

The JUDSON ADULT ELECTIVE SERIES was produced by the  
Department of Adult Ministries and Administration  
Division of Church Education  
Education Ministries  
American Baptist Churches, USA  
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JUDSON PRESS  
PO Box 851  
Valley Forge PA 19482-0851  
1-800-4-Judson

LS14-202

# INTRODUCTION

## A Rationale for the Study of the American Baptist Story

What Christians share in common is definitely the major proportion of Christian truth. Still members of a particular tradition need to be informed about those ideas and events in history which resulted in their own Christian heritage. They need to know the tradition out of which we enter into dialogue and cooperative mission with other Christian communions.

American Baptists have a mission to communicate the Gospel to the world, not just in the personal dimension of redemption, wholeness, and meaning in life, but in the social dimension of how the gathered community of believers lives in relationship with one another and with the world for whom Jesus Christ died. We have an understanding of the church as a participatory community where decision making and responsibility are shared with the entire community of the faithful and which affirms the worth of each person under the lordship of Jesus Christ. We invite the study of the New Testament with an open mind and are willing to trust that the spirit of truth will make its own witness through the church and through our lives.

### **Why We Communicate Baptist Emphases**

1. Understanding our heritage. We need to emphasize the careful instruction of our own people in Baptist contributions to the Christian heritage. Perhaps one reason many Baptists are easily persuaded to unite with other Christian churches is that they have never understood Baptist emphases on the authority of the New Testament, soul freedom, and religious liberty. Our contribution to evangelism and world mission is a heritage of deep significance.
2. Responding to the needs of youth and adults. We recognize that youth and adults are looking for an interpretation of existence which makes sense of their experience in the world. Pastors and leaders who share their Christian faith and Baptist tradition with openness and respect for other traditions will provide a context in which youth may learn to appreciate Baptist emphases.
3. Preparing for ecumenical fellowship. We welcome ecumenical dialogue that proceeds from an understanding of both the unity of Christians and the nature of one's own Christian heritage and experience of the church. Interaction with persons of other traditions heightens the need to be knowledgeable about one's own. Baptists need to be as articulate as are many other Christians about the meaning of their faith for their lives.
4. Correcting misconceptions of Baptist beliefs and practices. We teach Baptist history, polity, practice in order to provide a needed corrective to the way many Baptists practice their Christian faith. We can be challenged by the way some of

our forbearers suffered imprisonment rather than deny conscience, challenged the state's right to proscribe religious liberty, provided educational opportunity for minorities, and opposed social injustice in obedience to Jesus.

5. Expanding relationships with other Baptists. We understand that Baptists need to know the sad moments in their history which have led to major divisions North and South. Separate black Baptist denominations and several Baptist denominations formed as a result of theological conflict or the national origin of particular groups. Can we affirm our confessed belief in religious liberty sufficiently to expand bridges of fellowship and cooperative efforts with other Baptist groups, or does our excessive commitment to local autonomy and independence of the local congregation inevitably result in multiplicity of small Baptist groups?

## PREPARATION BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

The following resources are recommended to supplement the basic text, The Story of American Baptists. Check your church library and your pastor's library to determine which books are available to you. Asterisks (\*) indicate that these resources are referred to several times, are reasonably priced, and would make excellent additions to your church library. Resources in **bold print** are available from Judson Press.

**A Baptist Manual of Polity & Practice** – Norman H. Maring

**A History of the Baptists** – Robert G. Torbet

\*American Baptists Whence and Whither – Norman H. Maring (out of print)

Baptist Concepts of the Church – Winthrop S. Hudson (out of print)

**Baptist Confessions of Faith** – William L. Lumpkin

\***Baptist Convictions** – Winthrop S. Hudson

Baptists in Transition – Winthrop S. Hudson (out of print)

Baptists Who Dared – Frank T. Hoadley and Benjamin P. Browne (out of print)

\*Becoming Effective Teachers – Jan Chartier (out of print)

Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (out of print)

\*Learning is Change – Martha M. Leypoldt (out of print)

Shapers of Baptist Thought – James E. Tull (out of print)

The Big Little School – Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright (out of print)

## SESSION ONE

**THEME:** *Ideas Which Launched Baptists as a Separate Group*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapters 1-2.

Acts 8:12-13

Romans 6:1-10

Matthew 28:19

John 8:31

I Corinthians 9:1-12

I Peter 2:13-17

We introduce this series on the Baptist story by highlighting persons and positions on issues which are important to understanding our heritage as Baptists. We need to know that it was more than a distinctive method of baptism which gave early Baptists their identity as a community of faith in relationship to other Christian churches. We focus on two ideas which were important for early Baptists: believer's baptism and freedom of conscience.

### GOALS FOR THE SESSION

- to identify and define two key ideas which set apart Baptists as a distinct Christian group in England and America: (1) believer's baptism, and (2) freedom of conscience.
- to reflect on the meaning and practice of baptism which function in your congregation.
- to compare issues of conscience for colonial and contemporary Baptists.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

We assume a careful reading of the study book. Underline the "key concepts" (ideas) which were important to early Baptists, and circle the names of important persons in the Baptist story. Make a simple two column chart with names in one column matched with key ideas in an adjoining column. Clip some articles which identify issues of conscience, i.e., feminism, militarism, poverty and hunger.

### GETTING STARTED

Ask each person to recall a single incident from Chapters 1 and 2 which contradicted their previous understanding of the Baptist story. Which idea or event was most contrary to the perceived tradition?

Alternative: Show the filmstrip “People with a Mission,” the story of the American Baptists (available from the Judson Book Stores). Leave one frame in focus on the screen as a center of interest.

## **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

Offer the following choice of participatory teaching methods to the class and let the group decide which methods of interacting with the ideas suggested in Chapters 1 and 2 they prefer. The group might subdivide into task groups and utilize one or more of the following suggestions:

- 1) Identify one key Baptist leader in England and America and one idea with which she/he is associated. State this key idea, i.e., believer’s baptism, in your own words. Write a brief paragraph as to why this idea still has importance for you and other Baptists. What other Christian groups also share this understanding of baptism?
- 2) Study the reasons for Roger Williams’ banishment from Boston. Which of these issues are alive in contemporary society? Utilize current resources provided by the teacher. Has anyone of your acquaintance or from your congregation paid a price for acting on a matter of conscience? When does loyalty to Christ take priority over obedience to the state? “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”<sup>1</sup> by Martin Luther King Jr. reads like an epistle which ought to be read among the churches. Secure a copy from your local library.
- 3) Another group might engage in the study of biblical texts relating to baptism and research this issue in The Story of American Baptists. Some options for investigation and discussion:
  - a. Consult a standard history text like Robert Torbet’s A History of the Baptists, page 477.
  - b. Why do you suppose that John Smyth and Roger Williams had a troubled conscience over self-administered baptism?
  - c. Does the current practice among Baptists of baptizing very young children (5-9 years) really make invalid the affirmation of believer’s baptism?
  - d. Since discussion continues in all the churches of Christendom regarding the proper place and mode of baptism, do Baptists make a sufficient witness to the importance of believer’s baptism?
- 4) Develop as a role play the story of Isaac Backus and James Manning lobbying with John Adams of the Massachusetts delegation prior to the Continental Congress for “liberty of conscience.” Appoint the characters and develop

some guidelines for the debate but then let the actual lines emerge spontaneously. Imagine your classroom is Carpenter's Hall and recreate the scene for the group.

Allow 30 minutes for the study groups and preparation for the role play. A reporter from each group might share the most important issue from the activity in each group as a summary. Finally, invite the role play group to enact the role play.

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

The role play might naturally lead to discussion on how we as Baptists can make our point of view known in centers of decision making. Another alternative would be to ask persons to write their definition of the two key concepts: believer's baptism and freedom of conscience. Invite the group to select the most useful definition. Finally, the teacher might share his/her chart of key Baptist persons and the views they espoused. This could be copied onto newsprint or chalkboard.

