

INTRODUCING SOUTHWIDE BAPTIST

SOUTHWIDE BAPTIST is as wide as the South, as narrow as the doctrines of the regular Baptist churches of the south and as wide too. The personnel of its staff of writers is guarantee of this.

Amos Clary, the associate editor, is a graduate of Furman University and of Rochester Theological Seminary. He was for some time Field Editor of Religious Herald and is author of several books.

Judge J. H. White, the publisher, a well known Baptist deacon and banker of Marshall, N. C., is a layman of proved efficiency.

B. W. Spilman, widely known Sunday School specialist, President of North Carolina, Baptist Convention and of Southern Baptist Assembly at Ridgecrest, is on the regular staff of writers and will contribute SPILMANOGRAPHS each week. James Edward Dillard, Chairman of Southern Baptist Assembly Board and pastor of the great Southside Church in Birmingham, will contribute a sermon weekly. Bartlett A. Bowers of Broadway Church, Knoxville, will regularly give a column under the heading "MEDITATION."

F. A. Bower, a fine American of British birth, will write British and Canadian Notes.

Frank Willis Barnett, the inimitable, once editor of Alabama Baptist, now one of the editors of Birmingham Age Herald, will edit a column entitled: "THIS AND THAT, HERE AND THERE."

The editor hopes soon to be able to devote his entire time to the paper.

News will be the specialty of SOUTHWIDE BAPTIST. Our effort will be to gather the news of the churches of the Southern States, so that those Baptists who cannot afford to subscribe for fifteen or twenty denominational papers may take their state paper and SOUTHWIDE BAPTIST and keep in touch with the affairs of the SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION.

SOUTHWIDE institutions of the convention need such an organ as is now provided. The editor as corresponding secretary of Southern Baptist Assembly, has for several years found that announcements of the southwide institution had to be sent to at least fifteen papers in order to reach all sections of the South. With the Southwide Baptist all portions, if not all individuals in the Southern Baptist Convention can soon be reached by a single announcement.

The paper is not related to Southern Baptist assembly at Ridgecrest in anyway, but will contain much Ridgecrest news and report the fine addresses made there.

The Christian And His Bible.

By W. E. Denham.

There is no question that should engage the attention of our Baptist people today more seriously than the one named in the heading to this article. Voices are proclaiming views from every angle, and we are sometimes in danger of becoming confused over the widely varying calls and advice that come to us. Though we as Baptists believe that the Bible is the sole guide for our faith and conduct there are evidences here and there of a dangerous tendency to avoid or ignore its clear teachings and to engage in pure speculation. Among the questions where this tendency is making itself apparent may be mentioned. Evolution, the Pre-millennial Coming of Christ, the Biblical approval of war, Divorce and Remarriage, etc.

Recognizing the strong evidence brought by each side on all these questions the only satis-

factory basis for our beliefs must be one that comes from above and not from human thinking. Our own judgements are biased and incomplete, and only time can tell whether this one is right or that. The foundation we need must be one laid by God himself, and so attested that it shall stand unshaken through all the ages; and, while adjusting its method of statement to the immediate time of its writing, shall yet be so true to all underlying truth that always its principles shall apply to current conditions.

Baptists believe that the Bible comprises such a revelation. Thro' all the ages it has borne its message to men; in every age it has shown itself able to touch the fundamental needs and experiences of men; it has come with the stamp of Divine authority; and it has been so true to underlying fact that not in all time has one proven fact of science contradicted it. Theories of science there have been in almost unlimited number which have denied its statements, but as science has advanced in knowledge, and as in some cases our knowledge of scripture has become more accurate, it has been found that no abiding contradiction existed. We are fully justified, therefore in believing that in it we have the foundation which we need. The experience of the past, moreover, justifies us in believing that the Bible is so clearly the word of God, and so clearly accurate in its revelation, that it will always withstand all attacks, and in the end will be the one unshaken testimony to God's eternal truths.

There are three facts concerning the Bible that confirm the position just stated and that deserve our thoughtful consideration

First. THE BIBLE NEVER CONTRADICTS ITSELF.

It is fully admitted that there are many apparent contradictions to be found, but closer study will demonstrate that they are apparent only, and do not exist in reality.

