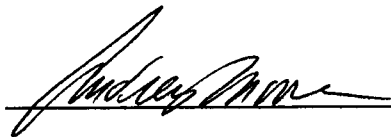


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'To Advance the Redeemer's Kingdom':
East Tennessee Southern Baptists Amid
Social and Cultural Transition, 1890-1929

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Andrew S. Moore

May 1994

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To Mom and Dad

*Honor your father and mother, so that you may live
long in the land. . . . Exodus 20:12 NIV*

*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he
is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6 NIV*

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I performed most of the research for this thesis in the Mildred L. Iddins Special Collections and Archives of Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. As a result of that experience, I believe it is only fair to warn those countless archivists on whom I will depend in the future that they have a tough act to follow. Sue Lynn McGuire, Carson-Newman's energetic and knowledgeable archivist, has set a superior standard against which I will evaluate all who follow her. On more than one occasion Sue Lynn was more enthusiastic about my project than I, and her continuing encouragement and search for additional sources (both potential interviews and the printed word) can never adequately be repaid. I also feel that I owe a special note of appreciation to a man long dedicated to the mission shared by East Tennessee Baptist churches: Rev. Glenn A. Toomey's devotion led him to maintain the Baptist archives at Carson-Newman and preserve that heritage that has meant so much to him and countless others.

In the earliest stages of my research I used Baptist sources available at several other places. I

began at the Knox County Baptist Association office in Knoxville, whose personnel always made me as comfortable as possible. I also made a couple of trips to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville, and Mary Jo Driscoll and Bill Sumners guided me through the sources they had available and helped me make efficient use of my time. In addition, I logged a considerable amount of time at the McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library System, whose staff was always courteous.

Any mistakes contained herein (stylistic, methodological, or otherwise) are my own responsibility and appear in spite of the sound advice and direction given by my thesis committee. Dr. James C. Cobb, my major professor and thesis director, Dr. Susan D. Becker, and Dr. W. Bruce Wheeler each read earlier versions of papers that became parts of this thesis, as well as drafts of the entire thesis. Their comments have made the argument stronger and more scholarly. Also, a Bernadotte E. Schmitt research award from the Department of History helped offset some of the expenses incurred while doing research.

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spiritual, and financial) deserve far more in return than the dedication page of a mere master's thesis. By dedicating this work to them, however, I express my love for them and my deepest gratitude for the standards of hard work and pride they set for me and for their commitment to a higher purpose for both themselves and their children.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on three East Tennessee associations of Southern Baptist churches, the Tennessee (later Knox County), the Nolachucky, and the Jefferson County, and describes these Baptists' responses to their perceptions of regional physical, demographic, and ideological changes during the "New South" period. From 1890 through the years around World War I, these Baptists engaged in their own brand of reform efforts, including support for a statewide orphanage, temperance agitation, a push for more denominational education, and increased mission work. Underlying this reform sentiment, however, was their concern for strengthening their denomination and augmenting its influence within southern society. After World War I, these Baptists reacted against the increasing popularity of evolution and higher criticism of the Bible, those factors of modernity that represented the greatest theological and cultural threats and symbolized an increasingly secular culture. This thesis uses sources that reveal how local associations of churches responded to demographic and ideological changes, an important consideration given the autonomous nature of Baptist churches.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since antebellum days, southern white Protestantism has exhibited an amazing degree of continuity based on an emphasis on individual salvation and justification by faith. Southern religion withstood the trauma of the Civil War and Reconstruction and the changes brought on by the creation of a New South. Defeat in the Civil War forced southerners to regroup and rebuild their world from the ground up. The South suffered through the pains of defeat by developing its own "civil religion" supported by southern church leaders. With the advent of industrialization and the shift away from an agricultural-dependent economy, southern Protestants often worked with New South entrepreneurs in support of the emerging capitalist status quo, all the while without compromising traditional values or the church's prominent place in society.¹ Indeed, historian Edward L. Ayers has written that religious expression appeared all over the New South. Religious belief provided motivation for people in politics, in reform, and in

¹Charles Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980); Frederick Bode, *Protestantism and the New South: North Carolina Baptists and Methodists in Political Crisis, 1894-1903* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975).

charity. Religion supplied meaning for people's lives "from courtship to child-rearing to their own deaths Even those filled with doubt or disdain could not escape the images, the assumptions, the power of faith."²

This intimacy suffered little over the sometimes rocky road of post-Reconstruction southern advancement. Church members experienced the same triumphs and travails as the rest of southern society. Religious institutions suffered the pains of progress and at the same time struggled to harness the prosperity and deal with the upheaval caused by an emerging New South. Along with the physical changes came ideological currents that threatened the religious cultural intimacy of the South. The North contributed to the rise of those challenges that only later in the New South period would infiltrate the former Confederacy.

The liberal Social Gospel theology that influenced Protestantism in a way that transformed northern religious leaders and churches arguably made few inroads among southern mainline Protestant organizations. This progressive theology proved germane, however, to the formation of the Southern Sociological Congress, which,

²Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 160.

among other things, sought to place "human welfare above property values in industry," and worked "for justice and good will to govern in all race relations," as well as "for thorough Americanization and such a strict loyalty to the nation that failure of anyone to meet his obligations of citizenship . . . would be regarded by the public as immoral and second only to sedition."³

The extent to which such an influence affected the majority of white southern Protestants has generated considerable debate among historians. Southern Baptists were one of the largest groups of white Protestants in the South at the turn of the century and have proved to be a fascinating topic for historians of the southern religious experience. Most students of the Southern Baptists concede that there was at least a hint of social reform sentiment present in the official actions of their Convention.

Differences emerge when one discusses the degree to which Baptists responded to the challenges of society at large. One conclusion emphasizes that Southern Baptists lived comfortably within their white southern world and maintained their distance from the challenges of society. A second school of thought interprets the role

³James E. McCulloch, ed., "Distinguished Service" Citizenship: Southern Sociological Congress, Knoxville, Tennessee. (Washington: n.p., 1919).

of Southern Baptists quite differently, noting the attention they paid to problems facing their social environment and to the liberal challenges to their theology.⁴ This project applies these conclusions to three associations of East Tennessee Southern Baptist churches and interprets the impact of their actions or inaction. The question that guided this research is, "To what degree did East Tennessee Southern Baptist churches respond to the modernizing New South's economic and demographic changes and ideological challenges during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?"

Any study of southern religion automatically brings to mind the notion that white southern Protestantism has served as nothing but a died-in-the-wool bastion of religious fundamentalism. By today's standards fundamentalism refers to that group (assuming there is

⁴Rufus Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1961); John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1972), with revised Introduction, Conclusion, and Bibliography by Samuel S. Hill, 1987; Wayne Flynt, "Dissent in Zion: Alabama Baptists and Social Issues, 1900-1914," *Journal of Southern History* 35 (November 1969): 523-542; "Alabama White Protestantism and Labor, 1900-1914," *Alabama Review* 25 (July 1972): 192-217; "Religion in the Urban South: The Divided Religious Mind of Birmingham, 1900-1930," *Alabama Review* 30 (April 1977): 108-134; Southern Baptists and Reform: 1890-1920," *Baptist History and Heritage* 7 (October 1972): 211-223; Louis Keith Harper, "Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1991); James J. Thompson, Jr., *Tried as by Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982).

only one discernible faction) that maintains a strict adherence to a set of principles that center around eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and the inerrancy of the holy Scriptures. This inconclusive definition does not help in viewing the evolution of fundamentalism into its present form. Ernest R. Sandeen has demonstrated that in the past different groups of Protestants have claimed different fundamentalist principles. One group held up a list of fourteen fundamentals of faith, while another subscribed to only five.⁵ This suggests problems with simply defining fundamentalism as a product of the acceptance of a few sometimes arbitrary codes of conduct.

A second problem with the treatment of fundamentalism arises when one attempts to place its origins in the 1920s, when conservative Protestant leaders responded to the controversy surrounding evolution and modernism's ideological attack on traditional Protestant understandings of Scripture. If the seminal event can be traced to a mere reaction against a set of forces, then once those challenges disappeared fundamentalists should have ceased to be

⁵Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. xiv, 273-277.

seen as a faction separate from other conservative Christians.⁶ Sandeen and George Marsden provide similar solutions to this problem by describing a movement and illustrating the development of fundamentalism based on religious traditions with antecedents dating back at least several decades.

George Marsden locates the foundations of fundamentalism in the nineteenth century and argues that the movement grew from older evangelical Protestant traditions. He contends that circumstances in the early twentieth century shaped fundamentalism and created a unique "cultural experience" for evangelical Christianity. Evangelical Protestants built on several conservative movements. Marsden regards the most formative factor affecting the emergence of fundamentalism as the realization that America had become a "culture that by the 1920s was openly turning away from God."⁷

Fundamentalists charged that modernism had undermined the biblical foundations of American civilization and created a spiritual and cultural crisis. According to Marsden, fundamentalism equaled

⁶ibid., pp. xii-xiii.

⁷George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 3.

"militantly antimodernist Protestant evangelicalism," a characteristic that made the movement unique in the 1920s. These fundamentalists were evangelical Christians who favored revivalist traditions of the nineteenth century and opposed "modernism in theology and the cultural changes that modernism endorsed."⁸

The "New South" attitude championed by men like Atlanta's Henry Grady often gave the impression that the South was changing at a terrifically rapid rate. Of course, a few areas did experience dramatic change, but even more were forced to wait for World War II-era developments such as federal intervention and the rise of the so-called Sun Belt. East Tennessee experienced its own version of New South changes around the turn of the century. Since the end of the Civil War manufacturing expanded by leaps and bounds to place Knoxville among the region's leaders. After the turn of the century, furthermore, manufacturing sectors in East Tennessee experienced an increase in their percentage of the gainfully employed population, while agricultural employment declined by over 50 percent.⁹ Using

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 19-41; William H. Nicholls, "Human Resources and Industrial Development in the Upper East Tennessee Valley, 1900-1950," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 71 (1957): 289-316.

economic and demographic data from twenty counties east of Knoxville¹⁰ in the Upper East Tennessee Valley Region, economist William H. Nicholls has shown that in 1929 per capita value added by manufacturing stood at 27 percent of the national average, up from 15 percent thirty years earlier. These figures are a long way from the 62 percent of the national average this region experienced in 1947, but they do show that areas in East Tennessee outside of Knoxville experienced at least some measure of industrial development. In fact, Nicholls also notes that of the more than thirty-nine thousand people employed in manufacturing plants in the fifteen Tennessee counties in 1949, 4 percent of these worked in plants that had been established prior to 1900, 15 percent were in those built from 1900 to 1919, and 60 percent in plants constructed in the 1920s. Moreover, 64 percent of the new jobs created in these fifteen counties from 1930 to 1950 resulted from expansion of industrial facilities before 1930.¹¹

By 1900, Knoxville's population was over 32,000, up from 3,700 in 1860. The number had grown to just over

¹⁰Fifteen counties in Tennessee (Carter, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Sevier, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, Washington) and five in Virginia (Lee, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Washington).

¹¹Nicholls, "Human Resources and Industrial Development," pp. 294-295.

105,000 by 1930. In the first half of the twentieth century, the population of the entire East Tennessee region multiplied from 380,000 to 617,000. No town or county in East Tennessee could compete with Knoxville in terms of urban development. In the first half of the twentieth century, however, the relative urban population of Nicholls's case study region had increased from 5 to 23 percent, with the population density rising from forty-eight to seventy-nine persons per square mile. The second largest increase in population density occurred during the 1920s, the last decade under consideration here.¹²

Knoxville differed from these East Tennessee counties in terms of the proportion of blacks in the population. In the fifty years after 1870, Knoxville's African-American population quadrupled and a race riot shook the city in 1919. In counties east of Knoxville, on the other hand, native-born whites comprised more than 90 percent of the total population, and the already small number of blacks actually decreased in the decades after 1900.¹³ Nine of the fifteen counties Nicholls studied fall within the territory of the Baptist

¹²McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, pp. 22-24, 50; and Nicholls, "Human Resources and Industrial Development," p. 300, 297.

¹³McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, pp. 36-38; and Nicholls, "Human Resources and Industrial Development," p. 301.

associations considered here. The few facts and figures presented here suggest that the New South in fact extended beyond Knoxville into surrounding predominantly rural counties, at least enough to vindicate these Baptists' fears of the changes wrought by increasing urbanization and industrialization.

Evidence in their annual reports indicates that these groups of Baptists certainly recognized rapid New South changes and expressed concern over their impact on the South in general and East Tennessee in particular. In 1890, for instance, in a call for support for missions, Knoxville Baptists noted the rapidly increasing population and growing cities, the "many improvements" in the country, the new railroads pushing through, and the new factories and mines springing up around the South. They also expressed concern over the population increase in East Tennessee. Cities and towns had grown "like magic . . . bringing with them distorted views of religion and civil liberty [that] imperils [sic] our very existence as a people."¹⁴

¹⁴Tennessee Association of Baptists, Proceedings of the 88th Annual Session, 1890; see also, TAB, 95th Annual Session, 1897, p. 18; TAB, 103rd Annual Session, 1905, pp. 22-23; TAB, 104th Annual Session, 1906, p. 17. Hereafter cited as TAB with appropriate session number and year. Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library System, Knoxville, Tennessee.

This thesis begins in 1890 and looks at three East Tennessee Baptist associations' responses to their perceptions of regional physical and ideological changes, increased population, and the growth of cities, concentrating on their attitudes toward their social and cultural environment. From 1890 through the early decades of the twentieth century, Baptists instituted a statewide orphanage, developed denominational schools, played a significant role in the anti-liquor movement, bemoaned the encroachment on traditional Sabbath observance, and emphasized mission efforts to save lost souls. This thesis describes these Baptists' reactions and denominational programs and discusses their significance in the midst of such challenges.