<sup>1</sup> "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," Staughton Lynd, ed., Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966).

## SESSION TWO

**THEME:** *A New Colony and a New Idea*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapters 1-2

Matthew 22:15-22

Romans 13

I Peter 2:16-17

The purpose of this session is to identify key leaders among colonial Baptists and the role they played in the struggle for religious freedom. This idea (the separation of church and state) eventually became a national policy and was ultimately expressed in the charter documents of a colony and a nation. Most Baptists cannot name more than a few persons important in the Baptist heritage. While most Baptists were ordinary folk, a few were distinguished and made important contributions to the destiny of the nation and the shaping of the Baptist heritage.

### GOALS FOR THE SESSION

- to identify the important role played by Roger Williams and John Leland in establishing a colony which provided religious and civil liberty.
- to appreciate the contribution of James Manning and Isaac Backus, lobbyists for religious liberty.
- to recognize the contribution of John Leland toward disestablishment of the state churches in Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

As you review the first two chapters of the study book, add further details to your chart of important persons and ideas. For this session give attention to the contributions of John Clark, Isaac Backus, James Manning, John Leland, and John Hart. Prepare on newsprint or chalkboard the details of the statements on religious liberty by John Clark and Thomas Jefferson. Keep alert in your current reading to discover articles on church/state issues. This assignment could be an individual or group project. Post interesting articles on a bulletin board. Prepare materials and directions for the three learning centers outlined below.

### GETTING STARTED

As group members arrive, invite them to examine the three learning centers and to select the approach in which they are most interested.

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

*Learning Center One:* Make a chart on newsprint or on chalkboard from the charter of the colony which guaranteed the free exercise of religion in Rhode Island. Use the quotation from Warren Mild, page 12. Write a brief statement reflecting on the impact of religious freedom on the growth and development of religious groups in the United States.

*Learning Center Two:* Make a large chart on newsprint or on chalkboard of the following:

“The early Baptists had the experience of being coerced by civil as well as by ecclesiastical authorities. This they also regarded as intolerable, for the church must be free to strive to be Christ’s church – to determine its own life and to chart its own course in obedience to Christ without being subject to outside dictation. Moreover, it soon became apparent that if Baptists were to claim this freedom for themselves, they must concede equal freedom to others.”

Winthrop Hudson, Baptists Convictions, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), p. 30.

Select one of the following questions and write your response:

- a) Does the separation of church and state mean the separation of religion and politics? Explain.
- b) Should the state ever investigate and prosecute religious groups? For example, Jim Jones and the People’s Temple or the Church of Scientology? Why or why not?
- c) Were Baptists correct in identifying the linking of civil and ecclesiastical power as a threat to God’s own freedom? Why or why not?

*Learning Center Three:* Study one or more of the assigned biblical texts. Write your answers to the following questions:

- a) Imagine how the audience to which this was first written responded. Did it have any impact on their social/political structures?
- b) Does this text have a message for you, for the church, or for our society today? If so, state it in your own words.
- c) Can you name an issue which would cause you to disobey the state in order to maintain allegiance to Jesus Christ and the church?
- d) Do you think that the church has so accommodated itself to cultural norms that it is no longer responsive to the biblical message?

The role of the leader is to monitor the learning centers or to choose another person to do so. Persons should be encouraged to complete more than one learning center if possible.

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

If you desire to bring the group together at the close of the session, individuals could be invited to share their most significant observation, their written response to a question or to identify an issue which needs further clarification. An alternative would be to select an important question from one learning center for group discussion.

## SESSION THREE

**THEME:** *Baptist Understanding of the Church*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapters 1, 2, 5

I Peter 2:10	I Corinthians 1:1
Ephesians 2:19	Galatians 1:1
II Corinthians	Revelation 1:4
I Corinthians	Acts 15

This week we will rediscover Baptist understandings of the church and how these perceptions have shaped denominational patterns of organization. The leader will encourage adults to begin their study with New Testament concepts of the church and then consider Baptist patterns of organization. This order may be reversed. The method will focus on enabling adults to discover ideas in the Scripture and in the study book rather than having the teacher tell adults what these sources state about these subjects.

### GOALS FOR THIS SESSION

- to study New Testament images of the church in order to see if these images are reflected in current Baptist church structure and polity.
- to describe the associational principle adopted by early English and American Baptist congregations as the means by which churches of similar faith and order related to each other.
- to identify the purposes assigned to the early Baptist associations and to compare these purposes with functions which are currently being carried out through associations and other American Baptist state and national organizations.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

The teacher should study the Scripture texts with reference to the church. Note the references to the idea of the universal church and others which refer to a group of believers in a local congregation. Note particularly Acts 15 which describes how the early church settled a dispute over requiring circumcision of Gentile believers.

Encourage the class to make a choice among:

- 1) a study of the New Testament idea of the church
- 2) the Baptist pattern of associations of churches, or
- 3) a biblical simulation of Acts 15, the Council of Jerusalem

Small groups or individuals might be encouraged to work with each of these topics. The teacher's role is to function as a resource person and an enabler of group process. If necessary, allocate some of the class period for study, writing assignments, organizing group reports, or preparing the simulation.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Write the following on newsprint or chalkboard as a focal point for today's session.

“Similar to other Christian groups, Baptists made the claim that their organizational patterns were based on the New Testament. While early Baptists were Congregationalists, they were not independents. They sought to link their congregations together to maintain a consensus on Christian doctrine and to explain their views to other Christian groups and to the world.”

## **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

1) Determine which subject, church or association that each group will study. Request that the group which chooses the association idea develop a chart on newsprint which identifies the function of the early Baptist associations. To simplify the investigation, you might assist the study by providing the four following headings (you may not want to provide the page numbers): (1) certification and supervision of clergy, page 14; (2) worship and celebration, page 14; (3) maintaining group consensus, pages 14 and 42; and (4) social ministries, pages 16, 17, 20, 41, 43. Then ask the group to discuss the following questions:

- a) How many of these functions are you aware of which are currently being carried out by your association of Baptist churches?
- b) How many functions are carried out through regional or national agencies?
- c) Does your association actively campaign for social issues like “religious liberty” and “slavery?” Why or why not?

An alternative assignment would be for the leader or interested person to locate the charter and by-laws of their local association. Make a comparison of the role assigned to the association in colonial and contemporary America. What explanation would you offer for the differences?

2) The group that is interested in New Testament understandings of the church should be invited to explore two groups of texts, one that considers the church in its catholic or universal sense and the other that considers the church as a local group of believers meeting in one locale.

The universal idea is evident in several texts with a variety of descriptive statements, such as, “The people of God,” Hebrews 4:9; “the household of God,” Ephesians 2:19; “the temple of God,” II Corinthians 6:16; and “the body of Christ,” I Corinthians 12:27. This meaning of the church identifies the church as “the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the head thereof.”<sup>1</sup>

It was not an indiscriminate multitude. It was a gathered people, consisting of those who put their trust in Christ. It was not an ecclesiastical structure, but a community of persons. The following questions identify issues which would provide the basis for a debate by persons taking opposing sides of the issue. Or, several persons could constitute a panel and discuss a range of views with the whole group.

- If the purpose of God is to create a “people of God,” can one be a Christian in isolation from a community of faith?

<sup>1</sup>Winthrop S. Hudson, Baptist Convictions. (Valley Forge, Judson Press, 1963, p. 8.

- Can the concept of the autonomy of the local congregation be reconciled with New Testament terms like “people of God,” etc.?