One reason for the difference of the opinion among us is the bias of our early training and experiences and thinking. It is exceedingly difficult to disassociate ourselves wholly from the views with which our lives were surrounded, and to bring to the study of the Bible an open mind. To this perhaps more than to any other cause may be attributed the continuance of many divergent doctrinal views. Baptists are unquestionably freer from this condition than most Denominations, as the presence among us of so many who have come from other Denominations testifies, but even we are too much tainted with this same fault, when it comes especially to matters other than those distinctive doctrine on which as a Denomination we agree. The errors of former generations are thus perpetuated, and the younger generation grows up tacitly accepting the views of its parents rather than forming the practice of consulting the Scriptures themselves and accepting their teaching. Many cases therefore where there is no real contradiction in the Word, find our people in opposite camps.

Another fruitful ground of divergence lies in the strength of our natural desires. The Scriptures speak in no uncertain terms on many social and moral questions, but even Christians too frequently place their desires before the Word of God, and finding in the Scriptures some minor points seeming to justify them, promptly seize upon them and use them as arguments against the clear teaching. Divorce and remarriage, dress, the relative positions of man and woman, worldliness, and so forth, all find Christians on opposite sides. On these and many other questions there is serious danger that we shall allow ourselves to be led into totally mistaken interpretations of Scripture.

What is needed is such a conviction of the absolute truth of the Word of God as shall lead us to accept unquestioningly its plain teachings and seek the meaning of obscure passages in the light of those that are plain. If we do this we shall tear down many a false standard of life and conduct.

Such an attitude will increasingly demonstrate the absence of contradiction and the fundamental and unshaken consistency of the teachings of Scripture.

Second. THE PLAIN TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE IS THE END OF CONTROVERSY.

This position should appeal in a peculiar way to our Baptist mind. Our divergence of views from others on Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the proper subjects for Church membership, and so forth, is based upon this position. It should therefore in order for us to be consistent, be our attitude toward all other questions. This does not mean that the Scripture always clears up all points of details are not obscure. Nor is this to be wondered at. We are dealing with spiritual and eternal matters, and we must humbly recognize the truth of Paul's words; "Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully even as I was fully known." It will take the light of eternity to make some things plain. This should not, however, lead us to refuse or even question the revelation that we have. Yet this is exactly what often takes place. Considering for a moment one or two of the difficult questions mentioned earlier in this paper; look at the matter of Evolution. The Bible story is certainly clearcut. It pictures a perfect creation as it left the hands of God. It further pictures that perfect creation as rudely and terribly ruined by sin. Both these statements are absolutely in conflict with the theory of Evolution. Yet many of our people, and among them some of our leaders, seem ready to accept the theory and reject the revelation. It seems indeed a case of "straining out the gnat and swallowing the camel." The question of the Lord's return, in-so-far as that shall precede or follow the Millennium, is another of these questions. No candid student of the Bible can deny that the Words of Jesus to His disciples implied that He might return while they lived, nor that this was their expectation. Yet because all the details of that great event cannot be specifically settled, there are many who ignore that clear teaching, and either on the ground of inability to answer hard questions or on a more or less arbitrary interpretation of difficult passage, turn away from the Doctrine, and sometimes sneer not only at those who hold it but even at the teaching itself.

These two classics will suffice. The Bible does not teach both Creation and Evolution; it does not teach both the Pre-millennial and Post-millennial Coming of our Lord; it does not contradict itself. On both questions its testimony is clearcut and emphatic, and should be accepted by all who love and believe it. It is not a question of a pet viewpoint. It is a question of a Scripture revelation. On many points the details may remain for all time obscure, but the plain statements of the Word should settle all controversy for Baptists.

Third. THE SCRIPTURES ARE INSPIRED OF GOD.

Our attitude here is really the fundamental point in all our thinking about the Scriptures. Only as we believe that in the Bible we have, not the work of men's hands, growing thro' the centuries more and more complete; but a revelation to men from God, can we estimate aright the strength of Scripture evidence. Whatever view we may hold as to the manner of Scripture Inspiration, and the writer is a firm believer in Verbal Inspiration, if we believe that they are inspired, then both of the foregoing positions stands as a matter of course. If in the Scripture God has revealed Himself and His truth and His will, then certainly as we study them we shall find in them no contradictions, and on all matters, whether of conduct or of belief, we shall accept their statements as final. Only so can we really show our belief in their inspiration.

Has not the time come among us when more and more we should recognize the absolute and unshaken authority of the Bible, not merely in our statements of belief and in those matters that are peculiarly Baptists, but in all matters? With all the best will in the world we shall not see eye-to-eye in all matters; there must ever remain that loving consideration for each other that accepts as inevitable some divergence of views.