

seek by study and prayer to prepare his sermon, which in our conception can never be dispensed with or minimized, for preaching is ordained of God as one of the major means of his grace. Surely we are agreed that the sermon should be no sensation-mongering, no mere jabbering of current comment, no formless, shapeless gruel, peppered with personal anecdotes and sacrilegious use of the Lord's precious name, but an authentic message from God, wrought with the finest art of which the preacher is capable under the Holy Spirit.

But the sermon is not the only part of the worship which should receive careful preparation. In our justifiable recoil from fixed, liturgical forms of prayer prevailing in ritualistic churches, we may yet unconsciously lapse into slovenly habits of prayer-expression which are just as fixed, or else we may fall victims to a sloppy emotionalism. Avoiding these errors, there should be profound spiritual preparation for public prayer.

In like manner much care should be given to the presentation of God's Word, whether it be in the form of responsive reading or by the minister alone. In any case it should be read as it was in the days of Ezra: "They read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Nehemiah 8:8).

One of the most significant acts of true worship is the offering. Diligent preparation should be made to insure that it will serve as a means of worship. The negligible manner in which the offering is frequently taken tends to play it down miserably. Unashamedly, definitely let us make of the offering a prominent, glorified part of our worship. When the wise men came to worship the new-born Christ, their offering of gold, frankincense and myrrh was the crowning act. "When thou bringest thy gift to the altar" was in the forefront of the counsels of Christ. Some feel the significance of the offering so emphatically that they insist it shall always be the climax of the service, as the expression of dedication, positively registered. We would not demand that money-offering shall always culminate worship, though it may often well do that, but we consider that our accustomed call to the people to offer themselves in surrender to Christ for salvation and service fulfills the highest demand for dedication. One thing we would insist upon, and that is, if we are to magnify and sustain regular, proportionate giving on our present budget plan of Kingdom support, we must greatly sanctify such Biblical giving by a more religious observance of it. Every pastor should summon his best thought to the best preparation for the best presentation of the offering as an act of worship.

Concerning the ordinances, it need only be pointed out that they should be Scripturally interpreted and reverently, beautifully, meaningfully administered. While we do not attach any saving efficacy to the ordinances, we do conceive them to be dramatized, pictorial exhibitions of the glorious Gospel of our crucified, buried and risen Savior, who brings newness of life to the souls of believers. Since this is true, our pastors should study the best techniques, as of a divine art, for the administration of these two marvelous portrayals of the Gospel.

We come now to the musical part of our worship, a matter which has been the subject of report before this Convention for the past several years. It is heartening to observe that here we have much to record in the way of progress and good ground for hope of improvement. Music occupies from a third to a half of all our church exercises, including the preaching, teaching, training, prayer, missionary and evangelistic services. It is being no longer regarded as a stepchild of the worship. Instead of begrudging time to musical performance, instead of tolerating secular-minded choristers who may have professional training but little understanding of true worship, or else allowing a type of trashy songs which often sadden or anger the thoughtful worshipper, Southern Baptists are awakening to an appreciation of noble, worshipful music. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that ten of our Baptist state conventions now hear annual reports on church music. Just as they have made denominational inquiry into and financial provision for aids to better preaching, Bible teaching, soulwinning, Church training, so they would look into and provide for good music in their worship. In some states, as in the case of North Carolina already cited in this paper, the executive boards are addressing themselves definitely to the task.

Another evidence of progress is the growing revolt against nondescript song-books which specialize in the sort-of-swing tunes that find the feet and not the heart and utilize words which are neither literary nor Scriptural, such song-books as are peddled by commercial publishers who for profit victimize many congregations. Our churches are requiring hymnbooks which have been competently edited for supplying the needs of real worship. Still another evidence

of this progress is the growing ability of our children to sing the great hymns of the ages, those tried and proven, because they have been taught in the public schools to sing them. Joined with the public school systems in the effort to correct low musical ideals have been our Baptist Training Unions which have incorporated training in religious music in their weekly programs. We hail this wide training as honoring the genius of Baptist churches, which exalt personal religion and congregational participation in worship and all phases of church activities. We do not forget that Catholics very early in their history abolished congregational singing because of unworthy musical execution and have since confined church music to the clergy and choir. Baptists would not wish to do away with noble choirs as an aid to soulful worship, but they would rue the day when their congregations ceased to sing.

More gratifying evidence of progress in respect to church music is noted in the correlation of instruction in our denominational schools with that of our churches, in the training of musical leaders and of religious choirs. Most heartening of all is the fine work of our Sunday School Board in planning for rural church education in church music and in arranging a Music Emphasis Conference at Ridgecrest under the direction of its music editor, B. B. McKinney, scheduled for July 26-August 1. When two years ago this Convention asked the Sunday School Board to make a survey of music in our Southern Baptist churches, it secured beneficial results which will be increasingly realized.