In order to understand these Baptists' actions, it is necessary to understand their notion of social reform. On one level, they treated reform as did a host of other activists trying to stamp out the liquor trade or to correct certain social ills such as the lack of adequate education. That is, they advocated measures intended to bring about a substantial alteration in society or the way people governed their lives. On a different level, however, their reform efforts took on an otherworldly tone. They believed that only

individual spiritual salvation and regeneration would bring about true and permanent social transformation. The first level appears in their active temperance stance, in their support for their orphanage, in their insistence on protection of the Sabbath, and to an extent in their rhetoric on behalf of education. The spiritual level, of course, gave rise to missionary endeavors as well as denominational education. In part this also contributed greatly to a sense of denominational pride, protection, and uplift.

The post-World War I South presented challenges that became even harder to resist. Southern cities and states increased boosterism and clamored for greater industrial development until this sentiment even infected rural areas. In the South, according to historians George B. Tindall and James C. Cobb, the predominant theme became expansion. On the intellectual front, historian Daniel Singal has noted the literary transformation in the work of certain southern writers beginning in the 1920s.¹⁵

¹⁵George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press and the Littlefield Fund for Southern History, The University of Texas, 1967), p. 71; James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1964* (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1988; originally published University Press of Kentucky, 1984), pp. 31-34; Daniel J. Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

Beginning in this post-war period, East Tennessee Baptists underwent their own subtle shift in world outlook and solutions for the problems facing American society. After the war and during the 1920s, these Baptists placed more emphasis on evangelism, mission efforts, and a Christian education, and labored to create a financially solvent and truly viable denomination. Baptists' social reform efforts had never strayed far from the doctrine of personal salvation, but the 1920s only increased their conservatism. To be sure, by the 1920s the Southern Baptist Convention found itself, through its sheer numerical strength, poised on the brink of true dominance of southern Protestantism. Thus, the Convention directed much of its effort toward the maintenance of denominational institutions. Still, Baptists denounced modernism, evolution, and the corruption of traditional culture and stepped up efforts to better the world by winning the lost to Christ. They perceived in this decay of traditional culture a formerly Christian civilization turning away from God. In response to this, they called for a return to a Christian America and concentrated their efforts on realization of this goal.

This study relies primarily on the annual reports of three East Tennessee Baptist associations, the Tennessee (later Knox County), the Nolachucky, and the Jefferson County. In Baptist terminology, an "association" is a localized gathering of individual churches who meet annually to coordinate their missionary and educational endeavors and their financial offerings. This is not to be confused with the larger Baptist "conventions," which exist on two different levels. A state convention consists of a number of smaller associations and is organized to undertake much the same tasks as associations, except on a larger scale. At the top of the Baptist hierarchy is the Southern Baptist Convention, among other things the coordinator of foreign and home mission efforts, the publisher of a variety of denominational literature, and the overseer of Baptist seminaries. Put more simply, the Southern Baptist Convention is made up of state conventions, each of which consists of a number of associations. The associations, in turn, are made up of autonomous churches, which elect messengers to each associational gathering, each state convention, and the annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting.

The Tennessee Association of Baptists organized in 1802 with twenty-one member churches from Jefferson, Grainger, Sevier, Knox, Hawkins, Campbell, Hamblen, Claiborne, and Blount Counties. Later churches from Anderson, Union, Roane, Loudoun, McMinn, Cocke, and Hancock Counties entered the association. In 1890 this association represented thirty-seven churches, forty-four in 1900, fifty-five in 1914, fifty-four in 1920, and fifty-five in 1925.¹⁶ After a number of churches in surrounding counties left the Tennessee Association, in 1917 the group became known as the Knox County Association of Baptists, even though a few churches from outside that county remained as members.

The Nolachucky Association took shape in 1828, with fourteen churches from Hamblen, Hawkins, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, and Jefferson Counties. In 1890, forty-two churches comprised Nolachucky, fifty-four in 1900, fifty-nine in 1910, thirty-eight in 1920, and thirty-three in 1929.¹⁷ The boundaries of each

¹⁶Glenn A. Toomey, "Knox County Baptist Association, Tennessee (1802-1978)". unpublished manuscript, p. 1, Toomey Collection, Mildred L. Iddins, Special Collections and Archives, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, TN; TAB, 88th Annual Session, 1890; TAB, 98th Annual Session, 1900; TAB, 112th Annual Session, 1914; Knox County Association of Baptists, Proceedings of the 118th Annual Session, 1920; and KCAB, 123rd Annual Session, 1925. Hereafter cited as KCAB with appropriate session number and year.

¹⁷Glenn A. Toomey, "Nolachucky Baptist Association, Tennessee (1828-1978)", unpublished manuscript, CNC, Toomey Collection, p. i, 224, 227.

association proved to be rather amorphous, and it was common for a church to leave one group to join another. As the number of churches within a particular county grew, those churches often split off from a larger association and organized their own county assembly. This process took member churches from Nolachucky on more than one occasion.

In 1919, fifteen churches in Jefferson County, located between Knox and Hamblen Counties, left the Knox County and Nolachucky Associations to form the Jefferson County Association of Baptists. Three had been added to that initial roster by 1922, and this number increased to twenty-three in 1923, where it leveled off for the rest of the decade, fluctuating by only a church or two throughout that time.¹⁸ Because of its late formation, the Jefferson County Association will only be discussed in the fourth chapter, which concentrates on the years after World War I and the 1920s. Nevertheless, these same churches participated in the Tennessee and

¹⁸Glenn A. Toomey, "Jefferson County Baptist Association, Tennessee (1919-1978)," unpublished manuscript, p. i; Toomey, *Milestone Sixty: History of the Jefferson County Baptist Association, 1919-1978*. Jefferson City, Tennessee. (By the author, 1978), p. 39; Toomey, *The Sesquicentennial History of the Nolachucky Baptist Association and Its Affiliated Churches, 1628-1977*. Murristown, Tennessee. (Nolachucky Baptist Association, 1977), p. 73; all the above from Toomey Collection, Carson-Newman College; Jefferson County Association of Baptists, *Proceedings of the 3rd Annual Session, 1922*; JCAB, *4th Annual Session, 1923*. Hereafter cited as JCAB with appropriate session number and year. Margaret L. Iddins Special Collections and Archives, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee.

Nolachucky annual meetings prior to 1919; therefore, the Jefferson County churches were able to draft and influence annual reports and vote before they had their own association.

The three East Tennessee Baptist associations under examination came together with similar expressed purposes. The language of the Tennessee Association in 1890 reflects the sentiment of the other two organizations. They intended

. . . to advance the Redeemer's Kingdom by preaching the gospel at home and abroad, the fostering of Sunday-schools, the support of Home and Foreign Missions, the encouragement of ministerial and general education, the circulation of religious literature, and the promotion of the unity and harmony of the churches.¹⁹

Previous historians have based their conclusions almost exclusively on primary sources generated by Southern Baptist professionals--state newspapers (which were often privately owned), Convention reports, and other Convention publications. Writing in 1987, historian Samuel S. Hill correctly noted that these studies basically show "what public figures and formal occasions produced in order to reflect and govern

¹⁹TAB, 88th Annual Session, 1890.

Baptist life."²⁰ The Southern Baptist Convention is made up of a large number of autonomous churches. To get a sense of how the Baptists' general membership responded to social problems, one must look below the national and state convention levels to the local association, the lowest level of cooperation among Southern Baptist churches.

Because this study makes use of the records of the official annual proceedings, formal occasions and public figures still play a prominent role in the findings. Nevertheless, laymen made up a majority of each association's voting delegates, and filled many of the important leadership positions as well. For example, in 1914, only twelve pastors were listed among the 263 delegates at the annual Tennessee Association meeting. This number does not account for all of the pastors who served as committee chairmen or who were on the Executive Committee; but, even counting these among the delegates equals a relatively small number of pastors. Furthermore, laymen held roughly half of the seats on that association's Executive Committee.²¹

²⁰Samuel S. Hill, Jr., introduction to *Eighthmy, Churches in Cultural Captivity*, p. ix.

²¹The proportions vary from year to year, but overall remain roughly half. For example, see TAB, 93rd Annual Session, 1895; TAB, 98th Annual Session, 1900; and TAB, 112th Annual Session, 1914.

Southern culture stands in contrast to the rest of the nation because of the degree to which southern white Protestantism reinforced the conservatism of the era. Southern white churchgoers did not merely conjure up their religious beliefs in a vacuum of mindless ignorance of their physical, mental, and spiritual environment, however. Instead, the fundamentalist nature of southern white Protestantism matured along with the emerging New South order. In most instances this development paralleled and buttressed the progression of changes in the larger society. This punctuates the importance of viewing southern Protestantism in terms of southern society as a whole.

Contrary to some interpretations,²² the South and southern white Protestantism have not survived as static entities cut off from the outside world and impervious to change. Instead, each has endured by adapting its institutions and cultural symbols to inevitable transition. Even though southern fundamentalism continued to emphasize individual salvation and the grace of a loving and omnipotent God, this was not a static throwback to the good old days. Southern white

²²e.g. W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, with a new Introduction by Bertram Wyatt-Brown, 1991; originally published, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1941).

fundamentalists brought this message of eternal hope into the twentieth century and challenged the forces of worldly ruin head-on.

CHAPTER 2

REFORM

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing through the early decades of the twentieth, the South experienced its own version of the Progressive Movement that instigated reform activities designed to correct problems of education, public health, child welfare, and public morality. Activists from the North as well as southern urban areas engineered "bureaucratic intervention" intended to alter southern traditions and effect positive change in the region.¹ Southern Baptists shared in some of this Progressive Movement, although they largely engaged in reform projects under their own banner with their own separate goals clearly in mind. They cooperated in anti-liquor agitation, concerned themselves with protection of orphans, and denounced the desecration of their Sabbath. These types of reform efforts indicate the slight degree to which Southern Baptists had been subtly influenced by the predominantly northern Social Gospel movement.² Most importantly, these Baptists also understood their

¹William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. xi.

²Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, pp. 79-92.

mission enterprises as agents of true reform and preached that eternal personal salvation would bring about real social transformation.

Probably the most visible social reform effort engaged in by Baptists and other Protestant denominations alike was the temperance movement. The last two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a shift in the kind of attention devoted to the anti-liquor cause in the South. Prior to the 1890s, southern reformers opposed alcohol's presence in their midst, but sought to make changes in behavior only through personal inner transformation, or "moral suasion," rather than through governmental intrusion in the form of state-enforced prohibition. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, the use of alcohol came to symbolize the breakdown of community and traditional values. In response to this important cultural and societal alteration, reform groups began to advocate more public solutions.³

The battlefield for the war between liquor interests and prohibition reformers moved from an emphasis on personal liberty and community responsibility to the public arena and "intrusive

³Link, *Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, pp. 31-42.

governance." Prior to 1890, the Tennessee Baptist Convention had eschewed solutions achieved through state-enforced prohibition and concentrated on the Christian community's responsibility to preach repentance and the salvation of Jesus as the cure for society's alcohol problems.⁴ Beginning in the 1890s, however, this attitude began to change and these East Tennessee Baptists joined the rest of the nation's temperance reformers in advocating laws to deal with this moral hindrance. In fact, it became their duty to support those laws that would place the most stringent regulations on the hated "jug trade." In 1896 the Nolachucky Association praised the progress already made by anti-liquor forces and saw "no reason for discouragement on account of the present condition and future outlook." In that same temperance report, Nolachucky Baptists believed that they recognized the unity of the nation's Christian people in "heart and conscience" that contributed to the healthy nature of temperance sentiment.⁵

⁴Ibid., pp. 34-35.

⁵Nolachucky Association of Baptists, Proceedings of the 69th Annual Session, 1896, pp. 16-17. Hereafter cited as NAB with appropriate session number and year. Margaret L. Iddins Special Collections and Archives, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee.

One year later, the Nolachucky Association announced its moral imperative to "use all our influence in moral suasion and the best possible corrective discipline for" alcohol's elimination. In addition, these Baptists also believed it was their duty "both to God and man" to support "the best possible laws on the subject."⁶ Nolachucky's 1898 Report on Temperance called the saloon "the enemy of all that is good, the ally of everything evil," "the center of vice and crime, the blot upon our body politic." The evil of liquor presented the most dangerous "foe to the religion of Christ." The time had come, the report proclaimed, "when this relic of barbarism should be wiped out of existence, and no longer permitted to curse us with its deadly presence."⁷

Baptists were expected to lead by example and, of course, not patronize saloons. In addition, every effort should be made to influence public opinion and elect only those public officials sympathetic to the anti-liquor cause who could insure passage of a local option bill, a piece of legislation that would allow cities to hold a referendum to decide liquor's continued

⁶NAB, 70th Annual Session, 1897, p. 16.

⁷NAB, 71st Annual Session, 1898, pp. 25-26.

status within their borders.⁸ In 1900 Nolachucky Baptists provided a lengthy justification for the removal of the "great blight on our western civilization." The report compared 1896 expenditures for liquor with the country's public debt as reported in December 1897. Liquor interests spent \$1.2 million versus a national debt of \$1.8 million. The report concluded that "the drink bill would pay the public debt in a year and a half."⁹

During the same period, all religious denominations gave a total of only \$5.5 million for foreign missions. The 1900 report belabored the point by comparing the money spent annually on liquor with the price of various agricultural and manufacturing products. According to these Nolachucky Baptists, the monetary value of the nation's annual consumption of alcohol equaled the price of "wheat, corn, rye, buckwheat, potatoes, gold, silver, iron, and petroleum combined." Furthermore, the 1900 meeting reported that Tennessee had twenty-one hundred liquor dealers, and a smaller ratio of distributors to total population than of ministers to population. This left "quite a disparity between the efficiency of the workers for Christ and those for King Alcohol." The

⁸Ibid.