The local use of the word for church is the most frequent meaning found in the New Testament. Assign individuals or groups to consider: I Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1; Revelation 1:4; among others. Geography and number dictate that a particular group of God’s people will gather in a specific location and form societies to express their obedience to Jesus Christ and to walk in his ways. This gathered community following the New Testament pattern meets for worship, edification, intercession, mutual care, and to prepare for witness and service to the world. Using the method of a chain reaction forum<sup>2</sup> invite each member of the group to respond to the question: What is the unique purpose of a local congregation? In this method, each person is asked to restate what the previous person has said before he/she makes a contribution.

## **CLOSING**

The way the session is closed will vary considerably depending on the choice of subject matter and methods used in the learning process. You might ask group leaders to share their most important learning from the experience and state how it relates to the here and now issues of your congregation, your association, or the church in its largest sense.

<sup>2</sup>Martha M. Leypoldt, Learning is Change. (Valley Forge, Judson Press, 1971) p. 73

## SESSION FOUR

**THEME:** *The Society Method of Organization to Achieve Mission*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapters 3 and 4

In this session we will focus on how Baptists organized themselves to carry out a new sense of the mission of the church “to reach out and convert the heathen.” An English Baptist, William Carey, pioneered the modern foreign missionary movement; an American Baptist convert from Congregationalism, Luther Rice, implemented an organizational structure – the society method – to implement the task of missions at home and overseas. This deliberate decision not to use the association as the organizing principle for mission resulted from the rejection of a more centralized denominational structure. As a result American Baptists have remained a loosely organized denomination until the most recent decades.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to identify the characteristics of the society method of organizing to achieve mission goals.
- to understand why Baptists chose the “society method” rather than utilizing the existing structure of the association of churches.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Study Chapters 3 and 4 in the text with a focus on the society method as an organizing principle for the church’s mission. Do some background reading in Torbet’s History of the Baptists, or Hudson’s Baptists in Transition. Prepare the handout quiz which is suggested as an opening experience. If you choose the panel method of presenting the issues, then your preparation should focus on preparing the discussion to conclude the session. An alternative methodology would be the preparation of a brief lecture describing the society method of organization.

### GETTING STARTED

Distribute a prepared handout which asks the class members to match key persons and events with important missionary societies identified in the reading. This will serve as a check on reading assignments. Have the group correct their own responses. If they do poorly, use some time to review the general content of Chapters 3 and 4.

Match the following:

- |                            |     |   |
|----------------------------|-----|---|
| A. Andrew Fuller           | (D) | Agent of the ABHMS.   |
| B. Haystack Prayer Meeting | (E) | General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the U.S. for Foreign Missions. |
| C. Lott Cary               | (A) | Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel.   |
| D. Luther Rice             | (C) | African Missionary Society of Richmond, Virginia.   |
| E. Philadelphia, May 1814  | (B) | Society of Inquiry on the Subject of Missions.  |

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

Take about ten minutes to present a mini-lecture on the characteristics of the society method of organization to achieve a social objective. In addition to the text see: Winthrop Hudson's Baptists in Transition, Judson Press, 1979, pp. 22-25. An alternative method would be to assign one of the following principles to a group member to research and then present the material as a part of a panel discussion. The following principles are most characteristic of a society: (1) Its membership is determined by the voluntary contributions of interested individuals; (2) It has no necessary relationship to any church; (3) It is a single purpose agency with a single aim, i.e. supporting foreign missions; and (4) It is administered by a self-perpetuating board of managers or trustees.

Next lead the group into an exploration of the question of why Baptists chose the "society method" of organization rather than the existing structure of the associations of churches. One answer is provided by Winthrop Hudson:

Numerous observers of our social history have pointed out that the characteristic response of an Englishman or American, when confronted by an immediately urgent need, has always been to form a committee or society to get on with the job. It is not surprising; therefore, that Luther Rice should have adopted this traditional method of organization to meet a specific need. This was a means of achieving quick action by interested people, but was not intended to provide a denominational structure (page 84).

Some additional answers include: (1) Since it was impossible to get a majority consensus among Baptists that overseas missions was mandated by the Gospel, the "society method" enabled a minority of interested persons to support a cause in which they believed; (2) "These societies were less of a threat to the control of the local church than were the regional associations to which the churches already belonged (Mild, page 29); and (3) Aggressive leaders like Luther Rice could promote an idea and criss-cross the country seeking "subscriptions" to finance the venture.

In order to summarize the learnings from this study of the society method of organization, select either means of concluding your study:

- 1) In order to relate the issue to your local church situation, ask your group members which educational and missionary societies are currently supported by members of your congregation? What input into policy formation of these societies do these contributors have?
- 2) Present these two questions to the group for their consideration:

First, does the society method find any biblical support as a means for organizing the church?

Second, what subsequent positive and negative impact on the denomination resulted from the widespread utilization of the society method?

It seems clear that in the first instance there was no biblical precedent for the society method. It was adapted from 18<sup>th</sup> century social and political organization. A partial answer to the second question following the text states positive values as being the avoidance of a hierarchical denominational structure enabling individual initiative to support particular educational and missionary endeavors and allowing an intentional minority to support a worthwhile goal in mission. Liabilities of the society method include: (1) no direct representation of the churches in policy formation, (2) multiple efforts in fund-raising by competing agencies and societies, and (3) the lack of any effective coordination with the denominational program.

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

Invite a couple to volunteer to assume the role of John Mason and Sallie Peck, a leading missionary family on the frontier. Identify a person in the group or the church who could direct a TV-style personal interview. Select a small committee to research and prepare the script. This committee might also consider alternative approaches to the next session.

## SESSION FIVE

**THEME:** *Frontier Style Evangelism: John Mason and Sallie Peck*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapter 4

Alternative: Baptists Who Dared, Frank T. Hoadley and Benjamine P. Browne: pages 49-53.

In this session we will study the life-style and accomplishments of a prominent American Baptist home missionary family, John Mason and Sallie Peck. We will note the breadth and depth of the achievements of this dedicated couple who were committed to transforming the life-style of persons in the expanding frontier of the West. Their Christian commitment, self-sacrifice, and creative educational and social service evidence a response to Christian faith which challenges each person to consider how he/she might extend the Christian witness on the frontiers of our own social border.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to identify the many dimensions of the frontier ministry of John Mason and Sallie Peck in order to comprehend the diversity of their ministry and reflect on the adequacy of our personal and corporate ministry to our society.
- to observe how many of Peck's forms of ministry still have validity and continuity as a part of national, regional or local congregational outreach.
- to consider new frontiers in our own society which call for a Christian witness and mission. Perhaps your group can identify a particular ministry to which you will give personal and financial resources.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Reread Chapter 4 giving particular attention to the many achievements of the John Mason Pecks' extraordinary ministry. Supplement your reading with Baptists Who Dared, Frank T. Hoadley and Benjamine P. Browne, Judson Press, 1980; or Torbet's History of the Baptists. Determine which of the alternative approaches suits your teaching style and the needs of the group. A planning committee or the leader should determine well in advance of this session what approaches will be used in order that proper preparation may be made. This is particularly true if you choose the historical sketch involving persons in frontier costumes.

## GETTING STARTED

Whether or not you choose the TV-style personal interview of the Pecks, invite a couple to dress up in frontier style costume and role play the Pecks greeting members of your class as they arrive at a frontier style Sunday School. (Check Robert Lynn's The Big Little School, as an excellent resource for depicting this format.)<sup>1</sup> The couple role playing the Pecks should arrive early and greet each class member with the enthusiasm experienced in a frontier Sunday School. If your group is not responsive to this idea, create your own method of introducing the mood and purpose of the session.

<sup>1</sup>Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright, The Big Little School. (NJ: Harper & Row, 1971).

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

Choose among the following alternatives or combine them in keeping with your own teaching/learning purposes for this session.

