

ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT GAMBRELL
BEFORE THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION,
MAY 14-18, 1919.

Brethren and Sisters of the Convention: We assemble today under solemn but inspiring circumstances. A year ago we met with a dense war cloud over us and the world. All minds were turned then to the very urgent task of caring for the things of that tragic hour. Baptists have always been patriotic. In the world's most trying hour, it is pleasant to reflect that this Convention and our people stood firm for those principles and measures necessary for the world's deliverance from tyranny into a higher civilization. Baptists are the friends of liberty, both civil and religious, the world over. Their inner principles make them so, and they can't help it, unless they abandon their fundamental beliefs. Individualistic and democratic, both in religious and civil matters, overlords, either in religion or civil government, have to Baptists an ill favor. Our honored brother, Lloyd George, Premier of England, sensed the soul of the titanic conflict when he said to ex-President Coleman, of the Northern Baptist Convention that the great war was, at the bottom, for Baptist principles. He meant for the common rights of man. Baptists did not originate their principles. They were taught them by that Quiet Man of Galilee, who was given to this dark world for a witness, a leader, and a commander of the people, the light of men, the light of the world, and this blundering world's Master Statesman:

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The triumph of the rights of humanity by the defeat of the Central Powers in the war, brings the world to the dawn of a new era in civilization. The hoary autocracies, which for many centuries have oppressed countless millions of the race, have fallen. Vast masses

of mankind have been penetrated to a degree by liberal views and sentiments. The attentive ear can hear from every part of the world voices calling to us, "Come over and help us." This Convention sits in council today to devise ways and means to meet the solemn responsibilities of this challenging hour. We are called, in an unusual way, to be considerate, serious, and prayerful. We need the wisdom that comes from above. No human wisdom will suffice.

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A year ago, this Convention, deeply interested for the success of the war, and not less interested for the souls of the soldiers, who were to offer their lives to redeem the world from a scientific barbarism, delivered itself very guardedly on matters affecting the war. Many of us, in view of the religious war policies of the Government, said less than we felt the extraordinary conditions fairly justified. The war is now over, and some things ought to be said, in the spirit of Christian frankness, for the good of the country and in the interest of Christianity itself.

Measuring my words and confining them within the limits of well-ascertained facts, the following statement is solemnly made: The religious war work policy of the Government was framed in a way to make of none effect the religious rights of a vast majority of the civilian population of our country and of the rights of a great majority of the soldiers in the army. It was framed in violation of the natural right of free Americans, and in opposition to the Constitution of the United States, the first amendment to which says: "Congress shall make no laws, respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Many Baptists have suffered fines, imprisonments, scourgings, and martyrdoms for religious freedom. This dearest franchise of a great patriotic religious communion; indeed, several communions, was taken from us while we were sending our sons afar to die for the freedom of mankind.

If Congress can make no "laws respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," who can? The War Department did. It did

it with an open avowal of its wish and purpose, admirable for candor, but bad alike in principle and policy. The Secretary in charge of that department avowed the policy of his department in these words: "The whole desire of the department is in the interest of breaking down rather than emphasizing denominational distinctions." The department had no business with a desire one way or another.

On this un-American, unconstitutional, whimsical notion, the religious war work was planned and carried out, except where Catholics were involved. Their rights were everywhere respected and their interests carefully conserved. All non-Catholic Christian denominations were forbidden the camps, except for the period camp pastors were allowed, and these were soon eliminated in pursuance of the general plan. The result was, that in the most crucial hour in the world's history, the hour of the greatest evangelistic opportunity, the hour when the men in the camps most needed the strength of God in their hearts, the great evangelical denominations of America, which had made the moral fiber of the Nation, were forbidden as such to minister to their people. At the same time the Catholic communion, essentially autocratic, was given place in the camps and the moral power of the Government put behind it to boost its interests.

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A joint commission from this Convention and the Northern Baptist Convention waited on the Third Assistant Secretary of War in Washington in the interest of a larger opportunity for Baptists and other denominations for serving in the camps. The immediate cause of the visit, the appeal, and the protest, was the order removing camp pastors. We were received with courtesy, but told that there was not the slightest intention of changing the order. There was some softening of expressions later, but the door to opportunity was held closed, and is yet closed to all denominations except Catholics.