⁹NAB, 73rd Annual Session, 1900, p. 27.

future looked promising for anti-liquor forces, however. The Nolachucky Association pointed to a stronger anti-liquor public sentiment that alarmed liquor distributors. Nationwide, public convictions had moved "in the right direction" as a number of states and the U.S. Congress had considered prohibition legislation.¹⁰

According to the Tennessee Association's 1905 Temperance Report, legal prohibition would "keep the temptation out of the way of the boy."¹¹ That group also interpreted the attack on the saloon as "a contest . . . between heaven and hell," a battle between good and evil. "Every christian, every voter, every citizen," their 1906 Report on Temperance urged, was responsible for supporting prohibition and voting only for those who neither drank nor favored liquor.¹² In 1907 the Tennessee Association called for "a mighty army of Sunday Schools, churches, and temperance organizations" to engage in "a relentless war till the saloon is no more, and the nations of earth are redeemed from this terrible curse."¹³

At its 1905 annual meeting, the Nolachucky Association reiterated its claim that it was Christians'

¹⁰NAB, 73rd Annual Session, 1900, pp. 27-28.

¹¹TAB 103rd Annual Session, 1905, p. 15.

¹²TAB, 104th Annual Session, 1906, pp. 29-30.

¹³TAB, 105th Annual Session, 1907, pp. 27-28.

duty to promote legal suasion and endorsed both Tennessee's Adams Law and the work of the Anti-Saloon League, both of which played integral roles in abolishing saloons from much of the state. After the delegates heard that report, several men added their own arguments to the official proceedings. J.E. Wickham argued that intemperance damaged men physically and hurt business. He pointed to Morristown and the improvements that Tennessee town had enjoyed since the end of saloons there; businesses had flourished and "want [was] unknown." Both Wickham and E.E. Folk contended that alcohol was "worse than slavery," as 100,000 men fell victim to its control each year. W.A. Atchley expressed the contemporary reform sentiment when he announced that Baptists could not pray the saloon from their midst; instead, "we can vote it out."¹⁴

Also in 1907, the state legislature passed the Pendleton Act, which allowed Tennessee's larger cities to hold a referendum on prohibition within their borders. The pastor of Knoxville's Deaderick Avenue Baptist Church appealed directly to Knoxville's women to persuade their husbands to support the referendum. Failing to do this, these women were to keep the men

¹⁴NAB, 78th Annual Session, 1905, pp. 24-25.

from voting at all costs.¹⁵ Knoxville temperance groups successfully supported such a referendum that ended the open saloon in their city until 1972.¹⁶

Even after Knoxville endorsed local prohibition, Anti-Saloon League representatives continued to visit and address the annual meetings of these Baptists, and both the Tennessee and Nolachucky Associations turned their attention to the liquor problem in the rest of the nation. The Tennessee Association's 1909 Temperance Report called "the use of intoxicating liquors . . . detrimental to the health, peace, happiness, good morals and good government; productive of pauperism, immorality, insanity, vice, and crime. The licensed saloon is the curse of the age."¹⁷ Where prohibition had succeeded, temperance forces rejoiced over a reduction in crime and poverty and a resurgence in Christian virtues and general prosperity.¹⁸

Both associations continually encouraged their members to preach, practice, pray, and talk temperance.

¹⁵Knoxville Journal and Tribune, February 11, 1907, cited in Roger Dale Posey, "The Anti-Alcohol City: Social, Economic, and Political Aspects of Knoxville, Tennessee, 1870-1907" (M.A. Thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1982), pp. 69-70.

¹⁶Posey, "The Anti-Alcohol City," 28, 56-94; Paul E. Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics: Turbulent Decades in Tennessee, 1885-1920* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1965), pp. 81-124.

¹⁷TAB, 104th Annual Session, 1906, p. 30; TAB, 107th Annual Session, 1909, p. 25.

¹⁸TAB, 110th Annual Session, 1912, p. 13.

Tennessee governor Ben Hooper took office in 1911 determined to enact legislation that would effectively enforce the state's prohibition measures. Knoxville Baptists praised the "patriotic integrity" of Hooper and heartily endorsed those in the legislature who dared to take an heroic stance for those laws, and members of the Nolachucky Association pledged themselves to keep up the fight without regard to political party affiliation. Suppression of the liquor trade must take precedent over any other political issue, and this alone should govern how good Christian men cast their vote.¹⁹ Both groups of Baptists lauded the "wave of temperance agitation and legislation [that] has swept our land," and thanked Almighty God who had worked through the Anti-Saloon League and the WCTU to rid the state of that "agency of the devil."²⁰

Both the Tennessee and Nolachucky Associations acknowledged that even the passage of a portion of Hooper's enforcement legislation, however, could not bring the complete end to liquor traffic in the state.²¹ To be sure, moonshining and bootlegging have been the

¹⁹TAB, 111th Annual Session, 1913, p. 10; NAB, 83rd Annual Session, 1910, pp. 26-27.

²⁰NAB, 84th Annual Session, 1911, p. 30.

²¹TAB, 110th Annual Session, 1912, p. 13; Isaac, *Prohibition and Politics*, pp. 206-231.

subjects of countless legends in Appalachia, and Knoxville Baptists had reason to fear such disrespect for their local laws. No less a public figure than the mayor of Knoxville, Samuel Gordon Heiskell, opposed the prohibition referendum in 1907, and Kentucky liquor dealers openly advertised in the local newspaper, intending to attract interstate customers.²²

The problem lay with the "nefarious" liquor traffic that "persistently refuses to accept the verdict of the people." Because of this persistence, Christians and other prohibition proponents could not let the struggle die. The fact that temperance foes had been unable to repeal anti-liquor statutes encouraged the Nolachucky Association and caused them again to praise their governor, a man they believed was determined to enforce those same regulations.²³

Now that prohibition had become law in most of the state, the 1913 Nolachucky Association meeting urged Tennesseans not "to surrender to a band of out-laws."²⁴ Enforcement required that the liquor interests' refusal to comply be countered by bringing "the law . . . into public favor" In order to alter public

²²McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, p. 36; and Link, *Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, p. 315.

²³NAB, 84th Annual Session, 1911, pp. 30-31.

²⁴NAB, 86th Annual Session, 1913, p. 19.

sentiment, individuals would have to continue to practice and teach temperance, and to expose the evils of drunkenness. Parents must do their part and forbid their children from using alcohol, and schools should teach "its baneful effect upon the body, mind and soul."²⁵

As the time for ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment and national prohibition neared, East Tennessee Baptists continued to decry the adverse effects of alcohol and to trumpet Americans' increasing realization that the use and manufacture of liquor should be abolished.²⁶ The Nolachucky's 1916 Temperance Report praised the nine states within the Southern Baptist Convention and the ten in the rest of the nation that already lived under prohibition and announced that in seven others "the sentiment for prohibition is growing rapidly." This fact only fanned the Baptist anti-liquor flame. They could not be satisfied, the Nolachucky group claimed, until the alcohol business in all its guises existed only as a memory. That same 1916 report called the liquor industry "unchristian, undemocratic, unrepublican, unprogressive, [and]

²⁵NAB, 85th Annual Session, 1912, p. 28.

²⁶NAB, 87th Annual Session, 1914, pp. 22-23; NAB, 88th Annual Session, 1915, p. 18.

unAmerican," and urged that the new battle cry be "On to Washington" in an effort to extend prohibition nationwide.²⁷

This cry for reform action on a national scale appears to transcend the localist traditions of southern culture and to be at odds with sentiments found throughout the region. With the presence of persistent community resistance to government intervention, the South probably presented the biggest obstacle to the enforcement of prohibition legislation.²⁸ Yet, these Baptists' push for national legislative involvement indicates their unwillingness to surrender in their moral crusade or even to admit that their efforts might be futile and not what was best for society at large.

While the Eighteenth Amendment made its way to state legislatures across the nation, the Knox County Association of Baptists hailed "the tramp of the prohibition army going on to a complete victory." This came at quite a propitious time in the view of the delegates to the 1917 Knox County Association meeting. As Americans were being called to war, restrictions on liquor insured that they would remain virtuous and noble men. That report charged Knox County Baptists with

²⁷NAB, 89th Annual Session, 1916, pp. 17-18.

²⁸Link, *Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, pp. 311-321.

rising up and driving "this blight from our own country, and from the whole face of the world."²⁹ The 1918 Nolachucky Temperance Report anticipated Tennessee's upcoming ratification legislature the next January. These Baptists urged members of the association to "vote as we pray" in November when they elected legislators. Now was the time for the culmination of the fight against liquor; the country was ready for nationwide prohibition.³⁰

The same reform spirit that motivated temperance agitation also contributed to a defense of one of the last recognizable fortresses of Christian tradition: the Sabbath. As historian William A. Link has written, respect for the traditional day of worship symbolized the power of southern religion over public policy. When this authority was threatened, the very essence of Christianity came under attack.³¹ Knoxville Baptists no less than other nineteenth century southern Protestants linked respect for the Sabbath to the continuing influence of the church.

Industrialization and a rapidly changing culture encroached upon Sunday church-going people, and by 1910

²⁹KCAB, 115th Annual Session, 1917, pp. 28-29.

³⁰NAB, 91st Annual Session, 1918, pp. 14-15.

³¹Link, *Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, p. 54.

Knoxville Baptists had enough and spoke out against the "present inroads" being made against the "Holy Sabbath." Such assaults included "bold trading, trafficking [sic], . . . soft drink stands, parks, Sunday picnics, ball games, . . . golf playing, [and] the running of freight trains on Sunday." These Baptists believed they had a scriptural mandate to protect their day of worship. The fourth of the Ten Commandments orders God's people to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy. To Knoxville Baptists, violation of this commandment would bring "inexpressible misery and woe." Drawing parallels between American culture and Old Testament Israel, they warned that the Israelites "lost their rightful place among nations, and fell into ruin" when they failed to honor the Sabbath.³²

Apart from the biblical argument, these Baptists sought this reform for another related reason. Again, in their mind true social change could best come from spiritual sources. Respect for Sunday worship symbolized the significance of this otherworldly influence. When Baptists perceived the decreasing importance of their holy day, they naturally worried that society would have less reason to heed spiritual

³²TAB, 108th Annual Session, 1910, p 20; Exodus 20:8; TAB, 108th Annual Session, 1910, pp. 19-20.

arguments. Knoxville Baptists claimed that in areas of the country where there was no Sabbath observance, moral depravity and the absence of civil law persisted. To prevent such corruption, Baptists of the Tennessee Association were exhorted to use Sunday for spiritual uplift and the glorification of God. The 1913 Report on Lord's Day Observance indicated that if individuals would honor the Lord and not waste the Sabbath, revival would sweep their area and bring "thousands" to salvation.³³

Judging by the absence of any such discussion in the minutes from their annual proceedings, the Nolachucky Association did not appear as concerned as their Knox County neighbors about this erosion of sacred attention paid to the Sabbath. Perhaps this is due to Knoxville's increasing urban nature versus the predominantly rural character surrounding the Nolachucky Baptists. In any case, by the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century, delegates to the Tennessee Association became increasingly alarmed over what they understood as blatant disregard for the Lord's day. In 1915 it was a "sad commontary [sic] upon our Christian civilization and our church people" that

³³TAB, 109th Annual Session, 1911, p. 23; TAB, 111th Annual Session, 1913, pp. 14-15.

Sundays had become "a time of pleasure and desecration." Not only had some Baptists begun violating the Sabbath for recreation, but they "make use of the day in a pecuniary way."³⁴ The 1916 report encouraged Christians to "raise the standard," and "the effect will be beneficial . . . [for] man's physical, moral and spiritual well being."³⁵

This aspect of Knoxville Baptists' reform sentiment was one reaction against industrialization, urbanization, and the cultural transformation taking place around them. The clash between the Baptists and change, they believed, must either result in complete moral decay or in salvation and expanded church membership rolls. Much to their chagrin, it turned out, this fact appeared only to worsen in the years following World War I. Their society grew more secular and continued to desecrate the Lord's day.

In Matthew 19:14 Jesus told his disciples: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew's Gospel also records Jesus informing his followers that whenever they helped even "the least of these, you have done it unto me." These scripture

³⁴TAB, 113th Annual Session, 1915, p. 28.

³⁵TAB, 114th Annual Session, 1916, p. 30.

verses served as the biblical support for another social reform effort that East Tennessee Baptists shared with their compatriots throughout the state. In 1891 the Tennessee Baptist Convention opened an orphanage in Nashville, and the Tennessee and Nolachucky Associations took on the cause of orphan children and responded "to the call for this noble work, . . . the purpose of which was to give food, clothing, shelter and instruction to those little ones, whose existence might otherwise have been blighted in the bud, and blasted with the darkness of despair."³⁶

They did not stop at merely blessing the orphanage, but supported it financially as well. The Tennessee Association's first contribution came during the 1892 annual meeting, when it collected \$25.50 in cash and pledges from the delegates. In the succeeding years, that association made the orphanage a regular beneficiary of the churches' offerings. The annual amount given to the orphans' home increased from \$78.01 in 1895 to over \$850.00 nine years later. The money given to the orphanage in 1914 represented almost 9

³⁶Matthew 19:14 (New International Version); Matthew 25:40 (NIV); W. Fred Kendall, *A History of the Tennessee Baptist Convention* (Brentwood, TN: Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, 1974), 182-83; TAB, 99th Annual Session, 1901, p. 31; TAB, 102nd Annual Session, 1904, Day 3.

percent of the Association's annual expenditures for benevolent causes.³⁷

Moreover, the 1907 report to the Tennessee Association advocated "the utmost vigilance" in making certain that there was no orphan child anywhere within the bounds of their association who was not protected. The same report called for an association-wide effort to find solid, Christian homes for the children already living at the orphanage. To be sure, at times this appeared as little more than Christian charity rather than true reform, especially in the language of the reports to the Nolachucky Association. No appeal should stir Christian emotions more effectively, the 1896 Nolachucky meeting announced, "than the orphan's cry."³⁸ Two years later, that same group dared not dispute "the obligation of Christian people . . . to feed and clothe the helpless orphans."³⁹ This concern for children stemmed from the Christians' reading of Jesus' instructions to his disciples, but also arose out of the church's concern for these children's roles in society, evidence that these Baptists had at least one eye on reform. Protecting these orphans from rampant evils was

³⁷TAB, 90th Annual Session, 1892, p. 18; TAB, 93rd Annual Session, 1895, p. 25; TAB, 112th Annual Session, 1914, p. 41.