- 1) Prepare a TV-style interview of an historical person to play the interviewer's role in the style of a Phil Donahue or Mike Douglas. Choose a suitable person, or persons, to play the role of John Mason Peck and his wife, Sallie. Following the initial interview period, ask for questions from the audience. Group members should be requested in advance to prepare suitable questions for this audience participation.

The interviewer and participants should be encouraged to get beyond the factual data to elicit responses to issues of motivation and commitment to Christian service on the frontier, survival of a cross-country journey, managing a household and a ministry on \$5.00 per week, and maintaining a ministry after the denomination cuts off the major source of funding. A useful line of questioning might ask the Pecks to respond to, "What frontiers in our contemporary society would challenge you to give another life of service?" "What frontiers of mission ought to be attracting the most creative persons, and which areas of society present the most significant challenge?"

Both the interviewer and the persons role playing the Pecks need time to adequately prepare for their roles if this teaching/learning method is to achieve maximum impact.

- 2) Students will research and prepare a three-five minute oral report on one aspect of John Mason Peck's ministry. Topics suggested by the text include:
  - early Sunday Schools
  - frontier public schools
  - the purpose and the establishment of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, now National Ministries

- Rock Springs Seminary, Shurtleff College and other early Baptist schools and colleges. Consider what factors contributed to the demise of so many early Baptist schools and colleges.
  - Peck's publications. Check your library for his Guide to Emigrants, or his Life of Daniel Boone. Perhaps you could locate and read selections from The Traveler's Directory of Illinois.
  - efforts to support missionary outreach to the American Indians
- 3) Prepare a list on newsprint or on chalkboard of the various efforts in ministry by the Pecks. Or ask the group members to develop this list from their own reading. In an adjoining column the students should list similar ministries being carried on by their congregation or associations of churches. After completing the chart, the leader should facilitate the group in a discussion of the following questions:
- a) How many of Peck's ministries have continuing relevance for the church today? What factors in the Christian heritage or the social situation support this continuing ministry?
  - b) What different forms of ministry are supported or engaged in by your congregation? What social changes have necessitated these newer forms of ministry?
  - c) How can the church challenge its most able youth to consider a life-time of faithful service on some new frontier of society? What needs does your group identify which call forth a witness and service from the church? In what forms of mission are your group members engaged? Are there new frontiers of service your group ought to be exploring?
- 4) Some groups may want to explore biblical sources which might have formed Peck's Christian faith and zeal for service at the frontier. What biblical resources would you suggest which support the Pecks' life-style? Consider some of the following: Deuteronomy 4:10; I Samuel 12:23-24; Psalm 34:1-18; Luke 9:57-62; Romans 10:11-17; Hebrews 8:8-13.

## **CLOSING THE SESSION**

The leader should assist the group to identify qualities of daring and commitment in its individual and corporate Christian experience. Why not test the group's readiness to identify and serve in some specific ministry in congregation or community. Today, almost every church and social service agency is actively seeking volunteer leadership.

## SESSION SIX

**THEME:** *Division Over Slavery*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptist, Chapter 5

Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Abingdon, 1962, Vol. 4, pages 383-90, "Slavery in the O.T."

This session and the next will focus on social and theological issues during the 19<sup>th</sup> century which divided Baptist churches and associations. Slavery was the most divisive issue dividing most denominations and almost dividing the nation into separate countries. Prior to the Civil War, abolitionist sentiment was so dominant in the North that American Baptist agencies affiliated with the Triennial Convention refused to appoint slave-holding missionaries. This action provoked the organization of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845. This session will examine how slavery divided Baptists into separate denominations.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to reflect on the scandal of slavery which divided most major denominations into separate groups – north and south.
- to demonstrate that Christians have historically used the Scriptures to support opposing sides in controversial social issues like slavery and are supporting opposing sides of contemporary social issues by arguments purporting to be based on Scripture, i.e., Equal Rights Amendment, Gay Rights, etc.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Reread Chapter 5 noting the difficulty Baptists had in making a firm decision against slavery. The mood of the nation was not unlike the emotional pitch evidenced by hawks and doves in the Vietnam era. It is suggested that you use a role play of the decision by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Board not to appoint a slave-holding missionary, to illustrate how this issue came to a critical stage in Baptist development. If you are not familiar with this teaching method, you should consult F.R. and G. Shaftel, Role Playing for Social Values, Englewood Cliffs, NJ; Prentiss Hall, Inc., 1967 or Jan Chartier, Becoming Effective Teachers, Valley Forge, PA, Judson Press, 1978, pages 28-29, for some assistance in planning.

If your group is challenged by the second learning goal, invite persons to research and report from contemporary periodicals examples of how Scriptures are used to support opposing social/theological views.

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

- 1) Organize a role-play which reenacts the appearance of a slave-holding candidate applying for a missionary appointment sponsored by the Foreign Mission Society, Mild, pages 45-46. Assign roles to the missionary candidate, and the members of the Mission Board including one designated as secretary, Solomon Peck, (four to six persons).

The missionary should prepare a position paper defending his/her practice of slavery based on the common practice of the Old Testament and all Semitic people. See Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible as suggested in beginning of the session. For biblical references see: Exodus 20:17; 21:1-11; Joshua 9:23-27; Leviticus 25:39-55; and Proverbs 17:2. New Testament texts also support the social custom of slavery, Ephesians 6:5-9.

Mission Board members should develop brief position papers arguing against the continuing practice of Christians owning other persons and keeping them in a position of servitude. Some helpful biblical texts include: Galatians 3:23-29; Philemon, verse 16, "treat the slave as a brother in Christ."

Helpful resources for developing arguments for and against slavery may be found in any standard encyclopedia.

After the board meeting has listed to the opposing viewpoints it should move to executive session and reach its decision. Some board member should make a motion to reject the candidate stating reasons why Christians cannot support the continuation of slavery. (See Mild, page 45.) The person playing Solomon Peck should conclude by predicting the division of the Triennial Convention into separate organizations serving Northern and Southern Baptists (1845).

After the role-play, the participants should be asked to resume normal roles and to interact in a debriefing session. The leader should encourage the expression of feelings and the identification of learnings from the role-play. The following questions may be helpful: (1) What feelings did the role-play evoke? (2) What learnings can you identify? (3) How do we interpret the biblical data which supports the social institution of slavery? (4) What alternative historical development do you imagine if the Mission Board had approved a slave-holding missionary? However, be sure to discuss questions which seem central to the group's interests.

- 2) The second learning goal is a perspective about the use of the Bible to uphold a particular viewpoint on a given social or political issue. Note that persons with opposing views on slavery each found resources in the Bible to support their views. Persons with opposing views on contemporary issues, e.g., the Equal Rights Amendment, often use biblical data in a similar way. The leader could illustrate this practice not only from the historical issues of slavery, but also from

the discussion of current social and religious issues in contemporary periodicals. The following questions are intended to give some focus to this broad issue:

- a) How can the church provide a context for the discussion of controversial issues without provoking separation and alienation of persons holding differing points of view?
- b) Does Baptist support of the separation of church and state require a “hands-off” policy regarding discussion and advocacy of particular points of view on social and political issues (Mild, page 43)?
- c) What principles of biblical interpretation are important when using the Bible to defend a particular position on a social issue?

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

Invite some reflection on how your group deals with controversial social issues. Is divergent opinion suppressed in order to give the appearance of unity? Is it assumed that all Christians should hold the same viewpoint on social/political questions? Does your group evidence the maturity to listen, to encourage difference of opinion, and to struggle toward the truth in complex issues?

