
# A History Of The Ohio Baptist Convention

By Dr. Richard H. Clossman

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# Introduction

In 1772, Rev. David Jones, A Baptist preacher from New Jersey, accompanied George Rogers Clark down the Ohio River with the purpose of "missionating" among the Indians of the Ohio territory. He described "the excellency of this new world" in glowing terms and added, "I recommend it to all who design to emigrate to this new world as most agreeable in all respects." The American Revolution had not yet begun when Jones returned home to New Jersey to report to his church and his mission society of his relatively unsuccessful travels among the Shawanese and the Delaware Indians. But he undoubtedly must have heightened the interest of his Baptist friends for western land, and prompted a few to journey westward after the war.

Just a few years later, Baptists were in the vanguard of the westward migration into the lands beyond the Appalachian Mountains, first in the Kentucky - Tennessee region, then in the more northerly territory. One historian has written that between 1791 and 1810, fully one-fourth of the Baptists in Virginia were estimated to have migrated into the Kentucky region. They moved westward primarily to obtain new farms and profitable fortunes from wilderness land. But they also moved westward to claim a newly-acquired territory for Christ.

The formation of the Northwest Territory in 1787 opened the region formally for occupation. Many Baptists from Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the New England region soon found their way into the Ohio country. Their lives represent stories of traveling and settling, of poverty and hard work, of dreaming, at times, near despair. For many settlers, Ohio was but a jumping-off place as they prepared to travel toward the fertile plains farther west. For others, Ohio represented the place for building and putting down roots for generations to come. For many, Ohio was the place for extending Christian values within the new nation. Ohio, in a way, represented an important crossroads to the West, a pivotal state both politically and denominationally.

In this year of the Bicentennial, 1976, Ohio Baptist celebrate their Sesquicentennial year of organized denominational life and ministry within the state of Ohio. It is a story not easily told; for every individual churchman, however unheralded or forgotten he may be, contributed to the story of the Kingdom.

This brief sketch attempts to focus on a few highlights of Baptist endeavor which were important to the corporate life of the Ohio Baptist Convention over the last one hundred and fifty years. The following pages trace in broad lines the story of Convention affairs rather than that of individual churches. In reading, one must visualize his own local congregation, its tradition and heritage, and its own significant contributions to the story of Ohio Baptists.

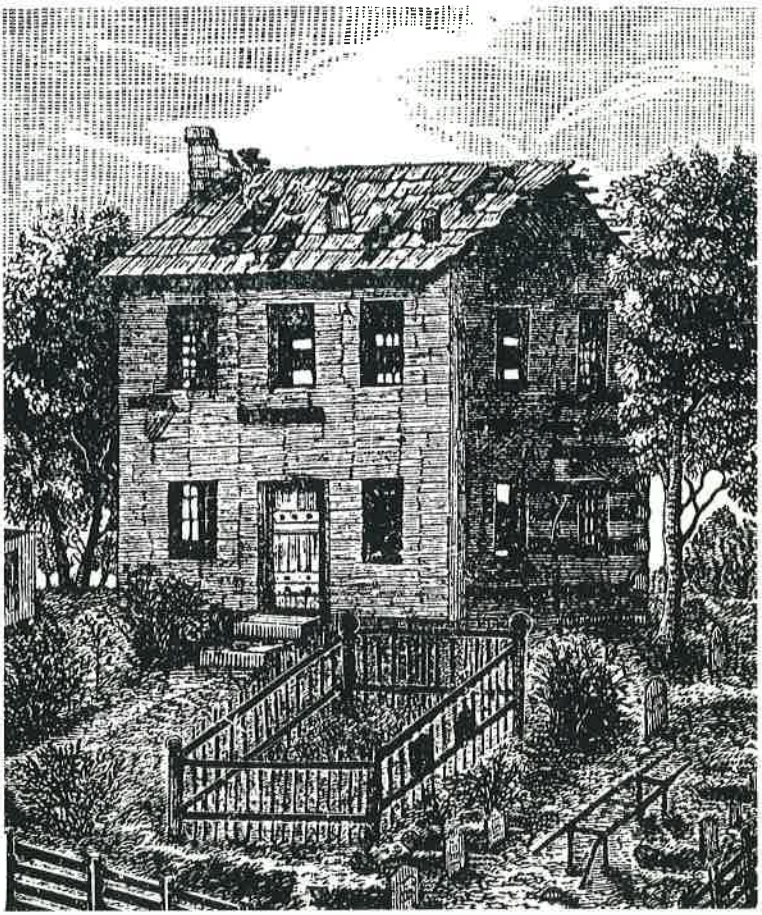
Much of the material in this short history is found in the Convention and associational annual minutes, the **Cross and Baptist Journal** (later titled **Journal and Messenger**), the **Ohio Baptist Bulletin,** and **The Ohio Baptist.** It is impossible, in a few pages, to cite various sources used in gathering the insights, quotations and events sketched within the following chapters. Generally, quotation marks indicate a direct quotation of words and sentences from some historical source.

This history is intended for popular reading; consequently, some liberties have been taken in matters of style. For instance, I have not used the term "Elder" often in the text, even though in early years, every Baptist preacher in Ohio was so titled. Only gradually did the title Reverend appear in printed and popular usage. I have taken the liberty to abbreviate the title Reverend in the following pages.

# I Ohio Baptists were Pioneers

The first church to organize within the Northwest Territory was a Baptist church, gathered at Columbia which was about five miles east of the present downtown area of Cincinnati. Six Baptists from New Jersey and Pennsylvania had been among the first twenty-six settlers to arrive in November, 1788. About a year later, January 20, 1790, according to A. H. Dunlevy's **History of the Miami Baptist Association,** a small group of nine persons joined together at the home of Benjamin Davis, in Columbia, to organize a church. Led by Rev. Stephen Gano, pastor of the First Baptist Church of New York City who was visiting his brother, Major John Stites Gano of Columbia, the small group was "duly constituted" a Baptist church and "messengers" were appointed to attend the Elkhorn Baptist Association of Kentucky in order to be received into the wider Baptist fellowship. Stephen Gano's father, Rev. John Gano, a great name among Baptist leaders in the Philadelphia Baptist Association, had come west in his elderly years and was about that time serving as moderator of the Elkhorn Association. From the very first Ohio Baptists were in connection with a wider fellowship.

The early leadership among Cincinnati Baptists evidenced a goodly number of accomplished members who made their mark both in civic and religious life. This is all the more remarkable when it is generally admitted that early Baptist settlers, both preachers and laymen alike, who moved into the western country were highly individualistic people, often abysmally uneducated and fiercely independent. Several of the Baptists in the Miami River area were active in political affairs and were unquestioned men of stature. The most celebrated Baptist in the region was Rev. John Smith, the first pastor of the Columbia Church, who became the first U. S. Senator from Ohio in 1803. The disastrous notoriety which came to him because of the Aaron Burr



COLUMBIA BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE

affair should not eclipse the fact that Smith served acceptably as the first pastor for Baptists in the Cincinnati area until 1795.

From the beginning, and for several decades to come, the Cincinnati area was the strongest Baptist center numerically in the state. After the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 and the subsequent Treaty of Greenville in 1795, settlers began to move into a relatively safe interior, so that by 1800 ten churches had organized in the vicinity according to the associational records of the Miami Baptist Association. And this was at a time when Baptist activity in other sections of Ohio territory was yet in its infancy.

There were, however, other early Baptist congregations which

settled in areas of Ohio territory. The "Rainbow" Church has generally been credited as the second Baptist church organization, although no exact date survives to mark the beginning of some of these early churches, the record books having long since been lost. A group of Baptists no doubt clustered around Captain William Mason, one of the "original forty-eight" pioneers who arrived at Marietta in the very first settlement in the Northwest Territory. Information is meager, but we know that Mason served as a Baptist minister, settled up the Muskingum River near Lowell, Ohio, and held worship services as early as 1793. Rev. Nehemiah Davis, an ordained Baptist minister from Maine, arrived in 1796 and was characterized as "a very sincere and ardent Christian, a man of prayer, and a fervent exhorter of the Rainbow Church."

We also know that the Rainbow Church was shaken by a schism within a few years of its founding due to the open communion doctrine of Elder Davis. The majority of members followed Davis in a secession movement which drifted into the Freewill Baptist fellowship where the prevailing strict Calvinism was heartily rejected. This early division among the membership of the Rainbow Church points to several important characteristics among Baptist people of that time period. First, Baptists were individualistic and independent-minded. Secondly, they were deeply committed to a constant search for a Biblical theology, and did not hesitate to work out very basic doctrinal positions within their congregations. And, lastly, they viewed the congregational system of church government as extremely important to the continuance of a New Testament community of believers whose witness and work came out of an inner harmony and whose ultimate authority was the Lordship of Christ. It is interesting to note that the "Regular" Baptists and the "Free" Baptists were to join forces again, but not until about the year 1911.

Another Baptist congregation to appear quite early in Ohio was one called the Pleasant Run Church which settled not far from where Lancaster was to develop as a city. Two rather special features of this "German" or "High Dutch" group of Baptists should be noted. First, the church was bilingual. It seems that the whole congregation (six families in all, according to the early Baptist historian, David Benedict) journeyed together from Rockingham County, Virginia, in 1801, and arrived in the Lancaster vicinity with their three bilingual ministers. This bilingual quality appeared almost from the start of Ohio Baptist life as an important factor in the ministries of several congregations. The second feature involved the reason for the coming of the German families into Ohio country. They were opposed to slavery; and the Northwest Territory had been

established by Congress as free land. This guarantee was an important reason which drew many Baptists from the Virginia and Kentucky regions into southern Ohio. This theme which plagued and eventually bloodied the entire nation prompted Baptists from these earliest days of Ohio history to take a stand on conscience and Biblical interpretation.

One other area of early Baptist settlement should be noted. A group of Baptists from Pennsylvania settled at Warren in Trumbull County and formed a church in 1803. The pastor, Rev. Thomas G. Jones, an important name among early Ohio Baptists, was Welsh, as were many of the Baptists traveling westward from Cambria County, Pennsylvania. Ohio Baptists were to receive substantial leadership and energy from these immigrants from Wales.

It should not be assumed that the Baptist population in Ohio was disproportionately large. The average pioneer, if he had any connection with a church, which was usually not the case, would have tended to identify with the plain preaching and emotional temperament of the Baptists and the Methodists. But the strict and intense commitment among the Baptists militated against many people joining their ranks. After the historian Benedict made a tour of Baptist churches in America in 1809, he made the following comment to Rev. Stephen Gano, who had by then become pastor at Providence, Rhode Island:

> "Except what is called the Miami Purchase, a country between the two Miami Rivers, I think the state of Ohio appears more destitute of preachers than any part through which I have travelled, and opens an encouraging prospect for missionary exertions, were it not for its remote situation from any society able to send missionaries there, and the numerous Macedonian cries nearer home."

The broad western expanse did indeed separate Baptist churches from one another in terms of miles. But they were not really isolated from one another. From the earliest days in seventeenth century England, Baptist churches had "associated" together. Ohio Baptists were no less inclined to form such lines of fellowship, organizing over the next 150 or more years under more than fifty associational names. Some of these groups of churches were so small and ephemeral that it is hard to trace their short existence. Others have continued until the present day, gaining in number and spiritual stature with each passing decade.

The Miami Baptist Association was the first to organize in 1797, bringing together four small churches in the Cincinnati area, namely, Columbia, Miami Island, Carpenter's Run, and Clear Creek. Most of the leaders were from Virginia and New

Jersey, a significant factor when one examines the firm antislavery attitude which emerged in the organizing statements of the association. They were so insistent in their antislavery position that they politely declined "opening a correspondence" with the "Emancipation Baptists" of Kentucky, a progressive group who held to a gradualist view of freeing the slaves.

In those early days, "correspondence" between associations was an important step toward eventual denominational unity. It usually involved the writing of a letter by the associational delegates during the days (yes! days - two or three, usually) of the annual meeting. Then a delegate was found who would volunteer to travel to the neighboring associational annual meeting, carrying the letter, and reading it before the group. It was an important statement of intra-Baptist fraternity among neighboring churches. Consequently, the Miami Association "corresponded" only with antislave Baptist associations.

Within a ten year period, thirty-seven churches were organized and added to the Miami Association. These small churches were scattered over an area of nine counties in Ohio and two counties in Indiana. For a time the Miami Association reached as far north as Greene, Montgomery, and Miami Counties.

The subsequent formation of Baptist associations gives evidence to the steady flow of frontier families moving into the wooded hills northward along the Ohio River. A Scioto Baptist Association organized in 1805 along the Scioto River area. It was strongly antislavery in character, much like the Miami Baptists. They publically stated, "We do not wish to correspond with any association or church that do in principles or practice hold to involuntary slavery." In the Adams, Highland, and Brown Counties, the Strait Creek Association emerged in 1812. Then, in 1816, the East Fork of the Little Miami Baptist Association organized just to the east of the Cincinnati area. And, farther to the north, the Mad River Association gathered together the flourishing activity of Baptists as far north as Champaign County. In each case, when a new association was formed, area churches transferred their associational membership to the new group with the blessing and encouragement of the parent Miami brethren.

Among these early Baptist associations, names of important leaders appear year after year in the early records, illustrating the stanch endurance which sustained these fragile ties among small congregations in the earlier years. Most of these leaders, who were at one and the same time ministers and farmers, gathered congregations together year after year and held up the vision of the corporate Baptist witness.

Baptist congregations were strict disciplinarians, and were not apt to lower their standards very often. Today, we might be

amused at the accusation of the "Original and Regular First Baptist Church" of Cincinnati that the Enon Baptist (the progenitor of the Ninth Street Baptist congregation) was "a disorderly body." But such issues were, at times, the very substance of Baptist doctrine, and should be appreciated as an important part of our heritage.

The speed with which families settled in Ohio can be seen in the early organization of other Baptist churches and associations in the central and northern reaches of the state. The Muskingum Baptist Association, full of Welsh leadership, convened just north of Granville in Licking County in 1811. Not long afterward other associations appeared: Columbus, in 1817; Owl Creek (an obscure group in its short life) in 1822; and Meigs Creek, in 1826. On the eastern rim of the state, a group of churches calling themselves the Stillwater Association (The later name of Zoar would help identify the location) appeared in 1817. And to the north, in the Western Reserve region, several congregations of New Englanders, with close family and fraternal ties with no less a Baptist leader than Isaac Backus, organized the Grand River Association in 1819.

Between the years 1819 and 1830, no less than fourteen associations were organized in Ohio. Most of the names have long since been altered or absorbed into larger units. Only a particular river or stream gives evidence today of the general location. Where would you place such associations as Salem, Mahoning, Mohican, Ohio, Huron, Greenville, Eagle Creek, Killbuck, Little Miami, Todds Fork and Oxford? Every name at one time meant an all-important claim for Christ among Baptists.

# II Ohio Baptists were Mission-minded

There is no theme in the early nineteenth century among Ohio Baptists as profoundly emphasized as MISSIONS. All kinds of missions! Foreign missions, first and foremost. Baptists in Ohio supported Luther Rice's urgent calls for contributions for Adoniram Judson, and through this support became a vital part of the Triennial Convention soon after the 1814 date. Also there was home missions! Building new churches in western lands! And there were still other forms of missionary activity - The American Tract Society, The American Bible Society, The American Sunday School Union, to name the more important ones.

The Ohio Baptist Convention began in 1826 as a home mission agency to foster growth and development within Ohio. There was, from the first, an urgency about the matter. Many citizens, recently arrived from the more settled East, felt the need to "civilize" and "Christianize" the western "Wilderness." And, even after the frontier soon moved westward toward the Mississippi and beyond, Ohio remained a region where churches were few and far between. The remarkable movement of immigrants into Ohio, a movement which continued in one way or another up to the very present, demanded continuous efforts in home missions.

The model for Baptist missionary outreach in America was not the "associational" unit, but rather the "society" plan. Individuals joined a society chartered for a specific mission, thus joining with persons of like purpose. Members contributed through their local society which in turn channeled the money to state and national units. Thus, the societies were developed into local, associational, state, and national levels, building a pyramid of activity and communication which served remarkably well among a people who ardently rejected ecclesiastical control.

As early as 1815, the Miami Association voted to "form ourselves into a society called A DOMESTIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY," having acknowledged the need to sustain correspondence with Dr. William Staughten of the Foreign Mission Board as well as the need to preach "the Gospel in destitute places in this Western Country." Other Baptist associations in Ohio quickly followed the Miami churches in forming "Auxiliary Foreign and Domestic Missionary Societies," until, by 1820, a dozen or more such missionary societies were in

"correspondence" with the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions (that is, with the Triennial Convention) and with one another.

It is significant that the Triennial Convention bypassed Ohio when it commissioned John Mason Peck and Isaac McCoy in 1817 to move westward for the cause of Christ. But, by then, several home missionaries had been appointed by various eastern home mission societies to minister in Ohio. Luther Rice had traveled briefly through the state on at least five occasions, from 1815 to 1817, and discovered a generous response, particularly in the Cincinnati area.

There seems to have been a remarkable energy expended in Ohio on behalf of missions. Associations developed the "fifth Sunday" meeting, sometimes called "visitation," "union," or "quarterly" meetings, in which Baptists would join to aid a small, struggling congregation who needed the encouragement of neighboring Baptist visits and some Gospel preaching.

"Missionary" activity on the state level was almost totally disconnected and unsystematic in the earlier decades. It involved, simply defined, the unpaid work of circuit riding preachers. But it did precipitate an anxious call for some rational organization in home mission endeavors. The original purpose of the Miami Association, viz. "to open a door of friendly correspondence," in which "a personal acquaintance is brought about between brethren from different parts," was plainly inadequate to link some twenty associations throughout Ohio. It was time for Baptists in Ohio to call a state convention of individuals, missionary societies, and churches to coordinate the work. Such was the proposal urgently put forward in 1824.

The prime mover for a state-wide annual convention among Baptists was the Cincinnati Baptist Missionary Society. Organized in 1824 with 118 individuals signing its constitution, the Cincinnati Society acknowledged that the "ultimate design" was to publish the need for a state missionary agency. The organizers, whose names today are virtually forgotten among Ohio Baptists, were some of the spiritual giants and original prime movers among Ohio Baptists. And most of the leaders were laymen, viz. Isaac G. Burnet, president; Ephriam Robins, Corresponding Secretary; Daniel Gano, Vice President; and Henry Miller, Solicitor. Only one minister, Rev. John Boyd of the Enon Church, was an officer in the society. This group immediately hired Rev. James Lyon to travel for six months in a twenty-five mile radius around Cincinnati. Without the vision and initiation of these Cincinnati Baptists, the State Convention would probably not have been organized until some years later. They deserve the major credit more than any other group.

