February 1923, 25. Dodd, pastor of the Baptist church at Winder, Georgia, encouraged other pastors to adopt a definite program for their churches: “Denominational Information, Study Classes and Educational Weeks, Sermons and Addresses on Stewardship and kindred topics. Tithing, Normal Class Organization, A-1 Standards, Publicity, ‘Keeping Everlastingly At It’ is the Watchword with us. *The enlisting of every member in every phase of Kingdom work is the objective.* One of the main parts of our program for the year is that we must reach the lost, doing our best to bring them to Christ. We are making find progress. Our church roll is being divided into ‘Active and Inactive’ or Enlisted and Unenlisted, with the earnest aim of putting every name on the active list. *Every man has a ‘job’ and is getting real pleasure in doing his very best to ‘Bring Up His Part.’* Whether in the Bible School, Preaching Service, B. Y. P. U. or the Between-Sunday Meetings, Evangelism and Enlistment are the key-notes. *Brother Pastor, try something definite, definite aims, a definite program.*” *Ibid.*, 25. Emphasis added.

³²“The Converts,” 6–7. For another article dealing with the organizing of new converts, see “Thousands of New Tasks,” *The Christian Index*, 10 September 1914, 2.

effort. . . . The mission study class method has demonstrated itself to be the best one for genuinely increasing missionary intelligence and efficiency in hundreds and hundreds of churches."³³

Seminary Education

Seminary education for Southern Baptists became increasingly practical in order to train young pastors to be more efficient. Promoting the curriculum of Southern Seminary, professor George Eager explained that the seminary was now positioned to train young ministers in practical areas. He wrote, "The old office of the Theological Seminary was to instruct students in things distinctly theological and ecclesiastical[:] the Bible, Bible doctrines, church history, homiletics, and the like." Things were now different: "The decided tendency, today, is to broaden the scope of the teaching and training; not that these important subjects are to be neglected or minimized, but that new subjects are being introduced and coordinated with these, *according to the reasonable and urgent demands of our times and the changed conditions of modern life.*" He continued to contrast the older method and the newer method of theological training:

Formerly the one end of seminary teaching was to prepare men for the pulpit and for a limited range of pastoral duties. Now students who come to the Seminary are offered courses and given training along new lines, to fit them for an enlarging sphere of Christian usefulness and leadership, in the Sunday school and the young peoples' society, in various forms of social service and even civic improvement, and for all the checkered work of Christian missionaries upon the foreign field. To this end expert instruction is given them, incidentally or directly in psychology, sociology, pedagogy, comparative religions and missions, as well as in the Bible languages, history, geography, customs, etc.

The purpose for these innovations to seminary education was "that instruction and training in the Seminary today should be both broad and deep, general and specific, *suited to the demands of the day*, not for scholarship only, *but for efficiency as well*, 'That the man

³³T. R. Ray, "The Pastor's Responsibility and Opportunity," *The Christian Index*, 12 January 1911, 5. For another article dealing with the role of pastors in leading their churches, see "The Pastor as an Obstructionist," *The Christian Index*, 3 November 1910, 6.

of God may be thoroughly furnished[,]’ ‘a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.’”³⁴

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary likewise sought to train efficient ministers. In his 1914 presidential inaugural address at Southwestern, L. R. Scarborough set forth his description of “the ideal minister.” Under the heading “The Marks of an Efficient Minister,” Scarborough wrote of this model minister:

He must be preacher, pastor, denominational agent for all missions, education, benevolence, and religious literature. He must be editor, social worker, reformer, advocate for all kinds of civic betterment, evangelist, teacher and leader in Sunday school, young people’s and laymen’s work. He must raise money, distribute charity, dedicate churches, lecture at conferences, keep up with all mission movements, and perform at all kinds of functions. The lines of his activity are overwhelming to his time, energy, and talent. The ministry must largely furnish our secretaries and denominational leaders. They must write our books on theology, on missions, on evangelism, on Sunday school work, and our commentaries. They must edit our great religious literature. They must furnish the missionary statesmen, leaders, and workers on the far-flung battle lines. For all these varied spheres, the theological seminary must furnish trained leaders. What a task for the Seminary!

That Scarborough was concerned with what seminary-trained preachers did as opposed to what they merely knew is evidenced with these questions: “Are the theological seminaries measuring up to that task [of producing ministers able to fulfill the above-mentioned duties]; are they delivering the finished product which the markets of the world demand? What is the final and primal test of their instruction and training? Is it the scholastic test or the pragmatic test? Is it scholarship or efficiency?”³⁵

Because the two seminaries of Southern Baptists, Southern and Southwestern, had at that time only about 450 students together while there were 23,487 churches in the SBC, Scarborough raised the need “either for more theological seminaries or for a popularizing and strengthening of the ones we have.” The more promising solution was the

³⁴Geo. B. Eager, “To Young Ministers: Some Facts and an Appeal,” *The Christian Index*, 10 August 1911, 2. Emphasis added. About two years before, Eager had written on a similar theme for the *Index*. See Geo. B. Eager, “Can It Stand the Test?” *The Christian Index*, 15 July 1909, 2.

³⁵L. R. Scarborough, *A Modern School of the Prophets* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1939), 173.

latter. Scarborough asked, “Had we not better change our curriculum, evangelize our spirit, and make more practical our methods, if we wish to furnish trained leaders for our churches?” While the seminaries had performed a good work in their relatively few years of existence, Scarborough lamented that “the fact remains that we are reaching only a small part of our constituency and producing only meager results compared to our need and our opportunity.”³⁶

In an article featuring The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the new Department of Church Efficiency, “inaugurated at the opening of the session of 1920-21,” was promoted. The new course of study was to cover “all phases of church efficiency,” with both the denomination and the local church receiving attention: “All phases of denominational life, especially its organized life, will be presented. Efficiency in the church organization itself will be taught, as well as the efficiency of the pastor as a leader and guide. This course will be of extraordinary value, and no young minister can afford to be without such training.”³⁷

Goals and Standards

Pastors were encouraged to use numerical goals to motivate their workers to

³⁶Ibid., 174.

³⁷“The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,” *The Christian Index*, 25 December 1920, 57. See also “The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,” *The Christian Index*, 8 May 1924, 24. Emphasis added. Promoting the tangible effectiveness of its graduates was deemed necessary to exhibit the worth of a seminary. President Scarborough of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary revealed part of the value of the Texas seminary, “The practical kingdom results of its students and faculty from year to year in professions of faith, in baptisms, in additions to churches, in volunteers for Christ’s service, in money raised for church and kingdom work can not be matched in the world. This is not a matter of pride but of joy and gratitude. It offers the same opportunities to men and women, preachers, their wives, singers, Sunday school, B. Y. P. U., W. M. U., workers, men and women just the same—and that in all lines of work now required and demanded by our churches and the denominational forces.” L. R. Scarborough, “A Modern School of the Prophets—A Marvel of Growth,” *The Christian Index*, 8 May 1924, 26. Concerned that “a very large per cent. of our Lord’s preachers came from the country, in poverty and obscurity” and had not had an opportunity for much formal education, pastor G. W. Garner of Fayetteville, Georgia, proposed a “Normal Course for Preachers” to last for an intensive period of four days at certain central points. Comprising such a course “of three or four books” would be “a brief, concise treatise on the great doctrines of the Bible. A practical presentation of the preacher’s character, mission, and the making and delivery of a

greater success. George W. Andrews, writing in January 1913, maintained, “There is every reason to believe that this new year will be a record-breaker from the Sunday-school standpoint, so far as Georgia is concerned. . . . Our work throughout the State is rapidly passing through a period of transition. *The demand is growing for a greater degree of efficiency.*” While gratified by “the present encouraging condition,” more should be expected. “Why not aim high? Ours is a great cause.” Andrews went on to delineate some of the numerical goals which could be accomplished with greater efficiency: “160,000 Sunday-school enrollment; 2,000 K. T. diplomas issued; 200 Teacher Training classes organized; 200 new Sunday-schools organized; 100 organized classes registered in our adult department; \$25,000 contributed by our schools to the objects fostered by our State Convention.” He exhorted church leaders, “Push the work of Teacher Training until every officer and teacher in your school holds a K. T. diploma. Keep your eyes open for opportunities to organize mission Sunday-schools. Encourage your organized classes to register in our Baptist Adult Class Department.” Andrews concluded, “Follow some definite, systematic plan for intelligent giving in our school. Let your motto be: *A larger and a better school in every way in 1913.*”³⁸

Similarly, Frank Leavell, then secretary of the Student Work Department of the Sunday School Board of the SBC, endorsed the use of goals to motivate both pastor and members to do efficient work in his 1929 Tharp Lectures of the Baptist Bible Institute in

sermon. *The third on church efficiency, or on the business side of church life.* Another the vital subject of evangelism.” G. W. Garner, “A Training School for Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 7 February 1924, 10.

³⁸G. W. A. [G. W. Andrews], “1913—The Outlook,” *The Christian Index*, 9 January 1913, 13. Emphasis added. Joseph Broughton, Sunday school superintendent of Atlanta’s Tabernacle Baptist Church, saw that there were, at that time, seven million more members of Southern Baptist churches than of Sunday schools. He proposed, “Personally I feel like we ought to make our aim at least a million per year” over a five-year program. Joseph Broughton, “Seven Million to Go After,” *The Christian Index*, 26 July 1923, 9. Southern Baptists were not alone with advancing numerical goals. See the “practical goals” adopted by the Northern Baptist Convention in 1915 in “A Five-Year Program,” *The Christian Index*, 17 June 1915, 9. For other articles anticipating denominational success, see L. R. Scarborough, “The Basis for Christian Triumph,” *The Christian Index*, 3 January 1924, 30; O. E. Bryan, “The Cost of Victory,” *The Christian Index*, 13 March 1924, 6.

New Orleans. Leavell justified the use of goals by noting that “the layman likes definiteness. He likes to see results. He likes to conjure with figures. He judges by comparative statistics. This is the habit of the business world, so he is dissatisfied without it in his church. He chafes under an aimless program. The ‘hit or miss’ program always misses.” Leavell explained that positive goals were motivating the laypersons: “A definite objective affords a conquest. Conquests are stimulating. An announced program for a period of years dispels restlessness. It unifies the forces. It binds together in one common effort the people and the pastor.” Leavell recalled “the following action . . . taken by our church in conference assembled on the 15th of September, 1920: ‘Resolved, that in the fear of God, and trusting to his almighty power, we adopt the Ten-Year Program outlined by our pastor.’” Twelve goals were listed:

1. The baptism of one thousand believers, an average of one hundred per year.
2. The addition of one thousand by letter.
3. The average attendance of one thousand in Sunday school.
4. The successful growth of the four B. Y. P. U. organizations.
5. A W. M. U. of a thousand members.
6. A might Brotherhood enlisting five hundred men.
7. The midweek meetings a great, popular and powerful agency.
8. Overflowing congregations at the morning and night services on Sunday.
9. Ten young men ordained to the gospel ministry.
10. Ten young women surrendered for definite Christian service.
11. One hundred voices in the choir.
12. Continued and enlarged cooperation in all denominational work and greater Christian influence in the city.

Leavell placed upon the pastor the expectation of leading the church to set specific objectives: “An upstanding layman dislikes the aimless programs of many churches of the day. They look to the pastor to correct this. In ministerial circles, ‘Laissez-Faire’ invariably means ‘lazy friar.’”³⁹

This was a period in which standards of excellence were being developed and used to test efficiency in churches. The *Index* editors noted that “there are many ‘standards’ being set up in this day, standards of ‘excellence,’ be it said with pleasure.

³⁹Frank H. Leavell, *The Layman Measures the Minister* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1930), 101–03.

Sunday-schools and young people's societies and various other organizations, are setting forth the conditions compliance with which [*sic*] will entitle school or society to a place in the A-1 rank." A visit to Atlanta's Ponce de Leon Baptist Church introduced the editors to "A Standard of Excellence for Our Members for 1912-13." The pastor had cards printed which contained a pledge to keep this standard "to be signed by all who were willing to move up higher than, perhaps, they had been moving as church members." The *Index* provided the pledge for others to consider and adopt:

1. Regular attendance at the Sunday morning service.
2. Attendance at some one other church service each week.
3. Membership in some department of the Bible School.
4. Regular contribution to church support.
5. Regular contribution to the benevolent fund of the church.
6. Daily family worship in the home.
7. Attempt by God's help to win at least one person to Jesus Christ.
8. Subscriptions to the Christian Index and to the monthlies of the Home and Foreign Mission Boards.
9. Reading one recommended missionary book during the year, or member of Mission Study Class.
10. Readiness to devote at least one hour each week, at the call of the pastor, to some special work for the church or the kingdom.⁴⁰

Ponce de Leon was not alone in its quest for quantifiable efficiency. In his article "The Efficient Church," E. H. Jennings, pastor of Prince Avenue Baptist Church in Athens, Georgia, provided an explanation of what qualifies a church to be deemed efficient, the test done at his own church to quantify objectively the efficiency of that church, and the plan adopted by Prince Avenue to increase the efficiency of the church. Evidently speaking of the role of the pastor, Jennings wrote, "The best energies a man can expend is in building up a strong, virile, wide-awake, efficient New Testament church. Such a task is worthy of a life." So how could a pastor know if his church was efficient? Jennings answered, "Broadly speaking a church is efficient when it has reached its constituency and is fulfilling its possibilities. A church with one hundred members, only fifty of whom co-operate in its worship and work, is only fifty per cent efficient."

⁴⁰"A Standard of Excellence," *The Christian Index*, 31 October 1912, 6.

Jennings looked not only to a church's ratio of active members to total membership, but to the ratio of church membership to the size of its community: "A church in a community of a thousand people who belong to it with only five hundred members, is only reaching fifty per cent of its possibilities."⁴¹

Jennings reported that his church "took a survey of its membership with a view to revising the roll and *bringing the organization up to a higher state of efficiency.*" The church was already recognized as "alert and alive, with its standard organizations, its goodly congregations, its well-organized Sunday school, its thriving women's societies, its three enthusiastic B. Y. P. U.'s, its financial system whereby a surplus has been reported in the treasury every month for over three years, and with frequent conversions and additions." The church's level of efficiency, though, proved to be unacceptable. Jennings provided the disappointing statistics:

And yet when we took stock we found that of 718 members on roll, 118 had removed to other places leaving their membership behind, and of these 79 left no trace of their whereabouts. Of the 600 resident members we found that only 332 are regular church-goers, and that excusing 33 who are physically infirm, there are 227 able-bodied men and women who attend the church with no degree of regularity.

The survey revealed further that of the 600 resident members only 332 are in the Sunday school, and only 298 are regular weekly contributors. In nearly every instance the regular givers are regular attendants and the regular attendants are regular givers; *192 of the members we have graded as "A-1" because they are regular contributors, Sunday school members and regular attendants at church.*

Based upon these numbers, Jennings concluded that "our church on the whole is not fifty per cent efficient."⁴²

Because of the Prince Avenue's less than fifty percent efficiency, Jennings and the leaders "decided upon a definite plan whereby we hope to raise the standard." He summarized the plan to increase efficiency among the resident members:

⁴¹E. H. Jennings, "The Efficient Church," *The Christian Index*, 25 November 1920, 3. Quite obviously, using community population and church membership as indicators of church efficiency indicates that conversion was now seen to be a work which depended more on human work than earlier Baptists would have believed. It would also put great stress upon both pastor and church to see that everyone in the community became converted and a member of that church.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 3. Emphasis added.

In the yearly every-member canvass soon to be taken, we shall try to enlist every member as a weekly giver to both local expenses and missions. The names of the 268 non-Sunday school members have been divided up among the departments and classes and a persistent and systematic effort is being made to get every one to either enroll in the school proper or the home department. The names of the female membership are given [to] the W. M. U. and of the young people to the B. Y. P. U.'s.

Jennings then laid out the plan to deal with non-resident and delinquent members:

A letter is to be written to non-resident members asking them to either give some evidence of continued interest or else remove their membership to the church nearest them. If there is no response after a month their names will be dropped. Unknown members will also be dropped from the roll if their address can not be found after a month of advertising from the pulpit. The delinquent members in reach of the church are to be visited again, and if after a month they show no improvement of interest, they, too, are to be dropped.