It is known generally that the Government created great munition centers into which it invited tens of thousands of the people to work. In these centers,

though Catholics were in many cases a small part of the whole population, the Government planned to build Catholic meeting-houses; while Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and others were not allowed to build their own houses in the places. A miscalled "Liberty" church was proposed for all non-Catholics. This was only an extension of the general plan to break down the non-Catholic denominations, while paramounting that autocratic hierarchy.

The plan was also expressed in the agreement of the Department with the Young Men's Christian Association, according to which agreement, that social-serving organization was to encourage nothing denominational in the camps. Your speaker believes the Y. M. C. A. ought to have a large place in the camps as a social organization; but it is fair to the whole situation to say, that it did not and could not represent the Baptists and other denominations. Its very genius forbade it. Few serious-minded church members will believe any social organization capable of acting for churches in the deep, solemn things of religion. And by its agreement with the Department it could not represent the denominations. The plain fact is, the Baptists and other great non-Catholic communions were not allowed to serve their people in their time of greatest need. In saying this, I challenge no one's motive, but state simple facts.

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It has been found impossible to impress men high in governmental circles that under our Constitution the Government in no way functions in religion. Its sole relation to religion is to protect every citizen in his right to worship according to the dictates of his own conscience or not to worship at all, if he so elects. The proper limit of governmental interference in the army is to protect the order and discipline of the camps and leave religion free. All regulations should be fair to all religious orders. We have not yet come to the day when we need a department of religious control in free America. To say that free religion within the limits of military order in camps is impossible is to say what cannot be shown to be true. In any event, the establishment of any form of religion anywhere by the Gov-

ernment contravenes the Constitution and is an outrage on the spirit of our free institutions.

The facts have been briefly stated. They are stated mildly; but they reveal a serious drift in governmental circles. The remedy is publicity and an appeal to public opinion. Baptists may have to lead. They have always led in the matter of religious liberty. They can lead. They have a history that will not embarrass them, but will rather reinforce them. They draw from the gospel their inspiration. A new indoctrination is called for. The occasion has arrived. The Baptists of America are united on the issue, 7,000,000 strong.

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During the recent past all kinds of winds of doctrine and no doctrine have been blowing strong, and the air has been loaded with dust, chaff, and other light, dry things. Well-paid men, paid in part by Baptist money, have gone hither and thither telling us that the old doctrines are no longer suitable for the new age and that we need a new church. It is well to reflect that winds are only hard on light, weak structures; but it will not be amiss to keep an eye on the fences, for some strong men are very busy trying to remove the landmarks, while others raise the wind and keep dust in the air. Some things have been removed. What still remains? God, the Father, remains. Jesus Christ, God's eternal Son, our adorable Saviour, remains, the same yesterday, today and forever, and remains the only Lord and King in Zion. The Word of the Lord, that endureth forever, remains. The Holy Spirit remains to quicken, guide, and help. The immovable foundation upon which Christ's churches are built remains. And, alas! poor human nature remains. The fundamentals all remain. Only circumstantial things are changed and are changing. The changing conditions make a large opportunity for service throughout the disturbed world, which today needs the Gospel of Christ unmixed with the seeds of Romanism, which through centuries have borne such bitter fruit.

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Our illustrious President by his open diplomacy has brought on a new day in the realm of statesmanship.

Lofty conceptions of human rights have penetrated dense masses of the Old World and on the ideals of liberty promulgated by the President the world is to be reconstructed. Good thoughts rule the world when they have an open field. The new, open diplomacy, along with the amazing energy, efficiency, and valor of the American army, brought the war to a quick end, and left America in the first place in the family of nations. And we can't shrink up now and drop out of the first place. America must lead the world along the upward way. All this falls in well with the free spirit and message of Baptists. Open diplomacy has its parallelism in free preaching, and the free discussions of all vital questions, out in the open daylight before all men. We are a pure democracy, and democracy demands that everything be done in the open, and every act of public officials is a legitimate matter for discussion, out in the country in the little meeting-houses, at the cross-roads, everywhere. All the people have more sense than some of the people. Open discussion will save the Baptist cause in our schools from the dry rot of the dryer critics, and save us from all sorts of evils incident to unwise denominational leadership.