The original time table for convening a state convention called for the first meeting to be in Cincinnati in September,

1825. Communications, however, were far from effective; and delegates from only eight neighboring churches gathered with the Cincinnati Society. It was decided to postpone the convention until the fourth Monday in May, 1826. The small group voted also to convene the 1826 session in Zanesville, where the "north and east sections" could be better represented. The decision to move the first meeting to Zanesville (then the second largest city in the state), represented the genuine concern of these leaders to propose "a general meeting to the delegates...to meet in GENERAL CONVENTION at the Baptist Meeting House in Zanesville."

On May 22, 1826, the Ohio Baptist Convention was born, gathering delegates from virtually every section of Ohio except the "destitute" northwest region which was as yet scarcely populated with any Baptists at all. The organization brought together thirty-nine "messengers" which, however small in number, linked about 7,000 Baptist communicants in Ohio together. Admitting that they were "comparatively strangers to each other," the delegates lost no time in organizing along the societal model and called for the employment of missionaries who, with little money in view, were willing to "run the risk of obtaining a compensation for their services from those among whom they may labor."

Two observations need to be pointed out about this new organization. First, an article in the constitution, distinctively Baptist, declared:

> "The convention shall never possess a single attribute of power or authority over any church or association. It specifically and forever disclaims any right or prerogative of this kind; hereby avowing that cardinal principle, that every church is sovereign and independent, and capable of managing its own internal concerns, without the least interference or assistance from any body of men on earth."

One can almost feel the fierce independence among Ohio Baptists by reading these words.

A second observation becomes significant only after years of change. It involves the characterization of the role of the "Corresponding Secretary," an office held by Rev. George C. Sedwick of the Zanesville Church. This position, important in the function of communication from the beginning, was eventually to evolve into the role of the Convention's Executive Minister. This office was not a paid position in those early days, nor was it full-time. Yet, over the years, this office was singled out as the vital link which was needed to unify the energies of home missions among Ohio Baptists.

REV. GEORGE C. SEDWICK

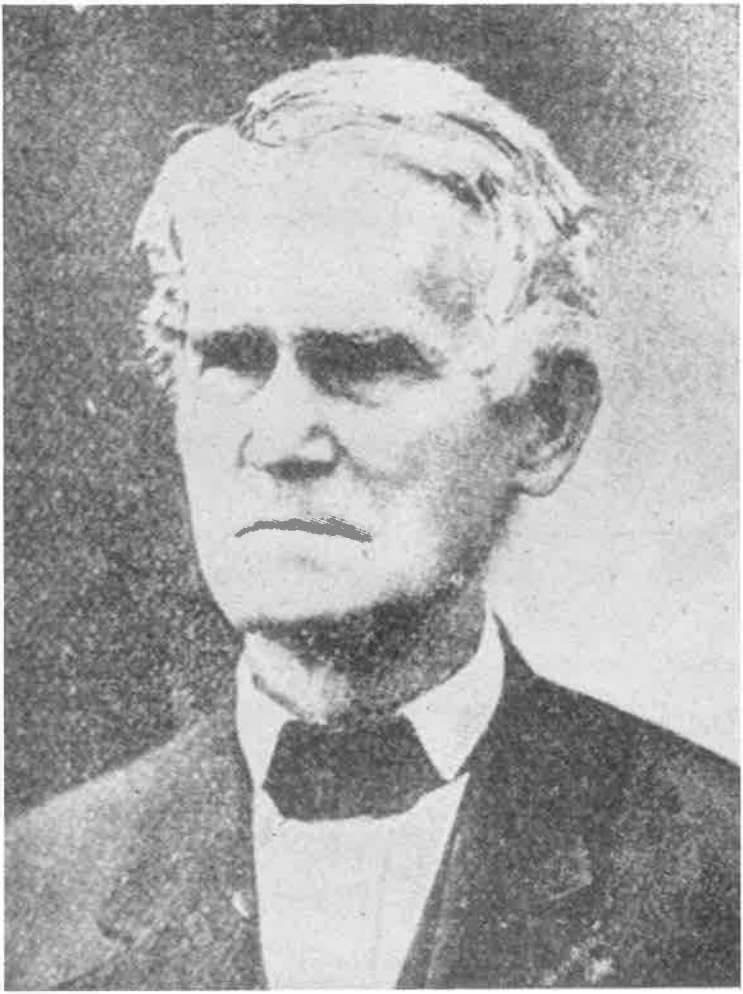
The early labor in the missionary enterprise under the aegis of the State Convention continued to fall upon the itinerant pioneer preacher who most generally farmed in season, and then carved out an area of responsibility for his preaching efforts at other times of the year. Typical was the account of Rev. Aaron Sargent of Clermont County who described his ministry in 1833 in his own solecistic writing style:

"As I have preached once a month Statedly to four Churches on Saturday and Sunday and the extent of Distance between from east to west about forty miles- and beside these - I have preached to five or six other churches in my Journiing - on Weekdays, Besides destitute neighborhoods and villages...for the most of the time I have preached twice a day and some days three times. Besides Religious interviews and conversations with parents and their Children and on some of these Occasions have Seene parents and Children melted To tears of prospects my hopes and fear alternate Have Risen. Sometimes I have had the unspeakable pleasure of seeing my Congregations Deeply engaged in the service of God While Saints Rejoiced Sinners mourned on account of Their Sins. Then preaching seemed an easy and Delightful theme, but perhaps at the next meeting prospects would seem quite different and inattention seems to prevail."

It must be admitted that the average Baptist layman and minister both were poorly educated. But the laymen faithfully upheld their ministers observing clearly that they had "gifts of heart" far greater than their "gifts of mind," as one friend put it. Thomas Coke, the early Methodist bishop, once commented: "The abilities of their (Baptist) ministers in general were peculiarly small; but their zeal was much, and God was pleased to own it."

A few leaders, however, emerged in Ohio among Baptists, who, in retrospect, appear as prodigious leaders of vision and competence. One of these was Noble S. Johnson, a lay member of the Enon Church in Cincinnati. Elected president of the Ohio Baptist State Convention in 1827, Johnson served eight years as president and made his most lasting contribution to the Baptist cause by his recruitment of Rev. John Stevens, who, without question, was the single most respected and accomplished leader among Ohio Baptists for several decades. Johnson and Stevens joined in partnership to found the **Cross and Baptist Journal** (later called the **Journal and Messenger**), a weekly newspaper, which lasted almost a century as the most important news organ among Baptists in the Ohio River valley region.

John Stevens, a graduate of the Newton Theological Institution, was an eastern man, had been trained to be a teacher, and had come west to assume the editorship of the proposed Baptist paper. Professor Irah Chase of Newton Centre wrote to him suggesting that he not stay in Cincinnati too long, since he



REV. JOHN STEVENS, D.D.

would probably be unhappy there. But, in a later letter, Chase advised him to stay, observing, "The present is a most important crisis in our affairs at the West, particularly in Ohio." Eastern leaders viewed Ohio as a crucial state among Baptists in the West. Stevens stayed in Ohio virtually all of his life and became, in the best sense of the term, a "western" man. No one person, perhaps, did so much for the Ohio Baptist Convention as he.

# III Ohio Baptists were Progressive

From the start, some Baptists in Ohio opposed the missionary effort. In one of the original documents of organization of the Convention in 1826, a comment was made: "There are some of our brethren...who have imbibed the strange idea that it is not their duty to unite in the cause of mission...There are others who openly opposed the missionary work."

The term "missions" often embraced a number of moral crusades. There were societies to keep the Sabbath, to prohibit the mail from being shipped on the Lord's Day, to call for total abstinence, to support the Sunday School, to supply tracts and Bibles, to send the slaves back to Africia, to educate the Indians - all of this in addition to the support of foreign missions and the home missions projects of building churches in the West.

But these crusades conjured up, in the minds of many older Baptist veterans, the struggles of some fifty years earlier when the "State Churches" of some eastern colonies sought to coerce citizens into rigid creedal beliefs. There was a basic suspicion among many Baptists, almost visceral in substance, which caused them to react against the changing climate of the times. And change was certainly in the mood of America's religious activities. Ohio was as caught up in the change as other areas of the nation. A flood of religiously-based movements poured into Ohio, from revivalism and millenial excitement to "Yankee" and Catholic theological constructs - all vying for attention by the "Western mind."

Baptists in Ohio, generally, did not want real change. They even avoided the towns and villages when building their local "meeting houses," enjoying instead a location a mile or so outside of the town near a shady grove of trees convenient for hitching the horses. But they could not avoid this increasingly heterogeneous character of the immigrants. One complained, "Each one brings his peculiar views along with him, and will often insist that the way they did things in England or Scotland, in the Eastern, Middle, or Southern States, was the best way."

Two theological controversies shook and threatened Ohio Baptists in the late 1820's and the 1830's more than at any time in their history until the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the twentieth century which shattered the basic unity among Convention member churches. These two controversies centered first in the reactions to the theology of Alexander Campbell, and secondly, in the issue of missions itself as an evangelistic effort in gathering conversions. When the debates were over, it was clear that the "Disciples" of Campbell and the antimission churches each traveled in different directions, and Ohio Baptists found their unity in a surprisingly progressive attitude. This progressive mood allowed, first, for the safe-guarding of cherished New Testament truth, and secondly, for the privilege of using new, exciting innovations for evangelism.

Change did not come easily to Baptists. Rev. John Leland of Virginia, one of the great names among Baptists during the Revolutionary War years, bemoaned the swift change which he was witnessing in his old age. He wrote:

> "A new order of things has taken place in the religious department since we began to preach. Then, when I went to meeting, I expected to hear the preacher set forth the ruin and recovery of men, and laboring with heavenly zeal to turn many into righteousness. His eyes, his voice and his prayers and deportment gave evidence that his soul travailed in birth for the salvation of his hearers. But now, when I go to meeting, I hear high encomiums on Sunday Schools - Bible, Tract, and Missionary Societies, Antimasonic Societies, etc.; with a strong appeal to people to aid with their money these institutions, which are to introduce the Millennium, assuring the people that every cent may save a soul."

One could ask, in the spirit of Leland, "Where does one find missionary societies in the New Testament?" "If the New Testament is our model, how do we justify this new kind of organization?" These were the same kinds of questions which Rev. Alexander Campbell was asking in his publication **Christian Baptist.** His was a call to the "primitive" New Testament style of Christian doctrine. "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak," he asserted, "and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent."

In addition, Campbell was crusading for another issue. He was calling for an easier step-by-step method to declare one's faith in Christ. Baptist tradition had insisted on a more "Calvinistic" approach in which the verification of a believer's

conversion rested upon a deep psychic affirmation which could be expressed verbally in terms of an "experience." Campbell was attempting to make it simplier to accept Christ, while the Baptists were attempting to retain a valid, life-changing, if indeed mystical, confession of faith in each convert. Both were needed among Ohio Baptists in the 1820s.

As pastor of the Wellsburg Church in the panhandle of (West) Virginia, Campbell found the Mahoning Baptist Association in the Youngstown area to be amenable to his leadership, after his church had joined in 1824. Mahoning Baptists were entranced by his views on immersion and his partison skills to debate Biblical doctrines. And it was not long until Campbellite theology won the majority of Baptists in virtually every church. The five years following Campbell's entrance into the Mahoning circle in 1824 were indeed phenomenal years. The Campbellite evangelist, Walter Scott, electrified the region drawing large and responsive audiences and winning remarkably large numbers of converts. By 1829 the Mahoning Association had dissolved itself announcing that "associations" were clearly not listed in the New Testament. The association was the first to embrace the "Reformation" of Campbell, and did so with the largest majority. Only a few remnants of Baptist congregations endured in the 1830s in the Mahoning territory.

The controversy swept across Ohio during the years 1825 to 1830 particularly. The Stillwater Association, just to the south of Mahoning, and the Killbuck Association in the general area of Holmes County, joined Campbell's movement. Churches were split; preachers were forced to choose one side or the other; bitterness resulted in a large segment of Ohio churches. The Ohio Baptist Convention was perhaps most threatened because of the strength of Campbellite theology in the Cincinnati region. Rev. David S. Burnet, whose Baptist father, Isaac, had served as city mayor for a lengthy period, joined Campbell's Disciples. Heralded as the "Boy Preacher," Burnet had become pastor of the fast growing Dayton Church. Under his leadership the church was swept into the new movement. Burnet's defection to Campbell cut off the Baptists from a remarkably gifted leader. Married to a daughter of John S. Gano in 1830, he also deeply influenced an important Baptist family in Cincinnati and was able to lead many into the "Christian reformation."

In one sense, Ohio Baptists gave birth to one of the great denominations in America, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Only once in the nineteenth century, around the year 1870, did the two Ohio groups talk seriously about some sort

of reunion, But, by then, Baptists, numbering about 39,000 and the Disciples, numbering about 30,000, were two separate and growing denominations unable to entertain the loss of their corporate identity.

The emergence of the Campbellite movement represented no small adjustment for Ohio Baptists. Baptists now had to share their claim as "New Testament Christians" with a formidable competitor. Both asserted an authentic scriptural stance. As a result, Ohio Baptists had to redefine the nature of conversion within their fellowship. They did not want the "externalism" of Campbell's ideas which were, to the Baptist mind, too "mechanical" and smacked of baptismal regeneration. They wanted to retain, as one Baptist remarked, "the internal work of grace by the Holy Spirit upon the heart." But no longer could Ohio Baptists retreat into the esoteric mysteries of out-moded Calvinistic thought. They were forced into becoming more progressive.

A second controversy among Ohio Baptists exploded in the 1830s over the matter of missions and missionary tactics. The struggle was, in a way, far more dangerous to the continuing growth of the Ohio Baptist Convention, since most churches in Ohio, small and rural in nature, were not far removed at all from the antimission attitudes which created the deep schism among Ohio Baptists.

The controversy had several sides to it. There were the political tensions which had put the "westerner" Andrew Jackson into the White House, not at all to the liking of many seaboard citizens. There was the western suspicion of the educated "eastern" preacher, who had come west either as a pastor or missionary agent. The eastern men had their own private agenda upon moving west which was not totally secret. John Stevens privately betrayed his early attitude about the Baptist residents of Cincinnati in a letter to which his friend replied, "Your picture of Baptist churches in your city is sufficiently mortifying to our denominational pride. I do hope that a brighter day is now dawning upon you." Furthermore, there was the aggravation in knowing that money was always flowing out of the West into eastern banks. Cash given to missions was no different; it usually flowed eastward to enrich the eastern banker. Most of these attitudes did not surface in Baptist literature or in Baptist sermons, since political preaching smacked too much of state-church behaviour. But they could not have been very far below the surface.

Perhaps two important attitudes among antimission Baptists could illustrate the most basic contentions argued among their ministers. First, there was the threat of doctrinal hetero-

geneity. Rev. Wilson Thompson, the most prominent antimission Baptist of the thirties, lamented, "O that times were as in years past, when the very name of a regular Baptist Church was enough to teach any one what were the doctrines held by its members." Obviously those days were over in Ohio. There were many kinds of Baptists within the State Convention churches, some educated, mostly uneducated, some paid preachers, mostly unpaid, some "Gillites," some "Fullerites," terms that need to be defined presently. The antimission preacher was remarkably self-educated in Biblical doctrine; but he felt secure only within the categories of his traditional patterns of thought.

A second important attitude must have involved the vocational convictions of Ohio's antimission ministers. Almost all of the Baptist ministers in Ohio gained their livelihood by means of some secular employment, most often farming. They were expected to support themselves. A congregation generally had its church meeting only once a month; and most congregations and antimission ministers could not envision adequate monetary support for the clergy.

Consequently, the Baptist system in the West tended to produce a minister, bi-vocational in outlook, who was fiercely independent and easily suspicious of any change. They were a breed apart toward which the eastern Baptist clergy scarcely restrained their disdain. Dr. Jonathan Going, while president of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, described the Ohio ministers in a private letter, saying:

> "I have formed a short acquaintance with some half a hundred Ohio Baptist ministers. Though they are generally illiterate, they appear to be pious, and many of them devoted servants of our dear Lord. They exhibit a motley appearance, dressed in all kinds of garbs and colors."

The antimission debate erupted particularly over the issue of methods used to convert the listener to Christ. The "old school" preacher, following the strict Calvinism of Rev. John Gill (1697-1771), an English theologian, expected that "God will save his elect" and that no "means" or use of "effort" should interfere with God's work. This type of theology identified strongly with a view of "particular" atonement. The more progressive minister, following Rev. Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), another English Baptist preacher, used "direct appeals and exhortation to those whose conversion they desired." A view of "general" atonement was implied here.

Actually the controversy came late among Baptist in Ohio. It had decimated Baptist unity in Indiana and Kentucky some

two decades before, hence the crucial nature of the struggle in Ohio in the thirties. Ohio Baptists belatedly had to face the issue. Were they "progressive" or were they "old-school?" John Stevens admitted, "All the Convention brethren are suspected of being Arminians." And indeed so they were to the chagrin of the antimission forces. One old pioneer minister pleaded with his friends who were divided on the issues. "And when it is considered that all our differences arise not from doctrine, but from a **qualifying view of the atonement** - let us agree, forthwith, to dispense with the unscriptural and unprofitable terms, **general** and **particular**, and harmony will soon be restored." But such was not to be the case.

It is significant that the revolt against missions and "bevolent institutions" was led by the Muskingum and Miami Baptist Associations, particularly because of their proximity to the most ambitious projects among Ohio Baptists. Close to the Muskingum region, the Granville Literary and Theological Institute was under way in 1831 under the direction of eastern men. In the Miami area, Rev. Samual W. Lynd, pastor in 1831 of the Sixth Street (later Ninth Street) Church of Cincinnati, and the first Baptist leader truly of national stature to settle in an Ohio pastorate, set about to make Cincinnati the intellectual and missionary center for Western Baptists. A series of annual conventions began in 1833 in Cincinnati called the Western Baptist Convention. The Old-School ministers could not have missed the import of both projects in Ohio.

The Muskingum Baptist Association was undoubtedly the first to revolt against the State Convention. As early as August, 1832, the Association voted to become "Baptists of the Old School," and to allign themselves with other Old School Baptists who had just organized nationally. The working relationships between churches and associations were as yet so tenuous and fragile in the case of the Muskingum churches that the vote did not even cause a murmur of surprise or concern. Perhaps few knew of the decision.

A similar vote by the Miami Association to reject the missionary enterprise of the Ohio Baptist Convention in 1835, however, caused a lengthy storm. Within a year there were two Miami Baptist Associations. The schism triggered a domino effect; and a statewide controversy resulted in two other associations splitting into two identically-named factions, viz. Mad River and Scioto. Not only associations, but also churches divided over the matter. For example, the Lebanon Church by mutual consent dissolved and divided itself between the antimission party which formed the "West Lebanon" Church and the mission faction which took the name

"East Lebanon" Church.