The church would increase in efficiency as some members became actively involved in the life of the church and others were removed from the roll.⁴³

Achieving efficiency within the church, however, was insufficient for Rev. Jennings. He explained, "But a church is not efficient unless it is also reaching its outside possibilities. The efficient church has frequent conversions and additions, and these should be in proportion to its membership possibilities." Jennings sketched the community around Prince Avenue: "A religious census revealed to us the names of nearly two hundred Baptists living under the shadow of our church with their membership elsewhere, and a much larger number of Sunday school prospects. These, too, we are making a systematic effort to enlist." According to Jennings, the local church must be growing numerically to be deemed efficient. He reasoned, "All normal life tends to [toward]

⁴³Ibid., 3. That times had changed regarding the dismissal of church members is evident with the mere dropping of unresponsive delinquent members from the membership roll. Wills notes that earlier Southern Baptists did not simply erase members' names but excommunicated them. He notes that by the late 1920s erasure in Southern Baptist churches had become common, a practice already common in Northern Baptist church in the 1840s. Wills, *Democratic Religion*, 91–97. W. T. Hardy spoke for the minority of Baptists in opposing Prince Avenue's dropping of names from the membership. While he endorsed everything else in Jennings' article, he believed that inactive members should be formally disfellowshipped. W. T. Hardy, "Regarding the Efficient Church," *The Christian Index*, 6 January 1921, 24. For church plans to increase efficiency, see J. M. Stifler and W. G. Sherer, "The Church Rally," *The Christian Index*, 21 September 1911, 2–3; John R. Sampey, "The Non-Resident Pastor Grouping His Members in Units," 8–9; John William Jent, *The Challenge of the Country Church* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1924), 43–79.

reproduction, and a church that is not growing in keeping with the growth of the community around it, is certainly not efficient.”⁴⁴

Baptists were cautioned, though, not to think that the mere putting forth of plans guaranteed efficiency. Plans had to be worked and required constant watchfulness. The *Florida Baptist Witness* cautioned, “There is a possibility and a very grave possibility that many of our pastors will not be as active and as alert as they should be, putting too much confidence in the efficiency plan from the beginning. It will take years if not a decade to bring any sort of a plant up to a degree of high efficiency.” The *Witness* revealed the pastoral energy required for the efficient plans to succeed: “It is a mighty task, and the church and pastor which does not watch it and press it every day, thoroughly review it at each business meeting, cure its defects, and strengthen its weak points, encourage its virtues, is sure to meet disastrous failure.” As a fine locomotive must be “carefully oiled, skillfully handled, continuously repaired, kept constantly in service, and properly handled,” so “any religious plan which may be evolved for the glory of God needs the skillful hand of an enthusiastic, trustworthy, energetic, trained pastor and people in order that it may put life, joy and success into the kingdom of God.”⁴⁵

Recommended Books on Efficiency

Books aiding pastors in church efficiency and in performing their tasks as executives, often written by pastors recognized as efficient, were promoted within the pages of the *Index*. W. H. Faust, who at this time was pastor of Gordon Street Baptist Church in Atlanta, recommended *How to Make the Church Go*, by William H. Leach.

⁴⁴Jennings, “The Efficient Church,” 3. Southern Baptists began conducting a religious census of the communities in which churches were located just before the beginning of the twentieth century, with A. J. Fristoe laying claim to initiating the movement. See T. G. Davis, “The Census Plan Endorsed,” *The Christian Index*, 30 January 1902, 2; A. J. Fristoe, “The Story of the Census,” 1; A. J. Fristoe, “Sociology and the Census,” *The Christian Index*, 18 September 1902, 1–2; A. J. Fristoe, “An Illustration of the Census,” *The Christian Index*, 25 September 1902, 1.

⁴⁵“Efficiency not Efficient Unless It is Sufficient,” *The Christian Index*, 18 May 1916, 9.

Faust wrote, “The author gives a practical and helpful treatment of problems that daily come to every pastor, and in a few chapters handles with skill, the minister as executive, the forces which move men, how to advertise a church and how to get the best out of volunteer workers. Every pastor of a church with over 350 members should possess a copy.”⁴⁶ Norman W. Cox, a Savannah pastor, endorsed *The Technique of a Ministry* by Bernard C. Clausen. The author was lauded as “pastor of the largest Baptist church in the New York State Convention, the First Baptist Church, Syracuse, which has a membership of more than 2,500 and property valued at more than a million dollars.” His credentials for writing such a book included the fact that “every department of this vigorous church is aglow with pulsing dynamic of life.”⁴⁷ John A. Davison of Columbus, Georgia, reviewed Jeff D. Ray’s *The Highest Office*. Of particular value was Ray’s emphasis upon meeting “the demands made by conditions of modern life,” such as “the new movement in the field of Religious Education,” “the growing interest in the doctrine of financial stewardship,” “the necessity for readjusting our missionary methods and the hindrance to the kingdom of a multiplicity of religious denominations,” as well as “many other problems growing out of conditions of modern life” and “certain non-official functions which the preacher must fulfill in the promotion of denominational interests, civic reforms and evangelistic enterprises.”⁴⁸ Carl A. Devine of Cedartown, Georgia, recommended William L. Stidger’s *That God’s House May be Filled*,” reporting that “this is a book full of modern ideas, methods and plans for running a church.” While Devine attested that the book “is full of original and unique plans for getting people to church” and that “the alert preacher will find stimulating suggestions, and may be able to adapt himself to

⁴⁶ W. H. Faust, review of *How to Make the Church Go*, by William H. Leach, *The Christian Index*, 8 March 1923, 22–23.

⁴⁷ Norman W. Cox, review of *The Technique of a Ministry*, by Bernard C. Clausen, *The Christian Index*, 10 September 1925, 31.

⁴⁸ John A. Davison, review of *The Highest Office*, by Jeff D. Ray, *The Christian Index*, 31 May 1923, 31.

getting the gospel message to the people through them,” he offered this reminder to those inclined to think that building the church was only a matter of the right methods: “But may I add that Wesley, Spurgeon, Jowett and a host of the world’s great gospel preachers did not find methods more attractive than Christ. ‘And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me.’”⁴⁹ Walter P. Binns of Moultrie, Georgia, recommended J. W. Jent’s *The Challenge of the Country Church*, which comprised the 1924 Holland Lectures at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and explored the improvement of the efficiency of country churches.⁵⁰

Not only books but also educational courses were promoted to help increase pastoral efficiency. For example, an editorial inclusion in the March 28, 1912 issue of the *Index* provided the following notice: “The American Institute of Sacred Literature is putting out a reading course for minister and other on ‘The Efficient Church.’ This is to be directed by Dean Shailer Matthews.” The subjects deemed essential for organizational efficiency were “Organization in Accordance with Its Function and Aim; Organization for Religious Education; Organization for Social Service; [and] Organization for Extension in the Home Field and in the Foreign Field.” The *Index* encouraged pastors to take advantage of this offering: “Pastors would doubtless find this a most suggestive and helpful course.”⁵¹

Examples of Efficiency

Capitol Avenue Baptist Church in Atlanta was put forth as an example of an “efficient” and “idealistic” church. The superintendent of its Bible school noted: “The

⁴⁹Carl A. Devine, review of *That God’s House May be Filled*, by William L. Stidger, *The Christian Index*, 10 April 1924, 31.

⁵⁰Walter P. Binns, review of *The Challenge of the Country Church*, by J. W. Jent, *The Christian Index*, 20 November 1924, 31. Lecture II, “Standards of Country Church Efficiency,” includes standards of measuring efficiency as well as representative examples of “highly efficient country churches.” Jent, *The Challenge of the Country Church*, 43–79.

⁵¹[Editorial Comment], *The Christian Index*, 28 March 1912, 1.

trend of things at Capitol Avenue is forward and not backward, upward and not downward, straightwise and not cross-wise.” First, he maintained that the trend of the church was “toward efficiency”:

This is shown by the number of Christian Culture classes we have at the present time, study classes, as they are sometimes called. We have them in the B.Y.P.U.,⁵² in the Young Woman’s Auxiliary, in the Bible-schools, (the name Sunday-school we have officially abandoned), and independently in our Bible-school we have more than forty officers and teachers who hold King’s Teachers’ diplomas. The purpose of these study classes is that our church members shall be educated in Bible doctrines, stimulated in the cause of missions, deepened in the spiritual life, enlisted more completely in Christian activities and given a broader vision of Christian life and service. *Capitol Avenue knows that a complete solution of all of the problems that lie out before our churches is a thoroughly enlisted and equipped church membership and we are putting much emphasis just here.*

The second trend was “toward the idealistic.” He explained:

We are trying to see that Capitol Avenue *is a model church*. We are endeavoring by personal appeal and personal visitation to reach and to enlist every member of our church. We want church membership with us to be a real thing. We want a name on our church roll to mean a name in the Record Book on high. We want membership to signify service and joining with Christ in the salvation of this world. We are trying to see that our church becomes more spiritual. We are exhorting our people to be pure in heart and unselfish in service. At a recent morning hour for worship 76 members covenanted to tithe. We are trying to build up the weak points in our work and to smooth down the rough places. And, last of all but first of all, we are trying to teach our men and women and boys and girls to do all that they do, whether singing or praying, or worshipping or serving, or studying or toiling, for the one great purpose that God may be glorified and his name exalted among the children of men. We try to put the Kingdom first, even before our local church. *Our pastor leads us toward the idealistic.*⁵³

Capitol Avenue saw organizational efficiency as enabling its members, under the leadership of its pastor, to be an effective church in its community for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Efficient pastors were provided as examples in order to encourage other pastors to become more efficient in the leading of their churches. For example, rural pastor

⁵²The Baptist Young People’s Union was seen as a requirement for a successful church, for therein would the future leaders of the local Baptist churches be trained. See “Some Pastoral Experiences with the B. Y. P. U.,” *The Christian Index*, 9 July 1904, 1; “A Church without and a Church with a B. Y. P. U.,” *The Christian Index*, 10 April 1919, 3.

⁵³W. W. Gaines, “Capitol Avenue Church,” *The Christian Index*, 27 February 1913, 14–15.

T. W. Gayer was put forth as an example of a pastor leading his church to a high standard of efficiency. Dr. E. P. Alldredge, in his *One Hundred Successful Country Churches*, introduced Pastor Gayer: “Four years ago the church [Orlinda Baptist Church, Orlinda, Tennessee] called Rev. T. W. Gayer, a young man with both college and seminary training and a broad and varied experience.” Alldredge recounted Pastor Gayer’s “seven distinct achievements to his credit in this pastorate”:

He has built a splendid church house, costing \$39,000 (worth \$50,000); thoroughly organized the Sunday school; organized and developed the three B.Y.P.U.’s in the church (there was no young people’s work there prior to his coming); has seen six of his young people give themselves to the ministry or mission work (there had previously been no volunteers and no young preacher from the church in its history); has helped to develop scores of active Christians in his membership, holding training classes every year along all the lines of church work; has seen his Sunday school and B.Y.P.U.’s reach the A-1 Standard, and has witnessed his church place its impact upon the whole life of the community.

After citing Dr. Alldredge’s commendation of Gayer, T. W. Jent, Dean and Professor of Applied Christianity at Oklahoma Baptist University, offered, “There is no mystery in the success of such a country pastor.” Jent explained, “He is not only immune to discouragement, but *irresistible*. He wins his people to his program by winning them to himself. They follow where he leads because he commands their confidence. His clearly conceived program, plus their cheerful co-operation, equals *efficiency*, that is, *a standard church*.” While other factors contributed to the high level of efficiency exhibited by the Orlinda Church, the leadership of the pastor was crucial. Jent maintained that the example of Gayer and Orlinda proved “*the determinism of the pastor* in the country church—his primacy in either efficiency or inefficiency, hence, his supremacy in the supremacy of the problem.”⁵⁴

In addition to the demands of an increasingly-complex local church structure, pastors were expected to become increasingly involved in denominational duties. J. Fred Eden, Jr., viewed the efficient pastor as one who was involved beyond his local church.

⁵⁴Jent, *The Challenge of the Country Church*, 74–79.

Eden realized that some pastors maintained that their local church required practically all of their time. He observed, "Fortunately his tribe is growing smaller, with the on sweep of Baptist progress, vision and opportunity; and may their number evermore be rapidly depleted." Eden praised the pastor whose vision extended beyond his local field of ministry:

The associational and enlistment-hearted pastor will never stand aloof and demand that the boards send a "paid agent" to his association to do proxy-work for him in carrying the *gospel of church efficiency* and development to the needy and undeveloped churches in his territory. On the contrary he will consult with the associational executive and laymen's committees and insistently urge that they call in the capable and trained pastors and the leaders of the Sunday school, B. Y. P. U. and W. M. U. forces, and plan and project an ambitious associational development program. He will urge a concerted program of publicity and preparation for an association-wide evangelistic campaign. He will gladly assist other pastors in the association in their revivals. He will insist upon development or enlistment institutes (for 2 or 3 days) in those sister churches, and joyously assist in them. He will bespeak Sunday school and B. Y. P. U. training institutes in the churches and districts in his association, and unhesitatingly offer his services in conducting some of them.

As if that were not enough, the wide-hearted pastor would use his organizations within his church to engage in association work:

This pastor of large vision, large mind, large parish and large effort will send forth his B. Y. P. U. forces in demonstrating and extension groups to organize Unions in other churches. He will ask his W. M. S. forces to do a similar work for their phases of church organization and training. He will train a number of his picked laymen in definite enlistment and development work, and to be lay-preachers; commissioning them to go to other churches and lead them out to greater development and efficiency, and to care for pastorless churches and supply for sick or absent pastors.

Eden concluded the list of associational duties for this efficient minister: "This pastor, with an association for his parish, will conscientiously and gladly attend the annual sessions of his association, the Fifth Sunday meetings, the Sunday school and B. Y. P. U. conventions, the district institutes." While giving of himself beyond his church, Eden predicted, the pastor "will ultimately make a wondrous discovery, that his own church has grown with mighty spirituality and acceleration; thus fulfilling Christ's pronouncement of

finding its life by losing it.” Eden challenged, “Brother preacher, how large is your parish?”⁵⁵

Pastors continued to be lauded for the organizational efficiency of their churches. For instance, “Rev. George F. Brown is happy in his work at Hobart, Oklahoma. He has been there six months and in that time the work of the church has grown rapidly and steadily. *Every department of a modern church is well represented in his organization.* His Georgia friends will rejoice with him in this good work.”⁵⁶ A pastor in Boston with Georgia connections received this accolade from an unnamed exchange: “It is hard to say in what line Dr. Masee, at Tremont Temple, Boston, most excels, whether in preaching, in evangelism, *in organization and administration* or in missionary appeals.”⁵⁷ Pastor J. W. Shoemate had recently moved to Funston Baptist Church in southeast Georgia, about seven miles from Moultrie, and was approvingly described as “a hustler.” Of the church was said, “They promise in less than fifteen months six departmental rooms and a fine graded Sunday school. They have 2 B. Y. P. U.’s, one of them A-1; and their hopes are to have really the livest, most efficient, and finest country church in all Southeast Georgia. They are moving that way!”⁵⁸ Savannah’s Immanuel Baptist Church, pastored by S. S. Mathis, was lauded for having enlarged its building and “is known among the Baptist churches of the city for its liberal giving and *splendid organizations.*”⁵⁹

⁵⁵J. Fred Eden, Jr., “The Pastor with an Association for His Parish,” *The Christian Index*, 5 August 1920, 3. See also The Commissions of Old and New Programs, “A Challenging Call to Southern Baptists,” *The Christian Index*, 3 July 1924, 10; C. E. Burts, “Baptist Progress Depends on Success of Every Member Canvas November 30-December 7,” *The Christian Index*, 20 November 1924, 27; C. E. Burts, “Baptist Progress Depends on Every-Member Canvass,” *The Christian Index*, 27 November 1924, 1.

⁵⁶ [Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 15 February 1923, 25. Emphasis added.

⁵⁷ [Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 15 February 1923, 25. Emphasis added. The *Index* viewed the exchange favorably: “An exchange carries the following fine word about the work of Dr. Jasper Masee. His many friends in Georgia will be glad to see it.” *Ibid.*

⁵⁸J. Fred Eden, Jr., “Enlistment Notes,” *The Christian Index*, 26 April 1923, 18.

⁵⁹R. L. Bolton, “A Little Journey Among the Baptists ‘in the City by the Sea,’” *The Christian Index*, 24 April 1924, 24.

Of Rev. Charles H. Kopp, pastor of Woodlawn Church, Augusta, Georgia, the *Index* reported that, during his three-year tenure, the church had received 333 persons into its membership, with half coming by baptism. In addition, “at a great ‘Home-Coming Service’ on the above date [September 14, 1924] *the membership voted unanimously to go forward on a most ambitious program for the year 1924-25.*”⁶⁰ The pastor of Augusta’s First Baptist Church received praise: “Dr. Grace excels greatly in the work of church organization. Since he assumed the pastorate a little more than three years ago, the Sunday school, as a result of his wise suggestions, has advanced to a high plane of usefulness.”⁶¹

Some Southern Baptists saw a model for efficiency in the apparent success of evangelist Billy Sunday. The *Index* noted that “no evangelist in America is attracting more attention than Billy Sunday.” Asking “what is the secret of Billy Sunday’s success,” the *Index* noted that he was “a man of prayer and faith” and “a man of striking personality, a pleasing speaker and preaches the plain gospel in unique expression.” Other men, though, were similarly endowed but had “only handfuls to hear them, and who are not known far beyond the limits of their local communities.” The *Index* deduced that “the secret of his power is in knowing how to mobilize the forces before the meeting

⁶⁰[Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 18 September 1924, 29. Emphasis added.