And free, open discussion of the recent invasions of the religious rights of the people by the Government is the only safeguard against that pestiferous tendency in official life to gradually stiffen a bad precedent into a fixed custom, equal in force to a law. We should keep on agitating till the true doctrine of religious freedom is ingrained afresh in the American mind. In like manner must we go afield all over the world with the sword of truth flashing in the sunlight and piercing to the heart of everything that exalts itself against the sovereignty of Jesus in the realm of the soul. This must be done in the spirit of love, of course, but done. Never was there such a day for the free preaching of the messages of the divine Word all over the world, and if we are wise, we will carefully avoid getting so close in with error that we can't swing the sword of truth.

To deliver my mind at this point, I must say more. We should not discount the good done by our brethren

of other denominations, not excepting Catholics; but facing the present world-situation, we are bound in faithfulness to preach the full truth covering the whole field of the divine revelation and make Christ's program, given in the Great Commission, effective wherever men live and need the Truth. In so doing we will serve Christ and all the world in the fullest measure.

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We stand today with many open doors before us and the inevitable "many adversaries." Let us gird up our loins and go forward. Baptists have always flourished by meeting issues bravely. It is my deep conviction that this Convention ought to adopt a program for work commensurate with the reasonable demands on us and summon ourselves and our people to a new demonstration of the value of orthodoxy in free action.

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It is, moreover, a conviction as deep as my soul that this Convention, representing the sentiments and convictions of millions of Christ's baptized people, ought to send out to our fellow Baptists everywhere a rallying call to unite to make effective in all lands the unique message of Christ and His apostles which we hold in trust for our brothers in every part of the world, to the end that humanity may be made free with the freedom wherewith Christ liberates individuals and nations. Only the Truth can make the world free and safe. Let our brother Paul speak the final words: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

REPORT OF A COMMITTEE OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION ON THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AND RE- LATED MATTERS.

Though the adoption by the Convention of the address of President J. B. Gambrell greatly simplifies the task of your Committee, the Committee feels that some of the important matters dealt with in the address may properly receive further notice at the hands of the Convention. It, therefore, offers the following for adoption:

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We deeply regret the necessity for any adverse comment on the course pursued by the United States Government in reference to the control of religious work among our enlisted men. Yet in view of what has taken place and of what, in some degree, continues to be the policy of the War Department, we are compelled to make earnest and respectful protest.

In the early days of the entrance of our country into the war six men were selected by the Government to advise the military authorities concerning the arrangements for the religious welfare of the enlisted men. This group, for all practical purposes, controlled the situation and powerfully influenced, if they did not determine, the policies of the Government in this particular business. These men were not recommended or indorsed by any of the Christian denominations of the land.

This initial blunder of ignoring, in a matter in which they were profoundly concerned, all the organized, historic, influential religious denominations, has persisted, except that Roman Catholics and Jews were permitted, and are still permitted, to function in the camps on their own account and in their own way. For a time non-Catholic bodies were allowed to approach the soldiers through the camp pastor arrangement, but even this privilege was granted subject to the direction of the

Y. M. C. A. After awhile the camp pastor arrangement was discontinued, and the written statement of the Third Assistant Secretary of War, not yet withdrawn, was given to the public, that "the whole trend and the whole desire of the Department is in the interest of breaking down, rather than emphasizing denominational distinctions."

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Our protest against this policy of the Government is based primarily on the ground that the Government cannot properly have anything to do with the promotion or discouragement of "denominational distinctions." That business is wholly outside of its legitimate sphere of action. The incident gives us opportunity to say further that the disposition to discredit the great, historic Christian organizations and the spirit which forms and directs them, ignores the fact that practically all the religious work of the world has been accomplished through them.

The Government ignored them when it arranged for the control of religious work among its enlisted men, but it called loudly upon them whenever the time of stress was at hand, called on churches, on associations, conventions—every form of denominational organization.

And it is to the lasting credit of these denominations that, though ignored and set aside in a business which came very near to their homes and hearts, they never failed or faltered in responding to every appeal which came from the constituted authorities.

We ask and would accept no special privileges for our own communion, but we earnestly protest against the granting of special privileges to others, and against handing over to the Y. M. C. A., with which the Christian denominations have only general, sympathetic contact, the full direction of religious work among our enlisted men.