Several other antimission associations were formed over the years, and can be traced by the use of such titles, chronologically, as first "Predestinarian," then "Regular." and finally "Primitive." The schism meant the loss of many small rural churches in southern and central Ohio particularly. But, in terms of numerical strength, it is significant that the larger congregations retained their allegience to missions. The schism actually proved liberating to the Convention. There was now an implicit acknowledgement that every Baptist church in the state had a responsibility and a stake in the missionary cause. Ohio Baptists had taken a stand as a progressive people.

# IV Ohio Baptists were Educators

Baptist concern for education made an appearance early. Rev. Thomas G. Jones, for years pastor in Wooster, and one of the great names among early Ohio ministers, was the guiding light in calling upon Baptists "to form a society for the purpose of raising a fund to assist pious young men who are desirous to engage in the work of the ministry, to obtain education, and to invite other associations to unite with us in the plan." A committee of ministers generally described as "The Baptist Theological Society for the education of young men for the ministry" was gathered in 1816. Out of this beginning, the Ohio Baptist Education Society was officially formed at Youngstown in the same year.

Such educational training was sorely needed among Baptist ministers. It was customary for a young man "to exercise his gifts in public," regardless of his educational background, in order to see if he were talented in preaching. Until the 1830s, not one Baptist minister in Ohio gave evidence of having received anything beyond the most rudimentary education.

The Education Society was all but moribund until 1830 when, spurred by the utter lack of educated leadership among the clergy, the Society members met at Lebanon to reorganize and to rewrite a constitution. Out of these and subsequent meetings came the proposal to establish "a literary and theological Seminary" to train ministers in Ohio. From the start a few Cincinnati leaders wanted such a seminary in the Cincinnati region, preferably in Newport, Kentucky. A decision to locate in Granville which was more central in the state resulted chiefly because of the energies of the two preachers of the Granville church, Rev. James Berry and Rev. Allen Darrow, who had secured local pledges to purchase a nearby farm. The site was considered rural enough to be a "safe" atmosphere" for the education of Baptist students.

The visit of Rev. Jonathan Going of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1831 profoundly altered the direction of the school's purposes by his proposal that the curriculum be broad-

REV. THOMAS G. JONES

ened beyond the proposed theological studies. The school originally opened in 1831 as the "Granville Literary and Theological Institute" and eventually became known as Denison University.

From the start, the small school floundered almost yearly with indebtedness. The first president, Rev. John Pratt, a graduate of Amberst, had not been on the job a year when a disastrous fire leveled the main building and saddled the enterprise with a mountainous debt for rebuilding. Few friends of education could be found during the early years.

DR. JONATHAN GOING

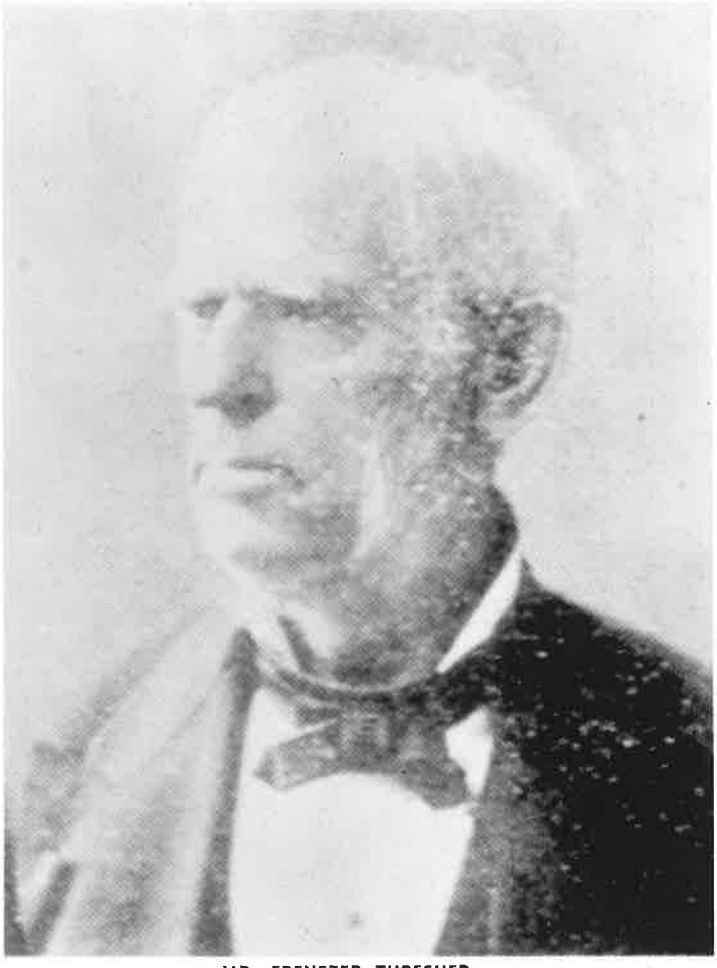
One associational report admitted that "perhaps one third of our denomination is hostile to the Institution, and perhaps another third is quite indifferent whether it lives or dies." When President Pratt resigned in utter desperation, a call went out to John Stevens to leave his Baptist newspaper and come to Granville to head the new college. Stevens did not want to go; but the question, forcibly put to him, was "Whether the Institution is to live or die." Then, providentially, Dr. Jonathan Going

consented to leave the East and the leadership of the ABHMS to become the new college president. He asked for one condition, however, that Stevens also come to the Institution. Stevens was told: "Dr. G. would be paid for his character, and you for your work." Obviously Stevens was to reorganize the faculty and curriculum while Going was to add his national prestige to gather funds for the survival of the school. The future did not look at all bright when, in the panic year of 1837, the Ohio Education Society tried to get a $200 loan in the East in order to pay the moving costs of Dr. Going to Ohio, and was told by an eastern agent, "The report is that the money could not be had in the East were it to save the State of Ohio." Somehow the money was raised, Going did arrive, and the school miraculously endured.

The school survived those financially desperate years only because of the heroic exertions of the leaders. President Going soon drove himself to exhaustion and death in his attempt to underwrite the expenses needed for the school. He left a debt of over $10,000 - more than when he began. The fact was that Ohio Baptists never responded with much generosity to Denison, unless one counts the singularly large gifts from individuals and especially those in the first Baptist Church of Dayton, the constant angel of the school for many decades.

One of the reasons for the continuous financial difficulties of the college during the early years was the reluctance of the Miami Valley Baptists to support such an educational venture located north of the National Road. Rev. Samuel W. Lynd, pastor of the Ninth Street Church in Cincinnati, along with Ehpraim Robins and others, had in mind to establish a theological seminary for all Western Baptists in Covington, Kentucky, a proposal espoused also by John Mason Peck. Doubtless this was one of the main purposes in Lynd's mind in helping to organize the Convention of Western Baptists and then in persuading them to convene in Cincinnati for their meetings. Only the strong leadership of the newly established theological department at Granville in which President Going and Professor Stevens taught Theology and Moral Philosophy delayed an early development of the Covington project.

The division of cash commitments had worked an extreme hardship on the Granville institution. Calling the Cincinnati men "incorrigible" and "hardhearted," Henry Miller, the hymn book publisher and member of the Ninth Street Church, sympathized with President Going, writing. "I do not accept the apologies that are made for not lending a helping hand to Granville." Denison University did not firmly stabilize its financial support until Rev. Samson Talbot, the young and popular



MR. EBENEZER THRESHER

minister of First Baptist, Dayton, consented to come to Granville in 1863 as the new president. Talbot carried with him the personal friendship of a group of remarkably dedicated and wealthy Dayton Baptists who, more than any other group, sustained the cause of Denison for many decades. Names such as Ebenezer Thresher, Elim E. Barney, William P. Huffman, C. H. Crawford, and J. B. Thresher gave their wholehearted support to Talbot and his successors. A later writer once commented about Ebenezer Thresher, observing, "Above any other man, he was the founder of Denison University. All that was before him was temporary."

Meanwhile, in the Miami Valley region, the wealthiest Baptist area in Ohio, several of the leaders felt a sincere commitment to make the area the leading theological Baptist center in western country. Consequently, in 1840, the Western Baptist Theological Institute was incorporated on a large tract of land in the Covington, Kentucky area. Rev. Robert E. Pattison of Massachusetts, who had formerly worked with the Board of Foreign Missions, came to assume the presidency of the seminary.

But it was the wrong time for cooperation between Ohio and Kentucky people. The decade of the 1840s brought the rumblings of sectional anomosities which soon brought a disastrous conclusion to the cooperative venture of a Baptist seminary among Kentucky and Ohio Baptists. Pattison was too closely involved in Cincinnati affairs, an "infected" area in "Southern" eyes, where antislave pronouncements could easily catch the ears of young and sensitive seminarians.

When the Kentuckians heard that President Pattison had termed the Alabama Resolution (a ploy which prompted the eventual division between Northern and Southern Baptists in 1845) as the "Alabama demon," he was soon accused of designing a plot to "place the institution entirely in the hands and under the control of the free states." Without doubt, such plans were prepared. When Pattison resigned abruptly, Rev. Samuel Lynd made one last effort to save his dream of almost two decades. By then pastor in St. Louis, he resigned his church, came to Covington in 1848 as the president and teacher, and discovered within a year that he had but one student. Kentucky Baptists would not trust their theological students so near to Cincinnati.

Ohio Baptists quickly purchased land, and later, in 1853, built a new seminary just north of the city limits of Cincinnati, calling it Fairmount. The abandonment of Lynd by his Cincinnati friends gives evidence to the deep cleavage over the issue of slavery. "Lynd has nothing to sacrifice in regard to the North," commented one Ohio Baptist in a letter. "He has already sold himself to the South."

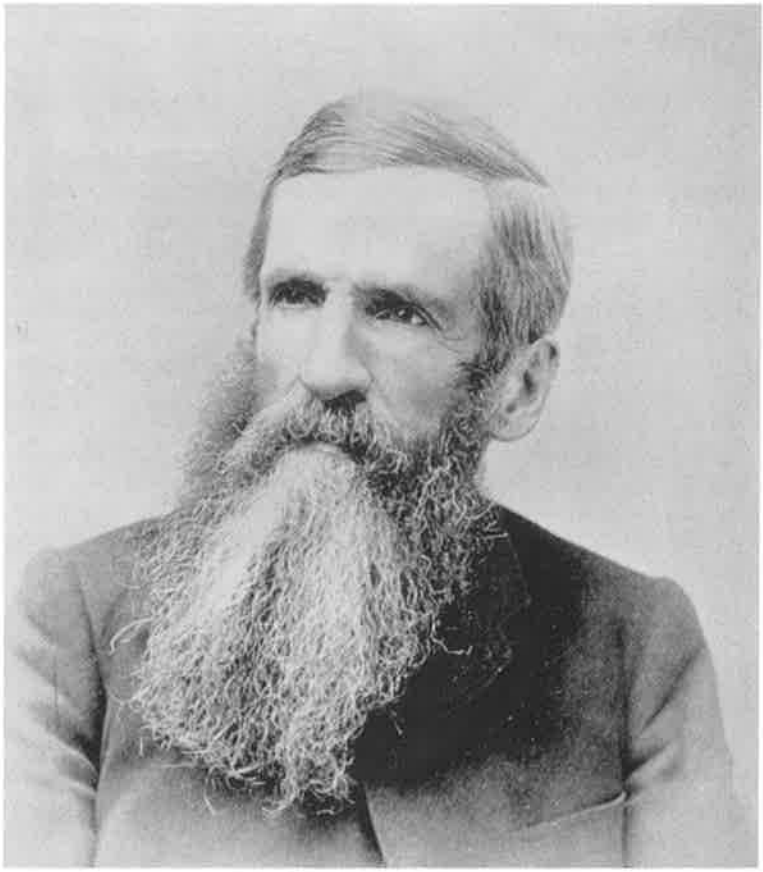
Fairmount Seminary now meant theological education for the Northwest rather than for all the West. And Ohio had two schools to support - an obvious reason why both schools struggled so frantically during the fifties. Denison even suspended its teaching for almost a year during the financial uncertainty. Fairmount graduated four classes of students; and then, suddenly, in 1858, the growing indebtedness forced the school to close. Sadly, Cincinnati Baptists found themselves burdened with the same lack of support experienced by Granville when Cincinnati had denied the earlier aid. Several

attempts were made to reopen the school, but Fairmount did not reopen. Not long after, in October, 1867, the Baptist Union Theological Seminary opened its doors in Chicago one block from the (earlier) University of Chicago; and the last vestige of hope for Cincinnati and indeed for Ohio to become the mecca for Baptist theological leadership in the western states completely vanished. After the demise of Fairmount, Granville emerged as the single location for higher education in the state for Regular Baptists and attracted a growing allegiance of the state's pastors.

Denison's contribution to Ohio Baptists and to the larger body of Baptist life throughout America began to produce a substantial return. In addition to the Dayton support, churches in the Cleveland area, another prosperous section of the state by mid-century, added strong fraternal and monetary support.

The truthfulness of one editorial comment, that "the attachment of our people to our college is feeble, because they have done so little for it," has generally been true through its long history. A significant loyalty, however, developed over the decades following the Civil War. As young ministerial students from the college were invited to visit and preach in local Ohio pulpits, the rationale for scholarship aid for future ministers attracted a growing response among the rank and file members of local congregations. The basis for support lay in the familiar themes among Ohio Baptists - evangelism and missions. Perhaps Ebenezer Thresher said it best when he remarked about his constant support of the school, "If Baptists educate them, they have them; and whoever has the youth soon has possession of the land." In 1873, between twenty and thirty students were planning to become ministers out of the student body of nearly two hundred. A list of the ministers who emerged from Denison to fulfill the dreams of Ohio Baptists would exhaust a larger volume than this short history.

One cannot complete the story of Baptist higher education in Ohio without mentioning the coeducational efforts. The Young Ladies' Institute was founded in the basement of the Granville Baptist Church in 1859, reorganizing a "seminary for young ladies" which was originally instituted as early as 1832. The ministry of one man, Rev. Daniel Shepardson, first pastor at Piqua, and then the long-time proprietor of the Institute, was also a very real part of the development of the Denison University tradition. The "seminary for young ladies" was designed as a sister school for Denison in those founding days. "What we need," reasoned Shepardson, "is a leading class of deeply religious and wholly intelligent women to mold and control all the departments of society in the interests of Christ's cause."



REV. DANIEL SHEPARDSON

Named Shepardson College in 1886, the school for young ladies eventually merged with Denison in 1927, after an ever increasing trend toward cooperation between the two schools.

Toward the end of the century, Denison University began to change perceptively. The strict discipline of older days became much more relaxed. The school began slowly to move away from its earlier church-centered moorings, taking on broader lines of study in addition to the traditional classical courses. Nevertheless, long after other church related colleges were showing concern over the reduction of ministerial volunteers, Denison could boast of a substantial group of young men preparing for the ministry. Only in the middle decades of our present century has the drift between college and state denomination altered the distinctively Baptist characterization of the school.

# V Ohio Baptists were People of the Soil

One of the most significant characteristics of Baptists when the Convention was formed in 1826 was that they were rural. Baptist congregations felt much more at home building their meeting houses a mile or two outside of town rather than within the village environs. Congregations in Cambridge, Mansfield, and Marietta, to mention only a few, preferred for a number of years to journey each Sunday-meeting occasion out into the country for their worship. This tendency to avoid towns and villages was far too common a practice to be coincidental. The trend gives us a clue to the individualistic and independent make-up of many Baptist congregations.

The practice was especially grievous to the dreams and efforts of the State Convention leaders. There was a total lack of control over Baptist growth within the state prior to the Civil War. Baptist churches mushroomed to an amazing extent in out-of-the-way locations, where they were destined to languish or die in the coming years. During the same years, few churches were established in strategic villages or county seats. The major efforts and the major failures of the State Convention can fairly well be summed up in the continuous projects to build and sustain Baptist congregations in urban locations which had been deliberately ignored during the early years of settlement.

Ohio Baptists were not only rural; they were also mobile. Many Baptists were part of the great movement westward. Families, and at times, entire congregations would settle for a brief time in Ohio only to respond to "western fever," which meant picking up their meager belongings and moving farther westward to begin again. Often a few remaining church members who were left with the upkeep of a meeting house would struggle along without pastoral leadership for decades. It was not infrequent for an association to receive notice that a church had "lost its visibility," a quaint but picturesque manner of reporting that the congregation had not been meeting regularly and had all but disbanded.

For many years, most Baptists in Ohio were also "thirty-day" Baptists. It was, no doubt, a matter of necessity as well as a matter of tradition. There were just not enough ministers to fill all of the meeting house pulpits. A thirty-day Baptist was a church member who met only once a month with his own fellow church members. Quite often, however, these "monthly" Baptists would go visiting on the other three Sundays and worship with other Baptist congregations, since the meeting houses were frequently only a few miles apart. And, on the "fifth Sunday" there could well have been an important associational "Visitation" meeting in some particularly feeble church which had no local pastor. Even the village churches were often of the thirty-day variety, to the dismay and concern of the few progressive pastors in the State.

The picture of the "average" Ohio Baptist in the pre-Civil War era now comes more clearly into focus. Small and rural in character, deeply suspicious of any hierarchical leadership, committed to the most loosely-structured type of Baptist connectional system, Ohio Baptists were far more feeble in actual organization than their rhetoric would suggest. In 1838, the average membership of the 364 Baptist churches in Ohio was thirty-eight. Also, about the same time, in 1836, only ten churches claimed the full-time attention of a minister. Furthermore, only fifteen congregations boasted preaching services every Sunday. Indeed, "the monthly system" was the Baptist system for pre-Civil War Ohio.

One can sympathize with the State Convention leaders who watched the yearly increase of migration and development within the state, and who, then all but despaired of orderly and systematic growth of the Baptist witness. One Convention leader lamented, "The apostles first laid siege to the cities. Here, again, our churches are unlike the primitive churches. Ours are mostly in the country."

There was a plan for growth. Home missions! The American Baptist Mission Society (ABHMS) had been founded in 1832 with Rev. Jonathan Going serving as its first Corresponding Secretary. This national society quickly began commissioning missionaries to move westward and settle in growing towns. The plan was to build Baptist churches through a more settled type ministry rather than through the support of the less productive pioneer itinerant. The cooperation given by the ABHMS in supplying high caliber ministers from 1832 until 1843 supported the Ohio convention during very crucial years. The ABHMS missionaries were both rugged and godly men, given to as much pioneer mission work as the older itinerant at times. One such man wrote in 1836:

"Crossing Wills creek, proceeded southwest, over hills and through deep gutters or hollows, following blind paths, several times losing my way, but finally arrived a little before night, and got up a meeting. Received some encouragement. This was a hard day's work."

Gradually the missionary became the settled pastor who first went out to organize and then ministered to a struggling new congregation in one of the growing county seat villages in Ohio.