⁶¹William Sturman, “Baptist Affairs in Augusta,” *The Christian Index*, 15 February 1923, 21. For examples of similar commendations of successful pastors appearing in the *Index* in 1924-1925, see Willie Snow Ethridge, “The First Four Years,” *The Christian Index*, 28 February 1924, 8; “Men and Matters,” *The Christian Index*, 3 April 1924, 29; “Rev. D. S. Edenfield,” *The Christian Index*, 10 April 1924, 13; B. S. Railey, “Regional Conferences,” *The Christian Index*, 10 April 1924, 18; “Men and Matters,” *The Christian Index*, 24 April 1924, 28–29; L. D. N. [Louie D. Newton], “Hapeville Baptists Making Remarkable Progress,” *The Christian Index*, 29 May 1924, 11, 18; John W. Ham, “Resignation of John W. Ham, Pastor Tabernacle, 1917–1924, Offered to Congregation in Conference, July 6, 1924,” *The Christian Index*, 10 July 1924, 22–23; “Dr. Haymore Goes to Missouri,” *The Christian Index*, 31 July 1924, 12; L. D. N. [Louie D. Newton], “Pastor Tunnell Observes Fifth Anniversary at LaGrange,” *The Christian Index*, 11 September 1924, 10–11, 22–23; [Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 9 July 1925, 13 [concerning Pastor Herbert Young]; L. D. N. [Louie D. Newton], “Capitol Avenue Fulfills Their Expectations,” *The Christian Index*, 23 July 1925, 7, 32; [Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 6 August 1925, 7 [concerning Pastor Norman W. Cox of First Baptist Church, Savannah].

begins, and how to use them during its progress.” The *Index* summarized Sunday’s preparations for the highly successful Philadelphia meeting that was in progress:

For more than two months before it began, two cottage prayer meetings a week were held in every block of the great city, followed with district prayer meetings. During this period, every citizen in the city was invited once a week to attend the meetings. They were advertised from the pulpit of every evangelical church and every pastor put himself squarely behind the movement. Five thousand picked singers were secured to furnish the music, and a great tabernacle was constructed as designed by Mr. Sunday. Much space in the daily papers was used in advertising the meetings, and worlds of specially prepared printed matter was scattered broadcast. All this and much more was done before Mr. Sunday appeared on the scene. When he arrived, with his assistants, the pastors and the picked members of their churches grouped themselves about him. The efforts they had made had already revived their hearts, and their interest ran high. Therefore, from the very first Mr. Sunday was enveloped in a spiritual atmosphere. These forces continued their prayers and their efforts under his skilled leadership. No wonder he preaches with power; no wonder thousands are being converted, and no wonder large gifts flow into the treasury for the expenses of the meeting. *The resultants of preparation, we repeat, is the secret of Mr. Sunday’s power.*⁶²

Sunday’s success depended upon spiritual preparation—prayer—and practical preparation—invitations to the citizenry, advertisement of the crusade, and “picked singers” for the special music.

Sunday’s remarkable successes were contrasted with the forgettable efforts of Georgia Baptists:

What a lesson for the pastors and churches of Georgia! We set a time for a revival, and an evangelist and a singer are secured, and the meeting begins with a drag; and by the time interest is aroused, it must be closed that other appointments may be met. The preaching is considered ordinary, the converts are few and the collections are scant. What is the matter? No cottage prayer meetings had been held, no invitations to attend the services had been extended, no advertising had been done, no groups of workers had been formed, no picked singers had been secured, no spiritual atmosphere had been created to tune up the evangelist for preaching and the ears and hearts of the people for hearing, and no expectations had been kindled. *If the pastors and the small churches here in Georgia would make proportionate preparations for a revival that were made for Mr. Sunday’s meeting in Philadelphia, or for the Chapman-Alexander meetings in Atlanta, the fame of unheard-of preachers would be spread abroad and multitudes of converts would be made from all walks of life.*⁶³

⁶²“The Secret of Billy Sunday’s Power,” *The Christian Index*, 25 February 1915, 1–2. Emphasis added.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2. Emphasis added.

The *Index* writer did not examine Sunday's preaching content, his altar calls, or the sovereignty of God in salvation. The chief concern was Sunday's methodology and Georgia Baptists' lack of it.⁶⁴

⁶⁴Evidently, not a few Southern Baptists increasingly viewed revivals as probable if only proper preparations were made and then God was depended upon to honor those preparations by bringing revival. One pastor claimed, "*One thing is sure: God is never to be blamed if a protracted meeting fails to reach the revival stage. Calvary is the expression of a love that would snatch every soul as a brand from the eternal burnings. . . . Surely God stands anxiously ready at any and all times to do his part in granting a church-stirring, soul-saving revival to any church.*" In addition, the pastor claimed "a second thing is sure: Revivals never just happen. One may seem to break out occasionally in a church and spread with the contagion of an epidemic, but invariably an investigation will reveal that it was the result of a price paid at some previous time. Just as great harvest of grain are the product of careful preparation of soil, constant labor and faithful compliance with the laws of nature, so *genuine revivals of religion are the results of certain plans persistently executed*, in which the hearts of men are reached and caused to respond to the will of God. The real problem in a revival is that of reaching men. *God is already enlisted. An enlisted God plus an enlisted community equals a revival.* A planter might as consistently hope for abundant crops without effort on his part as for a church to expect a harvest of souls without paying the price." A third thing was "sure": "*Any church can have a revival any time if it is willing to pay the price of preparation. Failure here is the tragedy of many meetings.*" Again, the pastor claimed, "To be sure, planning a revival involves work. *But work is the price of success in revivals, as in every other enterprise in life.*" In order to procure a revival, pastors were encouraged to "begin long in advance," as much as a year ahead of the revival: "Get the church to commit itself by a vote in conference to stand by it. This is Baptist. It fixes responsibility. It individualizes interest. It lifts the meeting from the pastor to the people." Pastors were also urged to secure, "after earnest prayer," a man of God for the pulpit, "who is as nearly as possible a man of God, sound in the faith, faithful in preaching, free of hobbies and clap-trap methods, tactful, with a consuming passion for souls and whose life is an evident incarnation of the gospel he preaches." In addition, pastors were to "make the revival the great objective": "A revival spirit can be created long before the meeting is to begin. In church services, Bible School and prayer meetings, it should for weeks in advance be the absorbing theme. Such topics as Prayer, Consecration, the Holy Spirit, Soul Winning, etc., are fitting." While it would require "some work," a religious census of the church community was needed—"It is indispensable to the highest success of the meeting. . . . It announces in a thorough, house-to-house, manner the coming meeting. It will reveal many new Baptists who are holding letters and who way [may] be lined up in the services. It will show many unsaved who express a preference for a Baptist church. It will be of great value to the pastor in providing him with the entire Baptist constituency of his church community. It will afford all the information needed in the event it is desired to grade the Bible School upon the modern basis." Other suggestions for preparation included the organizing of a personal workers' band to counsel those desiring salvation, as well as securing the best instrumentalist, the "largest possible choir," the organization of a junior chorus, the securing of an orchestra from the church members, "a capable, consecrated Director of Music," and the "right kind of song books." A large supply of tracts should be secured: "Our Baptist Sunday School Board at Nashville, Tenn., has an excellent assortment of tracts dealing with all phases of Christian experience, Baptist doctrine and church efficiency. Their line of tracts for the unsaved are unexcelled." The condition of the building should be clean, comfortable, and well lighted, and advertising should be "dignified yet attractive and plenteous announcement of the services." Last of all, one must remember that "a spirit of prayer . . . is of supreme importance." The writer maintained, "After everything else has been done, after we have laid our plans and set our machinery, a revival is not yet assured. *These things must be vitalized. The life of any revival is prayer.*" T. F. Callaway, "Planning a Revival," *The Christian Index*, 10 July 1919, 8–9. Emphasis added. See also T. F. Callaway, "The Human Side in a Revival," *The Christian Index*, 15 July 1920, 3, 18.

In an article carried by the *Index* in 1921, Canadian pastor O. C. S. Wallace implored churches to rely upon the Holy Spirit, rather than organization and advertising, for effective evangelism. He ob-

Additional evidence of the accepted intertwining of the spiritual with the practical is seen in the concluding paragraph of the article:

Jesus could not do many wonderful works in a certain place because of unbelief. Nor can pastors and evangelists be used of him in reclaiming backsliders and in the saving of the lost in such an atmosphere. *The secret of power with all God's servants lies in the resultants of preparation. If God's people will prepare the way of the Lord by seasons of prayer and the exercise of faith and hope, and by personal efforts to reclaim backsliders and reach the unsaved, he will graciously manifest his presence and power, and great and glorious things will be accomplished.*⁶⁵

While few of their Baptist predecessors would quibble with the concluding paragraph, the previous one would create great disapproval. By this time, though, organizational preparation had become so accepted that few saw any discrepancy between prayer and advertising and “picked singers.”

Even while pastors were encouraged to lead their churches toward organizational efficiency, they were cautioned to be realistic about the apparent success of their ministries. In his article whimsically entitled “How I Surpassed All My Predecessors,” Jeff D. Ray, professor of homiletics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, provided a reality check to pastors prone to self praise. In Lucan parlance (Luke 1:1-4) Ray began, “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in unblushing detail how their ministry is resulting in more additions, larger audiences and greater collections than the commonplace labors of those who preceded them, it seemed good to me also to give

served, “Trust has been put in publicity, and eccentricity, in billboards and long hair, in ingeniously conceived ‘dodgers’ and excessive physical exercises on the platform, and in innumerable other devices [*sic*] to attract the attention of the crowd. . . . By all means let there be skillful advertising; and let the eccentric man be eccentric if it is natural to him; and let the evangelist wear long hair, or a red necktie, or a long coat, or a short coat, according to his bent; and let him be a ‘converted Gypsy,’ or a ‘reclaimed gambler,’ or a ‘saved dancing master,’ and tell the people so. None of these make or unmake effective evangelistic methods. But if there is to be a manifestation of great saving power, certain great things must be done which please the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is not pleased when pastors, and deacons, and the parents of unconverted children, and the officers and teachers of the Sunday schools, and other church members fail to humble themselves before God and to obey the promptings of His Spirit.” O. C. S. Wallace, “A Deeper Note in Evangelism,” *The Christian Index*, 10 February 1921, 2. Like many Baptists of his day, Wallace was not opposed to organization and methods, but only to relying upon them at the expense of the Holy Spirit.

⁶⁵“The Secret of Billy Sunday’s Power,” 2. Emphasis added.

an account of how in my various pastorates I surpassed all my predecessors.” He then delineated accounts of phenomenal growth in four of his pastorates with statistics which would have been worthy of any success stories. He asked, “Now who will deny that I have had a remarkably brilliant pastoral career if one may judge by the samples?” There was, though, more to the story of each pastorate. He explained,

In that first pastorate there had been no pastor for more than a year preceding my brilliant advent. No wonder the congregations grew. In that pastorate where the collections made such an advance the church had before my going been served by a semi-hardshell preacher who never took any collection at all. It is not hard to double nothing.

In that pastorate where the fine house was built the money had all been raised, plans adopted and contract let under the ministry of my predecessor. He did the work and I got the newspaper pyrotechnics.

In that pastorate where the score applied for baptism at a regular Sunday night service the newspapers failed to state [*sic*] that they were all children from a nearby orphans’ home, converted in a meeting held in the home by another brother, which meeting I did not even attend. Twenty of the children wanted to be Baptists and ours happened to be the nearest church to them.

In the last spectacular instance where the church grew from 60 to 700, the newspaper failed to state that the little church had for years been trying to maintain itself in the remote outskirts of Waco, where there was almost no population, and about the time of [my] becoming pastor had moved into town under the shadow of Baylor University in the heart of the thickest Baptist population in the world. The growth was due to change of location and not to brilliant pastoral leadership.

Although a proponent of organizational efficiency, Ray still saw the work as that which, ultimately, God brings about. Consequently, the “successful” pastor has nothing about which to boast. Ray wanted to comfort those pastors who saw little visible fruit of their ministry: “I want to comfort my ordinary compatriots who have wondered why the brethren’s pastorates are so brilliant while theirs are so commonplace.” He also wanted those who saw remarkable results to grow in humility: “I want to suggest to my brilliant brother that when he has written a report of work, making self-laudatory comparisons of the present with the past, the best disposition of that report is to stick it in the fire. All such comparisons are ‘odorous’—malodorous.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶Jeff D. Ray, “How I Surpassed All My Predecessors,” *The Christian Index*, 11 July 1912, 3.

The Efficient Church

The most detailed treatment of the concept of church efficiency among Southern Baptists during the first three decades of the twentieth century was Gaines Dobbins' *The Efficient Church: A Study of Polity and Methods in the Light of New Testament Principles and Modern Conditions and Needs*, published in 1923 by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.⁶⁷ In the "Editor's Introduction," John Hill explained the value of Dobbins' book:

This is a practical age. It demands and gets results. The very sharpness of struggle in the competitive business world has developed an organization and a system which reap success from a very narrow margin of relative efficiency. The presence of successful business men in the membership of our churches is responsible for the conviction that the average church is not realizing proper returns upon the capital and energy invested. There is no disposition to judge the output of a church by purely commercial standards, but there is a growing demand for a better correlation of its activities and a thorough utilization of its resources.

That Dobbins' book was no impractical work put forth by an academician, Hill wrote, "Dr. Dobbins does not write as a theorist but as an exponent of principles which have

⁶⁷That Dobbins' book is worthy of scrutiny is revealed in the influence which he wielded throughout his long academic career. For instance, in 1967 Howard Foshee called Dobbins "Mr. Church Administration." Howard B. Foshee, "Editorial," *Church Administration* 9, no. 12 (1967): 3. In the same issue of *Church Administration*, John F. Havlik provided this tribute: "In many ways Dr. Dobbins blazed a trail for present day Southern Baptist Convention and church programing. He made one of the first attempts to define the functions of the church. H. saw clearly the role of the pastor in leading the church to organize and function." "Pioneer in Church Administration," *Church Administration* 9, no. 12 (1967): 9. Writing in 1978 while serving as dean of Southern Seminary's School of Religious Education, Allen W. Graves offers this perspective of Dobbins' influence: "Surely no one among Southern Baptists has had more influence in shaping the theory and practice of church administration in the now more than 35,000 Southern Baptist churches than Gaines S. Dobbins. That powerful impact came through his continuing flow of practical, pertinent books, and through his impact on thousands of students in his seminary classes at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he taught for thirty-six years, and then at Golden Gate Seminary where he taught for another ten fruitful years. After his second 'retirement' at eighty years of age, he has continued to provide provocative books and regular columns in a state Baptist paper while continuing some teaching assignments in the new Boyce Bible School at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary." Allen W. Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins—Mr. Church Administration," *Review and Expositor* 75 (1978): 383. Later major books of Dobbins on aspects of church administration include Gaines S. Dobbins, *Baptist Churches in Action: A Study of New Testament Principles and Modern Methods of Application* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1929) [a reworking of *The Efficient Church*]; Gaines Dobbins, *Vitalizing the Church Program: A Study in Modern Pastoral Efficiency* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933); Gaines S. Dobbins, *Building Better Churches: A Guide to the Pastoral Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1947); Gaines S. Dobbins, *The Churchbook: A Treasury of Materials and Methods* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951). Dobbins' influence is acknowledged in M. Ray McKay, "An Efficient Church in the Modern World" (Th.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1928), 4.

been tested and which are in use in many of our strongest churches.” Although the book was “unique in subject-matter and scope,” Hill maintained, “we are certain that its wide circulation will result in a quickening of our church and denominational life.” From Dobbins’ work Southern Baptists could learn how their leading churches had achieved efficiency and, in turn, how their own churches could increase theirs.⁶⁸

Dobbins began his work by examining the concept of efficiency and how it related to local churches. He defined efficiency as “the quality of producing effective results; or it is a quality of mind, or of body, producing, or capable of producing, maximum result with a given effort, or a given result with minimum effort.” Throughout the first chapter Dobbins correlated principles observed in “modern life” to the local church. Efficiency was demanded because of increasingly complex social conditions and because of the demand for success in the business and professional world. Respect for leaders no longer was given by virtue of their station in life; rather, respect was reserved for those who exercised efficient leadership. In addition, “*multiplicity of duties and opportunities*” required increased efficiency. Dobbins opined: “Every capable man is being called on today to do the work of two to a dozen men. The marvelous achievements of men in places of high responsibility can be explained only by the fact that they reduced their lives and

⁶⁸Gaines S. Dobbins, *The Efficient Church: A Study of the Polity and Methods in the Light of New Testament Principles and Modern Conditions and Needs* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1923), 4. Dobbins noted in his preface the origination and purpose of his book: “When the writer assumed charge of the newly-created chair of Church Efficiency in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., he was confronted with the problem of providing teaching material for a great class of young ministers. The imperative demand was for discussion based on practical need, growing out of actual experience and observation, with a solid foundation of New Testament truth. A considerable background of experience in the business world, in the pastorate, on the editorial staff of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and as field worker, served to encourage the writer that he might organize material of some value to the prospective pastors and other Christian workers of his classes. The definite aim throughout was to conserve time and energy for the future by confronting these students with vital facts and problems in church life and work, that they might be stimulated to thought and discussion; and attitudes, convictions and habits established that would render them genuinely more efficient in their life work. The notes thus prepared have grown into this volume, which is published in the hope that it may thus reach a larger constituency, and serve a wider purpose.” Dobbins noted that his indebtedness to Dargan’s *Ecclesiology*, I. J. Van Ness’s *Training in Church Membership* and *Training in the Baptist Spirit*, and the Northern Baptist Convention’s Frederick Agar, “whose series of efficiency handbooks, and whose personal interest, have greatly helped and encouraged in a difficult task.” *Ibid.*, 5.

work to a rigidly scientific efficiency basis. Lacking this system and discipline, men placed in position of heavy responsibility soon burn themselves out, or meet with failure that necessitates their removal.”⁶⁹

After noting examples of efficiency and inefficiency in the world of industry and the field of education,⁷⁰ Dobbins applied the concepts to the local church. That the emphasis upon church efficiency directly affected his view of the pastorate is seen in Dobbins’ declaration that, although the church elects deacons and other officers, “the responsible leader of a church is the pastor.”⁷¹ Dobbins portrayed this efficient church as being comprised of some five hundred members, with “the supreme objects before them . . . the saving of the lost through the preaching and teaching of the gospel, the building up of the saved in Christian character, the transformation of society by means of the religion of Jesus Christ at work in the hearts and lives of people.” How might a church, employing the principles of efficiency, carry out its responsibilities? Dobbins explained,

Regular and systematic surveys of the community afford accurate information as to needs and possibilities; equipment and working force are provided to meet these needs; activities are planned to give to every member a place of usefulness along the line of congeniality, special ability and preference, and effort constantly put forth to enlist every member in his or her place; a challenging and worthy program, judiciously advertised, is projected, that arouses the enthusiasm of friends and commands the notice and respect of the indifferent and inimical; the church is made a powerful force for evangelization and Christianization at home and abroad.”⁷²

In contrast to examples of efficiency, Dobbins presented “the appalling inefficiency which still exists.” Most men are employed in the wrong job; most use only about

⁶⁹Dobbins, *The Efficient Church*, 12–16.