## SESSION SEVEN

**THEME:** *Division Over Social and Theological Issues*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapter 5

James E. Tull, Shapers of Baptist Thought, Judson Press, Chapter 5 Dictionary of American Biography, article on “Alexander Campbell” or a standard encyclopedia

Matthew 28:19-20

Acts 2:38

Acts 8:12-13

Romans 6:1-10

Among main-line Protestant groups Baptists have been particularly susceptible to division over theological issues. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century this may be accounted for by widely scattered local congregations lacking strong associational relationships, under-educated clergy with little formal study of Baptist history and theology, and a strong preference for “religion of the heart” which opened persons to the persuasive powers of the most popular itinerant preacher. Alexander Campbell, a one-time Presbyterian, who brought his Washington County, Pennsylvania, congregation into the Redstone Baptist Association, was a most effective preacher-promoter. It soon became clear that his views on baptism and the Lord’s Supper did not conform to general Baptist beliefs. He traveled as far west as Kentucky debating Presbyterians on “baptism” and stirred controversy among Baptists by denouncing “associations of churches,” “hireling priests,” and seminaries which he labeled “priest factories.”

Today, one could not draw a crowd to debate over denominational differences in religious belief and practice. However, an understanding of the diversity in the American Protestant tradition and clearer perceptions of Baptist beliefs and practice can give us insight into ourselves and others.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to observe the impact of Alexander Campbell who attracted many Baptists into a new denomination, the Disciples of Christ (1832), by insisting on the necessity of baptism by immersion as essential to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.
- to reflect on the difference between Campbell’s interpretation of these ordinances and views more typically held among Baptists.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Since only page 42 in Mild’s book is given to a discussion of Alexander Campbell, you should obtain additional resources from your church or public library to assist your preparation. If you have a Disciples of Christ congregation in your community seek the

assistance of its minister. The primary methodology suggested for this session is the debate-forum.<sup>1</sup> Your task will be to select the participants, assist them with resources for their preparation, and organize the format for the session. You may well decide to become one of the principal debaters yourself. If you find the debate style too confrontational, you could invite leaders to research the topic and participate in a panel-forum.

<sup>1</sup>Martha M. Leypoldt, Learning is Change, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971), p. 89.

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

- 1) Public debate was a popular method for discussing controversial religious and political issues during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Alexander Campbell was likely the most skillful religious debator of his era. Enhance the setting by providing some minimal props to create the environment of a public debate in a town square or a frontier church building. Invite some members of the group to “take sides” on the issues in advance to lend support and encouragement to the debaters. Assign clear time periods to the speakers, five minutes each. If there are more than two debaters, alternate points of view, and allow three minutes for speakers to rebut each other’s arguments. After the debate is concluded, open the discussion to the entire group.

Since Baptism was often the subject of debate in Campbell’s ministry, the title of the debate might be stated like this: Baptism: As Necessary to Salvation vs. A Witness to One’s Salvation. The team representing Campbell’s views ought to argue in favor of baptism as necessary to salvation although there is some disagreement about whether Campbell actually believed this. The most helpful resource for researching this perspective will be found in Tull’s Shapers of Baptist Thought, Chapter 5, from which these statements are taken:

In his debate with W. L. Maccalla in 1823, he began to make public statements which seemed to indicate that he believed baptism to be necessary for salvation.

*The water of baptism, then, formally washes away our sins. The blood of Christ really washes away our sins. Paul’s sins were really pardoned when he believed. Yet he had no solemn pledge of the fact, no formal acquittal, no formal purgation of his sins until he washed them away in the water of baptism.*

The following statement, made in 1926, seems even more explicit:

*. . . we have the most explicit proof that God forgives sins for the name’s sake of his Son, or when the name of Jesus Christ is named upon us in immersion; - - that in, and by, the act of immersion, so*

*soon as our bodies are put under water, at that very instant our former, or “old sins,” are washed away, provided only that we are true believers.*

The team representing Baptist views will find reading Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice, Chapter 6, helpful. If you do not have access to this source, consider this quotation from their manual (page 130).

*. . . Baptists are numbered among those who think of baptism as primarily a response made by man. In baptism a person signifies his repentance toward God, his trust in God’s mercy, and his surrender to obey God’s will. As the baptism of Jesus was a public acknowledgement of his submission to the Father’s will, so the Christian’s baptism is a public acknowledgement of his submission to the judgment and will of God. This repentance and faith are expressed to God, but the act takes place in the presence of the church and the world. While baptism is man’s response, it is closely related to the grace of God. The fact that it is a response implies that God’s grace is prior to baptism, for only because God has acted in Christ is there a basis for our responding to him. It should be remembered also that baptism is the act which Christ designated as the appropriate means by which such public confession to God should be made.*

Additional resources to consult on Baptist perspectives on baptism include: E.Y. Mullins, Baptist Beliefs, Judson Press, 1925, pages 68-69; Winthrop S. Hudson, Baptist Convictions, Judson Press, 1963, pages 22-23. The following questions may be useful in the general discussion period after the debate:

- If Baptists hold that baptism is not necessary for salvation, should it be required for church membership?
- Since Baptists have placed the focus on the individual’s response to God through faith in Jesus Christ (believer’s baptism), why are we so identified by the public as insisting on a particular method or mode – immersion?
- Are members of your group able to articulate informed views about baptism or has the understanding of baptism and its practice receded in importance?

2) Alternative methods to the debate would include:

- a) Invite a representative from a neighboring Disciples of Christ congregation to present a Disciple's perspective on this ordinance.
- b) Invite a group of Baptists and Disciples to dialogue about their practice and the importance it has for them.

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

Along with theological debate and division, Baptists in the North were struggling with the need to balance the initiative of local congregations with a more coordinated approach to "home" and "foreign" missions. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American Baptists were ready for a national denominational structure to coordinate independence educational and missionary societies. During the next two weeks we will consider how organizational structures impacted Baptist life and polity.

## SESSION EIGHT

**THEME:** *From Competition to Cooperation: Independent Societies to National Convention*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapter 6

As early as 1829 Baptists in the North debated a proposal to establish a national denominational organization. The proposal was narrowly defeated with most of the opposition provided by New England Baptists whose forbearers had suffered the most under members of connectional churches. Articulated spokespersons like Francis Wayland, President of Brown University, and Edward T. Hiscox, compiler of popular directories for Baptist churches, reinforced and heightened the commitment of many Baptists to the autonomy of local congregations ignoring or minimizing the historic congregationalism of English Baptists which fostered strong associations of churches with clearly defined purposes. Independent and competing missionary and educational societies could not cope with the complex issues facing American Baptists at the turn of the century, and a more pragmatic answer to denominational interests was necessary even if no clear biblical or theological guidelines could provide specific formulations for church order.

The major idea behind this session is to sense the tension Baptists felt between the authority of the local congregation and the necessity to develop cooperative national structures representing congregations to carry out the missionary, educational, and social demands of the Gospel. This tension continues to be expressed in response to the emerging patterns of organization within the American Baptist Churches.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to observe the continuing tension between the principle of autonomy of local congregations and cooperative, representative denominational structures.
- to identify characteristics of the “convention” method for determining denominational policies and procedures.
- to study biblical texts which refer to the universal church to challenge the idea that independent local congregations is all that is meant by “ecclesia” in the New Testament (optional).

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Study the early sections of Chapter 6 and focus on the reasons behind the shift from independent societies to a national organization, the Northern Baptist Convention, 1907. if possible, secure in advance, copies of the pamphlet, The American Baptist Churches in

the U.S.A., from the offices of the General Secretary. Other reading which will be helpful include Norman H. Maring, American Baptists, Whence and Whither, Judson Press, 1968, Chapter 8; and Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice, Judson Press, 1963, Chapter 3. These materials ought to be available in every American Baptist congregation's library. Select members to prepare research reports on Baptist organizations.

If you choose to study New Testament texts on the church, make use of a bible commentary. You will find Maring and Hudson, Chapter 2, extremely useful for studying the New Testament concept of the church.