One can trace the growth of Ohio's population by the emergence first of young struggling Baptist churches, and then by the formation of new Baptist associations. There were never enough ministers or missionaries to meet the need and the Macedonian calls. While Ohio steadily increased in population, and the opportunities for Baptist ministries multiplied, the number of churches and associations within the state never really kept pace.

The years of courageous effort to evangelize the Ohio countryside, and simultaneously, the painful dilemma of persevering in the gigantic task with woefully inadequate funds, is the story of nineteenth century home missions among Baptists in Ohio. To say that leadership for this crusade lay with the State Convention during these years is somewhat misleading. The Convention was a victim of its own autonomy, existing and receiving funds only by the fragile good will of all too few progressive churches in the state. The real leadership rested upon a small group of noble men whose vision was almost always larger than their monetary and numerical strength.

Three categories of leadership should be listed in order to understand missions in pre-Civil War Ohio. The first, and perhaps the hardest working of the three types of leaders, were the missionary pastors. Usually supported on a subsistence allotment of $12.50 per month from the State Convention, the missionary struggled to gather a Baptist flock, keep his economic dignity, and cultivate a growing congregation. It was not easy. Many men spoke about the "pecuniary embarrassment of the times," and all too quickly wandered off to another field. One man, either with greater wisdom or less courage, depending on one's point of view, wrote to John Stevens in 1839, "I have an expensive family to support, and the amount of salary you have hitherto given would not be sufficient to sustain them." One can imagine the reasons for complaints of "the frequent removal of pastors" and the "restive spirit which prevails so extensively among us at the present times."

A second category of leadership is seen in the role of the Corresponding Secretary. From the first, this office was

singularly important in matters of communication. Perhaps Rev. John Stevens, for many years the Corresponding Secretary, had a large measure of influence because of his position as editor of the Ohio Baptist newspaper, the **Cross and Baptist Journal**. But other Corresponding Secretaries who followed the gifted Stevens were equally prominent and influential in the guidance of Convention and home mission affairs.

The third group of men who must be mentioned were called "Agents," a term which took on a variety of meanings throughout several decades. To understand the work of a Convention agent, one must visualize a scrupulously honest and dedicated man traveling from church to church collecting missionary money for a variety of causes. An agent in Ohio often worked for several benevolent causes at once, among which were included the Ohio Baptist Convention, Denison University, Bible Societies, the Foreign Missionary Society, the ABHMS, to name the more prominent ones. It was difficult work, going from church to church. One man refused an agent's job by writing to Stevens, "I think my constitution is too feeble to endure the labor and exposure of such an agency." But the labor was not the only worry. Rev. John L. Moore, who served as Convention Agent for more than a decade, beginning in 1838, announced, "I wish it distinctly understood that I am not about to leave the ministry and become a collecting agent for the Convention." There seemed to have been a second-class quality of ministry about the position. And that was not all. Perhaps the most agonizing cut of all can be seen in a comment in a private letter from an agent to Stevens in 1852. He remarked, "I am sick at heart of this eternal croaking about agents' salaries." It was clear; raising money was not a popular task.

The significance of the two different positions, that of Corresponding Secretary and that of Financial Agent, as it was soon called, appears in the fact that as early as 1840, the two offices were held by a single man, Rev. Orrin M. Sage, formerly pastor of the Massillon Church. The elected and unpaid office of Corresponding Secretary, and the paid but appointed job of overseeing the collection of missionary money among Baptist churches together eventually evolved into the role of Executive Minister for the State Convention. With the addition of yet another title, emerging especially out of the Civil War era, that of "Superintendent of Missions," the dim outline of our modern concept of an Executive Minister can now be seen.

It is also significant that the role of Convention Agent gained importance under the leadership of a minister named Rev. Reuben Winchell who introduced the Village Plan to Ohio Bap-

tists. By modern standards, in terms of money, the plan was not at all substantially successful. Nevertheless, it was hailed for years as the most important means for benevolence giving to home missions among Ohio Baptists. And indeed it was. First promoted in Elyria, in 1838, the plan called for individual donors to subscribe five or ten dollars per year for five years. Matching gifts, then, by the ABHMS, for every dollar raised among Ohio Baptists became the working capital which kept an ever increasing number of missionary-pastors in their fields of endeavor. The plan was to promote the Baptist witness in the villages and towns of Ohio, and to encourage a settled ministry. It was a determined attempt to motivate Baptists to face the prospect of an urban future. The fact that the Convention created a "Town and Village Department" in 1840 should not be misunderstood. The problem was not so easily solved. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Ohio Baptists were attempting to overcome their largely rural position.

If each rural Baptist church had remained numerically and spiritually vigorous, the resulting problem would not have been so vexing. But over the years, and especially as the end of the nineteenth century approached, more and more small, "destitute," rural churches, most without pastoral leadership, drained the resources of the State Convention at the time when the new concern was the rapid foreign immigration into our larger cities. The State Convention never did reach its long publicized goal to establish a Baptist church in every county seat in the state.

The highest praise was given to Ohio's rural churches in later years. The city churches were constantly applauding the substantial leadership of their members who had begun their Christian experiences in the rural churches of their youth. It was admitted by everyone that Ohio's urban leadership, both ministerial and lay, came preponderantly from the smaller, open-country, or small town Baptist church. Whether it was a valid observation is not the point; the point is that everyone believed it. It was as if Baptists of a later era were attempting to remember those marvelous early days when small groups of rugged pioneer believers gathered in obscure locations to sustain the Gospel witness.

There was also almost yearly criticism and disdain for the rural congregations. They were condemned for their lack of growth and their constant financial drain upon the Convention budget. This love-hate rhetoric concerning the rural churches started very early, and has continued, in some ways, up to the very present time. Some wise voices have attempted, at times,

to soften the issue. "Perhaps we have said too much against 'once a month' preaching," admitted the Convention President, Rev. Henry F. Colby, of Dayton First, in 1885. Perhaps the most conciliating attitude toward the end of the century was one of nostalgic paternalism. "If we want strong churches, we must keep up the small churches," advised one preacher. It made everyone feel good to hear about one's rural origin.

Without a doubt, the origins of the Baptist witness in Ohio have come from the rural church. It has, through the years, been both the strength and weakness of the Ohio Baptist Convention. Perhaps the most enduring and the most substantial witnesses to the love of Christ in Ohio can be discovered in the small rural churches still active and using buildings which were constructed in out-of-the-way locations around over the state.

# VI Ohio Baptists were Efficient

Efficiency! Perhaps no other word reveals the basic priority of nineteenth century American thought and life. Surely it helps to explain the directions of denominational activity. The words "efficiency" and "inefficiency" were used over and over again. Efficiency, explained by one Baptist leader, included "some plan of operation to...build up these churches and reclaim the moral wastes." Inefficiency, on the other hand, embraced "half-living, half-dying" churches which could not sustain ample pastoral support. The "inefficiency," it was thought, tended to weigh upon the guilt of the congregation. As one report described it, there was "a want of that deep toned earnest piety, or whole and honest hearted devotion to the cause of God and religion." And, indeed, the need for "efficiency" was obvious in one sense. In 1876, Convention leaders pointed out that Ohio's population was, at the last census, 2,655,118, while the members of all religious denominations, Catholics included, did not exceed 600,000. There was surely much "efficient" work to be done.

How efficient were Ohio Baptists? One rather lengthy summation in the year 1878 outlined the real substance of Baptist vitality.

> "Now how many self-sustaining churches have we in the state? The 46,000 Baptists are distributed among 580 churches. From this number, in estimating our available resources, we must at the outset deduct 100 churches, containing 7,000 colored members, as being non-participants in our work. This leaves 480 churches comprising 39,000 white Baptists. But by far the greater part of these are country churches, and there are no less than 365 of them, comprising 22,000 members, making an average membership of about 60 each, which are all destitute of whole time preaching and the majority of which have preaching only once a month. Then deducting fifteen mission fields which sustain whole time preaching only by the help of the Convention,

and which comprise about 1,000 members, with an average membership of about 70, we have left only 100 churches, comprising only 16,000 members, with an average membership of 160, which are self-sustaining churches, having whole time preaching on their own account."

By far, the majority of these "efficient" churches were in towns and cities. Regardless of the love which Ohio Baptists professed for the country church, it was readily acknowledged that the future of the Convention, and, indeed, the future of Ohio's commercial and cultural life, lay with the cities.

Even before the Civil War, Ohio Baptists were deeply involved in city missions, and especially in the bilingual ministries in Cincinnati. In earlier years, the Welsh churches had had to adjust to Ohio life with virtually no help from the Convention; but the coming of the Germans was different. In 1851, the Germans in Cincinnati made up twenty-eight percent of the total population. Observing that so many were Roman Catholics, one Baptist editor warned, "The enemy is coming in like a flood." No less a name than Rev. John Mason Peck visited Ohio in 1853 and aided the State Convention in organizing a "Committee on German Missions." Soon small German congregations and bilingual Sunday Schools blossomed and prospered in several Ohio cities. Several of our strong city churches of today had their origins as German-language missions in the pre-Civil War period.

The emergence of the Baptist City Mission of Cincinnati in 1852, later called the Cincinnati Baptist Social Union in 1868, was basically a response to immigrant needs. Of special concern to the Union was the cultivation of the small struggling German and Negro congregations. In 1869, the Cleveland Baptist Union was organized for similar reasons. Prompted especially by the First Church, the Cleveland Union soon planted Sunday Schools in a number of locations in the city. As in Cincinnati, some of the great churches of Cleveland originated from these Sunday Schools.

A fair amount of energy seemed to have been spent on the support of German missions. Both Cincinnati and Cleveland developed German publication societies in order to communicate to the immigrant in his own language. In addition, the American Baptist Publication Society supported a colporteur within the state to sell German Bibles and witness to immigrant families. While most Americans, newcomer and older resident alike, were busy pursuing the manifold wealth to be gained in the "western" country, a few dedicated men of faith, oblivious of city wealth and status, labored in small, obscure mission

groups. Out of this developed church after church in Ohio's cities.

Less was done to minister among the Negro population. From the beginning, there appeared an obvious barrier between black and white. One can point to early membership lists in several of our Ohio churches to give evidence to the policy of racial integration. But, whenever sufficient numbers were gathered among "our Colored brethren" the tendency was to plant separate churches for each group. As early as 1836, there was formed the Ohio Colored American Baptist Association, initiating in Ohio a sort of dual relationship which has characterized fraternal relationships up until the present time.

Known also in the pre-Civil War days as Antislavery Baptists, Negro Baptists have always accounted for a substantial proportion of the Baptist population within Ohio. They have been particularly strong among the city churches. Although few citizens outside of the Western Reserve region could have been called "abolitionist" in the years before the Civil War, the presence of so many Antislavery Baptists did encourage some of their white brethren to "speak out boldly" concerning "that gigantic sin, American Slavery." The very tension which eroded Baptist friendship between Ohio and its neighboring states of Kentucky and Virginia before the Civil War tended to encourage the fraternal connections among the Negro and white churches north of the Ohio River. A good many promises were publicly uttered by Convention ministers about making "no distinction on account of race or color in extending aid;" but in reality, the Antislavery brethren were afforded little more encouragement after the Civil War than formerly, either in monetary or fraternal terms.

By 1865, a change became apparent in the Ohio Baptist Convention. It emerged more centralized and administratively cohesive than before. Still far from playing a dominant role, the Convention began to seize control in the ordering of its priorities. Rev. John B. Sackett, the Convention Secretary from 1862 to 1870, marked a change in Convention policy when he announced, "We ought no longer to confine ourselves to assisting churches that apply to us for aid in neighborhoods where Baptist influence is already felt, but should seek out, each year some large and growing town, where no Baptists are at present known, send a competent preacher there and support him liberally till he has planted the standard of our denomination, and has gathered about him a self-sustaining church." Such a policy led the Convention toward the building of churches in strategic locations rather than allowing the dispersal of monies in an endless and largely unproductive proliferation of small projects in rural areas.

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Perhaps no Corresponding Secretary hired before the Civil War could have been so assertive as John Sackett. But the nature of the office had evolved by 1865 into a complex responsibility. Sackett was not only Corresponding Secretary, but was also Exploring Missionary, Superintendent of Missions and Financial Agent for the Convention. He traveled approximately 10,000 miles each year into almost every Ohio county, wrote annually about 500 letters, published numerous publicity articles, superintended the printing of the Annual Report, counseled with pastors and laymen, and, during his earlier years on the job, spent

about one-third of his time in "evangelistic labors" in "our mission stations."

For a denomination with a well established episcopacy, such duties would have been routine. But, for Baptists, only thirty years removed from the anti-mission crisis, the leadership of the Secretary was quite remarkable and was descriptive of an evolving rationale for an "efficient" ecclesiastical administrative position. Ohio Baptists were proud of whatever efficiency they could initiate.

There was no group of churches as efficient as those in Cleveland. Thriving, wealthy, progressive in leadership, the Cleveland churches began to assume a strategic amount of leadership by mid-century. For example, Mr. James H. Hoyt, a successful Cleveland lawyer and member of the First Baptist Church, served as president of the Convention for twenty-five years beginning in 1854, contributing measurably to the policies of the Convention. The churches of the Cleveland Association were the largest contributors of any association to the State Convention, carrying an average of twenty-three percent of the state mission budget during the decade of the 1870's. And this does not include the Rockefeller gifts. The first gift of record in the Convention treasurer's report of John D. Rockefeller was in 1878 for $200. For the next forty or more years, Rockefeller singly contributed gifts each year to the various State Missions funds totaling approximately twenty-five percent of the state's budgeted funds. Compared with some of his other gifts, these were very modest. Notwithstanding, a sizeable proportion of Ohio Baptist state mission work can be attributed to the stewardship of Rockefeller, who was for many years the superintendent of the Sunday School at the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church in Cleveland.

Although Cleveland, without doubt, represented the most flourishing region of the state, other urban centers contained significant Baptist vitality. The First Baptist Church of Dayton demands foremost notice. In addition to its substantial support to Denison University, Dayton First contributed the most constant, and for years, the highest single amount of any congregation to the state work. During the 1870's a yearly average of $613.00 represented a gift of about ten percent of the annual receipts from all of the other churches.

It is impossible to list even the leading personalities and leading churches which labored so successfully in Ohio's cities. Perhaps the most well-known city "missionary" among Baptists in Ohio in the second half of the nineteenth century was Rev. Joseph Emery who was hired in 1852 by the Cincinnati City Mission to minister to the indigent and unchurched of

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the city. Emery cultivated a close relationship with the immigrant groups and the Negro population, and became a frequent visitor to Cincinnati's orphan asylums, the House of Refuge, prison, Commercial Hospital, pest house, and the City Infirmary. Largely supported by the Ninth Street Church, Emery developed "mission Sabbath Schools" for "the children who

run the streets uncared for," and, in later years, devoted a substantial portion of his ministry among the city's Negro population.

The historical record in the Convention **Annuals** clearly reveals the attitudes of the Convention leadership during this era. One policy involved efforts to expand the growth of "efficient" urban activity, and contrariwise, to exhort against the "inefficiency" of rural decline as much as possible. The historical record also clearly outlines how limited were the achievements of the State Convention. Rev. Hiram Gear, secretary from 1876 to 1881, not only acknowledged that Steubenville and Chillicothe, with populations of 10,000, had no Baptist witness, but also added a list of twenty other important towns and cities of less population without any Baptist congregation. Gear succeeded in organizing six mission churches during his tenure, one of which was in Steubenville. These six represented a small number compared to the many unoccupied areas within his vision.

Today there are a number of county seat communities where American Baptists never did plant a Baptist witness. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, some ministers began to doubt the wisdom of planting churches in towns and cities which by the 1890's were often "over-churched" by other denominations. "Are there churches enough where there is no Baptist church?", asked Rev. George Wm. Lasher, prominent editor of the **Journal and Messenger.** Most Ohio Baptists agreed with Lasher, viewing their denomination as a "peculiar people," and unique among churches. Lasher, in his editorial, asserted forcefully that there was "not churches enough where there is no Baptist church!!!" But the question became more and more academic with each passing decade. Ohio Baptists, with all their calls for efficiency, were never able to plant the Baptist witness as plentifully and as permanently as the earlier opportunities had afforded.

# VII Ohio Baptists were Builders

No change came more rapidly to the Ohio Baptist Convention than with the sudden increase in Sunday Schools in the early 1870's. The transformation can be observed in the statistics in the years 1870 and 1872. In 1870, 241 Sunday Schools among Ohio's 536 Baptist churches claimed an average attendance of 9,770 members. Just two years later, the number had grown to 427 schools and 26,171 members in average attendance. The cause of this markedly successful increase was probably not so much in the origination of the Ohio Baptist State Sunday School Convention which began in 1870 as in the appointment of Rev. Charles Rhoads in 1871 as the Sunday School Missionary to Ohio by the American Baptist Publication Society.

The more progressive churches among Ohio Baptists had sustained Sunday Schools for years, ever since the Sunday School movement had been denominationalized. Prior to that time, when the schools were at first more interdenomination in character, Baptists tended to be rather suspicious of such an innovation as rather dangerous to the independency of the local church and as reminiscent of the old state-church control which Baptists had resisted so vehemently in the past.

Gradually the Sunday School concept became more and more the **modus operandi** for the mission work by the larger city churches. The Publication Society provided increasingly supplemental materials for teaching, library resources and attendance recording. In the years after the Civil War, at the annual State Convention, the Saturday afternoon and evening sessions gave way to a state-wide Sunday School program with a children's rally on Sunday. Consequently, the churches, always looking for a more "efficient" means to proclaim the Gospel, were ready for the systematic departmentalizing of church life which soon became the church's measure of success.

Without a doubt, the Sunday School movement was the most stimulating ingredient of Ohio Baptist church life in the late nineteenth century. The Sunday School Convention, which com-

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menced also in most of the Baptist associational sessions across the state in the 1870's brought new energy and increased attendance into the old associational programs, and often doubled the time necessary for the delegates to convene into two separate organizations.

The guiding light was Rhoads himself. Attending the associational meetings upon invitation to hold Institutes or special rallies during the adjoining annual Sunday School conventions, Rhoads developed a program for workers which captured the enthusiasm of Baptists throughout the state. As a result, his leadership tended to rival that of the Convention program in importance and popularity. His objective, as he put it, was "to make the membership work, which aids the churches far more than any other thing." Ohio Baptists seemed very willing to work in the Sunday School programs. It is no wonder that their schools grew.

The continued success of Rhoads caused no little tension within the Ohio family. The Convention had invited him more than once to join the staff of the State and serve as leader of the department of Sunday School work. Rhoads, however, had declined the invitations for a number of reasons.

Probably his most serious reservation was the erratic and inadequate funding for State Convention programs. He had seen several state projects, so glamorous when first introduced, quickly disappear for lack of money.