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In reference to the resolutions concerning Christian union which have been referred to this Committee, the following is submitted for adoption:

The Convention has repeatedly expressed its fraternal regard for Christians of every name and communion,

and its recognition of the real spiritual unity of all who love our Lord and Saviour. For this spiritual unity, rather than for external and organic unity, Jesus prayed. We rejoice in it and we hold ourselves bound to promote it in every way open to us.

The numerous and various schemes of federation, co-operation, or other forms of common action by Christian denominations which have been proposed, cannot be ignored without discourtesy.

Such of these schemes as involve a leadership which we cannot appoint or dismiss, but to which we must in some degree surrender our autonomy, are impossible for Baptists. We could not submit to a leadership of this kind even among ourselves. In practically all of them of which we have knowledge, such a leadership in varying measure is proposed.

Wherever this fundamental difficulty is not found and the way to common action seems open, we have yet to determine whether this is the best and most effective way to forward the interests of Christ's Kingdom.

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Baptists have, as we profoundly believe, a distinct witness to bear and our message must in no way be mutilated or enfeebled. It is our inescapable duty to bear this message unabated to the uttermost part of the world. To syndicate our denomination with other denominations would impair, if it did not destroy, this message. We have a great Christian communion, great in numbers and resources. Among us there is a spirit of the body, and we have fine and ennobling history and traditions. We have our own methods which we like and to which we are accustomed, but which we can change at will to meet changing conditions.

The practical and important question emerges, even if fundamental difficulties are removed, whether we cannot better promote the Kingdom of Christ by pressing on along the lines that are familiar to us, using methods that are approved among us and have been favored of God, than by venturing on vague schemes of general co-operation with other Christian organizations. We think we can.

We prefer to think of the denominational spirit, not as hateful and intolerant, though it may sometimes degenerate into hate and intolerance, but rather as we have known it, as growing out of clear individual convictions, out of loyalty to Jesus Christ and His Word. Such a spirit is neither to be contemned nor condemned. The loss of it would be a calamity to the world and to the Kingdom of Jesus.

Let us, then, while heartily bidding godspeed to all who love our Lord in sincerity and truth, as they follow Christ be busy about our own tasks, the tasks which, if neglected by us, will never be accomplished. Instead of wasting our time and confusing the minds of our people with fruitless discussion of impracticable proposals, let us make a program for ourselves so large, so progressive, so constructive, that it shall challenge the faith and imagination of our people.

And through all our plans and programs let the recognition of the sole and supreme Lordship of Jesus run like a thread of gold binding together our prayers, our labors, and our gifts.

We shall best honor our Lord, promote His truth, and serve our fellowmen, including our brethren of other faiths, by bending every effort to the task of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of our great Baptist host for the accomplishment of our specific task.

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Your Committee would further insist that free preaching and the freedom of self-determination carry with them the potency of the highest efficiency, as is fully demonstrated in America. Mass formations in religion under a centralized direction have always proven cumbersome and hurtful. The New Testament teaching is individualistic and free. The Romish hierarchy is the fullest expression of the opposite policy.

While declining on grounds both of principle and expediency to syndicate our denomination with communions holding so different standards of doctrine and different forms of government, we nevertheless apply the individualistic principle full length within our ranks. If any Baptist wishes to enter into any of the numerous extra denominational organizations, he is free to do so,

only we would wish it well understood that he represents himself, not the denomination. Of late years the denomination has been widely misrepresented by some assuming on their own account to represent the denomination.

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This Convention should make itself fully understood, and in the interest of clearness and fraternity your Committee would further say that all the cumbrous inter-denominational organizations seeking to lead the non-Catholic bodies have proven inefficient, confusing, and wasteful. To all interested parties we would insist that Baptists have their own organizations for conducting their own work, in their own way, and we believe we can handle the work both better and cheaper than it can be done for us by any extra-denominational agencies.

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Your Committee would further say that Baptists favor Christian union on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, but insist that union on any other basis is not desirable, nor with Baptists possible. We will both labor and pray for a Scriptural union, but deplore all efforts to promote union on any other basis. We cherish for our fellow-believers in all communions a deep and abiding love, but we believe that all attempts to bring incongruous elements into one mass-movement will inevitably promote discords, strifes, and spiritual deterioration—results we would deeply deplore.