Select several members of the group to research and prepare brief reports on associations and societies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century including the national convention. Prepare a time-line<sup>1</sup> of denominational organizations as a wall chart or on newsprint or chalkboard. Assign or make a flip-chart outlining the basic principles incorporated into the organization of the Northern Baptist Convention.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Give the group an opportunity to examine and raise questions about the denominational structures designated on the time-line. Serve as a resource person to provide additional details or answers to questions.

## **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

- 1) Invite the reporters to make brief reports of one association or society. The report should include: the date established, the organizational purpose or principle, methods of funding, and how relationships with local congregations were defined. In addition to the information in Mild's book, the pamphlet, American Baptist Polity: What's Happening and Why, by Robert T. Handy, Historical Commission, Southern Baptist Convention, 1979, is very helpful. Reports could include the following:

- General Missionary Convention (Triennial Convention) 1914, Mild p. 32
- American Baptist Home Missionary Society 1832, Mild p. 36
- Baptist General Tract Society (Publication Soc.) 1824, Mild p. 39
- Northern Baptist Convention (American after 1950) 1907, Mild p. 49
- Women's Home and Foreign Societies, see Torbet, The Baptist Story, p. 40
- American Baptist Education Society 1888
- Your local association, region, state, or city society

- 2) Present a flip-chart outlining the basic principles which were adopted at the organization of the Northern Baptist Convention stated by Mild, p. 49. Note that the new structure was something of a compromise between retaining the local autonomy of congregations and providing some participation in shaping policy for national agencies. This tension found expression in the by-laws which:

*declares its belief in the independence of the local church, and in the purely advisory nature of all denominational organizations composed of representatives of churches. It believes also that, in view of the growth of the Baptist denomination, and its extension throughout our country, there is need for an organization to serve the common interests of the entire denomination as state and district organizations serve their respective constituencies.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of this method, see Martha M. Leypoldt, Learning is Change, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>By-Laws of American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.: As Amended Effective January 1, 1979 (Valley Forge, ABCUSA, 1978), p. 7.

Consider raising these questions with the group:

- Does this tension find any expression in the life of your congregation? In your opinion, has American Baptist growth suffered from too much local autonomy or from excessive national bureaucracy?
  - What problems still face American Baptists in achieving effective local church participation in decision-making at the national denominational level?
- 3) As an alternative to (2), explore New Testament meanings for the church (ecclesia) which go beyond application to a local group of believers. Assign individuals or groups to study the following texts. Make available some biblical commentaries.
- a) *Matthew 16:18* – the only instance where Jesus explicitly referred to the church as that universal body of believers who would bear his name and carry on his work. Consider also Luke 12:32; Luke 8:21; John 15:5 which emphasize a close-knit fellowship. “It appears he gave little attention to institutional forms.”<sup>3</sup>
  - b) *Ephesians 6:16; 3:7; Romans 9:6, 8; I Peter 2:9* – in these texts it is clear that the early church identified itself with the old Israel as the inheritor of its promises.

- c) *Ephesians 5:23* – Jesus Christ is the acknowledged head of the church universal, not just of individual congregations.

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

Discuss the level of involvement by members of your congregation in regional and national American Baptist conventions. Invite the pastor or member to share a meaningful first-hand experience. Why not organize a group to attend the next regional or national convention whether as delegates or observers. Direct experience is the best means of learning.

IN PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S SESSION, invite group members to write faith statements or a response to the question, "What does being an American Baptist mean to me?"

<sup>3</sup>Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice*, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), p. 22.

## SESSION NINE

**THEME:** *Religious Liberty for Baptists: Baptists Against Themselves*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapters 6 and 7

Norman H. Maring, American Baptists Whence and Whither, Judson Press, 1968, Chapter 9.

While the denomination was bringing about more order in its national structure, leaders holding sharply differing theological perspectives were engaging in disruptive confrontation. Tragically similar to the current experience of Missouri Synod Lutherans and Southern Baptists, the theological controversy of the 1920's among American Baptists was particularly acrimonious and resulted in two departures of sizable groups of churches from the Convention. The impact of science on religion, e.g. the theory of evolution; higher criticism of the Scriptures, e.g. questioning authorship and chronology; and an optimistic view of humanity which seemed to deny the necessity of redemption through Jesus Christ were some of the issues at the center of the debate known as the fundamentalist/modernist controversy. This complex issue is difficult to deal with in a single session, and must still be discussed with deep empathy for persons holding differing theological views. As we examine issues which divided Baptists and which we still interpret differently, this session offers adults the opportunity to express in a formal statement how they interpret the meaning of their own Christian faith or what being a part of the American Baptist family means to them. As an alternative, you may want to explore the theological controversy in depth, and if that is your choice, a few resources are suggested to facilitate that purpose.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to sense the dichotomy between Baptists as champions of religious liberty and as advocates of a single confessional statement, e.g. The New Hampshire Confession.
- to invite group members to write personal faith statements or a response to the question, "What does being an American Baptist mean to me?"
- to examine factors which contributed to the theological debate and division among Baptists in the first half of the century.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Invite group members at least a week in advance to write personal faith statements with a particular focus on the subject, "What being an American Baptist means to me." If your

group is ready for a more rigorous discussion of the fundamentalist/modernist debate, assign additional readings in Norman H. Marings' American Baptists Whence and Whither, Chapter 9, and Baptist Concepts of the Church, Chapter 8, by Winthrop S. Hudson. Organize a role-play as an historical debate on the issues to surface some of the deep feelings associated with our cherished religious beliefs.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Select portions of some of the class members' faith statements and invite the authors to put them on newsprint and hang them on the wall, either in advance or as the group members arrive. Ask persons to note any statement they would like to discuss at some length with the author. Invite some of the authors to read their statement and to dialogue about any questions or responses which they invoke.

## **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

Choose among the following for alternative approaches to this session. Enable the total group or a planning committee to participate in the decision.

- 1) Since the fundamentalists attempted to force the Convention in 1922 to adopt the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1833) as a doctrinal statement, it may be useful to make copies of this statement and also The Philadelphia Confession (1742) available for comparison and discussion.<sup>1</sup> Confessional statements were widely used by Baptists for two centuries and only in this century have major groups of Baptists resisted systematic formulations of religious beliefs. It is important to note that Baptists generally used such statements as testimonies to faith rather than as tests of faith for fellow believers.<sup>2</sup>

At the center of the modernist/fundamentalist controversy was the attempt to force the adoption of The New Hampshire Confession by the Northern Baptist Convention, 1922. By a two to one margin the following substitute motion was adopted:

*We reaffirm our faith in the New Testament as a divinely inspired record and therefore a trustworthy, authoritative and all-sufficient rule of our faith and practice. We rededicate ourselves to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and call our entire denomination to the common task of sharing the whole Gospel with the whole world.*<sup>3</sup>

Divide into small groups and review Mild's book, pages 49-53. Assign one of the following questions to each group. Invite a reporter to summarize the group's discussion to share with the total group when it reconvenes.

- Examine the doctrine of the church in each confessional statement. Why would the fundamentalists give preference to The New Hampshire over The Philadelphia Confession?

- Why is there less use of confessional statements by Baptists and other Christians in the present century than previously?
- Why were missionaries and educational institutions the target of investigations rather than pastors and congregations?
- Recommend the personal faith statement of one or more of the group members for publication in the church bulletin or newsletter.

<sup>1</sup>William L. Lumpkin, Baptist Confessions of Faith, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1959). Sections of the doctrine of the church will be sufficient.

<sup>2</sup>Winthrop S. Hudson, Baptist Concepts of the Church, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1959), p. 23

<sup>3</sup>By-Laws of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., (Valley Forge, ABCUSA, 1978).

- 2) if your group can handle theological differences with some maturity, a natural approach to considering the issues is the debate format. The use of Robert Handy's terms, evangelical liberal and evangelical conservative rather than modernist/fundamentalist may help the group to see this controversy as a family fight between persons of equal commitment to Christian faith. Make available the resources suggested; your pastor likely can supplement these.