Rev. George E. Leonard, who became the Convention's Corresponding Secretary in 1882, wisely shared the popularity with Rhoads and encouraged the good work of the Sunday School momentum. He cautioned that the Convention leadership should "avoid antagonizing" Rhoads and the Publication Society, and allow them to do their work. "We all know," commented a Board report earlier, "there has been some rubbing that has not been pleasant, growing out of the relation of the S. S. work to the Convention."

Actually what had occurred so quickly in the 1870's and the 1880's was the emergence of two rather autonomous but interdependent organizations which needed to implement workable policies for a new day in church life. A solution did not come to the situation until Rhoads left the state and his successor, Rev. W. A. Holmes consented to serve in a dual role beginning in 1903. He was to be a paid missionary of the Publication Society and an appointed Field Worker serving without state pay under the sponsorship of the Ohio Baptist Convention. The adjustment paved the way, later, for the specialized staff positions which proved so invaluable in the Convention work in the twentieth century.

Sunday Schools meant classes and rooms and - in a word - a new type of architecture. The Sunday School movement was obviously not the only cause for enlarged church edifices. Baptists had also become more sophisticated through the years, and, consequently, were more interested in worshipping in a more expensive "Lord's House" than in God's barn," as one observer put it. Larger buildings developed normally with the growth of church membership and general affluence. But one of the determining factors in the renovation or the construction of a church building, particularly from the 1870's on, was the demand of Sunday School facilities which called for alteration in the basic architecture of church buildings.

Actually architectural styles had been slowly changing as Baptists became increasingly aware of the profound importance of design and taste. "It is the deliberate judgement of the Board," declared a report in 1868, "after years of observation,

that your missions will not be likely to prosper without places of worship under their own control." Furthermore, the report asserted, a congregation would be laboring under "immense disadvantage without suitable church accommodations." Baptist congregations were feeling the cultural pressure to match their architecture with the prosperity, and, at times, the opulence of the Gilded Age.

"Suitable church accommodations" began to involve a departmentalized system of class-room units, a factor which tended to increase the average cost of a new building into a venture much larger than had been needed in former days. The Sunday School rooms soon captured high priority in building, and were almost always so arranged that a movable partition could be lifted or folded in such a way that the extra rooms could be used to accommodate additional seating for the "audience room" where the pulpit stood. There were other portions to be built also, such as the baptistry, the "robing rooms" for baptismal candidates, a bell tower and spire, and the pastor's study. By the 1890's and early 1900's, some Baptist congregations were deeply committed to the concept of the "institutional church" in which the building often included a dining room, a library, sewing and craft rooms, and, if the money were available, gymnasium and recreational facilities. Also, prestige often dictated a pipe organ of recital hall quality.

The average church had come a long way from the once-a-month preaching station so familiar in pioneer days. Many congregations eagerly accepted plans to rebuild along more appropriate and modern lines - whatever their station in wealth and membership could afford. But money was not that easily accumulated. Often congregations with more modest resources competed with one another to attract large gifts from the more wealthy Baptist laymen in the state in order to help in the construction.

It was no wonder that funding for State Missions was so difficult in these decades at the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the available cash among the progressive congregations was often committed to neighborhood mission Sunday School buildings or to ambitious projects of rebuilding a downtown edifice in Gothic proportions. In 1867, the average cost for a Baptist meeting house, according to a committee report, was estimated at $4,000. A year later, in 1868, the Ninth Street Church in Cincinnati occupied its newly renovated edifice (its third in its history) at the cost of $90,000. One can well understand how churches, both large and small, would divert money, frequently without notice, to pursue an important building project of their own.

It was left to Rev. George E. Leonard to work out some plan for the financing of both State Missions Commitments and the many building projects, over the state. During his twenty-one years as Secretary. Leonard took great delight in helping churches raise money for new buildings. He would review their construction plans to see if they were within the range of practical size and cost for the congregation in question. He would write personal letters to the twenty or thirty wealthy laymen over the state who enjoyed giving out of their abundance to such worthy building and mission projects among the Baptists in the state. In addition he would publicize an open endorsement of the various building projects in the **Journal and Messenger.** For instance, in August, 1892, Leonard wrote "To all the Friends of the Mission work of the Ohio Baptist Convention" the following endorsement:

> "Dear Brethren and Sisters: By vote of the Board of Managers of the Ohio Baptist Convention, I am instructed to commend to your favorable consideration the call of the Tenth Avenue Church, Columbus, for Aid in building a house of worship."

Then Leonard listed the details of the "investigation" which led to the worthiness of the endorsement, and encouraged Baptists across the state to join the Tenth Avenue congregation in their task.

Leonard had a basic policy in mind as he was attempting to raise money. He expected the local churches to raise needed current support from the rank and file laymen within each congregation. But he encouraged the more wealthy members to contribute also to additional projects such as building construction. The plan probably worked as well as possible. The problem was that the requests for capital funds far outdistanced the capacity, or, at least, the generosity, of the few Captains of Industry among Ohio Baptists. There was just not enough money to go around. Again, John D. Rockefeller topped the list of givers by contributing a yearly thirty-three percent of all the capital gifts of each year. The Church Edifice Fund, as the plan was called, aided the completion of many Baptist houses of worship over the years, not a few of which are still being used today in Ohio.

Probably no Secretary could have been any more successful than Leonard in raising money, given the vicissitudes of the job. Baptists continued to give relatively large amounts to missions, especially foreign missions, but little, proportionately, to the state program. Calls for "systematic benevolence" and "distributive apportionment" sounded very suspicious to many Baptist congregations; and they were not reluctant to suggest at

times, whether they really believed it or not, that such financial pressure too nearly resembled "a tax from a foreign jurisdiction" and thus was not appreciated by freedom-loving Baptists.

Finally a plan was worked out in 1893 which seemed acceptable to the various Baptist missionary agencies which were raising money in Ohio. Five mission societies, namely, the State Convention, the Publication Society, the Missionary Union (the foreign mission agency), the Ohio Educational Society, and the Home Mission Society, met in Norwalk and agreed to the "Ohio Plan" which assigned a two-month period for collection in each of the five regional areas in Ohio, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Central. With this system, each agency was limited to one territory for two months, after which it would exchange with each of the other four. One period, July and August, coming just before the autumn associational meetings, was left open "for all secretaries to trouble all Israel what (sic) fails to adopt the plan." This system seemed to satisfy all concerned until 1919, at the time of the New World Movement, when the State Conventions in the Northern Baptist Convention became the collecting agencies for the Unified Budget as well as for their own funds.

Perhaps it is unfair to describe the "building years" of growth among Ohio Baptists only in terms of Brick and Mortar, and money and budgets. For this was, admittedly, but a small part of the broadly-based ministry radiating from over six hundred churches. It should also be noted that, in the year 1885 for example, nineteen of the 247 missionaries supported in the foreign fields by the Missionary Union were from Ohio. The most honored man among Ohio Baptists at the end of the century was probably not Secretary Leonard, but rather Rev. William Ashmore, Baptist missionary to Swatow, China, who had grown up in Zanesville, graduated from Denison University in Granville, and had carried the Gospel given to him through Ohio Baptists to another continent and to another people.

Another index in measuring the growth of Ohio Baptists was in the development of the Summer Assembly. Initiated in 1891 as a "young peoples' assembly," the new Ohio Baptist Young People's Union, which was organized as a separate department in the same year, 1891, created a summer conference program which eventually became a virtual "Chautauqua" gathering for Baptists in Ohio. In 1893 the Summer Assembly moved to Hiawatha Park, near Mount Vernon, and expanded into a summer conference for all age groups. Sponsored and directed by the OBYPU, the Lake Hiawatha Assemblies featured Bible lectures by nationally popular speakers, Sunday School

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courses for teachers, concerts, and selected entertainment which attracted about 1500 people each year at the turn of the century. Many Baptist laymen joined in leadership education classes during the summer experience, and returned home to strengthen the still growing Sunday School movement. The summer program for a number of years was directed by Rev. Charles J. Rose, pastor of the neighboring First Baptist Church in Mount Vernon. It was not surprising, therefore, when Secretary Leonard resigned in 1903, that the Convention turned

to Charles Rose to assume the leadership of the state work.

A last index of growth can be mentioned. It was the popularity of the annual Convention sessions themselves, a popularity which prompted some two to three hundred delegates to attend each year. Up until the year 1893 the host church had the traditional responsibility to supply free housing for all of the delegates.' But the burden became too great, and the delegates expected too many social amenities which local hosts could not afford. In 1881, one leader explained, "It is no longer regarded as just the thing to put ten to twenty-five persons on the floor in one room for lodging...Such entertainment was more acceptable and more readily offered thirty years ago than now.'" Consequently, after 1893, delegates began paying "fair prices'" at hotels and private homes. The change would appear trivial to some observers. But, in a sense, it gave notice subtly to an accomplished fact in American manners and social decorum. The frontier had, about the same time, been officially declared closed. American life had become decidedly urban and conventional. Baptists had moved to the city and had taken up city ways.

# VIII

# Ohio Baptists were Denominational

With the dawn of the twentieth century, the Baptists of Ohio were as optimistic as all the rest of America. There was a sincere hope of winning the world for Christ. Rev. Gordon Poeteat, upon his departure for China, was reported in the **Ohio Baptist Bulletin** to have declared, "The Standard Ohio Company has adopted the slogan, 'Standard Oil tin in every village in the Orient;' the American Tobacco Company is using the motto, 'A Cigarette in the mouth of every person in China;' So I, as a unit of the church of Jesus Christ, have taken the watchword, 'Christianity and its teachings in every hamlet within the boundaries of the Chinese Republic.'" There was a very real vision of winning the whole world. It was an optimistic dream, and one which caught up the whole of Anglo Saxon Christendom.

The drive toward "social betterments" at home and abroad was propelled by several types of energies, such as missionary zeal, a vision of progress, and the increasing wealth among American churchmen. All of this prompted the suggestion to many of the close arrival of the millennium.

Then came the First World War and the mood of America was never again the same. The growing pessimism following the war was not too apparent in the rhetoric of the Ohio Baptist publications. But the war marked the passing of an older era and the beginning of a new. The watershed experience of the First World War can mark the coming of an enduring pessimism which has been the watchword, or at least the mood, throughout this present century. No doubt the tension between the optimism of many theological progressives and the growing concern of many to conserve the worthy foundations of the past can help explain in a small way the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the twenties and the thirties.

The high hopes and the prodigious activity among the Ohio Baptists during what has been termed the Progressive Era was enormous. Their energy parallelled that of the political reformers of the period. Attempts to root out political corruption, to "Americanize" the flood of "foreigners" invading

the country at the time, to stop the liquor traffic which was blamed simplistically for virtually all of the poverty and woes of American society, were all constant themes in both the secular and religious press. There was an overall feeling that the church was to play a rather large role in the reshaping of modern civilization.

Many Baptists still tended to avoid the "political" rhetoric which had become popular among the Social Gospel leaders. There was that traditional barrier which was to be maintained between church and state. Any political preaching was an encroachment of this assumption. It was true that many Baptists had followed the aggressive leadership of Walter Rauschenbusch, leading Social Gospeler and professor in the German department at the Rochester Theological Seminary. Rauschenbusch had led many churchmen into some advanced positions in which his theological constructs involving the Kingdom of God was closely allied to ideas of political socialism. But these ideas were relatively foreign to the thinking of Ohio Baptists. Rauschenbusch had no contacts with Ohio Baptists of any substance, except as he kept in touch with the German Baptists editors and pastors in the Cleveland area. Perhaps the Cleveland area would have been the only city at all responsive to his ideas; and perhaps in the whole city only Rev. Charles A. Eaton, pastor of the Euclid Avenue Church, and Rev. E. A. Hanley of the East End Baptist Church, would have given them serious consideration. Consequently Ohio Baptists were much like the majority of Baptists throughout America; they had moved only a short distance toward a "social Christianity."

For several decades, there had been much inter-denominational cooperation in America. And Baptist leaders had easily supported such cooperation. Ohio Baptists had been deeply involved through the years in such cooperative ventures as the Young Men's Christian Association, the Evangelical Alliance, the Anti-Saloon League, the International Sunday School curriculum, not to mention city-wide evangelistic meetings. The vigorous protest by Cleveland ministers against Sunday baseball in the early 1900's included strong Baptist voices. And that Baptist voice in Ohio when measured numerically against other denominational groups was no small voice. In the state in 1908, the Baptist population of 92,112 ranked fifth in size among religious groups, behind the Roman Catholics with 557,650, Methodists with 355,444, Presbyterians with 138,768, and the Lutherans with 132,439. The public life involving political and social affairs was not without Baptist leadership also. The Democratic administration from 1909 to 1913 of Ohio Governor Judson Harmon, who was the son of a prominent Cincinnati

Baptist pastor, and the presidency of the Ohio Anti-Saloon League in 1913 by Dr. Emory W. Hunt, past president of Denison University, were notable examples of public men whose Baptist allegience was important during this era.

The emergence of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America in 1908 seemed but one more step in church cooperation and leadership in America. The organization allowed the larger implementation of "social service" ideas by Social Gospelers. But, given the long history of cordial attitudes in many types of interdenominational projects, no one was expecting the negative reactions which soon were boiling at the local level.

Far more important to Ohio Baptists was the organization of the Northern Baptist Convention in 1907. A decision to gather the several missionary agencies among Baptists under the umbrella of one "convention" aupices eventually worked profound changes in the corporate life of almost every Baptist church. In effect, the Ohio Baptist Convention disbanded as a state missionary society, and consciously attempted "to conceive itself not merely as a society, for the promotion of domestic or state missions but as an agency of the Baptists of that state for the promotion of the Kingdom of God throughout the whole world." The Ohio Baptist Convention was now subsumed under the larger activity of the Northern Baptist Convention, and the projects of one was often the result of the influence of the other. Soon, Ohio altered its annual state convention sessions to the month of May in order to convenience the Northern Baptist leadership. It pursued a standardization of ministerial credentials in line with national policy. It became the collecting agency for all of the mission work among Northern Baptists. There were but a few of the transformations which resulted from the creation of the Northern Baptist Convention.

In addition, at about the same time, the Granville office became the permanent headquarters for Ohio Baptists. Secretary Leonard had moved from Norwalk to Granville in 1895. He was in one sense actually returning the residence of the corresponding secretary to the Granville area, for it had been located there in years past. In Granville after 1895 the headquarters took permanent form. Purchasing the frame building on the corner where the present headquarters building now stands, a building which had been previously rented for some years as the office for Leonard, the Convention Board voted to construct the two-story building which now is occupied by the Convention staff. Built in 1924 and 1925 at the total cost of $92,413.30, the property was to have included some rental

space for paying occupants. The ground floor was rented out for a number of years while the Convention headquarters moved into the second level.

Substantial strength was added to the Ohio Baptists when the Freewill Baptists joined their Regular Baptist brethren of the Ohio Convention in 1911 as a part of a national merger. At least the official voting on both sides was for merger; and most Freewills eventually joined the Convention ranks. But the transition was not completely smooth. The Freewill Baptists, also known as Free Baptists, had had a separate existence since their early founding in New England by Rev. Benjamin Randell in 1790. Their penchant for Arminian theology and open communion had long rankled the more Calvinistic Regulars. But, by 1910, the controversy, if not moribund, was, at least, mooted by the more latitudinarian doctrine and practices among most Regulars. In a word, it was hard to tell the difference between Regular and Free. The 1913 annual session held in the Trinity Church in Marion, which had been a leading church among the Free Baptists in past decades, signaled a happy consumation between the two groups. Some Frees, it must be observed, hesitated for years; and others never united.

Similar interest in merger prompted conversations between the Disciples and the Convention Baptists. The first attempt at some serious discussion, initiated by the Disciples, had come in 1870, and was politely rebuffed by the Baptist leaders. Again in the 1920's interest was revived and continued, on and off, to attract discussion of some cooperative venture until very recent years.

There was another group with which Ohio Baptists felt a need to work out some arrangement. It involved the Negro Baptist churches of the state. For us who have lived through the 1960's and 1970's, it is, perhaps, not sufficient reason to cite the general mood of ethnic superiority among Anglo-Saxon Protestants in order to explain the attitudes of indifference among Ohio Baptists. But whatever the historical reasons, the indifference and the barriers were very real. At one point during an annual convention session, delegates debated whether even to list the Negro churches in the yearly annual since the two groups were so widely separated. Also Convention leaders ruminated and grumbled about the "emotional excesses" and the "uncertain income" of the Negro brethren.

During the period, the Negro churches were practically ignored in terms of sufficient aid even though the Negro Baptists numbered approximately one-fifth of the total Baptist population in Ohio. In decade after decade, when virtually every white church in Ohio was aided at one time or another, the Colored

churches, as they were known in those days, were seldom given even token support. Especially after the state-wide organization in 1896 of the Ohio Colored Baptist State Convention, spurred no doubt by the formation of the National Baptist Convention of the U.S.A. in Atlanta, Georgia, a year earlier, the two Baptist Groups in Ohio, one white, one Negro, began to drift even farther apart than they had been during the years of a rather tenuous fraternity in former times. Not until 1919, when Ohio discovered "multitudes of Negroes from the South" arriving particularly in the cities and seeking "homes in our state," did Ohio Baptists make a new effort to aid the Ohio Baptist General Association, as the 239 Negro churches were by that time called. In 1919, $2000 in aid money was budgeted by the Convention, mostly to support the Negro secretary working with the churches. By 1929, the amount had declined to $600. All in all, there was but a modicum of financial aid; it is hardly a worthy story to relate from the vantage point of the 1970's.

There was one group, however, for whom Ohio Baptists were willing to commit a generous portion of effort and financial budgeting. Again it reflects the mood of times, and the overwhelming concern in "Americanizing" the foreign-speaking sector of the population. In 1910, out of a state population of 4,767,121, the foreign-speaking portion of the population numbered approximately one-third of the total. These were persons who were either foreign born or children of foreign born.

Cleveland had long since replaced Cincinnati as the most "foreign" city, claiming some 195,703 immigrants out of its 561,000 population. The largest immigrant grouping came from Hungary. Other sizable groups, listed in decreasing total number, were immigrants from Austria, then Russia, and finally Italy.

What began as a goodly ministry to very needy people soon became altered after the First World War by the national hysteria of the twenties. Ohio Baptists were undoubtedly influenced by the irrationality of the Klan mentality and the Sacco-Vanzetti incident. "Large sectors of our cities are deplorably and perhaps dangerously un-American," wrote the 1922 report in the Ohio Baptist Convention **Annual.** Consequently there was a double reason for urgent work among the "foreigners," one emphasis being evangelism, the other emphasis being "Americanism."