³⁸NAB, 69th Annual Session, 1896, pp. 8-9.

³⁹NAB, 71st Annual Session, 1898, p. 23.

very important, but the Baptists also had to make sure that these children, when released from the home, could become productive Christian members of society.

In 1902 Nolachucky Baptists acknowledged that their wards "will be the future men and women of our common state and country." This made a life trained in "christian usefulness" necessary.⁴⁰ After reading the 1905 Report on the Orphans' Home to the Nolachucky gathering, delegate C.C. Parker called for Baptist churches to care for orphans' earthly needs while molding them into responsible contributors to the community.⁴¹ Such mature citizens would be expected to further Christian principles and "help us on to victory with the righteous causes of prohibition and civilization."⁴² In fact, the development of the home's dependents into productive members of society became one theme of several annual reports to the Nolachucky Association.⁴³

Baptists hoped to accomplish this process through spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical transformation of the children. The home offered a

⁴⁰NAB, 75th Annual Session, 1902, p. 34.

⁴¹NAB, 78th Annual Session, 1905, p. 19.

⁴²NAB, 83rd Annual Session, 1910, p. 23.

⁴³NAB, 75th Annual Session, 1902, p. 34; NAB, 78th Annual Session, 1905; NAB, 83rd Annual Session, 1910; NAB, 86th Annual Session, 1913; NAB, 87th Annual Session, 1914; NAB, 88th Annual Session, 1915.

weekly Sunday School and preaching by a local Nashville pastor,⁴⁴ and the matron made a special effort to pray with each child daily.⁴⁵ In 1898 Dr. A.J. Holt, state secretary of the orphanage, told the annual Nolachucky meeting that every child in the Home who was old enough had become a Christian.⁴⁶ In addition, those old enough to attend school did so at local public institutions near the Home. The Baptists never intended to keep the children any longer than necessary. The denomination maintained constant alert for Christian foster homes in which the orphans could be properly cared for.⁴⁷ In addition, in 1912 the state convention voted to release one of its wards only to those families that would make the child a legal heir.⁴⁸

In June 1912, the orphanage moved from West Nashville to a 137-acre farm twelve miles outside the city. Even before this date, however, the children's education had become "intensely industrial," for "it is a crime against any child to bring it up in idleness."⁴⁹ In 1912 the farm had approximately seventy-five acres in

⁴⁴NAB, 86th Annual Session, 1913, p. 17.

⁴⁵NAB, 78th Annual Session, 1905, p. 20.

⁴⁶NAB, 71st Annual Session, 1898, p. 24.

⁴⁷NAB, 78th Annual Session, 1905, p. 20.

⁴⁸Kendall, *A History of the Tennessee Baptist Convention*, p. 228.

⁴⁹TAB, 105th Annual Session, 1907, p. 27; TAB, 109th Annual Session, 1911, p. 12.

cultivation, with most of that devoted to vegetables for market, corn, and hay. The remaining sixty-two acres and a dairy barn proved sufficient to accommodate twenty cows.⁵⁰ Boys in the care of the Home were expected to learn agricultural skills. The farm, moreover, served recreational purposes for the orphans and was "good for the health and physical development of the inmates."⁵¹ Until Christian homes could be found, orphan children of Tennessee were at once protected from evil and prepared for a productive life and a positive contribution to society.

Opportunities to aid the nation's minority citizens presented themselves to progressive reformers in the forms of a large southern African-American population, whites in Appalachia, and increasing numbers of foreign immigrants. Although the population of blacks and Appalachian whites in Knoxville had increased dramatically before the turn of the century, for the most part East Tennessee Baptists talked about them as if they were only problems that existed elsewhere, although the Nolachucky Association at times proved to be an exception to this rule. Primarily, it was the churches' duty to support the Home Mission Board, which,

⁵⁰NAB, 85th Annual Session, 1912, p. 14.

⁵¹NAB, 91st Annual Session, 1918, pp. 12-13.

in turn, had the responsibility of ministering to these groups in the South and in the mountains. The Tennessee Association pondered no radical plans for upsetting the Southern white status quo in dealing with blacks. The closest any report came to this was a warning that the "scarecrow of social equality" should not keep them from ministering to the spiritual needs of the blacks. Indeed, the white church members showed a common southern paternalism toward the blacks. African Americans were benign hearers of the word. Knoxville Baptists thought that no one showed "a greater readiness to accept the plain [B]ible truth than the negro." Baptists, then, must not hesitate to "teach him the truth."⁵²

As early as the mid-1860s, some state Baptists had encouraged their fellow Christians not to abandon the former slaves regarding their spiritual and moral condition. Instead, in 1867 one Baptist newspaper opined that the duty belonged to white Baptists to properly influence blacks and mold them for good.⁵³ Some three decades later, the 1893 Home Mission Report to the Tennessee Association argued that southern

⁵²McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, pp. 18-19; TAB, 103rd Annual Session, 1905, p 23; TAB, 89th Annual Session, 1891, p. 20.

⁵³Kendall, *A History of the Tennessee Baptist Convention*, pp. 142-143.

whites, especially white Baptists, still had the responsibility for "the uplifting of the black race."⁵⁴ That same year the Nolachucky Association spoke of the need "to extend a christian helping hand to the colored people" as being "never so imperative as it is to-day."⁵⁵ According to the 1903 Tennessee Association minutes, there were ten million blacks in the South "of whose moral and educational needs few of us have any conception." Not only was it their social responsibility as Southern whites, but by this time "the providence of God" had made the blacks' spiritual care the responsibility of Southern Baptists.⁵⁶

Southern Baptists of this era fit Joel Williamson's model of racial "conservatives," whites who believed that blacks were socially inferior to them yet believed it was their mission to uplift the former slaves and fix their proper place in American society. Williamson argues that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some conservatives retreated into religious missionary work among the freedmen. Baptists were willing to accept the presence of blacks and work for their uplift as long as the relationship remained within

⁵⁴TAB, 91st Annual Session, 1893, p. 24.

⁵⁵NAB, 63rd Annual Session, 1890, p. 6.

⁵⁶TAB, 101st Annual Session, 1903, p. 19.

paternalistic, white-defined parameters. According to Williamson, from 1886 to 1891 the number of Baptist missionaries working among people of color in the United States rose from twenty-two to fifty-one. In 1890, forty-five of the fifty missionaries themselves were African Americans.⁵⁷ The rhetoric of the Tennessee Association is indicative of the conservatism outlined by Williamson. Yet, despite the rapid increase in the number of African Americans in Knoxville, the Knoxville Baptists only mention blacks in terms of regionwide mission work. That is to say, according to their associational minutes, the challenges created by blacks were not local problems. Considering their annual reports, for the Tennessee Association of Baptists, the problems existed in other areas of the South, and it was a missionary's duty to deal with them.

The Nolachucky Association's paternalistic home mission rhetoric differed little from that of their neighboring association, but the annual proceedings of several years, however, record the presence of at least one or two visiting black delegates. In 1893 that association seated two messengers from the French Broad

⁵⁷Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp 6, 276-283; Harper, "Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920," pp. 170-171.

Association (colored), along with other white "correspondents from sister Associations." One of these two delegates, Elder Peter Guinn, addressed the gathering regarding Christian education of blacks in East Tennessee.⁵⁸ One year earlier, delegates to the Nolachucky Association's annual meeting passed a resolution endorsing "the efforts of the colored Baptists" to create an institution of learning in their area.⁵⁹ In 1896 Rev. Guinn again appeared before Nolachucky's annual convention and collected an offering of \$10.60 toward just such an enterprise.⁶⁰ Not only did the Nolachucky recognize visiting delegates from fellow Baptist associations, but it also customarily appointed some of its own members as messengers to various meetings. At each annual meeting from 1894 to 1896 the Nolachucky Association named its own corresponding messengers to at least one colored Baptist gathering. In 1894 and 1896, delegates were named to the General Association (colored) and the French Broad (colored), and in 1895 only to the French Broad.⁶¹

⁵⁸NAB, 66th Annual Session, 1894, List of Visiting Delegates.

⁵⁹NAB, 65th Annual Session, 1892, p. 11.

⁶⁰NAB, 69th Annual Session, 1896, p. 19.

⁶¹NAB, 67th Annual Session, 1894; NAB, 68th Annual Session, 1895; NAB, 69th Annual Session, 1896.

This information does not necessarily belie the argument that Baptists behaved in a paternalistic manner toward African Americans. The minutes of the Nolachucky's annual proceedings, of course, do not record what their own members' roles as visiting delegates entailed, but it is striking that these southern whites would attend a colored church or religious gathering. Perhaps it is not as surprising that a black minister would be allowed to address the white Baptist meeting and solicit funds for black Christian education, as this would follow Southern Baptists' paternalistic mission attitudes that called for the uplift and Christianization of the former slaves.

In his study of Southern Baptists and social reform, Louis Keith Harper argues that Southern Baptists established mountain schools in Appalachia for two basic reasons. First, they believed that the mountain folk were of "pure Anglo-Saxon stock" and were only kept back because of their environment. They were unable to build churches and schools, so naturally, they could not advance. Second, Harper contends that Southern Baptists were proponents of New South boosterism. The mountaineers needed education to adjust to the modern

world.⁶² Evidence suggests that the Tennessee Association of Baptists adhered to this reasoning in its reports of Home Mission mountain work. The 1897 Home Mission report noted in Appalachia "a marked absence of the spirit of progress in things both material and spiritual." The same report found the mountaineers' "intellectual advancement . . . in keeping with their physical condition."⁶³ A later committee reported that Baptist work in the mountains consisted primarily of establishing and running schools that employed Southern Baptist preachers who both taught and preached to the mountaineers.⁶⁴

Like other Americans in the late nineteenth century, Southern Baptists expressed a great deal of concern about foreign immigration. This influx of foreigners threatened American church and political institutions, and only added to Baptist concern over the impact of urbanization. These Southern Baptists' fear of foreign influence at times appears to be irrational, as East Tennessee's population equaled more than 90 percent native-born whites for at least the first five decades of the twentieth century, with the foreign

⁶²Harper, "Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920," pp. 139-40.

⁶³TAB, 95th Annual Session, 1897, p. 19.

⁶⁴TAB, 100th Annual Session, 1902, p. 21.

immigrant population in the area never reaching above 0.51 percent.⁶⁵ This fear, however, represents several themes found in the associational records of these Baptists. First, potential problems such as immigrants or a non-Christian black population existed as problems to be solved elsewhere by the denomination's Home Mission Board and by people paid to minister to the lost. Secondly, and along that same line, this indicates the degree to which these Southern Baptists relied on the work of their denomination and the importance they placed on their parent organization, a relationship that will be discussed more fully later.

Even as they were lamenting the ill effects of the foreigners' pagan influence, East Tennessee Baptists saw the immigrants as an open mission field.⁶⁶ Despite the fact that outsiders crowded into their homeland and introduced alien thought, literature, and practices, for the Nolachucky Baptists these people still needed the Baptist-style evangelism that would break "the chains of religious despotism" and dispel the superstition that bound those people from the old world.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Nicholls, "Human Resources and Industrial Development," p. 301.

⁶⁶NAB, 67th Annual Session, 1894, pp. 9-10; TAB, 94th Annual Session, 1896, pp. 12-13; NAB, 75th Annual Session, 1902, p. 24.

⁶⁷NAB, 63rd Annual Session, 1890, p. 6; NAB, 64th Annual Session, 1891, p. 10.

The 1913 Home Mission Report to the Nolachucky Baptists, in fact, perceived the hand of God in the foreign influx. Baptists had been so slow carrying the Gospel to the world per the instructions of the Great Commission⁶⁸ that God decided to bring "the heathen to us." They reasoned that the success of Southern Baptist foreign mission endeavors depended on how effectively these foreigners could be Christianized.⁶⁹ The Tennessee Association believed that many of these immigrants would eventually return to their native lands. The Baptists decided that if they could convert the aliens before they returned, then they would be more effective witnesses for Christ than the missionaries sent abroad by the Baptists' Foreign Mission Board.⁷⁰ In 1905, the Tennessee Association reported that the Southern Baptists, with the impact of the immigration problem on the South in mind, placed missionaries in Baltimore and Galveston to welcome the newcomers with Christian compassion. These missionaries handed out Bibles in the foreigners' languages and told the aliens

⁶⁸Matthew 28: 19-20. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (NIV).

⁶⁹NAB, 86th Annual Session, 1913, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁰TAB, 94th Annual Session, 1896, p. 13.

how they could contact a Baptist minister when they reached their destination.⁷¹

Baptists' brand of Americanization involved a paternalistic attitude different from the coercion that historian Robert Wiebe sees evolving among many Americans.⁷² The Baptists believed that in order for these outsiders to ascend to the highest level of American civilization, without lowering the standards of civilization, they must have access to the Gospel.⁷³ Preaching the Gospel was an important part of these Baptists' response to the challenges presented by those different from themselves: educate them in the ways of the Lord, Christianize them, and in Christianizing, lift them up.

Reform of this latter nature proved to be these Baptists' primary concern. Their anti-liquor and orphanage campaigns had biblical mandates of sorts that justified diverting attention away from soul-winning long enough to stop elements of moral decay in the nation. Even while they participated in such Christian endeavors, however, their collective mind never was far

⁷¹TAB, 103rd Annual Session, 1905, pp. 22-23.

⁷²Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), pp. 157, 209-210.