Much, however, remains to be undertaken. Your committee, rejoicing in what has been accomplished, would urge that we press forward toward other highly desirable improvements in our worship and music. Two recommendations seem to us to be advisable:

First, that this Convention, welcoming the response of our denominational schools to the suggestion of correlating their musical instruction with the training undertaken in our churches, call upon them to extend in whatever ways may seem wise this instruction-correlation to the end that our denomination may be furnished with better standards, higher appreciation of good religious music, more general training in rendition, and that it may be equipped with more good musical leaders in the churches.

Second, finding no authorized, strictly Southern Baptist hymnal in existence and believing there would be large advantage in providing our churches with one suited to the needs of our people, wherever they may choose to use it, we recommend that the Sunday School Board through its appointment of a competent, representative committee, take under advisement the creation of the proposed hymnal and report its findings a year hence.

Respectfully submitted,

J. M. DAWSON, Chairman
R. J. BATEMAN
ALWYN HOWELL
ADIEL J. MONCRIEF, JR.

T. EUGENE WEST
E. A. PATTERSON
H. GRADY DANIEL

91. The President appointed George W. Sadler, Virginia, to attend the Christian Workers' Conference in Canada.

92. A memorial tribute to former Vice-President P. C. Barton was delivered by B. A. Pugh, Missouri.

93. The report of the Social Service Commission was presented by Chairman Arthur J. Barton, North Carolina, and the recommendations adopted seriatim. A resolution offered by W. D. Upshaw was referred to the Social Service Commission.

An amendment proposed by L. E. Barton, Alabama, was accepted: "We protest against the reappointment of Myron C. Taylor or of anyone else as a representative of this government to the Vatican."

The report as a whole was adopted:

THIRTY-THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

SOCIAL SERVICE COMMISSION

ARTHUR J. BARTON, Chairman

1941

The annual reports of the Social Service Commission represent much time, thought and labor. Ordinarily the Chairman of the Commission spends about nine months in gathering and filing source materials. Ordinarily he then spends about three months in organizing and classifying the material for the report and in the preparation of the report itself. If it may be said frankly, without apologizing for this report or casting reflection upon its character, the present report has been prepared under rather severe handicaps. About the first of December the Chairman of the Commission was taken ill. For some three months he had treatments which cleared up the trouble and he was beginning to feel fit and fine, when he was stricken with a severe and prolonged attack of influenza, which disabled him for about six weeks. So he has had to prepare the report under some difficulties and with a clear sense of weakness and inadequacy. It is sincerely hoped, however, that these facts have not materially marred the report and that it may have the same generous reception, both by the Convention and by our Baptist people at large and others, which has been accorded the reports heretofore year after year as they have been published and widely distributed.

NOTABLE ANNIVERSARY

The Convention is meeting again this year in Birmingham, Alabama. It has met in Birmingham twice before, notably in 1891. At that time Birmingham was a sprawling, over-grown country town. For the most part it had unpaved and dusty streets. It had few sidewalks. Nearly all of its buildings, including the business structures, and certainly its residences and churches, were of wood. But it had its great coal mines, smelting plants and steel mills. Birmingham had just "arrived" and was then commonly known throughout the nation as "the Pittsburgh of the South."

Birmingham is now a great city with many miles of paved streets and boulevards, with great business buildings and blocks, with skyscraper office buildings and hotels, with great banking institutions and a great volume of commerce, with great and growing sub-divisions and suburbs. There is a striking parallel between the growth of Birmingham in this fifty years and the growth of one of our Baptist agencies founded at that session of the Convention.

At that time, 1891, the Convention and the Baptist constituency of the South were small in numbers in comparison with the large figures with which we are now familiar. But the Baptist people came from all quarters of the South to Birmingham, and came with keenness of interest and depth of feeling far beyond that with which they usually attended their annual sessions. For years what many regarded as a very vital and very important question had agitated the minds of the Baptist people of the South, and much discussion had been had—much of it very heated discussion. The question was whether Southern Baptists should have their own Sunday School and Publishing Board and produce their own Sunday School literature, or whether they should continue to rely upon other sources, especially the Baptists of the North, for this service. In Fort Worth in 1890 a battle royal had been waged by the giants of those days on this question. A standing committee of nine had been appointed to be known as the Sunday School Committee. Here in Birmingham the report of this Committee was referred to a committee of which Dr. J. M. Frost, Pastor of the Lee Street Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, was chairman.

The Convention hall was packed; the report was made; a motion was made to adopt. The giants were there and ready for the battle. Dr. John A. Broadus, the inimitable, the mighty, the influential Broadus, sprang to his feet and claimed the floor. In a few simple words he said, "I know many of you have great speeches that you would like to make. I should like to make a speech