The story of the Foreign Speaking Work by Ohio Baptists must write large the name of Rev. Charles A. Brooks. Called to Cleveland in 1907 from his pastorate in Dayton, Brooks gave leadership to the Cleveland Baptist City Mission Society and to the Committee on Foreign Speaking People of the Ohio Con-

vention until the year 1914. The work prospered under his guidance and continued to flourish after his departure, serving a diverse number of non-English groups, many of which formed a number of Baptist churches. There were foreign language publications, mission Sunday Schools, such as the Josephine Mission begun by the Euclid Avenue Baptist Church in 1882, and even an Hungarian Baptist Seminary for a time. The effort to transform the "Old World institutions" of the immigrants into acceptable "American" patterns of citizenship and churchmanship was an acknowledged motivation of time. But there was also a desire to win persons to Jesus Christ. The methods used included the time-tested programs of Sunday School classes, evangelistic services, and the distribution of Gospel literature.

Although Cleveland was by far the largest mecca for the immigrant population, other cities felt the impact of their arrival. Baptists in Toledo, Youngstown, Martins Ferry, Elyria, Akron, and Dayton, joined with the State Convention and the Home Mission Society to sustain workers among the newcomers. From the beginning of the work by Brooks in 1908, the number of workers in Ohio increased until there were between ten to twenty missionaries at work, the number varying from year to year.

A significant list of converts who arrived in America during the momentous years of immigration prior to the World War could be made. Outstanding Christians, lay and ministerial both, entered into the Baptist fellowship in Ohio. It cannot be said that the effort to witness to the foreign-speaking newcomers was not worthwhile. Nevertheless, some statistical analyses have been done to measure the effect of such efforts at evangelization and Americanization, and the conclusions tell us that very little was actually accomplished in winning the immigrants away from their European-based faith. The fact that the Roman Catholic churches were unable to handle the massive influx of immigrants gave Baptists and other Protestants an opportunity to work among them in meaningful and rewarding ways. But, again, much like the story of the nineteenth century among Ohio Baptists, the effort expended was much too meager, and perhaps one could add, inadequate. The opportunites had far outmeasured the missionary response by Ohio Baptists.

Without a doubt, the most obvious change in Convention affairs was the marvelous growth in the financial prosperity which developed after the turn of the century. After Rev. Charles Justus Rose left the Mount Vernon church in 1903 to become the General Secretary of the Convention, the receipts into the state treasury did increase measureably. While at the turn of

the century Ohio Baptists gave $8,303 to State Convention mission concerns, Rose was able to raise that amount to $18,830 by the end of his first year on the job. His last year of service, in 1914, saw $27,005 come into the treasury. This was a long way from the total receipts of $177 in the maiden year of the Convention in 1826.

But there was another level of increase in giving just after the war. The amounts which were raised yearly during the years in which Secretary Rose served were comparatively modest to the yearly giving of Ohio Baptists immediately after the First World War. Ohio Baptists were caught up in that long inflationary road in which the value of money was to continue to change through each decade until the present year.

One can think of the Ohio Baptist Convention as reaching prosperous days, or at least handling a sizable amount of yearly receipts, from the years of the World War on until the present day. It was not, particularly, due to the coming of Rev. Tileston F. Chambers in 1915 to the position of General Secretary of Ohio Baptists, although Chambers was an extremely able and effective leader. It had more to do with the prosperity generated by the war, and, especially the New World Movement of the Northern Baptist Convention. The New World Movement was a five year program with a goal of raising one hundred million dollars among Northern Baptists. One hundred million dollars! That was a colossal objective. Far more than the amount raised, the crusade was to change the very nature of Ohio Baptists as well as other state conventions. For, in order to raise one hundred million dollars, there had to be a truly efficient and well structured organization. Out of this organization came our modern denominational system of today.

Most Baptists in Ohio were ready for this step. They had slowly adopted "Symmetrical Finance" and the "Budget-Apportionment Plan" which set a goal ("not a tax" the contemporary literature said over and over) for each Baptist church. The "duplex envelope" was now in use by some churches, also.

The increased giving was not due to any Rockefeller money. Actually, John D. Rockefeller altered his giving pattern of approximately twenty-five percent of the state's total receipts to a stated, and lower, amount. He was involved into large philanthropic projects over the years which demanded system and oversight. Also, Rockefeller had been stung in 1905 by the rejection of a gift of $100,000 to missions by Rev. Washington Gladden, an illustrious Congregational Social Gospeler of Columbus, Ohio. In what was obviously an overstatement, the Cleveland **Leader** newspaper reported that Rockefeller had "become sad, and has aged five years in as many weeks," be-

cause of the Gladden repudiation. Gladden had identified too completely with the poor working class in America's society to see any benevolent quality in Rockefeller's gift. Eventually Rockefeller turned his attention to large projects outside the state. One of the editors of the **Journal and Messenger** defended the semi-official editorial position of the newspaper by remarking, "The greatness of John D. Rockefeller's gift to posterity is equaled only by the grace and wisdom of the giver...I rejoice in the fact that the **Journal and Messenger** has never struck hands with his traducers, and the writer of this has spoken of him kindly during all the years."

The New World Movement, over its five year period, 1919 to 1924, raised $2,432,476 in Baptist money in Ohio for the various mission agencies within the Northern Baptist Convention. The year of highest giving was 1922 when $626,748.49 poured into the Crusade offerings. Of that amount, $61,727.67 came into the Ohio treasury. The next year, a breathtaking $101,122.60 out of a total Ohio giving of $464,500.11 was the State Convention's portion. This was the only time that the Ohio Baptist treasury received over $100,000 until 1948. And after 1948, the Ohio yearly budget never went under that level. For one who looked back into the nineteenth century for a comparison of the Convention's financial resources, it was nothing short of mind boggling to conceive of the many thousands of dollars at the disposal of Convention secretaries.

The New World Movement failed to reach its goal of one hundred million dollars. "It was fondly hoped," remarked one Ohio leader, "that the funds accumulated during the New World Movement period would place at our disposal very considerable sums of betterments but in this expectation we have been grievously disappointed." But, to call it a failure misses the most obvious advance for Convention Baptists. Ohio Baptists raised their level of giving and sustained that level from that point on. The percapita giving for Ohio rose from $1.46 in 1916 to $8.47 five years later. By 1926, the Convention had ten paid workers on its staff and was, perhaps for the very first time, providing ministry which might be described as an adequate state program among the denominational churches.

"For the very first time," declared the 1920 Board of Managers' report, "every district in the state has been provided with a superintendent." This had been an Ohio dream for decades -- to have a "district superintendent" in all five districts in Ohio. This was part of the progress derived from the New World Movement campaign. But there was more. By 1923, a similar report made the following comment. "The activities of our State Convention have become exceedingly

diversified and the departments of our work have rapidly multiplied." Such was the transformation which came with the post-war prosperity. Ohio Baptists were now truly "denominational" in a systematic and comprehensive organization.

Signs of a new era were not limited to financial increments. There were many, many other changes. Names, locations, traditions were being altered. The very structures of society and the patterns of living seemed to be dissolving into something new and different. Consider the following illustrations of change.

"The day of the New Bible School is at hand." wrote Rev. Wilson A. Holmes, of the Bible School Department in 1909, "the scope has been greatly widened, so that the old-time name of Sunday-school is a misnomer."

"Our faithful horse 'Ruth' was sold, and our wagon replaced by an automobile," wrote one of the state workers in 1918 who was stationed in the Marietta area.

"For the first time in our history," gasped one writer in 1920 in attempting to describe the fact that several women had been elected to positions on the Board of Trustees of the Convention.

"We are speaking a new language," exclaimed one Ohio Baptists voice, trying to verbalize and to comprehend the events, change, and consequences which confronted Ohio Baptists.

There were less earth-shaking changes. The very successful Summer Assembly, which continued to train so many church school teachers, changed locations from Hiawatha Lake to Summerland Beach at Buckeye Lake in 1911, and in 1917 to the Denison University campus. The Assembly years at Denison began a long and happy association in the minds and hearts of many Ohio Baptists who visited the Granville campus each summer.

One other change should be noted. The **Journal and Messenger,** the Cincinnati Baptist weekly which had been published since its early beginning in 1831, did not survive the death of its last editor, Dr. George W. Lasher in 1920. The paper merged with **The Baptist** in 1920 which was hailed at the time as the "new official paper of the Northern Baptist Convention." Although the loss of the **Journal and Messenger** was disappointing to many Ohio Baptists, the month-by-month news and promotional events among the Ohio churches had long since been transferred to the **Ohio Baptist Bulletin,** a bi-weekly which was begun by Secretary Rose in 1905. In 1920, with the demise of the Cincinnati weekly, the **Bulletin** was renamed **The Ohio Baptists** and became the official house organ for news and promotion.

Reaction to such profound changes in religious affairs was inevitable. And it was not long in coming. Within twenty years of the founding of the Northern Baptist Convention in 1907, Ohio Baptists were experiencing various types of hostilities and resistence to the new procedures and directions. The reaction cannot be simplistically described either in theological or sociological terms, although both were profoundly important. One must see the decade of the twenties, to some extent, as years of suspicion and fear and, even among churchmen, cynicism.

There was a segment of Ohio Baptists who saw the great dangers of denominational and interdenominational merger. "'Union!' seems to be epidemic," argued one Columbus pastor in 1909; "to 'join something' seems to be the fad in these days." So the argument ran. To join up with a "federation of Churches" was to support an "ecclesiastical trust" every bit as dangerous as the large business trusts which were threatening to strangle the commercial and laboring world.

Others saw the dangers of independency. Independence "has been unduly emphasized among us," one speaker pointed out at an annual session of the Convention. Our liberty had been "very near to lunacy," another added. One speaker in 1912 dared to suggest that the new vision of mission should lead to "denominational cooperation, interdenominational cooperation - federation, if possible." These statements were not lost on the ears of dissident pastors who were hearing other voices of ferment. It seemed that all of the frustrations, all of the failures of the Convention, all of the personal slights of past years, tumbled into the theological and organizational arena during the era of the twenties.

The report of the Ohio Baptist Convention Committee in Social Service of 1915 admitted, "Your committee has discovered a large amount of prejudice, on the part of many Christians, with reference to social service." They viewed "the social service propaganda" as an "attempt to substitute some 'new gospel' for the old and vigorous gospel of Jesus." The change in words, symbols and programs were getting in the way of communication and unity.

There was, to be sure, a change in vocabulary. There was much talk about "social uplift" and the "social needs of the community", terms which smacked plainly of the Social Gospel. Such rhetoric was plain evidence to all too many of the continual drift toward a theological adulteration of faith which had been growing for years. The growing acceptance of the Darwinian theory and its subsequent erosion of a literal interpretation of Genesis, the use of the "higher criticism" methods of

study of the Bible, and the appreciation of the Bushnellian concept of Christian Nurture which tended to militate against revivalism, all combined to form a new emphasis among many of the "advanced" ministers. On these theological issues, to name the more important ones, the battle between "Modernist" and "Fundamentalist" was joined.

To read the official publications of the State Convention in the twenties and the thirties would give the reader virtually no clue to the growing theological alienation of some of the churches in the Ohio Convention. This is in direct contrast with the much publicized statements of a century earlier during the antimission controversy. Unless Ohio Baptists had been reading sources beyond the official statements and house organ of the State Convention to apprise them of the issues which were forming, they would have known little of the struggle which lay just beneath the surface in many, many instances. Only if one read the "Resolutions" in some of the associational minutes would there have appeared the heated ferment which was being generated in some areas of Ohio.

Actually very few churches elected to leave the Convention in the twenties to go their independent ways. And perhaps their decision was based largely on the fact that they had a great deal of reading materials which accused and challenged denominational policies and leadership. The few churches who drifted away from associational and Convention ties in the twenties were to form a nuclei of protest and hostility which in another ten, twenty and thirty years were to beguile other Convention churches to alter their allegience.

Far more significant, numerically, was the attrition among the rural churches. "The decline of the rural churches goes on," declared Rev. Robert Hughes, the long time District Superintendent staff worker, "and apparently is increasing year by year." In a period of thirty years, from 1892 to 1922, one hundred and five churches disappeared from the Ohio Baptist roster of churches. It was by far the biggest loss suffered by the Ohio Baptists in their history. With the coming of the automobile, and with the continual decline of the rural population in some sections of the state, valid reasons can be cited. But, the record also shows that the major cause for so many churches eventually closing their doors was the long, often remarkably long, period in which congregations endured without any pastoral leadership, only to succumb to the vicissitudes of modern change and spiritual exhaustion.

A final word about the leadership of the Convention in the early 1900's. So many names could be listed. The great advances among Ohio Baptists and their abilities to organize ener-

getic and effective ministries in so many different forms and places, represented the net total of a large group of stalwarts from every region of the state. How does one begin to name so many who built a modern state convention program? The names of the Convention presidents, perhaps, can offer a glimpse of the men of stature whose talents provided the leadership during the years 1900 to 1930. In chronological order, the presidents were William Howard Doane, hymn writer from Cincinnati, Charles T. Lewis, Toledo lawyer, Herbert F. Stillwell, pastor of First Church, Cleveland, J. F. Herget, pastor of the Ninth Street Church in Cincinnati, Edward H. Rhoads, Jr., Toledo lawyer, and Joseph H. Lloyd, pastor of the Calvary Church in Youngstown.

Space does not allow the listing of Ohio's notable contribution to the national societies within the Northern Baptist Convention or Ohio's contribution to our national life. One word, however, needs to be said about Warren G. Harding. The memory of the Harding administration is too bound up with stories of Tea Pot Dome and 1625 K Street to give Ohio Baptists much sense of pride in the president's Baptist heritage. But it is good to mention another side of Harding, just to balance the record. When Harding's pastor at the Trinity Church in Marion was stricken with paralysis, the President himself assumed the support of the man and his family when the church was unable to care for the invalid and his family as well as the pastoral replacement which was needed during the time of illness. Harding sustained his personal care until the pastor died just a few days before Harding died himself.

# IX Ohio Baptists were Evangelistic

Some readers might find it surprising that Ohio Baptists should be designated "evangelistic" in the thirties, forties, and fifties. But the evidence is clear. Time and again, in one article and publication after another, the thrust of Baptist life in Ohio was summed up in terms of evangelism, revival, and missions. Ohio Baptists were dominated by the concept of evangelism; it was the heart of their work.

Perhaps one would be partially correct in explaining that the evangelistic rhetoric was an attempt to defend the Convention work against the constant accusations of the growing number of independent Baptist churches. It was an era of increasing vituperation and suspicion; and undoubtedly, Convention Baptists were on the defensive at certain points. But this was not one of the main reasons for the Convention evangelistic rhetoric.

There were several more important reasons for an emphasis on evangelism. These can be described under three main headings. First, Convention pastors and leaders had retained a theologically conservative position in the essentials of the Christian faith through the years, and they easily used a terminology regarding Biblical themes which was natural and appropriate for them to use. Secondly, Ohio Baptists sustained a long-standing Convention goal to prosper numerically. "Soul-winning" was still the best tried-and-true method they knew to recruit church members. Thirdly, and perhaps, most importantly, the expanding possibilities of world-wide ministries gave substance to the Convention call for world evangelism. The whole world seemed to cry out for spiritual and physical succor; and these needs were best expressed in evangelistic terms. Ohio Baptists had a world vision.

If the word "evangelism" was called into question, the issue would have to be whether evangelism was narrowly or broadly defined. The Convention leaders viewed the term evangelism more than "some method of propaganda", as one expressed the matter. Rather, key leaders among Ohio Baptists ascribed to the word "the whole question of Christian training and

education." Any and every program coming from the national convention office or from Granville had evangelistic overtones in the Baptist world mission. "While a Department of Evangelism is maintained in the Ohio Baptist Convention," explained the Trustees Report in 1956, "there is scarcely any part of the work of the Convention that is not evangelistic." Ohio Baptists were caught up in the evangelistic cause in a variety of ways. There were evangelistic services and visitation evangelism. Also there were goals in the Church School curriculum and the broad emphasis on all types of education. In addition there were stewardship programs which, if one can believe the oratory and the publications of national, state and local participants, was designed to raise the witness of Christ as surely as a revival meeting.

Programs! Campaigns! Crusades! Initiated mostly by the leadership of the national societies, a plethora of national campaigns became the major agenda for Ohio Baptists. It is easy to see the programing rather than the evangelism, but it is also possible to envision both as two sides of the same coin. In a very real sense programing became the **raison d'etre** of church activity for many. To tell the story of Ohio Baptists is to enumerate many of the great movements which were sponsored by the Northern Baptist Convention.

The story of the thirties is admittedly a little different since few significantly prominent crusades were forthcoming in the denominational life. Instead, there were frantic attempts to retrench and, at times, survive during the long years of financial depression. Beginning in the forties, however, the picture becomes clearer. Such efforts as the Church Loyalty Crusade and the Forward in Evangelism program occupied some Ohio Baptists during the war. Then the World Emergency Fund, introduced at first to aid the war needs, soon led to the World Mission Crusade and the Christian Life Crusade immediately after the war. After the brief recession years of the early fifties came the Nation-Wide Revival effort in 1952 followed by the Churches For New Frontiers campaign in 1953, and the Year of Baptist Achievement in 1955 and 1956. The yearly emphases in Planning For Action Conferences and Every Member Canvas efforts must also be mentioned. These perennial activities brought state and national staff personnel and a feeling of nationwide unity and camaraderie into many Ohio churches. These were not at all unwanted consequences.

Leadership in Ohio during this period of national denominational expansion resided in two Executive Secretaries, Rev. Tileston F. Chambers, who served the longest tenure of any

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executive officer for Ohio Baptists, from 1915 to 1939, and Rev. Paul Judson Morris, who served from 1939 until the end of 1957. The full burden of responsibility fell upon these two individuals to guide the proliferating activities of the State Convention work. It is almost impossible to gain some insight into the personalities of these two men unless one has had some personal acquaintance with them. No personal correspondence has been uncovered to date; and the annual reports written by them are overlaid with much of the expected eloquence of denominational language. But personal memory served best. "He was never angry - never" commented one very close acquaintance of Dr. Morris, and that about a man who spent many hours with dissident groups as well as with many co-operative ones. Both men were well loved and honestly respected. They were also faithfully supported by the large majority of Ohio Baptists.

The years of Dr. Chambers and Dr. Morris brought continuous change which characterizes the twentieth century in a profound way. Perhaps the most graphic portrayal of the change which came during their years can be made by comparing the yearly receipts of the Ohio Convention treasury in different years. When Dr. Chambers began his work in 1915, Convention contributions reach $38,797. When Dr. Morris retired in 1957, the receipts for that year were $184,549. A total of $663,664 was given by Ohio to the World Mission of American Baptists in the year 1957.

In addition to the financial growth, it is important to include other kinds of transition which were happening to Ohio Baptists. Some of the change seems trivial. Some appears profound. Added together, these alterations continued to shape and transform the Ohio Baptist family. Consider the following as elements of change in Ohio church life:

The Women's House Party was founded in 1934 by the State Society President Mrs. I. N. Clover.