⁷⁰At times Dobbins makes claims that appear overly optimistic, if not hyperbolic. For instance, he used the following from the field of education to help make the case for the pursuit of efficiency: “A course of study [at a ‘great university’], carefully articulated, affords opportunity for continuous advancement until graduation. Students, properly classified, pass step by step under graded instruction and expert supervision from the novice stage to the finished scholar or adept workman. *Nine-tenths of the men thus trained will attain to eminence.* Efficiency principles have been applied to producing a higher type of human beings.” *Ibid.*, 17. Emphasis added.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²*Ibid.*, 18.

a third “of their mental and spiritual forces”; “the average American family could live on what it wastes”; three million American workers are on the “sick list”; 630,000 preventable deaths occurred each year; one and a half billion dollars were wasted each year due to preventable deaths and diseases; a workman was killed every four minutes and another injured every four seconds. Dobbins lamented, “Consider the losses that ensue between producer and ultimate consumer, the wastage and loss due to mismanagement; the terrific toll of carelessness; the penalties of idleness, crime, and unemployment.” The religious realm fared no better. Spiritual resources went undeveloped in the average congregation; too few did too much and too many did too little; buildings under-used tied up capital; the majority of members remained “uninformed and unenlisted”; the educational plant was poorly equipped; and the pastor was “under-paid and over-worked.” Dobbins concluded, “If there is one thing needed above another in our churches it is the practical application of efficiency principles and methods.”⁷³

What were the principles of efficiency which churches needed to utilize? Dobbins found in Harrington Emerson’s *The Twelve Principles of Efficiency* principles that could be utilized effectively to produce efficient churches.⁷⁴ Dobbins then applied Emerson’s twelve principles to the church.⁷⁵ Dobbins justified the application of the

⁷³Ibid, 18–19.

⁷⁴Dobbins described Emerson as “one of the most successful practical efficiency experts,” whose book had “become a classic in the commercial and industrial world.” Ibid., 19.

⁷⁵The first principle was “clearly defined ideals.” Dobbins maintained, “The chances are all against any life or any enterprise that is without definite aim and purpose.” For biblical support Dobbins referenced Matt 6:19-34 and Matt 7:24-27. The second principle was “common sense”: “Efficiency demands the constant attitude of mind by which matters are viewed calmly, in a detached way, in the light of practical common sense.” Dobbins found biblical support in Matt 8:1-13; 12:1-14; 22:15-22; Mark 7:24-30; Luke 10:25-37; and John 4:1-42. Third, “competent counsel,” was essential because “no man knows it all”: “The greatest executive, other things being equal, is he who is wise and fortunate enough to surround himself with men who know the most on each phase of the many problems which he confronts.” Dobbins explained that competent counsel “implies responsibility for bringing to bear specialized knowledge and ability, after careful investigation, upon a problem or difficulty or enterprise, for the benefit of the executive who wants all the light he can get before arriving at a decision. For support, Dobbins provided Gen 41; Num 10:29-32; Num 13; 2 Sam 17; and Acts 11. The fourth principle—discipline—meant “the subjection

principles of efficiency to “matters of religion” by proposing that the New Testament

of one’s will to another and higher will,” as well as “self-control, the mastery of one’s powers and impulses.” For discipline to be efficient, it must be preventative instead of punitive: “It sets up high and worthy standards, and then challenges to their attainment, at the same time enforcing the penalties that justly accrue when these standards are wantonly disregarded.” For support Dobbins pointed to Matt 10:34-30; Luke 14:26-35; John 21:15-19; Rom 16:17-20; 1 Cor 5:9-13; and 2 Thess 3:6. [Concerning discipline in the church, Dobbins declared that “we need to make a thorough re-study of what is involved in the whole question of church discipline.” While not opposed to church discipline, Dobbins’ approach was less stringent than the common Baptist understanding of the mid-nineteenth century. He explained, “Many thoughtful, successful pastors doubt the wisdom of singling out dancing, card playing, drunkenness and profanity, and passing stringent church ‘laws’ against these particular offenses. Rather, they suggest holding up the ideal of consecrated, unworldly, consistent Christian living, and dealing with *offenders*, not offenses, with *individuals*, not violations.” The fifth principle was that of “the fair deal.” Dobbins contended that “nothing breaks down *morale* more certainly than the spirit of unfairness.” The business world required just dealings, and the church should require nothing less. Dobbins observed, “Much of the estrangement among church workers is the result of unfair practice, or imaginary injustice. Jesus introduced the principle of fair play into the relations of men in the most emphatic and startling manner of any of the world’s teachers. Read again what he says in the Sermon on the Mount.” In addition, Dobbins found biblical support in Matt 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; and Luke 9:46-48. The sixth principle was the keeping of good records. Dobbins explained, “All progress is based on records. A business concern without an adequate accounting department would soon be in bankruptcy.” Churches, though, had often violated this principle: “Yet the lack of adequate records in the average church is astonishing.” Dobbins maintained that “God is the Great Recorder, the Bible the most monumental evidence of the value of accurate records. A new day will dawn for any church that knows how to make, keep and use records.” No supporting biblical references were provided. The seventh principle—dispatching—included “all those processes which have to do with the prompt, systematic, efficient execution of a program or carrying out of a schedule.” Dispatching, though, required flexibility: “Patient and wise planning must be supplemented by keen knowledge of human nature and ability instantly to readjust plans to meet unexpected conditions and exigencies.” Dobbins claimed that “the value and necessity of this principle are everywhere taught in the Scriptures and exemplified in the lives of all great men of history.” For support, Dobbins referenced Prov 27:1; Matt 8:21, 22, 24; 25:2-13; Acts 24:25. The eighth principle dealt with “standards and schedules.” Standards were constantly used in the world of business and science to determine value, and schedules were needed to maximize efficiency. Without standards and schedules, chaos would replace order. Consequently, Dobbins asserted, “Efficiency in church work, no less than in business, demands carefully devised standards and schedules.” Biblical support was found in Exod 20; John 3:18; and Matt 20:18-20. The ninth principle of efficiency was standardized conditions. Dobbins explained that this meant “to standardize ourselves so as to command the unalterable extraneous facts—earth, water, air, gravity, wave vibrations; and to standardize the internal forces so that by means of personality we control conditions and forces and utilize them for our purposes.” Failure to make proper adjustments breeds inefficiency. Dobbins maintained, “We waste our strength and beat our lives out struggling against the inevitable, instead of adjusting ourselves to conditions which we cannot control; while on the other hand we too often acquiesce in the seemingly obvious and inevitable which nevertheless could be changed and made to serve our highest ends.” Dobbins contended that “recognition of this principle has made possible the achievements of modern industry. Why can it not be applied with equal success in the work of the church?” Biblical support was seen in Genesis 1; 1 Kgs 5; Acts 6:1-7. The tenth principle was standardized operations. Dobbins pointed to the standard procedures used to maximize efficiency in the production of automobiles. He asserted that “quantity-production is made possible only on the basis of standardized operations.” This principle did not mean, however, that individuality became mechanized or spiritual forces became standardized. Dobbins maintained, though, “that we know, within limits, what to expect from a given outlay of time and energy.” For biblical support Dobbins pointed the reader to 1 Cor 14:40 and 12:30. Principle number eleven was called “standard-practice instruction.” Business executives trained their workers in schools of instruction in order to train workers suited for

itself teaches a doctrine of efficiency. He found in the words of Jesus an “affirmative answer in unmistakable language.” Jesus’ declaration that “by their fruits you shall know them” was, to Dobbins, “precisely the test of the modern efficiency expert.” Dobbins maintained that Jesus’ teaching concerning the impossibility of a good tree bringing forth evil fruit and an evil tree bringing forth good fruit “was his statement of the fundamental efficiency principle as recognized and applied by men who have successfully built great business institutions and engineered great commercial enterprises.” Jesus’ warning that each tree which does not bring forth good fruit would be cut down and thrown into the fire “is the text of the captains of industry who, following this principle, have relegated to the scrap-heap that which failed of its requirements, no matter how expensive or time-honored.” While Jesus acknowledged “that efficiency is primarily a matter of men, not of method,” so have “all successful leaders of men.” Dobbins maintained that Jesus’ “ministry, his training of the Twelve, his plan of organization of his churches, his program of world-conquest, all exhibit the perfection of efficiency.”⁷⁶

certain tasks with the instructions of standard practice, a practice which made failure, to Dobbins’ observation, “well-nigh impossible.” Dobbins contended that “the duty of the church is to find tasks for its members and workers for its tasks, and bring them together, so that after sufficient instruction its members may be able to do cheerfully and well that which is to be done in the work of the church and kingdom.” Biblical support was found in Deut 4:1-2; 1 Cor 14; and 2 Tim 2:1-15. The last principle was termed “efficiency rewards.” Rewards are a part of life, and almost all achievements are the result of the pursuit of rewards. “The efficient executive,” Dobbins noted, “takes this into account, and secures the practical application of all other efficiency principles through the appeal of reward—in the form of approbation, promotion, increased wages.” Jesus, as well as much of the Scriptures, appealed to the bestowal of both present and eternal rewards as promises to the “good and faithful servant of God.” Dobbins claimed that the enjoyment of these rewards “constitutes life’s highest success.” How was this principle to apply to the church of the twentieth century? Dobbins declared, “The church that deals in negatives and does not set forth the great positive rewards of the Christian life is missing its opportunity.” Biblical support was seen in Lev 26:3-13 and “similar Old Testament passages”; Matt 10:30; 16:24-27; 20:1-16; 25:34-46; Luke 6:22-23; and Rev 2:10. *Ibid.*, 19-25. Dobbins did not, however, believe in reckless growth—he maintained a concern about the unconverted becoming members. He warned that “the greatest single hindrance today to true evangelism and the bringing in of God’s kingdom is the appalling tide of worldliness which has swept into our churches. Somehow it must be stemmed. The place to begin is at the fountain head. We are often too eager for numbers, and too careless in receiving new members. A reformation at this point, making it the steadfast policy of the church to receive a new member only after careful inquiry, and then providing for careful instruction in the duties, privileges and responsibilities of church membership, would go a long way toward solving the difficult problem of church discipline.” *Ibid.*, 196.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 25–26.

In addition to finding support for a New Testament doctrine of efficiency in the teaching of Jesus, Dobbins declared that “the Acts of the Apostles is a manual of church efficiency.” Dobbins supported his assertion with another: “Never did men achieve such results as these early Christians, in the face of tremendous obstacles.” Dobbins further asserted that “the apostle Paul stands out as the world’s greatest efficiency expert in religion, and in chapter after chapter of his inspired writings he deals with this practical and vital subject.”⁷⁷

Dobbins warned that an efficient church did not mean that the church pursued “constant change and improvement to meet the demands of each passing age.” What God established in the New Testament for the church cannot be improved. Indeed, Dobbins viewed his understanding of church efficiency as fulfilling the New Testament model: “Let us therefore settle it once for all in our thinking that the most efficient church is the one that is truest in purpose and organization to the God-given New Testament model.” Following this model did not, however, mean that the church was to remain anchored methodologically to the past. While civilization was moving forward, the church was using methods of the past, such as “once-a-month preaching, haphazard financial systems—or lack of system; inadequate buildings; unorganized forces.” In addition, the church was facing greater competition for social gatherings, was finding itself much enlarged in the cities with the shift of population from the rural areas, and was challenged by new social conditions, such as the moving of families, the weakening of home life, the fluctuation of moral standards, the proliferation of social organizations and amusements, and changing economic factors all required the church to adopt efficient methods to meet the new challenges.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Ibid., 26.

⁷⁸Ibid., 38–39.

An efficient church required that each member find his place of service within the organization of the church. Dobbins asserted, “For every saved individual there is, or ought to be, a place of usefulness in the church; and one of the church’s highest functions is to discover its members’ capabilities, and then lead each one into ‘the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ.’” For the church “to reach the goal of every-member enlistment,” some very different emphases had to take place. “*We must cease to think of the church as primarily an institution for preaching, where a congregation passively listens while the preacher delivers his message.*” Instead, teaching should be adapted to the various age-groups within the church and those who were in need of special care to be given it. Dobbins explained,

This means the grouping of children, young people, women and men of the church in organizations designed to utilize their talents and resources, and to make possible their carrying on the work which Christ has given them to do. The result in the well-rounded church will be the Sunday school, with its departments and organized classes; the young people’s union, with its group of young Christians in training for church membership; the woman’s missionary society, with its bands of young people and women studying and practicing missions; deacons and lay officers, serving the church in practical affairs of worship and administration; men’s brotherhood, enlisting the men in missionary effort, service and fellowship.

How would this “every-member enlistment” impact the responsibilities and duties of the pastor? Dobbins answered, “The pastor is the leader, teacher and adviser of all, and through his example and preaching will furnish inspiration and instruction that will make dynamic all the plans and activities of his people.”⁷⁹

Dobbins’ idea of an efficient church placed increased weight and responsibilities upon the role of the pastor. Dobbins maintained, “*An efficient church in our modern world demands consecrated, competent, trained leadership.*” The failure of the pastor to train properly the leaders in his local church would inevitably result in an inefficient church: “If he fails, failure may almost always be traced down the line of his church officers and leaders.” Dobbins admitted that “never were heavier demands made upon

⁷⁹Ibid., 42–44. Emphasis added.

the pastor for competency than to-day.” Because well-trained “business and professional men and women” would be in his congregation, the pastor himself must be exceedingly well-trained in the various areas of ministry: “The modern world, therefore, demands that in addition to his personal piety and call of God the pastor shall be a trained man.”⁸⁰

Because men and women in his congregation will have been “college-bred,” he must have similar training if he hopes “to command their attention and co-operation.” Because “the men and women *of power and influence whom he must reach and win* will be, for the most part specialists,” the pastor “too must be a specialist, knowing his subject with no less thoroughness than the physician, the lawyer, the educator, the banker, the manufacturer, the scientific farmer, know theirs.” Ministering in areas “where this degree of culture does not exist,” such as “in backward communities at home or in distant mission fields,” requires the possession “all the more . . . of these resources of specialization upon which to draw.” The pastor must, consequently, receive seminary training, “where for a period of years he will be steeped in the study of the Scriptures, particularly in the original languages; where he will become acquainted with theology, church history, missions, current religious thought, sociology, homiletics, and all else that relates to his specialty as a leader and moulder of religious thought.”⁸¹

While this training helps to prepare the pastor for his responsibilities in leading

⁸⁰Dobbins did acknowledge that “Baptists have wisely refrained from setting up educational requirements for entrance into the ministry, believing that God can *on occasion* use even an uneducated preacher to his glory, but in actual practice the churches, in country, town and city, are declining to request the services of untrained and incompetent men.” *Ibid.*, 46. Emphasis added.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 46–47. Emphasis added. Dobbins later put forth additional implications for having leading lay members in the church: “The rediscovery of lay leadership, together with the coming of so many splendidly equipped business men and women into the life of the churches as active workers and leaders, has brought about dissatisfaction with the inefficient management of the practical affairs of a church. This demand is based on the function of a modern church as a business enterprise; it is in line with standards of efficiency and system in all other departments of endeavor; it is emphasized by constantly increasing business responsibility which rests upon the pastor and officers of a highly organized modern church; it is justified by the needs which must be met in our complex social life if the church is to survive. Such demand for efficient management is readily acceded to by the earnest, aggressive pastor of today, as well as his church and officers, and is in line with the achievement of satisfactory results.” *Ibid.*, 162.

an efficient church and finding acceptance among the trained and cultured, more would be required of him. Dobbins explained, "In addition, we have recognized that to meet the complex demands of the modern world the Christian leader must at least put himself in the way of becoming *a practical efficiency expert in church organization and administration.*" He must be conscious of this need because "he will be compelled to learn to do by doing." Dobbins declared, "Surely there was never a day of greater opportunity than that in which we live, and the young men and women preparing themselves for efficient spiritual leadership to-day will tomorrow go out to meet the challenge of unparalleled privilege and responsibility."⁸²

The pastor must be involved in much more than preaching and providing for the spiritual care of his congregation. Dobbins reasoned, "As the organs of the body cannot function without the head, neither can a church carry on successfully organized activities without pastoral leadership." Why is such pastoral leadership needed? Dobbins answered, "The churches are eager to follow the leading of a man in whom they have confidence, and who, with resolution and courage, puts on a challenging program." This "challenging program" will not only create enthusiasm in the church but will also provide the preacher "a vigor, an enthusiasm, a freshness that will vitalize his pulpit ministrations as will nothing else."⁸³

While Dobbins called for efficient organization and the utilization of church officers to help carry out the church's programs, he saw this as freeing, rather than hindering the pastor in his spiritual duties. He explained, "The pastor-preacher who is burdened with the details of organization and administration soon finds himself overwhelmed with minutiae, his time consumed with material matters, his spiritual power sapped." Dobbins maintained that "by keeping his own spiritual life at normal high-tide

⁸²Ibid., 47. Emphasis added.