The issue for debate could be stated as, "Resolved: American Baptists should be required to sign a Confessional Statement." Give equal time to speakers for and against the proposition. Then provide time for a brief response to one another's argument. Take a vote on which side presented the better arguments on the resolution.

- 3) Or, consider the study and discussion of two biblical incidents which imply affirmation and acceptance of persons of other religious traditions: Luke 9:49-56 and Acts 10, 11:1-18.

*Luke 9:49-56.* Is there any similarity in attitude between disciples who wanted to limit the use of Jesus' name to members of their own party and modern Christians who will not engage in cooperative mission without doctrinal conformity? Or, consider Jesus' reply to disciples who cited Elijah as a reference in seeking to call down fire from heaven on Samaritans. Baptists who were forerunners in the struggle for religious liberty had to be saddened by the conduct of some Baptists in the middle of this controversy.

*Acts 10-11.* Peter needed a special vision to broaden his perspective to be inclusive of Gentiles in the household of faith. It must have surprised him to learn that God's grace could include a Roman centurion! Are there persons or groups in your community who are being excluded from community in your congregation by avoidance or neglect? May Peter's word that God's grace includes "them" as well as "us" speak to us as a word from God (Acts 11:17).

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

As a concluding experience, read either a member's faith statement or read and affirm together the 1922 statement by the Convention as a symbol of group commitment.

## SESSION TEN

**THEME:** *American Baptists: Symbol of Ethnic, National and Racial Diversity*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapter 7

American Baptists ought to celebrate the “other side” of their history. The tendency toward division is well known; not so well known is the national, ethnic and racial diversity reflected in the American Baptist churches. This inclusiveness was achieved by a moderation in the hyper-Calvinism of the Particular Baptists. Baptists in America used the wave of immigration to the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to provide bilingual work with many European language groups. Blacks in significant numbers were attracted to Baptist churches because the congregational polity permitted the maximum development of their own leadership. In more recent years American Baptists have facilitated caucuses to enable the ethnic and cultural preferences of Blacks, Hispanics, Native American Indians and Asians to find expression in denominational polity and program.

This session encourages you to celebrate the national and cultural diversity of your own congregation, and to increase your group’s awareness of the broad cultural diversity represented among American Baptists.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to recall the mission of American Baptists to diverse ethnic and national groups and to consider ways to extend that mission.
- to identify racial and ethnic groups within the American Baptist churches and to select one of these groups for a special focus.
- to observe the theological shift among American Baptists which supported an aggressive witness to the Gospel in evangelism and mission.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Study Chapter 7 and other sections of the book dealing with the theme. Determine which of the issues you want to research and report to the group. Select other persons to research and report on other topics. Check with your region/association office for resource persons who could represent minorities and report their concerns to your group. An alternative method is a TV-style interview with a guest(s). Do you have persons who can speak from personal or family experience about Baptist mission outreach? Contact churches in your area which might participate in some cultural, racial exchange between congregations.

## GETTING STARTED

How you initiate the session will depend upon the choices you have made in planning. If you have outside resource persons or group members representing minority persons, introduce them to the group. Identify any bilingual National Ministries efforts in your region/association. Did your congregation receive denominational assistance at its founding? If so, relate some details!

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

- 1) One option is a report on American Baptist mission with Black, Hispanic, Native American or Asian groups. Some information is available in The Story of American Baptists on the following groups:

- Native American Indians, pages 11, 36-38
- Hispanics, pages 56, 57
- Blacks, pages 28, 29, 31, 58, 59

If you choose to study relationships with black Baptists, you could ask individuals to make brief reports on black efforts in overseas mission, black colleges in the South, and black denominational organizations.

Black Missions. George Lisle, Kingston, Jamaica (1789); Lott Cary, Monrovia, Liberia (1815). Check with area black congregations for current involvement in overseas mission.

Education. National Ministries' efforts with black colleges in the South: Virginia Union, Shaw, Benedict, Morehouse, and Florida Memorial. See the American Baptist Directory of Schools and Colleges. Check with your region/association for a representative on one of these colleges. Consider the needs of these colleges in your budget.

Conventions. Three major groups, National Baptists, USA; National Baptists, Inc.; and Progressive National Baptists, report seven million members. Progressive Baptists have an affiliation with ABC/USA. Check an encyclopedia or the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches for further information.

A major fact to underscore was the failure of the white Baptist leadership to include black leadership in major decisions affecting the colleges and church school literature which precipitated the emergence of separate Baptist denominations (1886). Increasing numbers of black churches are dually aligned with American Baptists and a number of American Baptist churches have an integrated membership.

If you choose to study Hispanic, Asian or Native American Indian Baptists, check to see if congregations of these Baptists are located near you. If so, consult them for additional

information. Invite the group to consider if there are ways that Baptists in your community can work at being equal partners in mission.

2) An alternative focus for the session is the shift in theological emphasis of American Baptists in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries away from the hyper-Calvinism of the Particular Baptists represented by the Philadelphia Baptist Association. For resources see pages 25, 26, 55, 56 of Mild's book and Norman H. Maring's American Baptists Whence and Whither, Chapter 9<sup>1</sup>. Present these issues for discussion:

a) Distinguish between a "particular" and a "general" view of the atonement. Particular Baptists believed only the predestined or the elect would be saved, so missionary effort was futile or contrary to God's will. General Baptists felt that persons could exercise their free will in choosing to respond to God's grace.

<sup>1</sup>Norman H. Maring, American Baptists Whence and Whither, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1968), p. 84.

b) Andrew Fuller, pastor and secretary of the Baptist Mission Society in England, was responsible for this shift in thought. See Winthrop S. Hudson's Baptist Concepts of the Church, Chapter 4.

c) One result was the merger of the Free Baptist Association with the Northern Baptist Convention (1911).

d) Another result was the change in emphasis on doctrinal uniformity and confessions of faith. "By the end of the nineteenth century, associations began to discard their doctrinal standards, and Baptists talked of the freedom of every individual to interpret doctrinal questions for himself."

3) Some evaluation and reflection on your congregation's outreach to diverse national groups may be appropriate. Such decisions are often assigned to a missions or finance committee but the recommendations of an adult group might affect the congregation's priorities. Have the group consider these questions:

- How effective is your congregation's mission education program?
- Do you maintain personal contact and relationships with American Baptist missionaries?
- Do you cooperate in region/association mission to minorities?

- Could your group initiate a cooperative worship, educational or service project with another Baptist church representing a minority group?

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

Consider using the filmstrip People With A Mission: The Story of American Baptists (available from American Baptist Films, Valley Forge, PA 19482) as a closing experience if you have not previously used it. Or, plan a closing worship which celebrates the diverse ethnic, national, and racial composition of your group, congregation or association.