⁷³TAB, 104th Annual Session, 1906, p. 17; TAB, 105th Annual Session, 1907, p. 24; TAB, 111th Annual Session, pp. 23-24

from the effects their actions had on their denomination and the need to strengthen their own organization while furthering their intimate relationship with southern society.

CHAPTER 3

DENOMINATIONALISM AND SOUTHERN SOCIETY

Southern Baptist reform efforts paralleled some of those of the larger southern Progressive Movement. Where secular reformers wanted to effect change in existing social structures in order to achieve humanitarian results, Baptists injected a note of evangelism and soul-winning gospel into their social Christianity endeavors. Baptists also understood their mission assignments to churchless areas as beneficial to society at large. Another popular southern reform effort during the Progressive Era was the movement for better educational systems and facilities.¹ East Tennessee Baptists shared this conviction, but their reform rhetoric betrays their preoccupation with the enlargement of Baptist denominational influence during this crucial New South period.

These examples also offer excellent insights into what Baptists perceived as true social reform. Little doubt existed in their mind that a complete

¹C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press and the Littlefield Fund for Southern History, The University of Texas, 1951), pp. 396-97; Dewey Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), p. 246. Link, *Paradox of Southern Progressivism*; Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, pp. 72-92.

transformation of society would require a change of people's hearts and acceptance of Christian eternal salvation. Because society's spiritual well-being essentially was the issue and Baptists, as God's people, were best prepared to deliver the gospel, the strengthening of their denomination served the best interests of society in general.²

Alarm over rapid industrialization and New South social and cultural changes echoed most among the Tennessee and Nolachucky Associations' talk about missions. Nolachucky's 1890 State Missions Report noted the mission fields that had opened and called their "needs and demands greater than heretofore."³ New objects of evangelism presented themselves in the form of non-Baptists "crowding among us," in need of "favorable gospel privileges."⁴ As the United States was "the center of convergence for all peoples," the work of the Home Mission Board was especially important.⁵ The coming of the railroad and rapid urbanization opened up areas that needed new churches and Sunday Schools. The spiritual needs of mining

²Bill J. Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 26.

³NAB, 63rd Annual Session, 1890, p. 5.

⁴NAB, 63rd Annual Session, 1890, p. 6.

⁵NAB, 64th Annual Session, 1891, p. 9.

towns, moreover, could not be overlooked. Indeed, these southern products of industrialization and urbanization were "destitute sections" in need of Baptist churches and preaching. The state's new cities presented mission problems waiting to be solved. The solution included the delivery of the proper message.⁶

Several annual reports during the 1890s and early 1900s listed the population of non-Christian Tennesseans at one million, a figure that both appalled the state's Baptists and provided proof of the necessity of statewide evangelism. It was their responsibility to deliver to this million the saving gospel of Christ. Despite having the number of Tennessee Baptists double from 1880 to 1894, the burden of mission work still did not fall equally among the church's members. The 1894 Nolachucky State Mission Report enunciated the need for five hundred missionaries instead of the current forty-six.⁷

According to reports delivered at one annual meeting, these Knoxville-area Baptists believed their denomination to be the one best equipped to deal with these changes and this destitution. In 1900 Tennessee

⁶TAB, 88th Annual Session, 1890, p. 12; TAB, 106th Annual Session, 1908, p. 18; NAB, 89th Annual Session, 1916, p. 9.

⁷NAB, 67th Annual Session, 1894, pp. 10-11.

had fifteen county seats without either a Baptist church or preaching and fifty thousand homes without Bibles. Nolachucky's annual proceedings that year listed one priority to be an increase in the state of "religious fervor and . . . Christian work." They also argued that the answer to this challenge was a

genuine revival of that religion that takes hold on the heart, unfastens the purse-strings, gives liberality to the hand, vitality to the religious step, activity to the tongue and the pen, piety to the life, and a missionary fervor to the entire individual.⁸

Such religious fervor would inspire cooperation among the state's Baptists, regular giving of offerings, dissemination of evangelistic information, the employment of more home missionaries, "and consequently such a turning away from sin unto God as never was witnessed before in our State."⁹

Despite all of the talk about a "New South" and all of the material progress, argued the 1890 Tennessee Association minutes, there would never be "a new South till it is regenerated by the grace of God. We may have money and factories, but we will have the same intemperance and corruption till we have a renewed

⁸NAB, 73rd Annual Session, 1900, p. 25.

⁹Ibid.

South." Any new South demanded effective home mission work not only to save the lost, but also to protect the integrity of the region and to counter alien forces that would "endeavor to come in upon us and take from us that glorious [sic] heritage that has come to us through fire and sword and blood."¹⁰

This illustrates the intimacy of Protestantism and southern culture, a relationship that had grown increasingly strong following the South's defeat in the Civil War. Charles R. Wilson has argued that southerners developed their own civil religion to help them cope with the "Lost Cause." Southerners united behind a common heritage achieved in a manner very similar to that described by the Nolachucky Association. These Baptists still sought their own unique identity in the wake of the New South, a goal they could only attain by remaining separate from northerners and strengthening their own denomination.¹¹

Twenty-one years after Knoxville Baptists spoke of the material progress and spiritual regeneration of their homeland, the Nolachucky Association offered a

¹⁰TAB, 88th Annual Session, 1890, p. 13.; NAB, 64th Annual Session, 1891, pp. 8-9.

¹¹Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*; Bill J. Leonard, "Southern Baptists and Southern Culture," *American Baptist Quarterly* 4 (June 1985): 200-212; Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*.

similar assessment of the South's relatively newfound abundance. These Baptists noted that the region's "vast material resources [were] being developed with an almost greedy haste." The physical damage caused by the Civil War had been repaired and the downward trend even reversed in many instances. The question remained, however, whether this prosperity would be a curse or a blessing to the South. The 1911 Nolachucky Home Missions Report informed the delegates that southern Christians alone held the answer. Their religion could either dedicate the wealth to spiritual and moral ends or devote it to cupidity and the pursuit of pleasure, thereby making it "a curse to the people and the nation." Indeed, the greatest "threat to the power of religion in the South to-day is the mammon of unconsecrated wealth."¹²

It appears, however, that Southern Baptists had a difficult time harnessing the South's new material wealth to finance their own endeavors. Mission reports lamented the lack of monetary support given by the Baptist membership and urged that more missionaries could be sent to work in destitute areas if only the

¹²NAB, 84th Annual Session, 1911, p. 18.

money were available.¹³ Also, the orphanage reports often argued that even more children could be helped if Baptists would become more generous with their pocketbooks. In one particularly vociferous cry for increased monetary support of foreign missions, the Tennessee Association's 1915 annual meeting heard a report that lambasted those who "find it easy to obtain plenty of money to gratify their pleasure and dissipation." When the time would come to raise money for conquering the world for Christ, however, "we seem at once to get hard pressed." Until a revival swept through the churches, this would not change.¹⁴

The most important step Baptists took to insure their own vitality and financial solvency was the implementation of their Seventy-Five Million Campaign, a fundraising endeavor designed to raise \$75 million in five years. Initiated in May 1919 in Atlanta, Georgia, this financial drive promised to lead Southern Baptists in the creation of a "new America" and a "new world."¹⁵ Southern Baptists benefitted from the United States' performance in the war and expanded their own efforts to win souls. The efficient American wartime effort

¹³for example, see NAB, 64th Annual Session, 1891, pp. 8-9; NAB, 65th Annual Session, 1892, p. 12.

¹⁴TAB, 113rd Annual Session, 1915, p. 19.

¹⁵Thompson, *Tried As By Fire*, pp. 15-16.

served as the inspiration for "utilizing on behalf of our Kingdom enterprises the altruistic spirit, the enlarged vision, and the thorough methods of organization that have come from our experiences with the World War."¹⁶

Responding to the 1919 call for \$75 million, the Nalachucky Association of Baptists charged that their denomination had not formulated sufficient plans for carrying out certain enterprises such as missions and education. Calling themselves loyal servants of the Lord and envoys of the Gospel, the association's delegates heartily accepted their responsibility in the five-year campaign. Despite the daunting task, Nalachucky Baptists asserted that a "great people capable of accomplishment" had taken up the challenge.¹⁷ Three years later, these same Baptists praised their own efforts while reminding each other that much remained to be done. They had gone "afield in the fear of the Lord," and "unity, liberality, [and] heroism were shown on every hand."¹⁸ As the five-year plan came to a close, Southern Baptists fell short of their goal nationally and Tennessee raised but 82.5 percent of its

¹⁶Southern Baptist Convention Annual, 1919, p. 32; quoted in Thompson, *Tried As By Fire*, p. 16.

¹⁷NAB, 92nd Annual Session, 1919, p. 21.

¹⁸NAB, 95th Annual Session, 1922, p. 17

apportionment.¹⁹ Baptists did not interpret this shortcoming as a sign of failure, however. Instead, they pointed to the successes of the campaign. Tennesseans raised more money after the inception of the fundraiser than in previous years, collecting an amount totaling over \$3.7 million.²⁰ Baptist churches and missionaries reported more baptisms, an increase in Sunday School and Baptist Young People's Union enrollments, and the establishment of even more churches.²¹

James J. Thompson, Jr., has noted that the Seventy-Five Million Campaign began with a pronounced spirit of post-war optimism among Southern Baptists; before the drive could realize its potential impact, however, the Convention found itself locked in internal turmoil over "theological dispute and personal recrimination."²² For the most part, this turmoil did not filter down to the local churches of East Tennessee. The Knox County, Jefferson County, and Nolachucky Associations maintained a relatively solid front against the secular encroachments on their culture. For them, the Seventy-Five Million Campaign ushered in a period of emphasis on

¹⁹Kendall, *A History of the Tennessee Baptist Convention*, p. 211.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*; NAB, 96th Annual Session, 1923.

²²Thompson, *Tried As By Fire*, p. 20.

fiscal responsibility and an increase in evangelistic efforts. The campaign turned their attention to the future. In their hearts and minds, a Christian America was once again in reach and their spiritual duty compelled them to follow a stewardship program to increase monetary offerings and provide the means necessary to send missionaries into the fields of boundless opportunity.²³

In 1923, as the Seventy-Five Million Campaign entered its final year, Nolachucky Baptists noted that "blessings spiritual, yea material follow the faithful performance of this privilege and duty."²⁴ By 1927, stewardship had become essential to their faith and failure to tithe could be blamed for the financial arrears of the Southern Baptist Convention, as well as for some natural disasters, including famines, floods, and poor harvests. Withholding money from God thwarted His plan of redemption for the lost world that was to be realized "by the preaching of the gospel through the agency of men by power of the Holy Spirit."²⁵

The language of both the Tennessee and Nolachucky Associations indicates that they shared reformers'

²³JCAB, 5th Annual Session, 1924, pp. 14-15; NAB, 97th Annual Session, 1924, p. 9.

²⁴NAB, 96th Annual Session, 1923, p. 18.

²⁵NAB, 100th Annual Session, 1927, pp. 18-19.

attitudes toward education and considered it to be an important agent of social betterment. They recognized the significance of education and its potential for effecting true change. In the Tennessee Association's estimation, an educated populace would be better equipped mentally to accept the preaching of the Baptists' educated ministry. Its 1891 Report on Education told that year's meeting, "we shall never do what we ought until we educate the masses."²⁶

The 1904 Educational Report to the Tennessee Association asked rhetorically if the functions of the church were not "to help in the betterment of the social conditions of the country." Of course, the intended answer to that question should be in the affirmative and efforts at social advancement ought to be one role played by Christians. Educating the children of the South was a public duty that paid long-term benefits. For example, they believed that by educating children the number of lawless actions would decline, thereby lessening the number of criminals. With fewer convicts to contend with the public would save money on prosecutions and jails.²⁷ On the positive side, proper

²⁶TAB, 89th Annual Session, 1891, p. 29.

²⁷First quotation, TAB, 102nd Annual Session, 1904, p. 11; TAB, 96th Annual Session, 1898, p. 15; TAB, 110th Annual Session, 1912, p. 13.

training enabled a person to demand a higher salary and would develop one's cultural horizons by opening new areas "of pleasure in nature, in literature, in the social world and the treasury of his own thoughts."²⁸

Publicly-supported instruction received at least a token nod from East Tennessee Baptists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1895, for example, the Tennessee Association claimed it was its duty to improve the public schools, to make them as efficient as possible, and then to make sure that children attended. Its members also called for better educated teachers for the public schools. Similarly in 1898 and again in 1900 Nolachucky Baptists recognized the progressive trend of public education and praised the state's efforts to aid common schools. The 1906 Tennessee Association educational committee members asserted that it was Baptists' Christian duty to support public education, and in 1907, they strongly supported a new revenue law in Tennessee to benefit public school systems. In fact, the 1907 report pondered, "What better work along educational lines could the Baptist ministers and laymen of this Association and of East

²⁸NAB, 68th Annual Session, 1895, pp. 9-10.

Tennessee take up and push than the improvement of our public schools . . . ?"²⁹

Even successful public instruction fell short of Baptist ideals, however. A complete education must contain religious teaching, something state schools by law could not offer.³⁰ Because of the critical nature of their message and what they perceived as their direct calling from God, Christian education must necessarily be of a Baptist variety. Denominational schooling provided "prestige and influence" and better enabled the Baptists to challenge those heretical teachings that they perceived were "pouring into our Christian section." By countering the heresy, they would "preserve inviolate our distinctive principles," which they believed were "so vital to the religious world."³¹

In 1892 the Nolachucky Association warned that "denominational progress among us will depend upon the patronage and encouragement given to our own schools."³² The 1897 Nolachucky meeting issued an education report that encouraged denominational pride and loyalty and

²⁹TAB, 93rd Annual Session, 1895, p. 19; TAB, 104th Annual Session, pp. 20-21; quotation in, TAB, 105th Annual Session, 1907, p. 14; see also, TAB, 102nd Annual Session, 1904, p. 11.

³⁰NAB, 65th Annual Session, 1892, p. 13.