⁸³Ibid., 92.

through study, meditation, prayer, soul-winning, he communicates spiritual enthusiasm to his fellow-workers, and thus power is released that makes dynamic the efforts and plans of the church. Without this, little else is of much worth.”⁸⁴

As others had written, Dobbins saw the pastor as the chief executive of the church. For church management to be carried out efficiently, the pastor would have to realize his responsibility as an executive. Dobbins realized that the pastor’s “primary work is not that of business executive, yet he is, humanly, at the head of a great business concern which demands the services of men trained in practical business management.” This executive responsibility could not be, in Dobbins view, viewed with indifference: “The pastor’s *highest success* will be achieved in gathering about him men and women of executive ability, and depending largely upon them for relief at this point, that he may give himself more fully to spiritual ministries.”⁸⁵

Even with such executive support, however, the pastor of an efficient church was still required to exercise executive, business-like direction. Dobbins asserted that “it is of very great consequence that the modern pastor seek to develop the qualities of a good executive, that he may have the proper oversight of this immensely important phase of his church life.”⁸⁶ To that end Dobbins provided “some helpful suggestions for the development of executive ability”:

- (1) The thoughtful observation and study of good business men and their methods.
- (2) The frankly sought and cordially received advice of trained executives regarding business plans.
- (3) The occasional reading of the Book of Proverbs, books on management and efficiency, periodicals such as “The American Magazine” and “System.”
- (4) The habit of carefully planning your work dispassionately and in the light of all available facts.
- (5) The habitual practice of attending to routine matters promptly and thoroughly.

⁸⁴Ibid., 94.

⁸⁵Ibid., 163–64. Emphasis added. One may certainly ask if Dobbins had forgotten that deacons would be the biblical provision for such concerns.

⁸⁶Ibid., 164.

(6) The fixed determination to do nothing yourself (in the way of detailed execution) that you can train some one else to do.

(7) The cultivation of cheerfulness, optimism, good humor; the absolute refusal to yield to anger, wounded pride, self-pity, resentment.

(8) The attitude toward your work that it is the greatest game in the world, in which you may lose a few points, but cannot be finally defeated by yourself.

(9) The determination to see the best in and bring the most out of every individual, without being blindly credulous.

(10) Living as in the presence of Jesus, conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit, and the unfeigned practice of the Golden Rule.

With approval Dobbins cited a Professor McGarrah for support: "To express a dislike for management and a preference for preaching is no excuse." McGarrah illustrated, "Neither God nor the law will excuse a devout father who is too busy praying and teaching the Bible to provide the needed surgical care for a son. The spiritual nurture of the church, as of the individual, must be supplemented by proper attention to structural development and functional efficiency."⁸⁷

Because the pastor had this executive role, Dobbins maintained that, while the pastor may have his study in his home, he was to be provided an office at the church. This office should be "one of the best rooms in the church . . . where the pastor can keep office hours, and where the business of the church may be transacted." In addition, the pastor should be provided "an office helper" for the "details of clerical work." Dobbins maintained that "such an individual, under the guidance of the pastor, will earn the stipend paid many times over in the one matter of financial enlistment, working with the treasurers in keeping accurate accounts of money received and disbursed, and mailing out regular monthly or quarterly statements to the membership." Dobbins observed that "the larger churches more and more are thinking in terms of the *pastor and his staff*, and several distinct offices are being developed in consequence." Specialists would oversee the educational work, "the young people's work, the women's work, the finances, the music, the records, and other phases of the church's activities which are too important and exacting to entrust to volunteers alone, and which the pastor cannot supervise for the

⁸⁷Ibid., 164–65.

lack of time or technical skill.” Dobbins pointed to the New Testament churches which had “a multiplicity of pastors, or workers, who gave to the church all their time” for biblical precedent. Dobbins noted with approval that “the modern movement is significant in recognizing, as did the early Christians, the supremely important place of a church in the lives of its members, and in providing sufficient helpers to oversee and direct the activities of the church to the end that no single member nor phase of the work be neglected.”⁸⁸

Dobbins saw the provision of transportation by the church for the pastor as essential to his being an efficient executive. The provision of an automobile would save him time in making visits, would greatly multiply his usefulness in other ways, and would give “him a sense of freedom in his work that is of incalculable value.” Pastors living far enough away from the church to need railroad transportation should be provided transportation expenses in addition to his salary.⁸⁹

For the church to be managed efficiently, the pastor and his management team needed to lead the church to set “worthy church goals.” Dobbins believed that “a standard sets up worthy goals toward the attainment of which an organization or an individual may strive. Good management determines just what is to be done.” Dobbins provided “ten items in a suggested Church Standard of Excellence”: pastoral financial support; systematic financial support of members for the church; a graded, organized, and efficient Sunday school; a Baptist Young Peoples Union organized and efficiently conducted; an active and efficient Woman’s Missionary Society; a “Laymen’s Team or Union enlisting the men in denominational enterprises, in associational development, and in church activities”; supporting and encouraging young people to attend Baptist schools of higher

⁸⁸Ibid., 165–67.

⁸⁹Ibid., 167.

education; the observance of family and public worship;⁹⁰ the subscription of the Baptist state paper and “Home and Foreign Fields” by at least fifty percent of the church’s homes; and the execution of “thorough evangelism.”⁹¹

For these standards of excellence to be carried out, the pastor and his management team would need to develop “a constructive church program.” Because everything could not be done at the same time, Dobbins suggested that “the seasons of the year determine in large measure many of our activities.” He proposed the following for a church calendar: “(1) *Fall*—Planning, surveying, preparation; enlistment and enlargement. (2) *Winter*—Educational, training and social activities. (3) *Spring*—Missionary, benevolent, social activities; enlistment and enlargement; evangelism. (4) *Summer*—Evangelism, extension, recreation, vacation schools, institutes.”⁹²

Dobbins cautioned church leaders not to begin such programs and activities without first inventorying the church’s material and human resources. An inventory of the church’s human resources included “a carefully compiled list of officers” and “a complete survey of the resident church membership.” Dobbins proposed that “a group of trusted, tactful members” be selected to serve as a “survey committee” [which] will be

⁹⁰Dobbins provided these goals: “Daily family prayer and Bible reading in every home; preaching and prayer meeting services attended *at least once each month by all resident members.*” *Ibid.*, 168. Emphasis added.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 167–68. Some Baptists viewed the presence of the state Baptist paper in the homes of the members as an essential element for church efficiency. *The Index* commented, “The condition of the [denominational] paper’s subscription list in any given church as to size, promptness, and cleanness—a list of well paid-up subscribers is ‘clean’—testifies strongly to the pastor’s all-round efficiency as a preacher and worker.” “What About Georgia?” *The Christian Index*, 7 January 1915, 3. See also “A Neglected Denominational Asset,” *The Christian Index*, 5 October 1911, 6, and “Another Demonstration,” *The Christian Index*, 9 March 1916, 1–2. Two churches were transformed from lethargic to growing and progressive congregations because their pastors canvassed the membership and were able to have the denominational newspaper delivered to every home of their members. The writer encouraged those who wanted their church “to be a real live church” to adopt such a plan. He promised: “You will double the efficiency of your pastor and of your church officers, and of your membership. And if you have financial problems this policy will solve them, for the congregation when kept informed of the various interests of the church, at once wonderfully increases its liberality, and the difficulty [*sic*] of raising money absolutely disappears.” J. F. Jacobs, “A Real Live Church,” *The Christian Index*, 6 February 1913, 8–9.

⁹²Dobbins, *The Efficient Church*, 168–69.

requested to meet for several successive evenings, and with church roll in the hands of [the] clerk, and several good penmen seated at the table," certain information would be compiled concerning each member. Information deemed important included the member's full name; address; occupation; marital status; distance from church; car ownership; family connections within the church; attendance at morning worship; evening worship, prayer meeting; manner of financial contributions ("regular" and "tither"); office held; service area of interest or capability; enrollment or needed enrollment in Sunday school, Baptist Young People's Union, Woman's Missionary Union, and Laymen's Union; other areas of service, whether choir, usher, or special committee; categories of "definite Christian service" and "Christian service"; duration of church membership; observance of family altar; attitude toward church; influence in community; best manner of contacting; and any other remarks. This information would then be used in a "program of enlistment" in order to ensure that every member was functioning within the institution of the church.⁹³

According to Dobbins, the efficient church would proceed to a demographic study by surveying its community. Information would be gathered, classified, and interpreted. No aspect of the members and life of the community was to be left uninvestigated. Dobbins noted the purpose for this effort: "The information gathered, by house-to-house canvass in taking of census, and by the aid of informed helpers for community data, must be carefully tabulated and reduced to such form as to make it of practical use in the work of the pastor and church."⁹⁴

In the management of the efficient church, the conduct of public worship also received Dobbins attention. Dobbins maintained, "One of the finest of fine arts is leadership in a service of public worship; and one of the finest of Christian graces is intelligent, purposeful, spiritual participation in public worship. *The atmosphere of reverence, of*

⁹³Ibid., 169-71.

⁹⁴Ibid. 171-73.

interest, of responsiveness, determines in large measure the preacher's success in the delivery of the sermon." While the choir, the ushers, the deacons, and the congregation all contributed to the success or failure of the worship and received Dobbins attention, Dobbins noted that the preacher himself was to provide the proper example for reverential worship which the untaught congregation would reflect themselves. Dobbins lamented, "It is a pity that a good man should vitiate his influence and spoil the value of hours of study in the preparation of his message by carelessness and slovenliness in conducting the service of worship preceding the sermons."⁹⁵

After discussing the publicizing of the church's work to both members and the community at large, Dobbins included principles of church management from other writers. He concluded by stating that "the final test of executive ability is the power to develop and maintain team work." Dobbins provided four short sections of parallel statements which "set forth the indispensable functions of the leader in his creation and maintenance of *esprit de corps*." The "good executive" was one who organized, planned, supplied incentives, and supervised. What results would be produced by this efficient management? Dobbins provided three payoffs: "(1) Co-ordination, speed and control. (2) Superior output with respect to quantity, quality, and unit cost. (3) The maximum utilization of opportunity and of men, and the minimum wastage."⁹⁶

Dobbins' call for church efficiency culminated in three areas: enlistment, finance, and management. He claimed that the great weakness of Southern Baptist churches was the "failure to enlist adequately in the work of the church and the denomination." While Baptists excelled in evangelism, they struggled in having every member of their churches involved in the work of the church. This failure was no small matter to Dobbins: "Our next great task is to co-ordinate with a holy passion for evangelism a like

⁹⁵Ibid., 173–77. Emphasis added.

⁹⁶Ibid., 180–81.

zeal for enlisting and nurturing our members who are led to Christ and placed upon the rolls of our churches.” While achieving one-hundred-percent success would be impractical, “the growing of a great church and a great denomination depends largely upon the gradual, progressive achievement of the high standard, ‘A place of usefulness and happiness for every member, and every member in his or her place.’”⁹⁷

Concerns about Organizational Efficiency

Even as Southern Baptists became more enamored of organizational efficiency, they realized that theirs was a spiritual mission. As important as church growth and efficient pastors were in the expansion of the kingdom of God, Southern Baptists continued to express concern for spiritual success.⁹⁸ In his *Ecclesiology*, E. C. Dargan maintained, “It is evident that no small part of the church’s task is the promotion of its own efficiency as a unit of force for the moral and spiritual good of mankind.” Regarding the church’s concern for itself, Dargan elaborated upon three areas: “the increase, the culture, and the discipline of its members.” Dargan maintained that “the primary duty of the church is to grow” numerically through the conversion of sinners. While additions to the church through conversions could come through the regular preaching and teaching in the church as well as through special, protracted meetings, Dargan held that “the best of all methods . . . is faithful, personal work on the part of both pastor and people.” He was concerned, though, that churches too often saw this increase

⁹⁷Ibid., 182–83. Dobbins justified the proliferation of church activities as being essential to the spiritual health of Christians: “It is not enough to furnish *food* in the way of teaching and preaching; there must be *exercise* in worthwhile Christian activity if a healthy Christian life is maintained. Not all have the same inclinations, talents, opportunities, therefore it becomes one of the most important functions of a church to provide a variety of avenues of service. This philosophy underlies the organization of a church into the various groups and auxiliaries discussed elsewhere.” Ibid, 183-84. To get every member into a place of service, Dobbins suggested three ways to enlist members— through personal appeal, through group appeal, through special meetings. Ibid., 184-85.

⁹⁸For example, see Theodore L. Cuyler, “The Successful Minister,” *The Christian Index*, 1 January 1903, 2 (originally published in the *Evangelical Messenger*); W. L. Pickard, “The Basis of a Great Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 14 July 1910, 2.

of membership as being the duty of the pastor alone. Dargan conceded that “a large share of it should be his; that is, it is right that he should do more of it than any other individual member of his church, partly from his office, and partly because he is released from worldly care in order that he may give himself more particularly to spiritual work.” The pastor, though, “must teach, by precept and example, the church members how to do personal work.”⁹⁹

Dargan noted that putting undue emphasis upon the increase of members created two great dangers for the church. The first danger was confusing numbers with spirituality. Dargan argued that “counting is one of the devil’s substitutes for converting.” Dargan condemned both evangelists advertising themselves and pastors seeking to move to other churches who boasted of the number of their converts and additions to the church. Dargan lamented, “This is one of the sad curiosities of modern Christian life. What zeal there is for the multiplication table as a test of spiritual power! It seems sometimes as if we had all gone mad on the subject of statistics. It is a mournful thing when size comes to be a substitute for power. Our churches seem to have forgotten the ancient Scripture which tells of Gideon’s band.”¹⁰⁰

A second danger was a careless reception of members into the churches. While Dargan conceded that one could not expect a new convert seeking baptism to understand all of the particulars of theology, he warned: “The haste in crowding children into the church, when they have apparently only been moved by childish impulses, and the quick-

⁹⁹Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 551–56.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 556. J. B. Gambrell, though no opponent of organizational efficiency, nevertheless while president of the Southern Baptist Convention cautioned an over-emphasis upon numbers: “I notice that our Methodist brethren have set the mark for themselves at a million souls. My personal feeling is that we had better not have too much mathematics in a matter of this sort. The kingdom of God cometh not by arithmetic. I notice that Southern Baptists have set up large figures. I do not know why anybody should stop at a million. There might be a good many more that ought to be saved just as much as that million. Rather, let us go in full-length and full-strength, with an out-reach in every direction, lengthening our cords and taking in everybody that we can win by the faithful preaching of the Word of God. I hope Almighty God, in His infinite grace, will save us from a claptrap evangelism. My soul has no delight in it.” J. B. Gambrell, “Going Forward on Two Legs,” *The Christian Index*, 29 January 1920, 9.

ness with which untried strangers are accepted have often proved a snare and a trial.”

