

VI. RELATION OF SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION TO OTHER BAPTIST BODIES

According to instructions of the Convention, we submit the following statement of principles:

The relations between this Convention and other Baptist bodies can be understood in the light of a few basic New Testament principles, as follows:

The primary and fundamental principle is the direct relation of the individual soul to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. To his own Master every Christian stands or falls.

All Christian relationships are free and voluntary. To become a Christian is not to be coerced into obedience to Christ, but to choose him voluntarily and freely. Christ's authority is accepted as final for the believer in all things when he is thus chosen freely as Lord and Saviour.

The relations of the believer with other Christians are also free and voluntary and subject only to the authority of Jesus Christ.

A church of Christ is a free and voluntary association of believers, in his name, in obedience to his command, and for the carrying out of his purposes.

It follows that each church is autonomous or self-determining in all matters pertaining to its own life and activities. It is not subject to any other church or organization of any kind whatsoever, but only to Christ and his authority.

All Baptist general bodies are voluntary organizations, established by individuals who wish to cooperate for some common end or ends in the kingdom of God. This Convention is not an ecclesiastical body composed of churches, nor a federal body composed of state conventions. Churches may seek to fulfill their obligation to extend Christ's kingdom by cooperating with these general organizations, but always on a purely voluntary basis, and without surrendering in any way or degree their right of self-determination. These associations, unions, or conventions vary greatly in form, in size, in purpose, in territorial extent and in conditions of membership. But they are all similar to churches in the fundamental principle of their organization and life in that each is independent of all others in its own work, free, fraternal, autonomous, or self-determining in its own sphere and activities.

The principle of cooperation between individuals and churches and general bodies in pursuit of great common ends is also a basic teaching of the gospel. In all cooperative endeavor the principle of autonomy or self-determination should be carefully conserved.

There is no relation of superiority and inferiority among Baptist general bodies. All are equal. All make their appeal directly to individuals and churches. Each determines its own objectives—financial or otherwise—and allocates its own funds to the interests promoted by it. Each defines and fixes its own sphere of activities. But all is done with due consideration and regard for the functions of other Baptist bodies.

The powers of Baptist general bodies are never legislative, but always advisory in their relations to churches, and to each other.

The cooperation of Baptist general bodies with each other may be desirable from time to time for the sake of greater economy and efficiency. But there are dangers connected with such cooperation due to misunderstanding, confusion of thinking, and sometimes to trespassing upon the rights of cooperating bodies by one or other of the parties to the arrangement.

One of the present danger points is the cooperative relations between the Southern Baptist Convention and the various state conventions. This Convention disclaims all authority over any state convention, but wishes to define its own functions and activities in relation to state bodies. The following points should be stressed:

1. The cooperative relations between this Convention and state bodies as now established are limited to the one matter of collecting funds for southwide and state objects in conjunction with a unified appeal for the objects. The

state convention boards are at present recognized by this Convention as collecting agencies for Southwide as well as for state funds. This arrangement, however, is not an essential in Baptist organization, but is made simply as a matter of convenience and economy, and may be changed at any time.

2. The fact that the state bodies first handle the funds and are more directly related to the churches in the matter of collections does not alter the basic relations involved. For the practical ends in view this Convention co-operates in the unified appeal for funds through state agencies. But in principle it retains as inalienable and inherent the right to direct appeal to the churches. Furthermore, in all matters other than money raising it retains complete control of its own affairs, with the right to fix its own objectives and to determine the amounts of money allocated to its various objects.

3. The power of appointing the members of all committees and boards of this Convention resides in the Convention itself. When it is desirable that states, as such, or other territorial subdivisions of this Convention's area, be represented on the boards or committees of this Convention, this arrangement can easily be effected by consultation with the respective groups involved. But the power to appoint directly or to nominate the members of its own committees and boards must be retained.

4. The practice of careful discrimination and mutual respect as between the state bodies and this Convention is called for. The main functions of this Convention and of state bodies remain inviolable. Neither body may impose its will upon the other in any manner or degree at any time. Conference and discussion between committees of the respective groups are always proper in regard to matters involved in joint effort and in so far as necessary to promote good will and mutual understanding. As the work is at present conducted such matters are the division of funds into state and Southwide, ways and means of promoting interest in the various causes, and the burden of cost of collections to be apportioned to state and Southwide funds. These are all matters involved in the one matter of joint effort; viz., the collection of money. In all other matters this Convention pursues its own objects in its own way. It has no authority to allocate funds or to divert funds from any object included in a state budget. In like manner no state body has any authority to allocate funds to or divert them from any object included in the Southwide budget.

5. The observance of the above principles by this Convention and by state bodies is essential to the integrity and perpetuity of this Convention. Unless the Southern Baptist Convention insists upon its own autonomy in all phases of its own work a process of disintegration, loss of power and initiative, and gradual decline is inevitable.

6. It is important that the Executive Committee of this Convention receive instructions to conduct all negotiations with representatives of state or other bodies necessary to clarify relations and bring about a satisfactory adjustment, with a view to complete and hearty cooperation in all matters of common interest.

VII. MATTERS ON WHICH THE COMMITTEE ASKS FOR FURTHER TIME

Your Committee begs to ask for further time in carrying out the instructions of the Convention concerning the following matters:

1. Survey of Agencies.
2. Preparing Forms for Financial Statements of Agencies.
3. Preparing Forms for Auditors' Reports of Agencies.
4. The Study of Annuities.

MATTERS REFERRED BY THE HOSPITAL COMMISSION

The Hospital Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention requested of your Committee that it be granted the authority to refund its indebtedness. This request was granted, and the Hospital Commission has refunded its debt on terms favorable to the Commission.