³¹TAB, 88th Annual Session, 1890, p. 15; see also NAB, 73rd Annual Session, 1900, p. 16; NAB, 75th Annual Session, 1902, pp. 19-21; TAB, 102nd Annual Session, 1904, pp. 10-11.

³²NAB, 65th Annual Session, 1892, p. 13.

offered a defense against outside infiltration and interference. They warned that competing denominations may have "surpassed us in equipments . . . because they are loyal to their colors." If Baptists expected any financial help for their schools, "then we must speak for and patronize" them.³³ A later Tennessee Association report worded this sentiment most strongly: "It is either denominational education or denominational death."³⁴

Baptists were not the only reform group or religious denomination at work in the South or in Appalachia. Southern education reform occurred largely with the impetus of outside urban activists and the financial backing of northern philanthropists. In many ways this threatened local control of schools,³⁵ a challenge that at least the Nolachucky Association found disheartening. That group of East Tennessee Baptists argued, for instance, that monetary support of Southern Baptist institutions would fend off competition from schools dependent upon northern financial support.

³³NAB, 70th Annual Session, 1897, p. 14; see also NAB, 84th Annual Session, 1911, p. 10.

³⁴TAB, 103rd Annual Session, 1905, p. 16; see also TAB, 106th Annual Session, 1908, p. 17.

³⁵Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, pp. 124-134; and *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 73-97.

For Baptists to run off after other institutions because Northern capital has endowed them and made tuition in them merely nominal, is to keep us poor and insignificant, it is to eulogize and multiply their influence at our expense, or rather because of our want of loyalty.³⁶

Unquestionably, they argued, there no longer could be any excuse for a Baptist to look outside the church or the region to find premier educational facilities. For Nolachucky Baptists at least, "it requires no sacrifice to be loyal."³⁷

For all its attention to saving orphan children and making them productive, contributing members of society, moreover, the Southern Baptists' orphanage also contributed to this sense of denominational pride, protection, and uplift. In 1905, for example, one delegate to the Nolachucky annual meeting, J.M Haymore, addressed the gathering and urged the association to heed the apostle Paul's biblical warning to visit "the fatherless . . . in their afflictions." Haymore warned that North Carolina Catholics had taken Baptist children into their orphans' homes, a situation that should not

³⁶NAB, 70th Annual Session, 1897, p. 14.

³⁷NAB, 69th Annual Session, 1896, p. 16; see also *First Baptist Church Visitor*, November 1902, Vol. 3, No. 11, p. 1. Found in the First Baptist Church, Knoxville, papers on microfilm at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, TN. Only a few editions are scattered among the FBC minutes on microfilm reel #2.

be acceptable to Baptists. "We should care for our own," Haymore declared.³⁸

Regardless of the fact that Catholics presented no immediate threat to Protestant hegemony in East Tennessee, these Southern Baptists reflected the general Protestant anti-Catholic attitudes common at that time. They looked beyond their own area and pointed to Roman Catholicism as formidable competition, particularly in mission work among orphans. Again in 1916 the Nolachucky orphans' home committee warned delegates of a Roman threat. The report stated that the church must care for and protect children else the little ones would grow up with neither love nor respect for its teachings and thus leave the church the victim of death by "dry rot." Conversely, God would "bless and prosper" those who took time for "such a noble work of uplift." They charged that around this issue lay "one secret of the great power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church." Catholics furnished a home, fed, clothed, and educated them, thereby assuring a child would naturally turn to Catholicism. Baptists should learn this lesson well so they could benefit accordingly for their charitable efforts.³⁹

³⁸NAB, 78th Annual Session, 1905, pp. 19-20.

³⁹NAB, 89th Annual Session, 1916, p. 15.

Interdenominational competition for lost souls and new members no doubt motivated Baptist mission work as well.⁴⁰ First of all, the Knoxville Baptists assumed that the mountain whites and blacks were naturally predisposed to joining their denomination. Blacks were "readily made Baptists." Likewise, mountaineers descended from Baptist people, and themselves were "Baptists in principle." The Tennessee Association claimed that they could not let these potential members slip from their church's grasp and join the ranks of competing denominations or religions.⁴¹

The Tennessee Association also expressed fear that if Southern Baptists did not build schools and churches in the mountain regions, then no doubt other denominations would. Indeed, Southern Baptists had cause for concern in this matter. Historian Henry Shapiro has noted that, by the middle of the 1880s, northern Protestant churches had turned their attention from the freedmen to mountain whites. Southern Baptists also feared the Mormon influence in the mountains. According to the Tennessee Association's 1897 Home Mission Report, the Mormons had four hundred

⁴⁰Harper, "Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920," pp. 145-46.

⁴¹TAB, 89th Annual Session, 1891, p. 21; TAB, 101st Annual Session, 1903, p. 19; TAB, 102nd Annual Session, 1904, p. 19.

missionaries headquartered in Chattanooga, many of whom were working among the mountain people. The success of the Home Mission Board in attracting these potential Baptists and keeping within the ranks those presumably predisposed to Baptist ideology served as "the conservator of Baptist prestige and power in the territory in which it operates."⁴² Furthermore, 1,240 Baptist missionaries in 1911 baptized 20,913 lost souls, built 289 churches, and organized 731 Sunday Schools among the mountaineers, Southern blacks, Native Americans, and, since the Southern Baptists home mission field included Cuba, among Cubans as well. These successes testified to that "elixir of progress which [was] causing the Baptists of the South to walk in newness of conquest."⁴³

As the denomination matured in the twentieth century, its development often paralleled the progression of southern society. In fact, historian Bill J. Leonard has argued that Baptists' sense of denominationalism received important support from a common southern cultural identity. This unity provided

⁴²TAB, 101st Annual Session, 1903, p. 19; Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia on our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the Appalachian Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978) pp. 35, 48; Harper, "Southern Baptists and Social Christianity," p. 138; TAB, 95th Annual Session, 1897, p. 19; TAB, 107th Annual Session, 1909, p. 19.

⁴³TAB, 109th Annual Session, 1911, p. 21.

Southern Baptists with a large degree of continuity and enabled them to resist modernity into the twentieth century. As long as white southerners maintained that common culture, then Southern Baptists were able to withstand theological and ideological diversity.⁴⁴ Southern religious cultural intimacy and Baptist denominational unity did not appear threatened until a new era dawned on the South's horizon. World War I ushered the nation into a period of transition, and the South experienced growing pains as it felt itself increasingly drawn into the national fabric.

Southern religion experienced its own concomitant ills as the South underwent a cultural shift. The Baptists of the Nolachucky, Jefferson County, and Knox County Associations perceived this change as bad for their formerly noble southern civilization. As late as the second decade of the twentieth century, East Tennessee Baptists still took for granted the existence of an ideal Christian civilization. The Nolachucky Baptists maintained that Christian education would insure the continuation and advance of a Christian America. Without proper education, for example, future business leaders and others who would mold public

⁴⁴Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope*, p. 28; "Southern Baptists and Southern Culture."

opinion and shape civilization would be lost. "Unless they are Christian," one 1912 report warned, "civilization will not long be Christian."⁴⁵ As southern Protestants perceived their society in a state of cultural decline during the 1920s, the solution put forth by East Tennessee Baptists called for the return to a Christian America.

⁴⁵NAB, 85th Annual Session, 1912, p. 15.

CHAPTER 4

A CHRISTIAN AMERICA

World War I increased the South's prosperity and gave some southerners economic opportunities and social mobility they had not previously enjoyed. Also after the war, American religious fundamentalists felt the pressure of liberal challenges to conservative theology and struggled to hold off what they perceived as a secular onslaught. Modernist theology sought to adapt religious ideas to contemporary culture and to locate divinity within human nature. In the decades prior to World War I, the most obvious manifestation of modernism was the Social Gospel, the attempt by many northern liberal Protestants who believed people were basically good to de-emphasize individual sin and to focus on the manipulation of the environment to solve social problems.¹

As world war neared, Protestant denominations began to divide over the impact of modernist theology. After the war, this battle intensified and left the direction of America's major denominations in doubt. The internal wars raged into the 1920s and eventually led to a

¹William R. Hutchinson, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

conservative offensive against modernism. Historian George Marsden has written that fundamentalists were those evangelical Christian groups who carried out militant assaults on modernism. They battled to maintain their hold on society and to correct what Marsden has called "a culture turning away from God."² This chapter places the Baptists of the Nolachucky, Knox County, and newly formed Jefferson County Associations within that fundamentalist tradition and describes these Baptists' own attitudes toward modernism.

Churches in these three groups expressed real alarm over the secularizing currents their culture faced and what this meant for their traditional lives. They believed that they no longer could take the existence of a Christian civilization for granted, as they had done before the world war. These Baptists feared for the survival of the intimacy between Protestantism and southern folkways and attitudes. They perceived a culture in decay. These Baptists believed that modernism was increasing in popularity and influence; this meant that their conservative theology would lose its position of cultural and religious predominance. The theory of evolution symbolized for these Baptists

²Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, pp. 4, 205.

the cultural crisis that also was manifested in attempts to subvert a supposedly "law and order" society by thwarting Prohibition. In addition, attempts to subject the Bible to higher criticism challenged the inerrant biblical authority to which Southern Baptists had subscribed since their creation in 1845.³

Their response to cultural crisis came in a call for the re-establishment of a Christian America,⁴ the only way they could see to halt the social and cultural decay eating away the nation's moral and spiritual fiber. In keeping with their notion of denominationalism and strengthening their position in society, by "Christian" civilization these Baptists meant a society influenced primarily by their own doctrines and teachings and based upon biblical morals and ethics. Catholicism presented a "foreign" and therefore non-Christian alternative to the Baptist vision of a Christian civilization. Indeed, in reports to their annual meetings, the Nolachucky, Jefferson County, and Knox County Associations used the words "Christian," "denominational," and "religious"

³Slayden A. Yarbrough, "Biblical Authority in Southern Baptist History, 1845-1945," *Baptist History and Heritage* 27 (January 1992), pp. 4-12.

⁴For a history of Protestant America's relationship with civilization, see Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* 2d ed., rev. and enl. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

interchangeably when discussing appropriate education for their members. The vanguard of this movement for a return to their version of a Christian civilization was evangelism and mission work. Not only did their own country yearn for the saving grace their theology offered, but the entire world also "needs this message" because "these are testing times, and much is at stake."⁵

As the delegates to the Nolachucky Association's annual meeting worded it so eloquently at the end of the 1920s:

It is the chief business of God's people to win mankind from the pits of perdition to the portals of Paradise. The primal, primary, pristine, preaching and passion of the preacher is Evangelism--the winning of a sinning world to the Saving Christ.⁶

To achieve this goal, East Tennessee Baptists stressed the importance of Christian education and the development of church organizations to enlist and to train members in the struggle to save the South, America, and eventually the world.

The United States had entered the European conflict with a heady idealism that promised to make the world safe for democracy. Although the forces for democracy

⁵JCAB, 3rd Annual Session, 1922, p. 10.

⁶NAB, 102nd Annual Session, 1929, p. 15.

won the war, the promised outcome never materialized. Just as the post-war world found itself in turmoil and failed to agree on ways to practice and insure peace, so did America's churches stumble in the years following the Armistice to find their mission in an evolving society. The generally positive mood exhibited by American church people during and immediately following the war soon gave way to a reactionary spirit that rent post-war religious organizations formed in the wake of optimism and general good-feeling.⁷

In 1926 the Nalachucky Association of Baptists bemoaned the secularism and materialism that had gripped the country and diverted it from its spiritual course. This increasingly commercial society had resulted in a disrespect for the law that appalled patriotic Christian Americans.⁸ Although the threat of worldly pleasures weighed heavily on Southern Baptist minds, they perceived an even more serious threat to law and order as resulting from disregard for Prohibition, the 1919 amendment to the federal Constitution that outlawed the sale or use of alcohol. Legal and moral arguments of pre-World War I temperance reform gave way to appeals to

⁷Mark A. Noll and others, eds., *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christianity in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 373-376; Handy, *A Christian America*, pp. 159-170.

⁸NAB, 99th Annual Session, 1926, p. 13

Christian patriotism and righteousness and calls for strict law enforcement.

In 1919 the Nolachucky Baptists celebrated the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment and noted how "domestic prosperity and moral elevation have followed the closing of the licensed saloon."⁹ Jefferson County Baptists regarded Prohibition as a triumph of righteousness, but they also warned against relaxing their temperance guard. The "demon strong-drink" lurked all over and contributed to deliberate efforts to evade the law, which resulted in an increase in crime. Baptists must continue the fight to build "a type of citizenship that shall honor God and be a source of strength to State and Nation."¹⁰

As the decade progressed, the liquor problem refused to go away, a prime example of what Baptists believed to be a culture turning farther away from God. Enforcement of anti-liquor legislation became a more serious concern for East Tennessee Baptists. Leaders of the Nolachucky Association condemned bootlegging, and in 1926 this remained for them one of the greatest dangers to the nation.¹¹ In 1928 Knox County Baptists expressed

⁹NAB, 92nd Annual Session, 1919, p. 28.

¹⁰JCAB, 5th Annual Session, 1924, p. 18.

¹¹NAB, 97th Annual Session, 1924, p. 16; NAB, 99th Annual Session, 1926, p. 27.

alarm over the predominance of the propaganda issued by liquor interests. That same group, moreover, expressed its "painful disappointment" with the Democratic party for nominating Alfred E. Smith for president of the United States. Smith supported repeal of Prohibition and, therefore, was anathema to the ideals Baptists cherished. In addition, the New York Catholic represented the northern urban vices detested by many Protestants, Southern Baptists included.¹² They believed he would play into the hands of unrighteousness and become a threat to good government.¹³ The

intense debate over the direction of post-war American society manifested itself most clearly in the emerging conflict over the theory of evolution. In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin published *Origin of Species*, which introduced to a popular audience the theory of biological evolution. Although Darwin's argument upset widely accepted notions concerning the creation of the universe and the history of the world, by the end of the century it had been assimilated into American Protestantism with relatively little fanfare. Herbert Spencer may be credited with Americans' popular notions of evolution. Spencer emphasized the creative

¹²Thompson, *Tried as by Fire*, pp. 167-194.