Dargan admitted that no universal rule could be made concerning the reception of members, but greater care would lessen the “need for exclusions, and the danger of crowding the church with unspiritual elements would be lessened.”¹⁰¹

Concerning “the culture of its members,” Dargan displayed the interweaving of organizational efficiency with a concern for biblical spirituality. Dargan emphasized the training of church members in three areas. The first area was personal spiritual growth. Dargan believed that Christians should be trained in matters of piety and religious knowledge. He commented, “Sound intelligence and wide information on religious matters are greatly to be desired among our membership. Ignorance and narrow-mindedness are the bane of many churches.” The second area involved giving financially to the church’s

¹⁰¹Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 557. Dargan was not alone with his concern about the bringing of the unregenerate into the churches’ membership. The *Index* noted that “Dr. A. T. Pearson, who is a keen-eyed observer of religious affairs at home and abroad, has the following to say about modern evangelism, not in opposition to the thing itself, but to the methods of many evangelists: ‘Modern evangelism makes much of members, parading statistics, and often with a reckless mode of reckoning. It is easy to secure a show of numbers, but such numerical estimates are very deceptive and misleading. If superficial means be adopted; if people are encouraged to think that some simple outward act or step carries merit or brings salvation, or if in any way there is a carnal appeal to the hope of some self-advantage, there will be a ready response.’ *And alas, such evangelists fill many of our churches with unconverted people who injure the life of the churches and bring them into disrepute with the world.*” [Editorial comment], *The Christian Index*, 25 February 1909, 1. Emphasis added. For additional articles expressing concerns about church members failing to attend the services of the church, see G. W. Garner, “Baptist Leaks,” *The Christian Index*, 11 March 1909, 1–2; “Baptist Leaks,” *The Christian Index*, 18 September 1919, 2; A. T. Robertson, “Dead Timber in a Church,” *The Christian Index*, 29 April 1920, 4; W. H. Faust, “The Matter of Church Membership,” *The Christian Index*, 24 May 1923, 30; [Louie D. Newton], “A Regenerate Church Membership,” *The Christian Index*, 27 November 1924, 12.

B. J. W. Graham, at the time editor of the *Index*, viewed the problem of inactive and non-attending members as “the result of the failure of the pastor and the leading members to exercise the proper watchcare over the young and weaker members,” not as the result of the unregenerate joining the church. Graham charged, “In many cases no special effort is made to secure their regular attendance upon the stated services of the church, and they are given little or no training in church activity. They are not sufficiently urged to contribute of their means for the support of the church, and are not instructed in the co-operative work in which it is engaged. Little or no attention is given in directing them in their reading and study. They join the church and it is left to them to attend and to contribute of their means or not, just as they choose.” What should be done? “These non-church-going and non-contributing members should be grouped and the groups should be divided among the active members and finance committee, and they should never be let alone until they become regular attendants upon the services of the church, and regular contributors to its expenses and to the objects it fosters. Along with this oversight should be included the spirituality of these inactive members. *In this way only will the primary leak among Baptists be stopped.*” B. J. W. Graham, “The Primary Leak Among Baptists,” *The Christian Index*, 18 January 1917, 2. Emphasis added.

work. While “churches should be trained in the grace of giving,” there existed “a tendency to regard liberality as the chief test of spiritual life.” Dargan observed that “often a church is estimated by the amount of money it raises for religious objects rather than by the piety and intelligence of its members.” The third area consisted of active involvement in the church’s activities—“in all phases of the church’s work.” He cautioned, though, that “all noise is not activity. A great many people and churches are more fussy than fruitful.” Still, “one of the crying needs of the times is a real, genuine Christian activity. True, works do not save the worker, it is rather the saved who work; but the work of the saved may be the salvation of the unsaved.”¹⁰²

The third concern for church efficiency for Dargan was corrective discipline. He deplored the lack of corrective discipline in the early twentieth-century church, contending that “one of the great lacks of our modern church life is found just here.” While “our fathers” may have been too strict, “there seems little reason to doubt that we have gone too far to the other extreme, and our churches to-day are by no means sufficiently alive to the importance of a careful discipline.”¹⁰³

Other voices continued to raise concerns about looking to organizational efficiency to increase the numerical growth of churches. Rev. J. F. Singleton believed that Baptist churches were organized according to the New Testament pattern. Additional organization within Baptist churches which grew as a result of “our union with Christ” would be blessed by Christ, but such organization could not be forced on churches. The failure of churches in fulfilling their mission could not be solved through imposing organ-

¹⁰²Dargan, *Ecclesiology*, 558–59.

¹⁰³Ibid., 561. Dargan further argued that discipline may necessitate the involvement of sister churches: “Should any church . . . grow so lax as to tolerate differences in fundamental doctrines, it will be the duty of its sister churches to withdraw associational fellowship, and not make the denomination as a whole responsible for corruption in doctrine. Great care and wisdom are needed in the exercise of discipline on account of doctrinal aberrations. Men who honestly differ as to some doctrines of the church, but are pure in life and honest in purpose, ought not to be dealt with as if they were criminals. They should be reasoned with lovingly, and if they cannot be convinced, then they should be kindly, though firmly, excluded.” Ibid., 562–63.

izational structures: “The trouble is not in our visible organism, and trying to remedy the trouble by working on this is but to make matters worse. We can have no more organization than we have oneness of spirit.” If the spiritual condition of the church is not right, no amount of external organization could correct the problem. What did Singleton see as the grave problem facing Baptist churches? He answered, “The only trouble with our organization is in our unregenerated members and our lax discipline. The only danger to us is in our ignoring the true source and means of union and with human ignorance and weakness acting up our own affairs and depending on ‘organization’ to do the work.”¹⁰⁴

S. M. Provence, while not addressing specifically the turn toward organizational efficiency, captured the spirit of those who questioned the movement: “When we quit drawing our own poor little plans and asking the Holy Spirit to adopt them, when we faithfully follow his plans, the perennial harvest will gladden the world.”¹⁰⁵ Though seeing benefits of organizational efficiency, W. H. Faust cautioned, “In our Sunday-school work we are stressing method more than prayer and the power of the Spirit. Organization is not to be discounted, but it needs to be combined with a great amount of prayer.”¹⁰⁶ Pastor S. A. Cowan of Atlanta’s Inman Park Baptist Church worried that multiplied organizations within churches was leading to a disintegration of the churches themselves. Cowan was particularly concerned that persons could be a member of an organization of the church without being a member of the church itself.¹⁰⁷ Rev. R. L.

¹⁰⁴J. F. Singleton, “Baptist Organization,” *The Christian Index*, 17 March 1904, 1.

¹⁰⁵S. M. Provence, “A Perennial Harvest,” *The Christian Index*, 29 February 1912, 2.

¹⁰⁶W. H. Faust, “Putting Christ Second in Our Churches,” *The Christian Index*, 25 March 1915, 9.

¹⁰⁷S. A. Cowan, “Probable Disintegration and an Ally,” *The Christian Index*, 26 July 1923, 2. Q. C. S. Wallace, pastor of Eutaw Place Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland, had grown fatigued with the continuous promotions of new organizations by efficiency experts: “Instant and incessant solicitude for the spiritual welfare of others will far better qualify the members of a church for efficiency in church work than all the apt things an ‘expert’ can tell us. It is said that during the world war Lloyd George, who performed such marvels of organization and efficiency, came to have a poor opinion of ‘experts’; but no man of his

Bolton, pastor of the Baptist church in Madison, Georgia, warned of a devaluation of preaching because “the complex life of the churches call for many agencies and organizations, and the preacher is tempted to become a promoter and organizer.”¹⁰⁸ L. R. Christie, pastor of First Baptist Church of Savannah, declared that “no minister can prepare regularly two worth-while sermons in a week. With his manifold other duties, including pastoral service, denominational work, community interests, it is humanly impossible for him to maintain a high standard of pulpit work speaking twice on Sunday to virtually the same audience.”¹⁰⁹

Other Southern Baptists expressed concern about the emphasis upon organizational efficiency. They saw such efforts as interfering with the biblical emphases placed upon pastors. Sanford Miller Brown (1855-1938) became editor of Missouri’s *Central Baptist* in 1884 and was the founding editor of *The Word and Way*, official newspaper of Missouri Baptists, in 1896. In his *Church Organization and Work*, Brown wrote “An Appeal to Pastors” in which he decried the direction which the twentieth-century ministry had taken. He reminded pastors that “you are the called and ordained leaders of the churches of which you are pastors. . . . Your business is to *preach the Word*.” He warned them that “you can do God’s work, only in His way.” To those who might look to other guides for direction, Brown admonished, “You will do well to consult the Book for direction, not only as to what you are to preach, but also as to how you are to lead the flock.” He recognized that the Bible did not delineate all the minutiae of church organ-

age knew as well as he how to assemble and utilize real knowledge, wisdom, and skill.” Q. C. S. Wallace, “Watching the Whirling Clover-Leaf,” *The Christian Index*, 12 March 1825, 6. Again, Wallace was not opposed to organizational efficiency, but he thought that there was too much talk of new, efficient measures and too little actual work being performed.

¹⁰⁸R. L. Bolton, “A Synopsis of the Convention Sermon,” *The Christian Index*, 9 December 1920, 2.

¹⁰⁹L. R. Christie, “The Passing of the Sermon,” *The Christian Index*, 8 July 1920, 3.

ization and church work, “but there is a clear outline of church organization and work in the New Testament.” Brown put forth the crux of his concern:

If you are pastor of what is now regarded as an *up-to-date church*, I have no doubt that you have often realized that much of the time and strength you should have put into prayer and the preaching of the Word, you have been compelled to devote to the extra-organizations in your church, keeping the intricate machine oiled, as we say, and in running order. Your time has been taken up with financial matters. You have been crippled.

What was Brown’s solution? He counseled, “I beg you to begin today, to go back to the simplicity of New Testament church organization and work.” New Testament simplicity did not mean that the church was not to have ministries within it. For instance, Brown encouraged pastors to “take an interest in the Sunday School—the teaching ministry of the church: you are responsible for what is taught there.”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰S. M. Brown, *Church Organization and Work* (Kansas City, MO: Western Baptist Publishing Co., 1910), 97–99. Brown argued that the church should have ministries within it, not separate organizations within the church. Concerning the Sunday School, Brown wrote, “It is not an organization: it is the church gathered on Sunday to study and teach the Word of God. It is a service of the church, and should no more be thought of as an organization, than is the preaching service. . . . Great harm has come to the cause, by making the Sunday School an organization in itself.” Brown also acknowledged a legitimate place for “the work of women” and “the training of young people.” Again, though, these were not to be separate organizations within the church: “But after all this is said, it remains a fact that, in almost all, if not quite all, of the devotion, study, and work of the churches, all classes of members should meet together, pray together, study together, and work together. The teaching of the Scriptures is all on the side of this view, and after all, it is well not to proceed in any direction where the way is not clearly pointed out by the revealed will of God.” *Ibid.*, 45–50. Rev. R. C. Granberry observed, “There are many pressing demands made upon the modern minister of the gospel. The modern social and ecclesiastical life is all the while piling up ‘things.’ Almost every week sees the birth of a new movement, and to the list of ‘reforms’ others are added. Departments of endeavor pack the calendar! There are committees, and committees, and then some more committees. If the minister keeps abreast of modern expectations, he must have eyes like the beast in Revelation, and at least one thousand hands. At times I am tempted to add this one sentence to the Litany: ‘From the man with a new scheme, good Lord deliver us.’” R. C. Granberry, “The Attendance of the Sunday School Upon the Services of the Church,” *The Christian Index*, 8 January 1914, 5. B. D. Ragsdale, Professor of Biblical Introduction and Homiletics at Mercer University, expressed concern about the increasing number of books of sermons being published and bought: “When preachers are too busy ‘serving tables,’ serving on committees, organizing campaigns, putting on and putting over drives, that congregations on Sunday must be served with ‘second hand’ sermons, the time will be approaching for a new reformation.” B. D. Ragsdale, “Books of Sermons Increasing Every Year,” *The Christian Index*, 16 April 1825, 7. L. O. Dawson, writing in 1934 after having been in the ministry for some fifty years as pastor of Southern Baptist churches in Kentucky and Alabama (most notably at First Baptist Church of Tuscaloosa from 1892-1924) and as a professor at Howard College in Birmingham, sounded a similar concern: “The great modern churches, with their multiplied activities, are making mere administrative officers out of many good preachers. The various meetings, committees, unions, circles, campaigns, enterprises, clubs, addresses, papers, conferences, and a whole lot besides make their insistent demands; and the more important, but less obtrusive things, are shunted aside, or left perforce to take care of themselves. There is danger of the

Victor I. Masters, who had served as a pastor of Baptist churches, associate editor of South Carolina's *Baptist Courier* (1896-1905), editor of *The Baptist Press* (1905-1907), associate editor of Virginia's *Religious Herald* (1905-1907), was in 1916 serving as superintendent of publicity for the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board, a position he would hold from 1909-1921. Having observed throughout the denomination the ever-increasing attention given to organizational efficiency as a means to numerical attainment and, believing that the pursuit of it had become too dominant, wrote a series of three articles carried by the *Index*.¹¹¹ He noted, "'Efficiency'

typewriter drowning the voice of the prophet. Service is a beautiful word, and 'public servant' is a man to be honored by us all. But when the pastor becomes a general utility man, the errand boy of a whole community, it is time for him to take stock of his days, hours, and minutes—his very moments—and see just how much time he is giving to the work of an ambassador, whose main duty is to persuade men to be reconciled to God." L. O. Dawson, *After Fifty Years* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1935), 89. Dr. Henry A. Brown, who retired in 1917 from his forty-year pastorate at the First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, lamented the reducing of the concept of the church to organizational efficiency. Writing what would have been comprised his typical charge to newly-ordained Baptist ministers for biographer Gilbert Stephenson, Brown stated, "In this day of multiplied and complex organizations, if a pastor attends to all matters that claim his attention, his pastoral work in visiting his members must suffer. Is it more important to attend to his pastoral work, at the expense of other matters, or neglect it for other duties? . . . There are some people who seem to think that the church is a great organization with all sorts of machinery attached to make it efficient. A Baptist church is a little democracy—an organism made up of persons who profess regeneration and are associated together to do the will of Christ in teaching his word, preaching the gospel, caring for the poor and the sick, and carrying the good news of salvation to every creature. Too many organizations hinder rather than help church efficiency. They sometimes create friction and jealousies that hamper the best growth. Simple organizations for the distribution of power and service are useful. The pastor must be a shepherd. He must feed and lead and comfort the flock. He cannot turn away from his main work to fritter away his strength in mere matters of detail that may be left to others who have time for it." Stephenson, *The Pastor Beloved*, 108. Many, though, saw organizations as increasing, not diminishing, the pastor's efficiency. Such reasoning was used in support of the new daily Vacation Bible Schools in churches. See Homer L. Grice, "Not a Fad; but Here to Stay," *The Christian Index*, 27 March 1924, 5, 24. J. E. Dillard, pastor of Southside Church in Birmingham, Alabama, pastored a church of some two thousand members and thoroughly supported the practice of organizational efficiency. Typical of such supporters was his announcement that organizational efficiency, while necessary, was not sufficient for an efficient church: "For fear some brother might misunderstand me, I hasten to say that you can't run a church without religion. Certainly, while it is good to have a great plan and a proper organization, we must realize that you can never run a religious institution unless you have religion itself. In the factory, I noted with great interest the various wheels, the belts, the machines and all th[at?]. I was not unmindful of the fact that they all connect up with one great engine and that there was sufficient power generated in the boiler to make the thing go. We may have all kinds of organizations, but unless we are all harnassed up together, as one body, permeated and controlled by the Spirit of God, we fail. 'It is not by might, not by power, but by my spirit,' saith the Lord." J. E. Dillard, "The Modern Minister as an Overseer," *The Christian Index*, 27 October 1921, 6.

¹¹¹Victor I. Masters, "Efficiency as a Fetich. No. 1," *The Christian Index*, 20 July 1916, 9;

has come to be the over-topping interest in our kingdom plans and denominational assemblies. It is not therefore inappropriate to scrutinize this word and the significance of its rapid advance to a place in the vanguard.” Masters set forth his concern:

The dictionaries define efficiency as meaning power to do works, to cause effects, to produce results. In religion the word seems to mean practically what pragmatism does theologically. The time of the looming large of efficiency has followed close on the heels of the time when our theologians began to expound pragmatism for us.

But it has required something more speedy than theology to account for the arrival at record speed of efficiency at the center of most of our religious group deliberations. That something else was Big Business.¹¹²

Whereas pragmatism in theology required believing whatever was most beneficial for one’s welfare, efficiency in church work meant doing whatever was necessary to bring about intended results. Masters maintained, though, that theological pragmatism alone could not account for the rapid advance of the concept of efficiency in church work.

This rapid advance of efficiency in the business world was fast and revolutionary. Masters wrote, “In scarcely more than two generations power machinery and the vast consequent increase in productivity and inter-communication, have changed the whole face of the world more than it had changed in a thousand years before.” “Big Business” was “the most spectacular and pretentious fruit of the unprecedented economic and social transformation” brought about by this emphasis upon efficiency. Masters maintained, “Once established as a modern god, Big Business through its soothsayers was not averse to pronouncing oracles, particularly as it found both the worldly minded and the righteous with ears itching to receive its words and treat them with profound respect.” The

Victor I. Masters, “Efficiency as a Fetich. No. 2,” *The Christian Index*, 27 July 1916, 9; Victor I. Masters, “Efficiency as a Fetich. No. 3,” *The Christian Index*, 3 August 1916, 9. Masters’ denominational perspective warrants a detailed examination of his concerns.