The "new electric organ" such as the one installed in the Mill Creek Church at Ostrander where Rev. Meredith Lasley was pastor in 1938 initiated a new kind of church music for many small churches.

An announcement came to "all Pastors and Church leaders" in 1939 that there was no more "free entertainment" at the annual meetings, and that each delegate would have to pay his own hotel expense (going advertised rates, $2.00 to 2.50 for a single, and $3.00 to 4.00 for a double).

The separation of the Cleveland Baptist Association in 1941 into a distinct "Collecting and Promotional Agency," removed from the rest of the State Convention an important sector of churches from Convention activities.

The first telecast of a religious nature over WBNS-TV, Columbus, was conducted on October 16, 1949, by Rev. Raymond L. Bailey of the First Church.

The election of the first woman president, Mrs. Frank R. Carroll, of the Ohio Baptist Convention in the year 1957 began a new pattern of elected representation among Baptist churchmen in the state. The list could go on and on. Perhaps Ohio Baptists in the year 1933 would most certainly have included the "spirit of lethargy" which had allowed for the repeal of the "Eighteenth Amendment." Every year seemed to bring some alteration in local and national affairs. The era contained more sociological, moral, and technological change than all of the previous centuries in Baptist history.

Perhaps the most basic ecclesiastical "change" in State Convention affairs was actually no "change" at all. In 1942, Article III was removed from the Constitution in a perfunctory vote. The Article had, from very early days of the Convention, been the hallmark of Baptist independence. "This convention," read the article, "shall never possess a single attribute of power or authority over any Church or Association whatever." This bold assertion had outlived its usefulness. The existence of a local Convention church was generally, by 1942, closely dependent upon State and National resources for pastoral leadership, missionary objectives, and fraternal cohesion in Baptist associational affairs. The removal of the article was not so much a repudiation of local church autonomy as an acknowledgement that Ohio Baptist congregations were indeed dependent upon neighboring Baptist churches and were linked in a world-wide commitment of missionary effort.

From the time of the twenties onward, the organizational structure of the Convention was more and more complex. Yet there was a basic cohesion in the arrangement which allowed for a great deal of autonomy in the various departments of work of the Convention. A bare list of the divisions and personnel produced a rather lengthy delineation of the Convention structure. In 1954 there were six departments, sixteen committees, seven "Appointees of the Board" most of whom were Directors of departments, six elected "officers" and fifty-four "trustees" of the Convention, seven staff secretaries working in the Granvill office, and 278 names appearing under various committee headings. The interrelationships among these various leaders represented the warp and woof of corporate Baptist life and work. Their activities wove a fabric of Christian concern which involved, at one and the same time, theological, fraternal, financial, and personal commitments. In a real sense these people were the State Convention. It was a rather tightly-knit

group which led affairs in a loving and paternalistic way rather than in a strictly democratic style.

The growing complexity of denominational life was one of the root causes of the continuing withdrawal of churches from the Ohio Baptist Convention. Minority voices had more and more difficulty influencing the broadly-based direction of Convention policies. At least various persons thought that they were not being heard. Some churches were very concerned about the theological directions of mainline Protestantism, and yet, felt that they could not voice their protests effectively. Most pastors and lay people with such concerns chose to honor the traditional ties of Baptist denominational life as the most appropriate means to express their concerns. Some, however, felt the need to "become independent." Thus, not a few of the churches were "torn by internal strife," as one observer put it.

It is not possible from an examination of the official minutes of the Convention records and publications, at least as far as this writer is concerned, to determine where exactly the power of decision-making really lay during this period. It is clear that the policy of the long tenure of Convention presidents changed in 1935, so that no longer were there long established and highly visible elected officers to guide the yearly Convention sessions or the quarterly Board of Trustees meetings. One might guess, with some degree of accuracy, that the altered power of year-by-year decision making drifted from the office of the elected presidency to the appointed and salaried staff members in the Granville office.

One can make a good case that this transfer of decision making was much needed as the State Convention moved into a period in which a great deal of money was administered out of the Granville office. But such a change easily rankled the more dissident pastors in the state.

Again, it should be pointed out that one would scarcely have been aware of any internecine struggle between feuding Baptists in and among the churches by reading the **Ohio Baptist** of the Convention **Annuals**. Only occasionally was the subject broached. By the 1950's several explicit statements were made quite publically about the loss of churches which seemed to suggest that the issues had finally been faced and that the lines finally drawn between independent and Convention Baptists. The most explicit editorials made by Dr. Morris on the matter in the mid-fifties laid the trouble mainly on the type of ministerial leadership which churches received. There were men who deliberately set out to be "disruptors of churches," and entered the Convention ranks for that express purpose.

A new Committee on Strategy was appointed in 1951 to "protect churches against the subversive propaganda that seeks to disrupt our Baptist fellowship." The committee had to struggle not only with a type of independency which professed "a superior orthodoxy" and sought to denigrate the kind of cooperative spirit which characterized the Convention churches, but also with some of the over-zealous pastors of Southern Baptist mission churches who had followed the great migration of Southern people into the northern states. Perhaps the wisest course was that which the Executive Secretaries took during most of the years of the realignment. They said publically as little as possible about the matter, and attempted to work with personalities and churches individually. But, meanwhile, the matter boiled on for years within a few congregations, poisoning the fellowship in congregational and associational life where there should have been a rich quality of Christian trust and love.

One cannot blame the loss of membership among Convention Baptists entirely on the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. But, undoubtedly, Baptists, non-Baptists and the unchurched population all felt an identity crisis about the issue. It was hard to answer the question, "What is a Baptist?" At any rate, the steady growth in Baptist membership in the northern states first weakened and then began to decline. Dr. Walter E. Woodbury, National Secretary for Evangelism was reported in the **Ohio Baptist** in 1941 to have said, "Although we baptized an average of more than 50,000 every year between 1933 and 1938, in the Northern Baptist Convention, we had fewer members at the end of these five years than when we started." Then he added, "Allowing for normal loss by death, our membership now should be 2,503,942. Our present membership is almost exactly 1,000,000 less than that. Where is this lost million?"

During the years of the thirties, forties and fifties, Ohio Baptists experienced steady growth. In 1933, Ohio's 423 churches reported a total membership (total in terms of including nonresidents) of 91,465. In 1938 there were 422 churches reporting a total of 94,724 members. By the year 1945, the Ohio Baptist membership finally topped the 100,000 mark with 406 churches reporting 101,469 members. The total membership stayed above the 100,000 figure until 1950 when it slipped to 97,029. Church membership statistics are at times notoriously inaccurate. It is hard to make more than general observations about the resident membership lists, let alone the nonresident rosters. But, it seems rather clear that membership among Convention Baptists in Ohio peaked in 1957 and

then leveled off into the 90,000 bracket. Only in recent years has the Baptist population increased enough to have passed the 1957 banner year. The resident membership among Ohio Baptists today, in 1975, is 114,004 which is more than in that peak year of 1957 when there were 89,037 resident members recorded.

The number of churches in the Ohio Convention is another matter. The decline was precipitous. When Secretary Chambers began his term of service in 1915, the Convention boasted 465 churches. When Secretary Morris retired in 1957 the Ohio Baptist **Annual** listed 336 churches. Today, in 1975, the Ohio Baptist Convention claims 332 churches. Remarkably, the population of Ohio Baptists has not only stabilized but also increased in spite of a continual decline of congregational units. A graph of Church School attendance, if examined over the same number of years, would show a similar decline.

The downward trend of Baptist membership was a bitter pill to swallow. When population increases and church attendance throughout America were climbing steadily, particularly in the record-setting fifties, Ohio Baptist membership did not increase proportionately but tended to rise at a slower rate. As far as Ohio Baptists were concerned, an explanation of this phenomenon must include some analysis of the theological ferment going on among many of the congregations. However, there were other reasons. The continuing change of Ohio from a rural to an urban orientation played a large role. In addition, the many small, feeble congregations which had survived many decades without adequate pastoral leadership could not withstand the increasing mobility of urban and rural population. For years, Convention leaders had deplored the lack of first-rate leadership for these congregations. And, finally, this long-time weakness produced sad consequences for both congregation and Convention.

In spite of the tragic loss of church after church, the Ohio Baptist Convention was basically healthy, energetic, and strongly supported by a large group of committed people. No one can examine the financial record of these years without admiration of the world vision of the rank and file Ohio Baptist contributors. Even during the depression years, Ohio Baptists maintained a relatively stable, though much diminished, supply of mission money for denominational agencies. No story relates any more eloquently the importance of world evangelism for Ohio Baptists than the review of their mission support of Northern Baptist mission concerns.

The depression years of the thirties were not at all easy for church supported agencies. Denison University resignedly

had to cancel its $3,300,000 campaign in 1930; and the Ohio Convention was forced to curtail its program budget year after year to avoid any year-end debt. Incoming receipts to the Granville office plummetted. Total giving by Ohio Baptists, who had raised a total of $329,794.13 in missionary contributions in 1929 dropped to $140,226.89 in the dark years of 1933. Ominously, an early result of the 1929 stock market crash tended to dry up the contributions of five or six larger churches in the state. These were the very churches who had faithfully carried the major financial leadership for years. The rest of the decade was spent in efforts to recover the major losses.

The task of sustaining the missionary contributions in the depression years was the responsibility of Rev. Ernest R. Fitch, the Secretary of the Department of Missionary Cooperation, which over the years had become the centralized agency through which Baptist missionary money was raised. Sometimes called "the other secretary," to differentiate him from State Secretary Chambers, Fitch cautiously lowered the "Quotas" set by the Apportionment Committee for each church, pleading with the Ohio congregations not to set a goal less than 85% of the apportionment. The Granville staff, from Fitch and Chambers on down, returned five percent of their salaries to the treasury in order to balance the state budget.

The tragedy of the curtailment lay in the diminution of the state and national missionary programs. Miss Mary Thomas of Lima reported, according to an **Ohio Baptist** editorial in 1933, that "she was one of twenty of the missionaries of the WABFMS now on furlough, to be told they could not return because of falling receipts." The writer continued, almost as an aside, "I wish you could have seen the tears stream down her face after she had taken her seat." The year 1933 had been particularly difficult. There was "much mission money in closed banks," reported the Annual report. The local Every Member Canvas campaigns and the heavy contributions had come about the same time, and many local church treasurers left the money supposedly safe in local banks instead of sending it on to the needed destination.

Rev. Paul Judson Morris was called to Ohio in 1935 from Vermont to become "the other secretary." In his role as Missionary Promotion Secretary, Morris quickly endeared himself to Ohio Baptists, giving leadership in several ways. He led the Forward Fund Campaign soon after he came in which the level of Ohio's giving rose with a 20% increase to the designation of a "Vanguard State." He initiated the Pastors' Three Fellowship Days in the Spring when the annual sessions of the State Convention were moved back to the October

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date in 1934. Consequently, when Secretary Chambers retired, Dr. Morris was asked to combine the work of Executive Secretary and that of Director of the Board of Promotion. Actually, the Granville office had slowly developed two executives over the years, and the Convention Board recognized that the two responsibilities "should be brought together under the supervision of one Executive."

If the financial depression of the thirties was a "disaster," as one put it, for the world mission program, the World War

of the early forties was no doubt a greater tradedy in American life. There was much irony in the fact that the "Sunday of Sacrifice" of giving to the World Emergency Fund was scheduled on Sunday, December 7, 1941. The next four years yielded far more emergencies than Baptists could meet. Young Baptist laymen and pastors went to war; gas rationing slowed church activities so that some of the yearly fellowship sessions and committee meetings were canceled; foreign missionaries were endangered and, at times, imprisoned. A welcome radiogram came to the Granville office on December 24, 1942, from Miss Ruth Mather who had served previously on the Ohio Convention staff.

> "GREETINGS TO YOU...AM WELL COMFORTABLY EQUIPPED FOR WINTER. GREATLY ENJOYING UNIVERSITY WORK AND LIKE AGAIN. APPRECIATING YOUR LOVE THOUGHT PRAYERS. MAY THE CHRISTMAS PEACE ABIDE WITH YOU ALL THROUGH THE NEW YEAR. MUCH LOVE ALWAYS. RUTH MATHER (Shaowu, Fukien, Free China)."

Ohio Baptists emerged from the war, as did the whole country, into the financial boom years of the late forties and the fifties. It is interesting to note the rather close correlation between the yearly contributions of Ohio Baptists and the national prosperity. Ohio Baptists gave well. In several years during this period, Ohio Baptists were singled out for their "place of leadership in the support of our American Baptist World Mission." By 1947, Baptists in the Ohio Convention and the Cleveland Association were giving over a million dollars to the Unified Budget and to the World Mission Crusade. Ohio was not only a leader in monetary gifts but also supplied its share of leadership to the national Convention and the various missionary agencies.

The financial recovery rising out of the coming of the Second World War led in 1940 to one very significant addition in the Convention, the development of the Town and Country Department. Long neglected, and during the depression of the thirties, virtually abandoned for a time, the "town and country" churches had no one officially appointed to work with them after the last "District Superintendent" retired in 1933. The type of "visitation evangelism" of Rev. Charles H. Stull of the Department of Evangelism was only partially successful among town and country churches; and the Christian Education staff was increasingly departmentalized which militated against complete effectiveness. The only substantial aid for a few small churches was the financial assistance

to the pastors' salaries. The aid was limited only to a few locations; and the aid was not very bountiful anyway.

The coming of Rev. F. W. McDermott in 1940 as Director of Town and Country work was a new day for many Ohio churches. Rev. Clayton A. Pepper continued his work in 1944 when Mr. McDermott was called as president to Rio Grande College. Mr. Pepper sought to return vitality to many small churches, establishing "yoked fields" where ever possible in order to enlist an able pastor onto a field. He described his work in the monthly **Ohio Baptist** with some of the most readable pages of the period. In 1953, when Mr. Pepper joined the national staff, Rev. Harold C. Loughhead extended the work further with programs which attracted national recognition. After a century of inadequacy, the Ohio Convention had finally raised the Town and Country church to a place of parity with other Convention concerns.

Christian Education was another department which prospered during the period. When Mr. Wilson A. Holmes retired in 1932 after 31 years of service, leadership passed first to Miss Helen Wickes, then to Miss Miriam A. Peterson in 1943, Rev. Wilfred T. Packer in 1946, and Rev. Alex Elsesser in 1955.

One major change came in Ohio's summer activities. When the death of Mr. R. O. Carver brought to an end his twenty-nine years as president of the Ohio Baptist Assembly, the organization itself was "dissolved as a separate corporation" and in its place the "Assembly and Camp Committee" began its work within the framework of the Christian Education Department. Summer camping was changing in style and was growing in popularity. After several years using the Denison University campus and the Tar Hollow State Park, the Convention in 1955 decided to raise $300,000 for two state camps. Within a year, the "Loudonville camp," now known as Judson Hills, was secured, and state camping in Ohio took a new turn.

Camping was but one aspect of a continuing emphasis in Christian Education on departmentalized activities. Other indications of this emphasis was the emergence of Ohio's first "Young Adult Weekend Conference" in 1948, the reestablishment of the office of Children's Work in 1947, with Miss Doris Stansbury, and the enlargement of student work on university campuses. "Those were great years," reminisced one former staff worker.

The development of "student work" in some respects represented a turning point in the Convention's relationship with Denison University. Always at the center of leadership in past years, Denison's presidents, such as Dr. Emery W. Hunt and Dr. Avery A. Shaw, were staunch Baptists, both of whom

served as presidents of the Northern Baptist Convention. But with the growth of the state universities, Denison slowly ceased to be the state's educational mecca for Baptist youth. The encroachment of the state schools syphoned off increasingly the Baptist allegience which had been painstakingly cultivated over the past years. In 1924, for instance, when there were 391 Baptist students at Denison, there were also 371 Baptist students at Ohio State University. The students at Ohio State prompted the organization of the ministry of the Francis Wayland Foundation. Denison had to adjust to the reality of an increasing number of centers of higher education.

Denison University attempted several projects over a number of years, especially in the fifties, to retain church loyalty, which were relatively successful. For a few years, particularly in the forties, Rio Grande College was given increasing recognition as a second Baptist college in the state. Rio Grande had been founded originally by the Free Baptists in the nineteenth century and attempted to attract Baptist students into its program. During the same period, as the state schools encroached more and more toward an ascendant position in numbers of students enrolled, the Ohio Baptist Student Foundation developed with the center at the Ohio State Campus. First Rev. Dean Robert Wright and later Rev. Howard R. Moody directed the work.

One other project of major significance belongs to this era. It involves the story of the city, its bilingual missions, and, most importantly, the founding of its new churches. With the continuing attrition of church units in the state, no project seemed more urgent to church leaders whose vision to reach the world for Christ was, if anything, heightened by the mobility and affluence of peoples within the state.

A new Department of Cities had been created in 1931, primarily as an experiment of the American Baptist Home Mission Society who paid the salary of the new director Rev. E. H. Dutton. The director was to oversee the activities in seven cities, viz. Akron, Canton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown. Cleveland had its own Executive Secretary, Dr. Dores R. Sharpe, and had become increasingly self-sufficient of state activity. The "Seven Cities" had, over the years, developed strong churches, several significant bilingual missions and churches, and, in three instances, Christian Centers in cooperation with the ABHMS. These three centers were Toledo's Friendship House, Dayton's Community House, and the Bethel House of Campbell. Each had a unique ministry which is beyond the scope of this historical account. Most of the bi-

lingual projects across the state eventually moved toward a full English language ministry, becoming vital city churches.

In addition to the bilingual work, City Director Dutton attempted to cultivate some improved relationship with the Negro Baptist churches. During his nine year tenure Dutton was aware of the need to build bridges with a growing population of Negro Baptists. "We can say that the Negro is the Southerner's problem if we wish," commented one report in 1936, "but we cannot say so and tell the truth for the fact is that of the six largest Negro cities in America, four of them are in the Northern Convention."

A restoration of fraternal and working ties was slow. It was not until after the Second World War that some of the strong Negro churches, such as the Macadonia Church in Toledo, and the Zion Church in Dayton, became dually aligned. Also the work of Christian Friendliness in Ohio which was implemented after the war pioneered in issues of race and discrimination which had not been faced before by Ohio Baptists.

From 1930, there had been a department of church extension in the state connected with the older Church Edifice committee. But first the depression years and then the war years prevented measurable progress. After the war, the new post-war prosperity brought first new remodeling, then a few new mission congregations, and finally, with the coming of the Churches For New Frontiers campaign in 1953, a rapid appearance of several major suburban congregations. The New Frontiers projects in Ohio were encouraged to use the newly organized church in Mt. Washington, Cincinnati, as a model since it had become so successful so quickly. The measure of success for a mission church was basically, first, numerical growth, and secondly, quick debt retirement. In just two years, 1954 and 1955, a number of churches took root, viz. Beverly Garden in Dayton, which became the Spinning Road Church, Covenant in Wickliffe, Diamond Hills in Mansfield, Headlands in Mentor, Judson in Toledo, Lincoln Village in Columbus, Mountview in Columbus, and St. Clair Avenue in Hamilton. The excitement of the dawning of a new day for Ohio Baptists was clearly in the air. During the same period, twenty-three other sites were being considered for new locations for Baptist congregations. Few of them were quickly given the green light. Nevertheless, the New Frontiers program added great momentum to the hopes of the Ohio Baptist family.