¹³KCAB, 126th Annual Session, 1928, p. 18.

aspects of evolution and allowed God's design to continue to play an important role. By 1900 evolution came to be what historian Ferenc Morton Szasz described as "almost a fashionable creed." Instead of Darwin's theory that removed a supreme God from the picture, evolution came to mean Spencer's idea of progress and the steady improvement of civilization. Before the outbreak of World War I, anti-evolutionists such as William Bell Riley and Billy Sunday had little if any national impact.¹⁴

The societal and cultural turmoil created by World War I, however, catapulted Riley to fundamentalist leadership, an occurrence historian George Marsden attributes "to his ability to articulate the urgency of the cultural crisis."¹⁵ For fundamentalists, evolution and modernism became both religious and cultural threats. This combined menace came to replace wartime Germany as the enemy of American patriotism.¹⁶

Southern Baptists joined the majority of American conservative Protestants in not concerning themselves with evolution and modernism in the decades prior to

¹⁴Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982), pp. 1-9; quotation on page 9.

¹⁵Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, p. 152.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 153.

World War I. During the nineteenth century, Southern Baptists worried primarily about the establishment of their denomination as well as the post-Civil War Reconstruction of southern society. Indeed, Southern Baptists felt little threat from modernism and allowed William Poteat to teach the theory of evolution to his biology classes at Wake Forest College in North Carolina and to publish his beliefs in an article for the journal *Science* and in his first book, *Laboratory and the Pulpit*.¹⁷ Poteat would not get by so lightly after World War I, however, when he and a number of other Baptist evolutionists experienced the wrath of conservatives who despised Darwinism. The inattention of the pre-war years began to change in the second decade of the twentieth century and this continued into the 1920s. Southern Baptists joined other fundamentalists in an attack on liberal theology, a conflict that quite often pitted more than one group of Baptists against each other.

The fundamentalism versus modernism battle reached its climax in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925, when high school teacher John T. Scopes went on trial to test the constitutionality of a state law forbidding the teaching

¹⁷Thompson, *Tried As By Fire*, pp. 64-66.

of evolution in public schools. It mattered little that Scopes was not even sure he had actually committed the crime. The eyes of the nation watched as William Jennings Bryan led a team of prosecutors against Clarence Darrow, the most prominent member of Scopes's defense team. The courtroom drama featured the nation's most popular fundamentalist in the person of Bryan matched against noted agnostic and skeptic Darrow.

The outcome of the trial, a guilty verdict against Scopes, figured far less prominently in American society than did the trial itself and the conflict it represented. As it did all over the nation, the courtroom spectacle created quite a stir down the road in East Tennessee. In the weeks leading up to the Dayton spectacle, Knoxville newspapers carried almost daily front-page updates of Scopes's and Darrow's actions in New York as they prepared defense strategy.

Knoxville got an opportunity for a first-hand look at the controversial Darrow the day after Scopes and his defense team arrived in Dayton.¹⁸ Officially, the defendant's chief legal counsel was John R. Neal, an eccentric Knoxville lawyer and former University of Tennessee law professor who opened his own law school

¹⁸Knoxville News, 22 June 1925, p. 1.

after being fired by university officials in 1923.¹⁹ Neal enlisted Darrow's participation in his law college's first commencement exercises. On 24 June 1925, in a speech delivered to a capacity crowd in Knoxville High School's auditorium, Darrow avoided direct references to evolution and lambasted legislators everywhere for "drafting their pet theories into laws which they want to inflict upon the rest of us."²⁰

Darrow found a receptive audience at the graduation ceremony, but the ideas he represented took center stage in debates carried out in the Knoxville media. The controversy in the Knoxville News raged along several fronts. Supporters of Tennessee's anti-evolution statute most often made the customary argument that Darwin's theory threatened to supplant the Bible and introduce evil into the hearts and minds of school children. Opponents of the law questioned whether the state had the right to ban the teaching of the theory of evolution. In addition, under the guise of a complete education, they urged that students be presented with as much information as possible and be allowed to reach their own conclusions.

¹⁹Office of the University Historian, *Volunteer Moments: Vignettes of the History of the University of Tennessee, 1794-1994* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee, 1994 forthcoming), pp. 20-21.

²⁰Knoxville News, 24 June 1925, p. 1

Two of these three East Tennessee associations joined evolution adversaries in formal opposition to what that theory meant to their own culture and belief system. Delegates to the annual meeting of the Jefferson County Association of Baptists unanimously passed a resolution to that effect, singling out those modernists who espoused the vile theory. They also voted to "support no school that will keep, knowingly, any teacher that teaches anything that contradicts the inspired word of God." Furthermore, members of the Jefferson County Association urged their fellow Baptists to use their franchise wisely and cast their ballots for no candidate who would try to repeal the prohibitive legislation.²¹ Similarly, the Nolachucky Association of Baptists denounced evolution and any other theory that contradicted the word of God. Nolachucky Baptists praised Tennessee governor Austin Peay and those members of the Legislature who supported the anti-evolution bill. The Nolachucky Association concluded its seven-part 1925 resolution with high praise for the recently deceased William Jennings Bryan, who put up a "courageous fight . . . made to re-establish the Holy Bible and its teaching in the minds and hearts of the

²¹JCAB, 6th Annual Session, 1925, p. 12.

people and we rejoice in his career and Christian service."²²

If there occurred any discussion of, or opposition to, these resolutions, the minutes of the associational proceedings show no record of it. Not only was there virtually no internal opposition at the annual meeting, but the majority of the membership of the individual churches probably shared these opinions. At the same time that Darrow spoke to John Neal's law students, the statewide Baptist Young People's Union (B.Y.P.U.) held its annual convention at First Baptist Church of Knoxville. In his Knoxville appearance, Darrow argued that man was an "impotent deck hand on a rudderless ship." Delegates to the B.Y.P.U. convention heard their opening speaker contradict Darrow and encourage students to be "captains of their souls."²³ In a later convention address entitled "Stemming the Tide," Knoxville's O.E. Bryan noted that he was not with Darrow on that "rudderless ship drifting about an ocean of chance." Instead, "thank God, I'm on another ship, the ship of Zion."²⁴

²²NAB, 98th Annual Session, 1925, p. 27.

²³Knoxville News, 25 June 1925, p. 1

²⁴Ibid., 26 June 1925, p. 1.

The Saturday, 27 June 1925, edition of the Knoxville News reported, however, that not all the delegates opposed what Darrow represented. According to the news report, several who attended the convention refused to give their views on evolution and the Scopes trial for fear of retribution. Those in favor of at least some version of evolution were reluctant to divulge their names to the reporter. One student preparing for the ministry, Wallace Rogers of Knoxville, opined, however, that the theory of evolution did not contradict the Bible's creation story. "Science and religion are two separate and distinct things" and should not be confused, Rogers argued. Religion should not be thought of in terms of science, he continued, and evolution should not interfere with religion.²⁵

This student's viewpoint indicates the true divisiveness of the evolution controversy. The overwhelming majority of Southern Baptist laymen opposed any theory that threatened to supplant the Bible's prominent position in their faith, but a number of influential Baptist leaders espoused an opinion similar to Rogers's. Moderate creationists separated the Bible from scientific discussions and argued that the

²⁵Ibid., 27 June 1925, p. 3

Scriptures had no validity in fields beyond religion. They responded to evolution by asserting that the creation account in Genesis was not meant for people familiar with the ways of twentieth-century science. These moderates feared stripping the Bible of its spiritual importance by forcing it into a realm where it did not belong. This middle stance did little to appease the strident anti-evolutionists, or to dissuade the majority of Baptists from their firm conviction that their's was a culture in decay.²⁶

In the minds of East Tennessee Baptists, the disillusion and cultural chaos symbolized by the evolution controversy begged for the evangelistic efforts Jesus called for in his Great Commission, delivered in Matthew 28:19-20, when he instructed his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." This evangelism must be based on Baptist principles, which could correct those "defects of the culture and civilization which brought on the world war."²⁷

During the immediate post-war years Southern Baptists moved to consolidate their position in society and to take appropriate measures for insuring that they

²⁶Thompson, *Tried As By Fire*, pp. 101-136, particularly, pp. 113-115.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 11-12; Matthew 28:19, New International Version; quotation, E. Y. Mullins, quoted in Thompson, *Tried As By Fire*, p. 12.

would thrive as a denomination and have a significant impact on the South, the rest of the nation, and the world. For most of their history, Southern Baptists had emphasized missions and the need to bring salvation to the heathen world. After World War I and into the increasingly secular 1920s, however, their evangelism took on a more urgent tone, and in their minds it became their duty to recreate the pre-war Christian civilization to counteract the rest of the nation's turning away from God.

Mission work was the crux of the plan to redeem the secular civilization and to recreate a Christian America. Indeed, in their 1920 Home Mission Report, Knox County Baptists declared that the roots of this once great nation were "fundamentally religious." They had no doubt that this foundation was in serious trouble at the end of World War I. The preservation of their sacred principles, however, could be entrusted to Christian patriots, those people who emulated Baptist principles and teachings. Following the war, Knox County Baptists noted that a legion of believers dedicated themselves to "Christian Americanism."²⁸ In 1921 the Jefferson County Association issued a similar

²⁸KCAB, 118th Annual Session, 1920, p. 23.

call for Christian patriots to respond to the challenge. Their responsibilities, the Report on Home Missions argued, should rouse their "patriotic sentiments" to "resolute action."²⁹

These guardians of a Christian civilization were those "native Americans" who aimed to defend American liberties by protecting the faith which had "made those liberties possible." Winning converts to Christ proved essential in cultivating the "righteousness that exalteth a nation." Soul-winning became a patriotic endeavor, and teaching Christ's truths conserved that great nation built on Christian principles. Ultimately, by securing more converts and developing the right kind of character within American citizens, Baptists would save the nation from spiritual and cultural degeneration.³⁰ This proved especially true for their vision of the South. With God depending on them to spread his crucial message, the "home fires" must never be extinguished.

In 1923 Jefferson County Baptists recognized one of the most pressing educational problems the South faced and enunciated the need to decrease illiteracy in the region. The solution to that serious problem should

²⁹JCAB, 2nd Annual Session, 1921, p. 11.

³⁰KCAB, 118th Annual Session, 1920, p. 23.

include the teaching of Christian ideals in all schools.³¹ The South, the home and stronghold of the Southern Baptists, promised to be "the brightest prospect and biggest opportunity for New Testament Christianity in the known world."³² Beginning in that region, where Baptists took their members, raised their money, and attended their churches, God would bless their work and their efforts would multiply globally and lead to the fulfillment of their vision of a Christian civilization.

In 1924 Knox County Baptists called for "enlargement . . . from every direction." This meant that weak churches needed to be strengthened and that rural areas and towns and cities alike needed missionaries. The challenges were clear to them: changing conditions in the industrial sector, migration, and "the test of our civilization by the creeping in of insidious error in our schools and colleges."³³ The report that pointed to these problems covered home missions, which means that the delegate who delivered it, Dr. W.A. Atchley, pastor of Lonsdale Baptist Church, had in mind the entire South when he described such

³¹JCAB, 4th Annual Session, 1923, p. 14.

³²KCAB, 118th Annual Session, 1920, p. 23; JCAB, 2nd Annual Session, 1921, p. 11.

³³KCAB, 122nd Annual Session, 1924, p. 23.

changing conditions. The report, however, may well have been aimed at Knoxville. McDonald and Wheeler have argued that Knoxville in the 1920s still had the look of a New South city, with the population increasing and home and building construction on the rise. Cultural fragmentation resulted, however, when whites left the city in mass exodus for the suburbs, and blacks moved in to replace the white out-migrants. In addition, those involved in manufacturing received low wages, with little if any job security. As for "insidious error," just the year before, officials at the University of Tennessee had fired a number of faculty members, in part for the use of a textbook that discussed the theory of evolution.³⁴

No one who read the newspapers regularly could deny the existence of these trials nor the general population's lack of respect for the law and government. There was but one answer to each and every one of these threats, "the leavening power of the gospel."³⁵ The struggle to save American culture from moral ruin took on battle-like proportions, with no doubts as to the makeup of the competing sides. The efforts to return to

³⁴ McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee*, pp. 50-61; Office of the University Historian, *Volunteer Monuments*, pp. 20-21.

³⁵ KCAB, 122nd Annual Session, 1924, p. 23.

a Christian civilization made up "the work of the Kingdom," with God clearly on the side of Southern Baptists. Moreover, Nolachucky Baptists harbored no misgivings as to what God's presence meant to combatants: "the side on which God is is the winning side."³⁶

The post-war era presented new challenges that East Tennessee Baptists recognized as draining the spiritual life from the nation. The Nolachucky Baptists in 1918 noted that conditions in fact were changing and schools must adapt their curricula to maintain their effectiveness.³⁷ As early as 1917, Knox County Baptists realized that "a new order is upon the world and never before have there been such gigantic struggles for both civil and religious liberty." Despite the commendable and necessary work done within the state educational system, public schools could not teach religion. Secular education, therefore, eventually would be ruinous for society.³⁸

In 1921 the Jefferson County Association's Report on Christian Education noted the "skepticism and infidelity in the world" and argued that "only trained

³⁶NAB, 92nd Annual Session, 1919, p. 19.

³⁷NAB, 91st Annual Session, p. 25.