¹¹²Masters, “Efficiency as a Fetich. No. 1,” 9.

influence of “Big Business” on behalf of efficiency was widespread. Others were impressed with the greater productivity wrought through more efficient measures.¹¹³

In the realm of religion, those favoring “Church Unionism” found ready support in the concept of efficiency. Masters explained, “In efficiency it [Unionism] joyously took note of a rich windfall, which it was not slow to appropriate. The naughty sects, kept apart by ignorance, prejudice, and hate, said Unionism, are standing in the way of efficiency. Unionism is the one and only cure for this destructive waste, for efficiency does not break its fast except when Unionism feeds it. Hail efficiency.” Southern Baptists, while rejecting Unionism, had “gone quite a distance in magnifying efficiency, which began its career as a shibboleth for Big Business and which Unionism promptly adopted as a plank in its platform.”¹¹⁴ Such a “magnifying” of “efficiency,” however, seemed contrary to Southern Baptists ecclesiology, with its emphasis upon democracy, a form of organization deemed inefficient by organizational experts. Although “the New Testament does not teach efficiency at the expense of democracy, and Baptists do not want or need efficiency at the expense of democracy,” Baptists had accepted the promise of the success of efficiency which was, at best, unverified. Masters countered, “If all that is claimed for efficiency in the field of business should be verified, it would still not fol-

¹¹³Masters illustrated, “Big Business was also mightily interested in efficiency on its own behalf—more work, more product; more product, more dollars; more dollars, more Big Business. One prophet of Big Business saw some men digging a ditch. Inspired, he counted the number of motions and muscular contractions made by these in throwing out a shovelful of earth. He figured that if he could reduce the number of motions and muscular contractions per shovelful, he would please the Big Business paymaster, and get more money for himself by arranging that the ditch-diggers should get less for the same amount of work. From ditch to factory, from factory to railroad, and from humans to machines, this efficiency expert cast his critical eye, and by way of sundry arithmetical calculations, showed how wonders could be performed everywhere in the field of mechanics, which is about all the world of Big Business. All of this was advertised to a waiting world, psychologically prepared by the age of machinery to give heed. Less is heard of the efficiency engineers in the field of Big Business now. Already in the one field of mechanics where the new shibboleth might measurably merit permanent respect, less attention seems to be given to it than was accorded a few years ago.” Masters, “Efficiency as a Fetich. No. 1,” 9.

¹¹⁴For instance, see also L. R. Scarborough’s concerns about Unionism in L. R. Scarborough, “Truth Tremendously Imperilled,” *The Christian Index*, 1 May 1919, 6.

low that it has a similar value in the field of religion. But much which has been claimed for it in business cannot be verified.”¹¹⁵

Masters saw nothing in the teachings of the Scriptures to support the claims of twentieth-century efficiency. Indeed, scriptural examples abounded which would be considered inefficient by twentieth-century experts. Masters illustrated: “Mary, the dreamer, was a failure compared with her sister Martha, in the matter of efficiency. Yet our Lord declared that Mary had chosen the better part.” He argued, “The god of modern efficiency is not the God of revelation, though the God of revelation is infinitely more efficient than this new creature of man’s imagination.” Such a belief did not mean, however, that Baptists should disdain efficiency and organization. Biblical efficiency, though, should proceed out of love to serve others: “The New Testament teaches a prudent carefulness in the Lord’s work but it is a carefulness which has sat at the feet of generous love and confident faith, rather than studied in the economic school of Big Business, whose moving spirit is a keen love for gain rather than service to needy humanity.” Masters’ concern was not with doing things efficiently, but with allowing material ends to determine how things should be done. He wrote, “Do we desire efficiency? We do well. But we want the efficiency which is of Christ, rather than the mechanical, material, imperial efficiency which is of Big Business. Therefore we will think more of expanding love and attaining the results of love than we do of whether this or that form of organization may perhaps be helpfully readjusted.”¹¹⁶

That expectations placed upon Baptist pastors because of organizational efficiency had greatly increased their work is revealed in a particularly telling issue of the

¹¹⁵ Masters, “Efficiency as a Fetich. No. 1,” 9.

¹¹⁶ Masters, “Efficiency as a Fetich. No. 2,” 9. Masters’ articles must be read in light of the unsuccessful effort to combine the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board of the SBC in the name of efficiency. Masters’ point was that perceived efficiency, especially with an eye towards dollars spent per convert, was not the best criterion to use in making the decision. For a similar denominational concern see J. M. Frost, “From a Business Viewpoint,” *The Christian Index*, 14 December 1916, 6–7.

Index. Designated the “Pastor’s Number,” the July 25, 1918 issue focused upon the call to and work of the ministry. With all of the articles except “The Divine Call of the Minister” written by laypersons, one sees from the perspective of educated laymen what was expected of their pastors. One writer called upon prospective ministers to obtain the best education available because, among other reasons, expectations of ministers had greatly increased than in bygone days: “Never before has so much been expected and required of ministers of the gospel.”¹¹⁷ Another writer offered that one way in which a pastor could remain at a church was to be “always interested in all the varied activities of his church.” In addition to “unremitting study of God’s Word” and visiting “his flock, especially the sick, the afflicted and the aged,” this “successful pastor” will be involved in the weekly prayer meeting, the Sunday school, the B. Y. P. U., the women’s missionary societies, community moral causes, and associational and state denominational meetings.¹¹⁸ A third writer examined the relationship between the pastor and deacons, having experienced pastors who “have, as a rule, been in sympathy with their deacons and in hearty cooperation with them in all their work.”¹¹⁹ Another offered this challenge: “What I am insisting upon is this: Pastor, train your workers, give them the information they need and must have, stimulate and keep alive in them the true evangelistic heart, encourage and lead them definitely to be constantly doing personal evangelistic work. Challenge them to leading souls to Christ and developing Christian character.”¹²⁰ The pastor’s involvement with the B. Y. P. U. could hardly be overemphasized:

He should faithfully assist twice a year in the selection of the officers and have a public installation of them before the entire church. . . . He should attend the weekly meetings, and, from a back seat, observe both the strong and weak points. He

¹¹⁷Henry S. Jones, “The Call to Preparation for the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 6.

¹¹⁸Evans, “How to Get Into and Stay in the Pastorate.”

¹¹⁹Chas. A. Davis, “The Pastor and His Deacons,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 7.

¹²⁰George W. Andrews, “The Pastor and the Sunday School,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 8.

should then commend the one and recommend the other. His supreme opportunity, however, is at the monthly meeting of the executive committee. There he should help establish definite goals, high aims and worthy undertakings, and later encourage the realization of these objectives. At the meeting, in other services, on the streets and in the homes, he can, with a little thoughtfulness, frankly compliment individual members, officers, committees or the entire Union for their commendable efforts. . . . Again, the pastor should not suffer any man to take from him his priceless privilege of teaching yearly a "Study Course," wherein his young people are to receive their individual indoctrination and their distinctly denominational instruction.¹²¹

The Corresponding Secretary-Treasurer of the Woman's Baptist Missionary Union maintained that the success of the W. M. U. depended upon pastors who understood its purpose, who would appreciate "the true significance of the missionary society being auxiliary and know that this work cannot and will not run ahead of the church and the pastor," who "must prove himself an ally to the woman's work in overcoming the opposition that obtains wherever there is ignorance of it," and who "must help the women get their credits properly entered on the treasurer's book, realizing that all gifts are credited to the church, regardless of the organization contributing."¹²² The pastor was called upon "to lead a man's life among men and to play a man's part in the game of life." He was expected to be "one of the best men in the community, to be one of the best citizens of the community, standing, not offensively, but firmly, actively and courageously for the things that make for righteousness and good government."¹²³ Another layman offered three

¹²¹Frank H. Leavell, "The Pastor and the B. Y. P. U.," *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 9. Leavell justified his demands upon the pastor: "Pastors are busy men. If these suggested activities are considered in the light of their relative importance with other things that absorb their time, would they not commend themselves to every pastor in the land? With such a universal attitude and such unanimous activity on the part of our pastors, there would very soon be *greater love and greater efficiency in our local churches* and the coming of the kingdom, for which we all work, would be greatly hastened. The writer maintains that these things should begin with the pastor. In his greater maturity, his wider experience and his deeper insight into the needs of the kingdom and possibility of the young, the initiative should rightly and logically be his. We rejoice that the day has come when of many such is true." Ibid. Emphasis added. For a longer analysis of the ministry by a layman, see Leavell, *The Layman Measures the Minister*.

¹²²Evelyn Campbell, "The Pastor and the Mission Societies," *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 10.

¹²³W. W. Gaines, "The Pastor as a Citizen," *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 10–11. See also W. W. Gaines, "What the Pew Asks of the Pulpit in a Time Like This," *The Christian Index*, 4 July 1918, 6–7.

suggestions which, “if made effective, would aid the cause of missions”: “1. Let every Georgia pastor constitute himself the standing agent of at least two religious papers, the Christian Index and the Home and Foreign Fields”; “2. Let each pastor organize a men’s missionary union in each church”; and “3. Let the pastor urge upon his board of deacons a standing committee on stewardship.”¹²⁴ Another layman argued that the institutions of the denomination “can not exist without money, and this can not be secured without the co-operation of pastors.”¹²⁵

Georgia Baptist pastor W. H. Faust, a supporter of organizational efficiency, nevertheless saw in the multiplied demands of the modern church pastor a possible hindrance to securing the number of pastors needed. He lamented, “One of the biggest problems facing the Baptist denomination in Georgia today is how to get efficient men to fill our pulpits.” Neither better education nor better pay would guarantee the needed additional pastors, because pastors were now better educated and better paid than at any other time in history. He offered that “the hardness of the task with present day duties may keep some out.” He explained,

In fact, what, with preparations to preach, so often visiting, side issues and announcements—and what pastor is there whose heart doesn’t sink when he is called upon on Sundays to announce the Y. M. C. A., the Y. W. C. A., the Woman’s Club, the W. C. T. U., the L. T. L., the Parent-Teachers’ Association, the Ladies’ Aid, the D. A. R., the U. D. C., the Red Cross, the Civic League, the B. Y. P. U., the Royal Ambassadors, the Christian Endeavor, the W. M. S., the Y. W. A. and scores of other meetings. He feels that there will be few left with energy to look after the church and the souls of the absolutely needy.

Regardless of the additional duties brought about with an increasingly complex organizational structure, Faust appealed to parents to be God-used instruments to bring their sons into the ministry. He concluded, “Therefore, the appeal comes all the stronger because it

¹²⁴U. V. Whipple, “The Pastor and Missions,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 11–12. For similar concerns about pastoral leadership in raising funds for missions, see “The Prime Need,” *The Christian Index*, 17 December 1914, 8; “Some Facts to Face,” *The Christian Index*, 18 February 1915, 1–2; T. B. Ray, “What is the Judson Centennial?” *The Christian Index*, 4 March 1915, 4–5.

¹²⁵C. J. Hood, “The Pastor and Denominational Institutions,” *The Christian Index*, 25 July 1918, 12.

is a hard job, a man-sized task, yet when the response is made the gratitude of the true prophet of God is inexpressible.” The solution was not to simplify the organization; rather, it was to pray “the Lord of the harvest” would call strong men into the fields.¹²⁶

George Boardman Eager, Professor of Biblical Introduction and Pastoral Theology in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, noted that churches had undergone great changes during the previous fifty years. A half century previously, Eager observed, churches were known for their simplicity in organization, in “preaching” services with irregular Sunday Schools, in church buildings, in congregational aims, and in the minister’s duties. By 1917, Eager exclaimed, “How different from all that—whether the contrast be in *time* or in *type*!” Concerning the congregation of a local church, Eager observed, “It is now a regiment, not a mob. The minister is the captain, the recognized and beloved leader, exercising rule, yet not ‘lording it over God’s heritage,’ aspiring to do all things in the spirit of Jesus and for the Kingdom and glory of God.” While congregational organization had many advantages, including producing increased efficiency, Eager noted that it was not without dangers to the church and to the pastor. Too much organization, forgetting the importance of individual salvation, removing responsibility from individuals to committees, neglecting the Holy Spirit, and organizations becoming independent of the leadership of the church instead of functioning as auxiliaries were detrimental to the well being of the church. As to the danger to the pastor, Eager warned:

To put the whole matter in a nutshell, the supreme, generic danger is that he will degenerate into a mere functionary of an ecclesiastical mechanism, instead of

¹²⁶W. H. Faust, “A Great Need,” *The Christian Index*, 2 December 1920, 21. M. E. Dodd, pastor of First Baptist Church of Shreveport, Louisiana, wrote similarly: “The supreme need of the present hour is more spiritual power. . . . We southern Baptists have the numbers, the organization, the money and the intelligence to answer at once every call. We do not need any more of these. We have more of them now than we are using.” Like others, Dodd was not opposed to organizational efficiency. Like others, he did not believe that organizational efficiency was enough: “What we do need and need tremendously is sufficient spiritual vitality to properly use what we have. We have gathered numbers, produced wealth and set up massive machinery faster than we have grown in the grace of inward glory and power. We need to give first attention to first things. We must keep the soul fires burning if the wheels of our machinery are to be kept turning.” M. E. Dodd, “Keep the Soul Fires Burning,” *The Christian Index*, 13 March 1924, 5. See also Robert C. Granberry, “Recruiting the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 12 February 1920, 8–9, and Robert C. Granberry, “Recruiting the Ministry,” *The Christian Index*, 19 February 1920, 15–16.

being what he is called to be—a vital, sympathetic, Christ-like pastor and preacher. The peril is great, too, because the popular demand for a minister who is a man of affairs, an organizer, a manager, a money-getter, etc., is wide-spread and insistent. Against this temptation and insistency he should set his face like a flint, not in indolence or love of ease, but because his personal character as a Christian and his highest success as a minister of Christ are at stake. Nothing short of the sense of supreme loyalty to Christ rather than to the congregation, or the spirit of the age, and a most resolute determination to conserve both his time and his strength for the higher and more spiritual forms of ministry will save him from that much to be dreaded doom for the minister—the doom of degenerating into the mere engineer of the church machine.¹²⁷

J. D. Winchester of Monticello, Georgia, used even stronger words in his opposition to the great emphasis upon organizational efficiency. In recounting a recent experience told by Dr. A. T. Robertson in which Robertson, as a visiting preacher at a church with a large Sunday school attendance, was greeted by a much smaller congregation at that church's worship hour, Winchester asked, "Can a church meet this supreme hour with a half hour's program of some foreign classical music, and a fifteen, or even a half hour's address on some such subject as 'Pussy cat, pussy cat, where did you come from?' 'A knock out punch,' 'A home run,' 'How to get married,' 'The glory of modern science,' 'Social service,' etc? No." He continued, "Can a church maintain the organization and run the machinery we have today without detracting from the interest in and attendance upon the supreme hour of its life and work? Dr. Robertson's experience and observation, together with that of hundreds of other preachers and pastor[s] says: No." Churches were getting away from the primacy of the task of preaching and corporate worship. Winchester persisted, "Can we erect buildings more with a view to housing machinery than to preaching the gospel, and then hope to make preaching the gospel the one big thing in these buildings? No." Winchester was not insisting on doing away with all of the church's organizations, but he was insisting on returning the focus back to the main worship hour: "Granting that our church buildings should be something more than

¹²⁷George Boardman Eager, *Lectures in Ecclesiology on the Church as a Social Institution and the Organ of the Kingdom of God* (Louisville: Mayes Printing Co., 1917), 27–31.

mere preaching places, we contend that they should be something far more than ‘Work shops.’”¹²⁸

Other voices continued to differentiate between numerical success and faithfulness. Southern Seminary’s A. T. Robertson, writing in response to a questionnaire sent out by *The Christian Century* to some 25,000 preachers to determine the twenty-five most useful ministers in the United States, allowed that “the interest in the subject [the greatness of preachers] is a tribute to preaching itself and is not necessarily harmful or

¹²⁸J. D. Winchester, “Preach the Gospel,” *The Christian Index*, 22 February 1923, 30. See A. T. Robertson, “Why the Morning Church Service?” *The Christian Index*, 18 January 1923, 6, to which Winchester was referring. In many churches the morning worship was being skipped by many who attended Sunday school and the evening worship was being neglected by many young person who attended the preceding B. Y. P. U. Robertson himself maintained that B. Y. P. U.’s that took the place of the evening service had perverted their purpose. He wrote that the B. Y. P. U. “was started to make better Baptists, better church members. Loyalty to Christ, to church, to pastor, was the motto. If the B. Y. P. U. in any given case leads the young people to cut the evening service, I am bound to question whether that B. Y. P. U. should not end its career. It is using the church building to hold a meeting that takes the place of the church service.” The trouble was not with either the Sunday school or the B. Y. P. U., though. Robertson supported both. “Our trouble, undoubtedly, is the overcrowding of services on Sunday. Sunday school claims an hour and a half. Morning church takes another or more. The B. Y. P. U. calls for an hour and evening worship adds another hour at least. The spirit of rivalry gets members of the classes to the Sunday school and to the B. Y. P. U. Many then feel that they have gone enough for one day and go home. They cut out church in the morning or the evening or both. . . . I believe in the B. Y. P. U. and in the Sunday-school provided they are made to help and not to hinder the work and worship of the churches of Jesus Christ. . . . Dr. Broadus used to say that what can not be endured must be cured.” A. T. Robertson, “Why the B. Y. P. U.?” *The Christian Index*, 1 March 1923, 7. For additional concerns of Robertson about the neglect of the primary worship services of the church, see A. T. Robertson, “Pleasing the Young People,” *The Christian Index*, 14 September 1922, 8; A. T. Robertson, “The Organized Class,” *The Christian Index*, 29 March 1923, 5; A. T. Robertson, “Why the Evening Service,” *The Christian Index*, 29 May 1924, 4. Unfortunately, poor attendance at Sunday evening services had become a concern before the end of the nineteenth century. See Theodore L. Cuyler, “The Sunday Evening Problem,” *The Christian Index*, 16 June 1898, 3. Others voiced similar concerns about the independence of organized classes. For example, Homer J. Councilor, speaking to the third annual session of the South-wide Baptist Organized Bible Class Conference, maintained, “The class that considers itself apart from the church ought to be converted or killed.” James W. Merritt, “Organized Class Leaders of the South Hold Great Session in Atlanta,” *The Christian Index*, 24 January 1924, 15. For a view sympathetic to Robertson’s concerns and yet completely supportive of B. Y. P. U.’s, see John A. Davison, “The B. Y. P. U. as an Aid to the Pastors,” *The Christian Index*, 27 September 1923, 7.