All told, thirty one new churches came into the Convention during the years in which Dr. Morris was Executive Secretary. Through the years, Dr. Morris had leaned heavily on the advice given by a few leading pastors, Dr. F. B. McAllister of Ninth

Street in Cincinnati, Dr. E. W. Bloomquist of the Youngstown Temple, Dr. Charles Seasholes of Dayton First, and Dr. J. H. Satterfield of Canton First. These were city men; and many of them saw the building of new churches as a matter of first priority.

By the time Dr. Morris retired, the Convention staff had increased to nine appointees, eight secretaries, and two part-time workers in the Granville office. It was a large staff to be housed primarily in the second floor of the headquarters building. In 1956 a fire partially destroyed a restaurant which had been renting the corner portion of the building. The event became the occasion for the Convention to expand its headquarters space to include one half of the ground floor area. This decision doubled the work space for the staff.

By the year 1958, the Ohio Baptist Convention represented a rather large and unwieldy organization. There was an attempt to draw the Convention churches together into program and fraternal ties which would become profitable for the Baptist work, but, at the same time, there was the carefully guarded policy to allow for the local autonomy of each congregation. The purpose was to achieve a healthy balance between denominational control and local independence. If there was a basic principle of operation, a **modus operandi** at work within this delicate balance between Baptist liberty and Baptist unity, it was perhaps best summed up in the Baptist commitment to world mission and evangelism.

# X Ohio Baptists were Pacesetters

The decade of the sixties and the first five years into the seventies seem to form a single era becoming a time-frame which serves mind and memory as yet "present tense." The fifteen years would have had to be described in distinct terms even if Dr. Joseph I. Chapman had not assumed leadership in the year 1960. No doubt it is yet far too early to catch the full perspective of the deviations in religious mood and the social permutations which shook our nation in the sixties. Reactions are still echoing shock waves into the seventies.

What were some of these shifts in mood and social turbulence? Several stand out as important. There was a feeling among many people that the frantic, boom-time, building years which followed the Second World War were now over; and it was time to be more cautious and judicious in all of our affairs. Also there was a different attitude about suburban living. Urban sprawl with its traffic patterns and spacious architecture crawled out in every direction from our central cities after the War. But in the sixties, those privately-owned rows of well-landscaped homes took on the appearance of a cordon of opposition strangling the inner-city where several minority groups struggled for financial wellbeing and a sense of dignity. Furthermore, another shift in mood was apparent in young people. They exhibited a sense of rejection about a number of things such as society's penchant for opulence, the Vietnam War, and traditional views of success. All of these attitudes directly affected the ministry of the church, Ohio Baptists not excluded.

Rev. Clifford G. Hansen, who came to be the new Executive Secretary for Ohio Baptists in January, 1958, was well aware of the demands of the sixties and the need for new models for ministry. He expressed himself in one of his editorials in the **Ohio Baptist** by observing,

> "We enter the decade of the sixties with a clear realization that the time is upon us to re-examine the mission of the church. We are well aware that old

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concepts, methods and techniques are no longer adequate for the Space Age. In fact, if we are honest, we have to admit that the church has lagged in the constant evaluation of itself, its ministry and the results of its efforts. This is a modern frontier which we cannot afford to ignore.''

Secretary Hansen had a good staff to help him in meeting this challenge, viz. Rev. Harold C. Loughhead, Town and Country; Rev. Alex H. Elsesser, Christian Education; Rev. Arthur E. Basile, Camping and Youth Work; Miss Mary Meadows, Children's Work; Rev. Horace H. Hunt, State Student Work; Rev. John A. Fassett, Southern Area Missionary; Rev. H. E. MacCombie and Rev. George H. Calhoun, Council on Missionary Cooperation Counselors.

Rev. Hansen, however, stayed only a little over two years as Executive Secretary, and then left in March, 1960, to become the General Missionary for American Baptist Churches in the South. His leadership in a sense was, therefore, more in the nature of an interim Secretary.

In December, 1960, Rev. Joseph Irvine Chapman, D. D. assumed the duties of Executive Secretary. Coming from a pastorate in Michigan, Dr. Chapman had served as Executive Secretary of the Twin City Baptist Union and the Minnesota Convention of American Baptist Churches. He entered the Ohio office with a well defined concept of the role of an Executive Secretary at a time when Ohio need energetic and creative leadership. "It is fun to dream, to plan, to lay foundations," Dr. Chapman commented early in his tenure in office. Also, he had a forthright manner in expressing his feelings and position from the very start. His first editorial in the **Ohio Baptist** was a significant position statement. He declared:

> "American Baptists in Ohio proclaim the whole gospel! It is high time that we stop accepting the invalid thesis of those seeking to discredit God's cause through our American Baptist Convention that they preach the Gospel and we do not!...WE DO PROPOSE TO STATE OVER AND OVER AGAIN the great heritage, the great witness, the great world mission, and the great evangelical concern which marks us as American Baptists in Ohio."

Dr. Chapman was ready to lead Ohio Baptists into relevant and Biblical ministries. If Ohio Baptists have become pacesetters, a sizable share of the credit must be attributed to the capable leading of the Executive Minister.

The Ohio Baptist Convention had, in many ways, not kept up with the times. Or, to say it another way, the Convention had not faced squarely the issues emerging from society's rapid change such as the need for organizational structuring, staff communications, and modern office techniques. The first major task which Dr. Chapman faced was to lead Ohio Baptists into more modern and efficient models for ministry.

Dr. Chapman has, in his own words, worked through four

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different "phases" during his fifteen years in Ohio. The first phase, 1960 to 1963, was a period of orientation and planning. The second phase, from 1963 to 1968, was crucially important for his leadership. It involved the reorganization of the Convention structure, a momentous event in the existence of the Ohio Baptist Convention. The Convention, by and large, was ready to accept his strong hand of progressive leadership.

Rewriting the Convention's constitution was not accomplished quickly. A Long Term Planning Committee chaired by Dr. Orlando Tibbetts of the Lakewood Church studied and evaluated the need for modifications for eighteen months before it re-

ported to the Board of Trustees in September, 1962. Another year was spent in preparing and writing the proposed new constitution. When the presentation was made at the Toledo First Church at the annual sessions in October, 1963, the delegates united in an affirmative vote of 237 to 13 for the new constitution.

There were several major concerns which led to a new Constitution. The first was the old Convention structure itself. The digest report, **The Frank Story of American Baptists in Ohio,** in 1962 made several observations. "The committee found it was almost impossible to draw an administrative chart of the present organization of the Ohio Baptist Convention." No one seemed to be in control of the whole structure. There were several different "Directors," numerous "presidents," at least seven decision-making agencies, six of which were class-B city societies. "The lines of authority are blurred, work of staff members is not clear," cited the 1962 report.

Another reason for a new Constitution lay in the need to revitalize the association. Not a few Ohioans were ready to declare that the "old Baptist associational plan" was dead. But not Town and Country Director Harold C. Loughhead who dreamed for the day of "associational renewal." Closely related to this concern was the need for an "area ministry." Dr. Chapman was very much aware of approximately 150 churches which needed close, personalized attention in order to sustain their ties within the Convention.

There were still other problems. "Programs" from various directions filtered down to local churches with such lack of coordination that some central management was called for. Even in the simple matter of correlating different programs within a yearly calendar seemed beyond some executive control at times. Also, the Board of Trustees was elected by a relatively small number of delegates at the annual session. In truth, some structural modernization was called for.

The new constitution was "the heart of the entire program of reorganization" declared Dr. Chapman in 1963. It called for well-delineated lines of relationships between churches and the Convention. It wrote large the strong and centralized control which had become, more and more in the last half century, the hallmark of the Granville office. At the same time, the Constitution had forced a kind of grass-roots responsibility upon the local churches. This, in turn, was intended to revitalize the associations among American Baptist churches across the state. Rather than Baptist independency and libertarian autonomy, it was now more accu-

rate to outline associational and Convention alignments in terms of participatory democracy within a sort of federal system.

There was a real question as to whether the new plan would work in Ohio. "A period of change always involves many risks," admitted Dr. Chapman. "There can be many lonely moments in such a procedure," he added, "and I would be less than honest if I did not confess to such moments during this past year."

Except for a few changes, the present functioning of the new by-laws has not been altered since the implementation in 1963. Four main divisions formed the main design for ministry in 1963, viz. Christian Education, Christian Higher Education, Church Program and Outreach, and World Mission Support. The Division of Christian Service and Concern was added in 1968. This then is the basic structure of today's Convention. A variety of departments and committees subsumed under the various divisions gather together a large corps of clergy and laymen into a systematic, coherent domain. This group actually becomes the Convention at work. There has been only one major departure from the original plan of 1963. The division between Resource Ministers and Area Ministers written into the 1963 By-laws has dissolved into different nomenclature for state staff workers, namely, Executive and Associate Staff. The responsibility of both resource and area portfolios by single staff members altered the original intent.

When the new constitution was accepted in 1963, the Convention at last seemed streamlined and operative. The Board of Trustees truly became the policy-making body of Ohio Baptists, while the Executive Committee became the "administrative committee" which handled the "house-keeping" chores of a routine nature.

Transition to a new style of operations was not easy. Staff rearrangements were part of the adjustment. Former "directors" of departments had to find their way as resource or area ministers. But, by 1965, the executive staff in Granville seemed to hit stride, and Dr. Chapman began describing Convention affairs in terms of "stability" and "continuity." The diverse activity of the churches seemed, more and more, to touch base with the proper liaison staff member.

It is significant to note the recurrent phrase "hopes and dreams" which appear in the various publications of the last fifteen years. Ohio Baptists seemed aware that great achievements were within their reach for the first time. All of the necessary components for successful ministry appeared to be available. New equipment was purchased for the needed mod-

ernization in areas of financial bookkeeping, clerical and secretarial tasks. One is tempted to reminisce about the "old days" in the nineteenth century when Ohio Baptist leaders floundered year after year, and pathetically lamented about why they could not get their jobs done, or could not muster enough money to support even the essential projects within the state.

Pacesetting among Ohio Baptists has not been limited just to efforts in restructuring. There have also been some significant innovations of other kinds. It would be difficult to arrange these innovations according to their impact upon Baptist life.

Perhaps the Ministers-at-large program has touched more churches in meaningful ways. Retired ministers in the program no longer have had to feel superannuated; instead they were able to respond to short-term pastoral opportunities as interim ministers in local churches. It brought some of the finest type of pastoral leadership to large and small churches alike.

Missions-minded Ohio Baptists hosted more than forty American Baptist missionaries in the fall of 1962 in what was named a "Missionary Mobilization." It was no small task; the program carried personalities representing the American Baptist world vision into many Ohio Churches.

The coming of Mr. and Mrs. P. Sadhu Samuel in 1964 also focused the attention of Ohio Baptists on our ties with Baptists throughout the world. The cost was underwritten by the Baptist women of the state.

The appointment of a Convention evangelist was a great boon to many of our churches. Rev. Douglas Eades was first to fill this position. Later, serving in this position were several other ministers, Rev. Charles Lusher, Dr. I. Lawrence Clark, Rev. Edward Fischer, and Rev. Albert Crocker.

The annual sessions were more and more star-studded with outstanding platform personalities whose inspirational challenges rivaled the national convention programs. No more was it possible to hold the October sessions in small cities, due to the space requirements for housing and convening.

One of the innovations stemming from the "hopes and dreams" for Ohio was the creation of the Ohio Baptist Forward Program in 1964. The fund undergirded a variety of plans such as camping facilities, higher education projects, new church construction and ministries, a minimum salary program, and the summer ministries in Southern Ohio - all of which were very special to Ohio Baptists. This campaign was continually publicized as over-and-above any other giving within the church mission program. It was for special state projects

which would have been given short shrift had not a forceful campaign included them.

In a sense the Forward Program was an attempt to create some self sufficiency in state programs. For instance, when the moneys raised from the national campaigns were depleted, as in the CHEC funds of the sixties, or in the New Frontiers funds of the fifties, Ohio intended to supplement its local ministries with local funds. It was a concerted effort to avoid "flash-in - the pan" crusades and to build in a continuity in ministry. The Sesquicentennial Campaign has become but an amplification of this concept. Several staff ministers, namely Rev. Henry L. Gillenwaters, Rev. William Hayden, Dr. Russel A. Jones, and Rev. Folke Ferre, successively directed the Forward Program for the state.

One result of the Forward Program was the expansion of the summer camping program. A second camp site near Wilmington, purchased in 1958, gave the southwestern region of Ohio a camping facility. Camps Kirkwood and Judson Hills have served well in the development of the corporate fellowship of the state convention. Camping has continued to be an important part in the Christian Education program in Ohio.

Camping was not the major preoccupation of the Division of Christian Education over the years. It was, however, the most visible, probably, in terms of capital investment. Also camping has reflected the state's concern for "Youth Ministries," a priority which was included among the four themes of the Long Term Planning report of 1968. The Christian Education programs over the years have received excellent staff leadership from Rev. Oliver Carlson, Rev. Gordon Korb, Rev. Ralph Lamb, and Rev. Paul R. Edie.

The continued interest in "Youth Ministries" has aided Ohio Baptists to continue support of the Division of Higher Education. For some years, Rev. W. Clinton Powers, who worked on Denison University's staff as a liaison to Ohio's churches, had kept alive a vital link between the school and Ohio Baptists, until he resigned in 1962. Afterward lines of communication have tended to weaken. The main center for campus ministries continued to be at Ohio State University although continued efforts were made to sustain workable programs on the many college and university campuses over the state. Directing the work over the years have been Rev. Norman Armstrong, Rev. Raymond Farrow and presently Dr. Bryan F. Archibald.

One of the major achievements of Ohio Baptists has been the continual response in mission giving to national American Baptist campaigns. Ohio Baptists have energetically

participated over the last few decades in a variety of national campaigns, the Baptist Jubilee Advance, the Churches for New Frontiers, the Christian Higher Education Challenge, and the World Mission Campaign, setting high records.

Ohio's remarkable commitment to state and world missions can most graphically be portrayed in dollars and cents. Year after year, Ohio Baptists pushed their level of giving to record heights. In 1947, the State Convention budget topped the $100,000 mark; in 1958, it climbed above the $200,000 level; in 1962, the $300,000 mark was passed; and, in 1973, the state ministries of Ohio Baptists reached $410,863. These amounts were actually percentages of return on Ohio's mission giving, reflecting a commitment in church contributions which was approximately three times the amount cited above. In 1968, the giving of Ohio Baptists for the first time, for all causes, was over $1,000,000. Over the years, Rev. Lynn Miller and Rev. George Calhoun staffed the Division of World Mission Support.

There is one goal which Ohio Baptists have not been able to achieve. They have not been able successfully to organize enough new churches to replenish the losses of past years. The number of Convention churches in Ohio has stablilized during the last fifteen years close to the 300 mark; and one might celebrate this achievement as an important trend for Ohio Baptists. There has thus far been little success in lifting the number of churches above the 300 mark. When the Sesquicentennial Celebration was first mentioned in 1965, Dr. E. L. Goss suggested a "Fifty Giant Steps Program," which would involve a goal of fifty new Baptist churches over the next ten years. The suggestion remained a rather distant dream.

The founding of new congregational units barely counterbalanced the attrition of churches still occurring in the southeastern section of the state. The staff men who labored with the Church Extension committees and the Division of Church Program and Outreach worked strenuously and wisely to implement as many productive undertakings as would prove feasible. Working in this area have been Rev. George A. Haddad, Dr. E. L. Goss, Rev. John D. Walden, and Dr. Paul Warford.

The success in halting the continual withdrawal of churches from the convention fellowship is, in itself, a very significant accomplishment. This development in the last fifteen years deserves hearty commendation; and it points to the continual labor and love of the Convention's Area Ministers who have touched church after church with their personalized concern.

Quite a few men have served in various regions of the state over the years, Dr. Clayton A. Pepper, Rev. James Dillon, Rev. Phillip Newhart, Rev. Louis Eckols, Dr. William J. Schlatter, Rev. John Eldred, and Rev. Charles Lusher.

If the Ohio Baptist Convention has turned the corner in its continuing relationship to the few displeased churches, it is due, in part, to the aggressively evangelical leadership of Dr. Chapman. American Baptist churches have traditionally followed a middle course, as Dr. Harvey Everett explained to the Trustees in 1972, of "a bridge-leadership...between the more conservative and the more liberal denominations." Ohio Baptists clearly proclaim the Gospel in evangelical terms; but they have also insisted in maintaining strong ecumenical ties. This coupling of rather dissimilar emphases has had, at many times, the suspicious appearance of equivocation. But the administration of Dr. Chapman is not equivocating and most churches are aware of this clear position. Through the years, Dr. Chapman has had a number of staff helpers who have given administrative support to his leadership, namely, Rev. Harold Loughhead, Dr. William J. Schlatter, Mrs. Garland Swanson, Rev. Walter E. Daniels, Rev. John E. Williams, and Rev. Clare Hoyt.

In very recent years, the Ohio Baptist Convention has continued to style its ministries for "The Church for New Times." High priorities have been placed upon a) The Renewal of the church, b) Evangelical concern, c) Leadership development, and d) Youth ministries. The Convention has placed much weight upon the reports of the Long Term Planning Committee and has shown a genuine seriousness in searching for a "Mission Tomorrow." Dr. Chapman's leadership in the third and fourth "phases" (1968-1975) of his tenure as Executive Minister has included several pacesetting tasks, the Mission Tomorrow proposals, Key 73 evangelism, the crucial negotiations for the adjustment of the return percentage of mission money, the breathtaking plans for the Sesquicentennial celebration, and the great possibilities of the Evangelistic Life Style emphases.

The story of the seventies promises to be every bit as exciting for Ohio Baptists as any other period during the last one hundred and fifty years. It is a story in which every Ohio Baptist reader of this brief history will participate. You will make it happen. To be continued.....


## DR. RICHARD H. CLOSSMAN

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Dr. Clossman grew up in Zanesville, Ohio, where he was a member of the Market Street Baptist Church. He served in Ohio as pastor of the Duncan Falls Church, the First Baptist Church, Byesville, and as associate minister of the First Baptist Church, Ironton. After serving for a time as associate minister at the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, Huntington, West Virginia, he returned to Ohio to pastor the First Baptist Church, Mount Gilead. In more recent years, he served as the American Baptist Campus Minister at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.