³⁸KCAB, 115th Annual Session, 1917, pp. 24, 23.

and consecrated workers can meet the demands of the times." The character of education, the Jefferson County report continued, would determine the identity of the state and nation, as well.³⁹ In 1920 Knox County Baptists maintained that changing international conditions demanded educated leaders and urged Baptists to "recognize the new era that has come upon us."⁴⁰ One year after the Dayton "monkey trial," the Nolachucky Association's annual proceedings declared that "the greatest evil of the day is (probably) **modernism**," and "in this age of Unrest and Uncertainty, there is an urgent demand for men of strong Christian character."⁴¹

As they perceived the situation, their world required better qualified men to be farmers, lawyers, teachers, and preachers. These men could get the necessary "literary and scientific training" in public schools, but "the most needed element of character 'Christianity'" could only come from the religious colleges, which could "educate against educated error."⁴² This concern over education indicated not just an effort to remedy contemporary problems associated with the secularization of society. By

³⁹JCAB, 2nd Annual Session, 1921, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁰KCAB, 118th Annual Session, 1920, pp. 17-18.

⁴¹NAB, 99th Annual Session, 1926, pp. 8-9, emphasis in original.

⁴²Ibid.

providing religious education that emphasized moral and ethical principles, denominational schools would raise up a legion of potential leaders who would be prepared to face future worldly obstacles and to reverse the cultural decay in progress.

The 1925 Jefferson County Association meeting reported that in times past the church had wielded a significant influence on education, and that in turn had affected the lives of church people. Therefore, they declared it their duty to provide for their young people educational institutions grounded in Christian principles. This would insure continued growth of the churches and would give their future leaders the knowledge and power to make stands for righteousness.⁴³ Improper education, moreover, made students more likely to succumb to the influence of liberal theology and would cause them to reject the Christian traditions of their families. The leaders of the Jefferson County Association expressed this sentiment in 1926:

. . . in this day of modernism and evolution [young people] are likely to receive anti-religious training that will make shipwrecks

⁴³JCAB, 6th Annual Session, 1925, p. 13; also JCAB, 5th Annual Session, 1924, pp. 8-9.

of their faith and cause them to scoff at the Bible and the religion of their fathers.⁴⁴

Despite the emphasis placed on Christian education, Baptist schools and colleges could not serve everyone, regardless of how important these institutions were. Southern Baptists also needed a means of teaching and training the membership at large and of enlisting new members and winning converts. The Sunday Schools that had been around for decades joined the Baptist Young People's Union (B.Y.P.U.) as the primary agents for leading local churches into the cultural battle. As with the larger push for a Christian America, the emphasis placed on the work of the Sunday Schools and the B.Y.P.U. contained a considerable degree of optimism. In spite of the firm belief that their society was going to hell as it lost touch with God, East Tennessee Baptists also maintained hope that exposure to the right information would bring about tremendous results in individual lives.

In nineteenth-century America the Bible played a vital role in the majority of individuals' lives. Often the Bible was the only book found in a household, and from it people learned to read, to understand, and to

⁴⁴JCAB, 7th Annual Session, 1926, p. 18; see also NAB, 97th Annual Session, 1924, p. 19; KCAB, 122nd Annual Session, 1924, p. 28; JCAB, 5th Annual Session, 1924, p. 8.

explain their world. The Scripture's influence could be seen in people's everyday language, and its imagery appeared in popular literature as well as in the speeches and writings of politicians and other American notables. The higher criticism to which late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars subjected the Bible became one of the most critical challenges American Protestantism would face.⁴⁵

In the minds of many Southern Baptists, higher criticism of the Bible rendered that book an imperfect document as it questioned the virgin birth, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and Jesus' rightful role in salvation and spiritual guidance. Baptists argued among themselves over biblical hermeneutics, but as a rule rejected modernism's relegation of the Bible to an insignificant role in man's life. They generally gave the Scriptures preeminence in their worship and relationship with God. East Tennessee Baptists minced no words in their rejection of liberal attacks on the word of God.

The primary piece of literature to be owned, studied, and obeyed was, of course, the Bible. According to a 1927 educational report, Knox County

⁴⁵Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America*, pp. 15-16.

Baptists argued that the Bible should be treated with love and respect "as God's revealed word" and given "an exalted . . . place" in a college curriculum.⁴⁶ The Nolachucky Association told its members that Baptists should spend at least one hour a day studying God's word.⁴⁷ Not surprisingly, Jefferson County Baptists declared the Bible the "first . . . and the most important" of all books.⁴⁸ Carson and Newman professor of Bible John L. Campbell published his defense of God's word in 1928 in a book entitled *The Bible Under Fire*. Campbell attacked proponents of biblical higher criticism and modernism and argued that once America learned "to adapt the present age to the Bible," then "we shall have a regenerated humanity."⁴⁹

These Baptists also made a strong case for the importance of religious literature and periodicals in addition to the use of the Bible to enhance the moral lives of Christians and to spread the information necessary for continued support of evangelism and soul-winning. In 1921 the Tennessee Baptist Convention

⁴⁶KCAB, 125th Annual Session, 1927, p. 24.

⁴⁷NAB, 94th Annual Session, 1921, p. 26.

⁴⁸JCAB, 3rd Annual Session, 1922, p. 13.

⁴⁹John L. Campbell, *The Bible Under Fire*, with an Introduction by Robert Dick Wilson (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1928), p. 193. Mildred L. Iddins Special Collections and Archives, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, TN.

purchased the *Baptist and Reflector*, a statewide newspaper which had been in private hands since its inception in 1889. Private ownership had never hindered the state's Baptists from promoting the periodical at every opportunity; now, however, the state convention gained an even more powerful tool for its denominational information and propaganda machine. In addition to the *Baptist and Reflector*, East Tennessee Baptists made use of literature issued by the statewide convention as well as of publications of the denomination's Sunday School Board and mission programs.⁵⁰

The benefits of Baptists' having access to the proper information resulted from the realization of "the necessity of bringing our causes to the attention of the brotherhood."⁵¹ Nolachucky Baptists attributed the "standard of morals in every state, county and community" to what people read.⁵² Religious and denominational literature must be judged by the results they would bring, the Nolachucky Association asserted in its proceedings a year later. In that post-war era of "readjustment," Knox County Baptists stressed the need for their fellow church members "to have knowledge of

⁵⁰Kendall, *A History of the Tennessee Baptist Convention*, pp. 212-213, 229; NAB, 100th Annual Session, 1927, p. 17.

⁵¹NAB, 92nd Annual Session, 1919, p. 15.

⁵²NAB, 91st Annual Session, 1918, p. 15.

Kingdom affairs that we may be able to grapple with the problems of the time."⁵³ Indeed, when Baptists knew of "the work of the Master" which the denomination carried on, then that knowledge would produce inspiration, which, in turn, would spur individual actions.⁵⁴

The push for greater dissemination of information and the development of higher ideals and a Christian civilization took shape within local churches in the Sunday Schools and B.Y.P.U. Following Jesus' command in the Great Commission, Nolachucky Baptists in 1921 reiterated their primary concern as being salvation of the world. They employed military terms to issue a call-to-arms to the association's member churches. The forces had to be trained and the soldiers of the Cross prepared for battle.⁵⁵ East Tennessee Baptists recognized that God's word received a decreasing amount of attention outside of the churches, and the Master's work required the Sunday Schools to correct this deprivation. Indeed, these schools and the B.Y.P.U. often provided youngsters' only contact with Scripture lessons. Given the importance of youth in the continued vitality of the church, this trend demonstrated cause

⁵³KCAB, 118th Annual Session, 1920, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁴NAB, 101st Annual Session, 1928, p. 28.

⁵⁵NAB, 94th Annual Session, 1921, p. 25.

for alarm.⁵⁶ Along with the B.Y.P.U., these schools provided the opportunity and avenue "for the inculcation of eternal truth" and the teaching of "principles of morality and true Christianity" intended to preserve their culture from "the multitudes of evils that threaten our Zion."⁵⁷

By 1929, Baptists of the Jefferson County, Knox County, and Nolachucky Associations had failed, along with the rest of American Protestantism, to achieve their vision of a Christian America. In fact, some things appeared worse in 1929 than they did ten years earlier. In 1919, for example, Prohibition had just gone into effect and offered at least a glimmer of hope for the end of liquor's corrupting influence on Americans. By 1928 a candidate for president had opposed the Eighteenth Amendment, and conditions seemed right for the repeal of that anti-liquor amendment. Still, the same degree of optimism remained. East Tennessee Baptists persisted in sounding the clarion call for patriots to remain true to their Christian ideals and enforce the law with greater zeal.⁵⁸

⁵⁶NAB, 95th Annual Session, 1922, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁷JCAB, 5th Annual Session, 1924, p. 18.

⁵⁸KCAB, 127th Annual Session, 1929, pp. 12-13.

CONCLUSION

This study indicates that concern over the problems inherent in a changing society led East Tennessee Baptists to engage in a few selected social Christianity reform efforts. These endeavors suggest that such concern was not confined to the Southern Baptists' professional leadership. Indeed, their annual proceedings suggest that these three associations, which were made up of both laity and church pastors, responded, at least in rhetoric, to what they perceived to be a rapidly changing world. In their minds, their predominant position in southern society was eroding, as the liquor problem refused to go away, as respect for the Sabbath decreased, and as new mission fields awaited Baptist missionaries. In 1928, the Report on Christian Education to the Knox County Association of Baptists lamented secular society's neglect of religion, the result of which was "a lowering of [the] moral standards" of the nation.¹ They took what they believed to be appropriate actions to place their region back on the road to morality and Christian purity. One important motive underlying their reform sentiment was

¹KCAB, 126th Annual Session, 1928, p. 19.

Southern Baptists' push to strengthen their denomination.

Literal Biblical interpretation that emphasized evangelism and individual salvation governed their actions. They advocated mission work and personal salvation to cure the destitution of unchurched (or non-Baptist) areas of the South. Closer to home, they cared for the orphan children of the state and took an anti-liquor stance. They preached against the growing laxity in observing the Sabbath. They recognized the need for education, primarily denominational, to keep Southern society in general, and Baptists specifically, abreast of their rapidly changing world. During the 1920s, a decade in which many evangelical Christians saw their culture turning farther from God, these East Tennessee Baptists shifted from their emphasis on repairing certain aspects of the existing social structure to an assault on evolution and higher criticism of the Bible, those factors of modernity that represented the greatest theological and cultural threats, and to efforts to disciple and evangelize a lost world.

Historians agree that, for all practical purposes, in the public eye fundamentalists lost the cultural

battle of the 1920s.² Even though John Scopes was found guilty, Clarence Darrow humiliated William Jennings Bryan on the witness stand, and no less than H.L. Mencken ridiculed southern fundamentalism and provincial agrarianism. Despite the derision, these Baptists maintained at least a certain degree of continuity and optimism throughout.

Baptists often measure success and failure differently than secular observers. In 1915, the Nolachucky and Tennessee Associations operated 103 Sunday Schools, with a total membership of 16,133. That total climbed over the next decade, with those two groups plus the Jefferson County Association reporting only two more schools, but over three thousand more members in 1927. Over that same period, total church membership increased from 20,109 to 26,531.³ Talking about their own association, Knox County Baptists in 1928 pointed to a six-fold increase in Sunday School enrollment over a twenty-three-year period and praised the "marvelous, yea phenomenal, growth" that should bring "inspiration and vision for the future" so that

²Joel A. Carpenter, "From Fundamentalism to the New Evangelical Coalition," chapter 1 in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, George Marsden, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), p. 4; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 61

³Proceedings of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, Statistical Reports, 41st Annual Session, 1915, p. 102; and 53rd Annual Session, 1927, p. 110.

Baptists would "look for even greater accomplishments for the glory of God and the salvation of our people."⁴ Those are hardly the words of a completely defeated people.

They continued to preach the same salvation by faith in an omnipotent God that had characterized their religious life for decades. For example, in 1922 Professor Oscar E. Sams, president of Carson and Newman College, delivered a sermon to First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, in which he insisted that "the supreme expression of God's love was in the giving of His Son." The response to this love should be "a life of growing purity" and confession of all sins.⁵ Such a message could have been used as justification for mission work in 1900 or in support of Christian education in 1920.

This was not merely the relic of a nineteenth century ideal that would cut these Baptists off from the social and cultural changes brought on by a New South. Instead, they preached that same theology to meet contemporary challenges. Along the way, moreover, they co-opted methods and strategies used successfully by representatives of secular society. Their extensive

⁴KCAB, 126th Annual Session, 1928, p. 14.

⁵*Orange and Blue* [Carson-Newman student newspaper], 1 February 1922, p.

⁶Mildred L. Iddins Special Collections and Archives Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, TN.

reliance on the print media anticipated the importance later twentieth century evangelicals would place on radio and television to further their own ministries. In the 1920s, they patterned their Seventy-Five Million Campaign after American wartime efforts. This fundraising endeavor failed to reach its monetary goal. At the local level, however, it still supplied churches with a more efficient way of raising money and propelled them along the road toward institutional viability.

Perhaps only slightly less important was these associations' emphasis on the dissemination of information and its role in their cultural crusade. Realizing they lived in a "day of publicity," East Tennessee Baptists decided to defeat their ideological challengers with the same type of media. Cultural decay followed from the abundance of literature that exploited "the sex instinct" and upset morality and Christian principles.⁶ Baptists offered their own literature that would feed the intellectual and spiritual appetites of its readers. Instead of breaking down moral life, however, this genre of books and periodicals would uplift, Christianize, and aid in the salvation from cultural crisis.

⁶NAB, 99th Annual Session, 1926, p. 25.

In spite of shifting cultural mores, the intimate historical relationship between fundamentalism and southern culture cannot be denied. As the South moved ever closer to the American economic and social mainstream in the years leading up to World War II, Protestantism largely maintained its prominent conservative position in southern society. As the South has been pulled from its regional shell, so have its churches. Southern Baptists are now the largest white Protestant denomination in the country. One might argue that this suggests, at least in part, the ability of that denomination to adapt its message to modern America. As southern culture changed along with that of the rest of the nation, traditionally fundamentalist Southern Baptists brought their evangelical message of eternal hope into the twentieth century and used that as their most potent weapon in the cultural battle waged against modernity.

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