While Robertson clearly saw dangers with organizations within the church, he was not opposed to organizing itself or to pragmatic efforts to increase the attendance in classes. Concerning positive features of organized classes within the Sunday school, he wrote, “Class rivalry is also aroused. The more organized classes there are the keener is this sense of competition. Sometimes drives for members serve to add to the membership. ‘Watch us grow,’ they cry as a slogan and it works with many. Sometimes in such special drives members are ‘borrowed’ for one Sunday from some other school and very little comes of that. But, as a rule, there is some net gain from such intensive effort.” Robertson saw organized classes as serving an evangelistic arm of the church by attracting many who otherwise would never attend a worship service. He did not, as noted above, desire for the Sunday school to supplant the morning worship. Robertson, “The Organized Class,” 5.

even useless.” Nevertheless he cautioned, “It does not at all follow that the prominent preacher is the most useful minister of the gospel.” He counseled, “Jesus gave the jealous disciples the measures of true greatness in the kingdom of God. It is service. There is no other real measure. Honors, praise, money, all worldly rewards amount to nothing in the scales of Christ. He will be exalted most who serves his brethren most. It is a great thing to be used of God in a rich and full way for the blessing of men.” He observed, however, that “men do not always know when they are most useful. The unknown preacher who stands in his lot and does his duty may do more good than the famous minister whose name may be on every lip. The lists are open for all servants of Christ. It matters not one particle about human votes and human applause. Each minister has his task and his work.” Robertson provided what Baptists would have always acknowledged: “Greatness in the ministry is not determined by reports to the newspapers or to the associations. Greatness may be determined by giving a cup of cold water to a child of Christ when others had not done it. The really great preacher does not pose and is not trying to get into the limelight. He goes on doing his duty because he follows Christ as Christ leads him on.”¹²⁹

These voices of concern did not call for a rejection of organizational efficiency. The concept had become too entrenched in Baptist thinking for a radical move to the simplicity of the past. Instead, they desired to see Baptists de-emphasize the priority of organizational efficiency while re-emphasizing the traditional, scriptural duties of the pastor.

¹²⁹A. T. Robertson, “The Greatest Preachers,” *The Christian Index*, 9 July 1925, 5. Later, Robertson wrote, “It is plain [from Matthew 25] that one may be a preacher and not be in the kingdom at all.” He cautioned those who esteemed a pastor great because he pastored a large church: “He may be pastor of a great church and be a bad man in heart and in life.” A. T. Robertson, “The Least in the Kingdom,” *The Christian Index*, 6 August 1925, 7. For additional articles warning of an excessive emphasis upon numerical growth and organizational efficiency, see C. H. Wetherbe, “The Higher Purpose,” *The Christian Index*, 15 January 1914, 4–5; “Novelists and the Church,” *The Christian Index*, 29 January 1914, 2–3; “Back to the Main Thing,” *The Christian Index*, 28 January 1915, 2; “A Passion for Souls,” *The Christian Index*, 2 March 1916, 1–2; “Specialists in Church Work,” *The Christian Index*, 27 April 1916, 2.

Conclusion

The transition to organizational efficiency which began during the latter third of the nineteenth century became the norm in the psyche of Southern Baptists during the first quarter of the twentieth century. While Southern Baptists remained true to most of their predecessors' beliefs concerning the gospel ministry, the perception of what comprised an effective ministry and a successful pastor had changed by 1925. While their heritage was one of faithfully doing what Scripture prescribed, their focus now was upon practical methods by which they could build the Southern Baptist vision of the kingdom of God.

That the shift to organizational efficiency had become the norm is evidenced by several factors. Baptists leaders announced that a new day had arrived and that churches could no longer operate by the primitive models of the past. The church had to be involved with much more than preaching and teaching the Scriptures. Churches were lauded for their growth and new buildings, and claims were made that the growth of the Southern Baptist Convention was due to the modern methods being employed. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary structured their curricula to teach their students practical courses in church administration. Southern Seminary revealed its belief in the importance of such practical training by establishing a department of church efficiency. The department head, Gaines Dobbins, put his teaching on the subject in his book *The Efficient Church*, published in 1923. Acknowledging that his work was based upon business principles, Dobbins was influential not only with the churches which his students would pastor but also with the pastors and church leaders who read this book as well as his later books on church administration.

This shift in Southern Baptist thinking appears to have resulted from honorable motives. Baptists recognized that their churches were under the divine mandate of evan-

gelize and disciple. They maintained that the task for doing so in a rapidly growing and changing society was greater than the abilities of the pastors alone. They looked at their congregations and saw multitudes doing little or nothing to aid in the work of the church. Consequently, only through the organizing of this vast number of laypersons could greater results be produced.

Southern Baptists saw in the increasingly complex world of business a model by which they could produce more effective churches. Seeing businesses growing as a result of implementing principles of organizational efficiency, church leaders maintained that they had to do likewise with their church membership if they were to remain effective in modern society. As businesses sought to increase their profits, so did churches seek to increase their members and budgets. Churches with greater memberships would have more Christians permeating society; churches with larger budgets could be involved in greater and more extensive missionary activities.

The acceptance of this shift produced a change in the perception of the pastor. While he was still expected to preach biblical messages and see about the spiritual needs of his membership, he was also expected to lead the church as its chief executive. A successful pastor could no longer be one who did only the duties of his Baptist predecessors. He now had administrative tasks essential for running an efficient organization, and his effectiveness in leading would inevitably produce visible results.

Southern Baptists did not see themselves as jettisoning the practices of the past. Indeed, they viewed this shift as necessary in order to remain relevant with the present. Because the Scriptures were their authority for matters of faith and practice, to the Scriptures many Baptists went to justify applying business methods to the church in general and to the pastorate in particular.

Some Southern Baptists warned about the excesses of organizational efficiency. The warnings of the twentieth century, however, were different from those of the

latter nineteenth century. The earlier warnings were often from those who believed that organizational efficiency was a departure from the biblical ways of the past. The latter warnings were often from proponents of organizational efficiency who expressed concern that churches were placing too much emphasis upon organizations, methods, and numbers and too little emphasis upon spiritual matters. They reminded that the church was not merely a business—the souls of persons were at stake. They recognized that an undue emphasis upon methods and numbers would lead to an influx of unconverted members and churches devoid of spiritual vibrancy. Nevertheless, leaders were not issuing any calls to return to the ways of the past. The methods of organizational efficiency had proved too effective in growing larger churches and increasing the influence of the denomination.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Southern Baptist pastors of the early twenty-first century find that a large proportion of their time is involved in administrative aspects of managing a church. While all will acknowledge that other duties are more important—essentials such as preparing and preaching biblically-faithful sermons, leading godly lives, caring for the spiritual needs of members, and seeking the conversion of unbelievers—practically all will acknowledge that pastors are evaluated according to their effectiveness in their use of principles and methodologies which lead their churches to grow in quantifiable ways.

As one studies the history of Baptists, one recognizes that the modern emphasis upon the pastor as an executive was unknown to early Baptists. Obviously, a shift in perspective took place during some era, and only a chronological examination of Baptist views of the gospel ministry can reveal where that change took place. From their beginnings, Baptists have left a substantive written witness to their beliefs about the gospel ministry. Confessions of faith and church manuals, as well as monographs and newspaper articles, reveal that Baptists have examined carefully the Scriptures in order to determine what should comprise the gospel ministry.

The logical place to begin such an examination is to venture beyond the first Baptists to their immediate predecessors, the English Separatists. Separatists valued the Scriptures as the Word of God; therefore the Scriptures were considered authoritative and sufficient for all matters of faith and practice in general and for all aspects of the gospel ministry in particular. Their adherence to the Scriptures led to their separation from the Church of England, the church which, Separatists argued, had corrupted the ministry by

adding offices and practices unwarranted by the Bible. From the Scriptures, Separatists found the qualifications for ministers, congregational authority for calling a minister, and mutual responsibilities of both ministers and congregations. From the Scriptures, ministers found that their duty was one of biblical fidelity. They were to be faithful in the declaration of the gospel and in watching over the souls of their congregation. Ministers were to be diligent in their duties, but diligence did not guarantee quantifiable results. Because God alone could produce conversions, the numerical growth of a congregation was the result of divine pleasure, not human endeavor.

Seventeenth and eighteenth-century British Baptists continued the Separatist adherence to the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures in all matters of faith and practice. Such a high view of the Scriptures does not mean that they always agreed about all aspects of the ministry. Indeed, while belief in a plurality of elders was commonplace, not all had a plurality. Some which did have a plurality divided their elders into pastor-elders and ruling-elders, while most viewed all elders as pastors. They did all agree that the congregation was scripturally mandated to call its own ministers, and that the Scriptures provided the qualifications by which ministerial candidates were to be judged. While congregations were expected to respect their ministers, obey their scriptural teaching, and provide financial support and Christian affection for them, ministers were to watch over the souls of their members. Once again, administrative duties did not include developing and implementing methodologies to attract unbelievers to their services in order to produce church growth. While they diligently preached the gospel, regeneration was in God's hand, not theirs. Only God could bless their efforts with observable success.

American Baptist ministers of the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries continued the emphases of their British brethren. The call to the ministry was a divine call confirmed by believers who were in a position to discern the candidate's qual-

ifications. A man thus called was to exercise diligence in preparing for the ministry, whether that preparation was formal or informal. No one questioned that the Scriptures gave the congregation the authority to call its own pastor. While most acknowledged scriptural support for a plurality of elders, churches became less likely to have more than one minister as new churches were planted and qualified ministers were fewer than needed. Congregations continued to be expected to provide material and affectionate support for their ministers and to obey carefully their biblical teachings. Ministers were charged with watching over the souls of their members, realizing that eternal destinies were at stake. Once again, ministers were never charged with the responsibility of producing observable results. They desired for their churches to grow as unbelievers were converted, but God alone could produce conversion. Biblical fidelity was the duty of ministers; blessing those efforts was the prerogative of God.

Southern Baptists of the latter third of the nineteenth through the first quarter of the twentieth centuries continued, for the most part, in the same stream as their forebears. The Scriptures alone were to determine the office of the gospel minister and the qualifications of those who entered it. Southern Baptists, for the most part, believed that the Scriptures taught a plurality of ministers for the local church, but they found themselves so far removed from such a practice that they were uncertain how to return to it. While the preparation of most ministers was informal, the expectation of ministers receiving formal training increased as more Baptist colleges and seminaries were established. Members were expected to contribute to the material needs of their ministers, though most pastors continued to experience want in this area. Members were also expected to hold their pastors in esteem by attending preaching services and following pastoral teaching. Pastors continued to be charged to care for the souls of their congregations and seek the conversion of unbelievers.

During the latter third of the nineteenth century, however, a noticeable and verifiable shift occurred in the work of the pastor. While his duties in soul care continued

to be expected, he increasingly became charged with the administrative duty of organizing the members of his church to carry out the church's work in an efficient manner. Southern Baptists justified this administrative responsibility by appealing to the scriptural teaching that the pastor was the church's overseer. Whereas earlier Baptists viewed the position of overseer as signifying the minister's rule in the church, Southern Baptists expanded that understanding to include the pastor's leading his church toward organizational efficiency. Pastors viewed the ever-increasing proportion of unbelievers in their states with alarm. They came to believe they could no longer allow their churches to continue after the models of the past if unbelievers were to be converted. Looking at the large numbers of members in their churches doing little in the work of the church, they believed that the organization and motivation of these idle workers would do much to advance the kingdom of God on earth. Finding a place for everyone to serve became the challenge for pastors. Pastors who effectively organized their members into new societies or organizations within their churches often found their churches growing in attendance and offerings. Larger attendance required newer and more sophisticated buildings, all observable, quantifiable measures of the efficiency of the pastor.

The shift which began in the latter nineteenth century became firmly rooted in the Southern Baptist mind-set by the mid-1920s. With the turn of the century, Southern Baptists maintained that a new day had arrived. Consequently, the primitive ways of the past would no longer work. Taking a cue from the business world, pastors and denominational leaders insisted that only pastors who organized their churches for efficiency could be successful in the Lord's work. Pragmatism served as the test for any ideas about how to lead the church. Methodologies which produced results were promoted for pastors and other church leaders to adopt. Both major seminaries of Southern Baptists, Southern and Southwestern, restructured their curricula to accommodate this growing desire for practical courses, with Southern going so far as to establish a department of

church efficiency. Gaines Dobbins, the department head, organized his lectures into *The Efficient Church*, the first of several books by Dobbins showing pastors and other church leaders how to develop more efficient churches. Whereas opposition to organizational efficiency arose during the latter nineteenth century out of a concern that the churches were departing from the scriptural paths of their Baptist predecessors, now questions were raised by proponents of organizational efficiency who believed that efficiency had become over-emphasized. An adjustment of emphasis was required; not a return to the past.

Though maintaining the authority of the Scriptures and their faithfulness to them, Southern Baptists nevertheless found themselves in compromising situations in their quest to enlarge the kingdom of God through this shift in the work of the pastor. The pastor's preaching and personal pastoral duties necessarily became compromised as he was called upon increasingly to engage in the work of an executive. His leading his members in righteous living through the measures of church discipline became de-emphasized because of a potential reduction of numbers. A decrease in piety among the members corresponded with an increase in "membership leaks," which in turn called for the pastor to become an even better executive and organizer in order to keep the members happily engaged in the work of the church. The Baptist distinctive of a regenerate church became jeopardized as more members became inactive. Whereas earlier generations of Baptists responded to a lack of conversions with calls for repentance, personal holiness, and prayer, now pastors were called upon to lead their churches to become efficient through organizational measures. While the twentieth century pastor was still looked upon for spiritual guidance and care, he no longer could focus upon such duties as did his predecessors. After all, the successful pastor, while maintaining a high view of the Scriptures in his preaching, was the one who led his church to produce quantifiable results. In short, Southern Baptists unwittingly compromised the scriptural work of the pastor by expanding his duties to encompass the administrative oversight of a religious enterprise.

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ABSTRACT

FROM BIBLICAL FIDELITY TO ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY: THE GOSPEL MINISTRY FROM ENGLISH SEPARATISM OF THE LATE SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

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This dissertation provides a historical and theological examination of Baptist views of the gospel ministry from English Separatists of the late sixteenth century to the Southern Baptist Convention of the mid-1920s. Chapter 1 provides the thesis of the dissertation, background material to its being written, and the methodology by which its conclusions are reached.

Chapters 2 through 4 provide overviews for the ministry among English Separatists, British Baptists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and American Baptists of the mid-seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries, respectively. Each chapter focuses upon primary writings revealing each group's understanding of such issues as the office of the minister, the divine call to the ministry, ordination, preparation, the call by a congregation to a local church, and mutual responsibilities of ministers and church members.

Chapters 5 through 7 examine the ministry among Southern Baptists from about 1865 to 1925. While the fifth chapter follows the same pattern as the previous three, Chapter 6 examines the beginning of a shift in the focus of the work of the minister from 1865 to 1900 with the introduction of organizational efficiency. Chapter 7 demonstrates that this shift became denominationally accepted during the early twentieth century.

This work maintains that the heritage of Southern Baptists expressed consistent views concerning the office of the minister into the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The minister's call to the ministry, preparation, ordination, call to a congregation, and mutual responsibilities with church members were derived from clear biblical statements and principles. The end of the nineteenth century, however, witnessed a shift in the Southern Baptist view of the work of the ministry regarding the ability to produce quantifiable outcomes—a shift which became firmly established during the first two and a half decades of the twentieth century. This shift fueled a Baptist concern for organizational efficiency, a concern which viewed successful churches as those which were optimally organized to produce quantifiable results. Because pastors were seen as the key to organizational efficiency, they were judged according to the success of their churches' achieving those results.

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