

THE LIVING LORD

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen." Revelation 1:17-18.

The Southern Baptist Convention met in Oklahoma City. It had met there in 1912 and 1939. The registration at this convention on Thursday was 9,144. I want to present certain facts and figures about the work of Southern Baptists which I trust will be of interest to you.

The Southern Baptist Convention was organized in Augusta, Georgia, May 8, 1845, with 325 messengers from eight states (Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, and the District of Columbia), for the avowed purpose of formulating plans for eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the denomination for the propagation of the Gospel at home and abroad. At that time there were 350,000 members of Southern Baptist churches, including 100,00 slaves.

During these 103 years the Convention has extended its territory to include the following states and the District of Columbia: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia. It has grown in number of churches to 26,822 with a membership of 6,491,981. These churches have a property value of \$450,385,517 and their total contributions to their local work in 1948 amounted to \$124,856,115 and to missions and benevolences \$31,750,299.

The total population of the territory included in the Southern Baptist Convention is approximately 68,146,000. Of this number some 35,776,650 are affiliated with some religious group, approximately 10,589,888 being Baptists, white and colored. It is conservatively estimated that there are at least 32,369,350 of all ages and races in the Southern Baptist Convention territory who are unchurched. Approximately 26,219,174 of these are white.

State Conventions	21
Associations	961
Ministers	27,343
Active Pastors	16,251
Ministers Ordained During Year	1,341
Churches	26,822
Non-Resident Members	1,555,676
Resident Members	4,823,542
Total Membership	6,491,981
Baptisms	312,246
Ratio	1 to 20.8
Churches With Sunday Schools	25,305
Total Enrolment	4,308,374
Churches With Vacation Bible Schools	15,357
Enrolment	1,485,360
Churches With Training Union	13,242
Enrolment	1,078,828
Churches With WMU	13,335
Enrolment	859,798
Churches With Brotherhoods	3,453
Enrolment	119,228
Total Local Gifts	\$124,856,115
Per Capita	\$19.23
Total Mission & Benevolence	\$31,750,299
Per Capita	\$4.89
Church Houses	25,116
Pastors Homes	7,242
Total Value Church Property	\$450,385,517

Publications issued by the Sunday School Board reached a total circulation of 35,498,542 for 1948. Home Life, launched two years ago, is now approaching a monthly circulation of 350,000.

Forty-two new book titles were published during the year with a total printing of 798,793 copies. There were 203 reprints totaling 1,798,594 copies during 1948.

Total business receipts for the year from all sources, including the Baptist Book Stores, was \$7,109,288.55.

From a tabulation of the annual report of the Home Mission Board it would seem that evangelism is the main emphasis of home missions. Direct employees of the Board reported 28,345 conversions in services they conducted. Another 11,333 conversions were reported by cooperative missions workers who are jointly employed by the Home Mission Board and state mission boards.

Thus it would seem obvious that some 34,000 people were converted through home mission endeavors during 1948.

During 1948, 2,167 mission Vacation Bible schools were conducted by the workers.

New work started during the year includes an additional unit of missionaries among the migrants and the entering of Alaska by the Home Mission Board.

The total number of missionaries is 741. Add 287 summer student workers for the grand total of 1,028. There was a net gain of 22 missionaries during the year.

Our Foreign Mission Board reported 670 missionaries in 119 mission centers situated in 25 areas. The overall budget is approximately 5 million dollars.

In 1932, American citizens gave an average of 5.3 per cent of their income to churches and to charitable institutions, whereas in 1948, they gave approximately 1 per cent.

There are less than 100 thousand Baptists in Germany now. Germany baptized 20,000 since the War. During that time not a church has ceased to function, even though many of them are without buildings.

I should like to close this report and service with a brief message on the subject, "The Living Lord." The text is Revelation 1:17-18, which says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen."

I. The Living Lord Anchors Our Souls.

In Jesus we are anchored to the Rock of Ages.

1. He guarantees to us the remission of our sins. Forgiveness of sins is a reality. He said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And we are witnesses of these things." Luke 24:26-27.
2. He provides for us a way of reconciliation to God. He gave His life as a ransom in order that we might be reconciled to God.
3. He guarantees the reception of our souls. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:14. Thank the Lord our garments have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

II. The Living Lord Is The Actuator Of Our Service.

1. He actuates our service by example.
"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:5.
Our Lord holds before us the example of His own perfect life.
2. He actuates our service by gratitude.
"For the love of Christ constraineth us." II Corinthians 5:14.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1.
3. He actuates our service by need.
"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Luke 10:2.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20.
4. He actuates our service by reward.
"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." II Timothy 4:8.

III. The Living Lord Is The Assurance Of Our Success.

1. There is the assurance of our salvation.
Our salvation does not depend on what we do for Christ, but on what Christ has done for us.
2. There is the assurance of the success of our service.
We cannot offer a prayer, give any money, deliver any testimony, make the slightest sacrifice, but what the recording angel will write it in the book of God's remembrance.