## SESSION ELEVEN

**THEME:** *Walter Rauschenbusch: Prophet for Social Action*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, Chapter 7

Norman H. Maring, American Baptists Whence and Whither, Chapter 11

This session will focus on the life and ministry of Walter Rauschenbusch, pastor-theologian, and the contributions he made to shifting the American Baptist perspective on evangelism to include issues of social service and social justice. His views had an important impact not only on American Baptists but on much of Protestantism. His ideas took shape as he struggled with the realities of ministry to the poor and exploited of New York's slums. Though handicapped by deafness as a result of illness from exhaustion in ministry, he served as a seminary professor and a social prophet for thirty years. His writing set new directions for American Baptists' understanding of evangelism which found expression in the Evangelistic Life Style program of the denomination. While his views became labeled as "social gospel" he never abandoned an emphasis on personal commitment to Jesus Christ and his views were highly influenced by his biblical scholarship and his pastoral experience. His writing is still a challenge to the contemporary church.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to affirm the movement in American Baptist thought and mission from an almost exclusive focus on the conversion of individuals to include corporate efforts to change social and political structures and to seek economic justice.
- to reflect on Walter Rauschenbusch's perceptions of the social dimensions of the Gospel and his impact on American Baptist effort in evangelism and mission.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Read the brief section Walter Rauschenbusch in Chapter 7. Read Maring, Chapter 11 to get an overview on the changing perception of the church's mission. If you have access to Rauschenbusch's writing, such as Christianity and the Social Crisis, select some key passages to illustrate his ideas. Selections from his sermons and prayers would provide excellent resources for an introduction to the session. (See Rauschenbusch's Prayers for the Social Awakening, page 124 ff.) Consider whether to use the illustrations from "Sermon Starters" in Baptist Heritage Resources, a packet available from Judson Book Stores. Make a decision about developing the session considering these alternative ways: Rauschenbusch's biography and theological ideas, biblical texts which focus on social concerns, or the impact of civil rights legislation as an illustration that legislation can

change the social condition and opportunity of minority groups. Perhaps only two of these issues can be used.

LOOKING AHEAD, begin preparation for an evaluation of the unit, found in Session 13. Read the entire session plan in Session 13 in order to be adequately prepared.

## GETTING STARTED

Share in a litany or a prayer composed of some of Walter Rauschenbusch's writings, or ask the group if they are familiar with the term "social gospel." Invite persons to share the meaning of this term and any awareness of the historical context which fostered its use. A group member might retell the brief biographical data which is given in Chapter 7.

## DEVELOPING THE SESSION

Several alternative approaches to the theme are provided and your teaching plan will be determined by the resources available and the needs and interests of the group.

- 1) Invite four group members to present the biographical sketches from the life of Walter Rauschenbusch taken from "Sermon Starters" in the Baptist Heritage Resources packet. An alternative way to present the biographical data would be a personal interview with a member of the group assuming the role of Rauschenbusch.
- 2) Invite small groups to study the following biblical texts not just for their historical meaning but for the word of God they may speak to your group's involvement in the mission of the church.
  - a) *Mark 10:42-45*. Jesus defines the servant role for the church. The church is to continue the preaching, teaching, healing and helping ministry begun by Jesus Christ. Rauschenbusch saw the need to take political action in order to change the social and economic condition of the poor.
  - b) *Isaiah 1:11-17*. Isaiah's message is a warning that the mere repetition of worship forms can be sterile. Invite a task group to examine your community's needs and to recommend some specific "social action" your group can undertake.
  - c) *James 2:15, 16, NEB*. "Suppose a brother or a sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, 'Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat,' but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?" Food baskets and even food stamps are only a partial answer. Christians need to address major social problems like high unemployment particularly for minorities, and a more equitable distribution of the nation's wealth and resources.

Rauschenbusch challenges the church to address root causes and social structures as well as giving “the cup of cold water.”

- 3) Some Christians have been conditioned to interpret the Gospel as affecting only inter-personal relations and not the relationships between groups. To reflect on the social change which can result from legislation, consider the social impact of the school desegregation of the 1960's. While blacks as a group have not improved their relative economic situation, they have achieved public access, increased educational opportunity, and higher levels of entrance to management and the professions which are having a social impact. The point at issue here is the evidence that a change in civil law has greatly affected the social mobility and opportunity of a submerged minority. In view of the social activism of the church in the sixties, why is the church so relatively quiet in the struggle to pass the Equal Rights Amendment and almost silent about the high unemployment of minorities in the cities? Ask your group to write a social action agenda for the church today which is faithful to the vision of a Walter Rauschenbusch. Ask persons to consider making a commitment to a study-action group to maintain continuous involvement with an issue such as: unemployment, women's liberation, hunger, environmental issues, etc.
- 4) If original sources are not available, consider the quotation in Mild's book on page 59 which illustrates that the basis of Rauschenbusch's social perspective was rooted in the prophets. He became convinced that the conversion of individuals would never enable the church to make the necessary changes in society to achieve social justice. Invite your group to assess your congregation's evangelism, education, and social action programs. Are they focused more toward the personal or social? Is Rauschenbusch's perspective a challenge to your church's perception of its mission?

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

If you use suggestion (3), read the social action agenda as a group reading. An alternative closing would be to read a selection from the prophets or a litany of Rauschenbusch's writings or prayers.

## SESSION TWELVE

**THEME:** *The Priesthood of Believers: The Mutual Ministry of Believers*

**READINGS:** The Story of American Baptists, pages 10, 11, 51.

Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice, pages 5, 91-95.

Pamphlet, The American Baptist Churches, USA, p. 16.

Baptist Heritage Resources, “A Baptist Cameo.”

Romans 12:4-10

Galatians 5:1-15

Ephesians 4:10-16

I Corinthians 12:12-31

Hebrews 10:19-25

I Peter 2:9

We return in this session to a basic Baptist belief – the priesthood of believers. This idea receives scant mention in The Story of American Baptists although it is implied in several contexts. Some persons have regarded this idea as the chief cornerstone of the Baptist interpretation of Christian faith. In fact, it is an idea which Baptists hold in common with all the churches of the Reformation.

Warren Mild touches the subject when he refers to Baptist immigrants “expecting to exercise the right of private judgment in their faith (page 10), and when he indicates that some Baptists have an aversion to signing any confessional statement (page 51). A useful but brief discussion of this subject is found in A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice by Maring and Hudson. You likely have already found this to be a useful resource.

### GOALS FOR THE SESSION

- to point out that the idea of the priesthood of believers is frequently, though erroneously, identified as a primary characteristic of Baptists.
- to understand the concept of the priesthood of believers in the context of Protestant theology.
- to dispel the notion that this idea means that each individual is free to adopt whatever views he/she will regarding the Christian faith.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

The major role of the leader will be as a resource person in making materials available for small group research and study. Secure the necessary Baptist resources to supplement The Story of American Baptists. Study the Scripture selections and do background reading in a critical commentary. You should work out in advance your own answers to

the questions which are assigned to study groups. Select leaders for the small groups and determine how the subgroups will report their results to the entire class. Finally, study the Baptist resources so you are prepared to assist the group leaders with interpretations of key ideas.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Put two key phrases on newsprint or chalkboard, “soul competency” and “the right of private judgment” and place them in a prominent position. Have markers or chalk available. As persons arrive, invite them to write brief explanations of these ideas on newsprint or chalkboard.

## **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

- 1) Use the resource, “A Baptist Cameo” by William F. Keucher from Baptist Heritage Resources as an outline for small group study and discussion of this issue. Appoint leaders and divide into four groups of no more than six persons. If you have a large group of over twenty-four, you could separate the assignments into Scripture and Baptist resources.

Assign each group one of the following meanings for the priesthood of believers:

- equal access for all believers into the presence of God (Hebrews 10:19-25) (Maring & Hudson, pages 5, 91)
- mutual equality and responsibility in the covenanted fellowship of the congregation (Romans 12:4-10) (Maring & Hudson, pages 91-93)
- “soul competency” which emphasizes equal access to the Scriptures and all means of grace (Galatians 5:1-15) (pamphlet, The American Baptist Churches in the USA, p. 16)
- competency of laity to serve anywhere, in any vocation, as called and empowered by Christ (Ephesians 4:10-16, I Corinthians 12:12-31) (Maring & Hudson, pages 93, 94)

The subgroups will study one of the meanings for the priesthood of believers and the assigned Scripture passages. Assign groups the following questions or others which you suggest:

1. What is the primary meaning of the text as you relate it to the context of the chapter?
2. In what ways is the text supportive of your understanding of the priesthood of believers? Does the text contradict any of your understandings of the meaning of this term?

3. Does the interpretation of this idea found in the Baptist resource correlate with your interpretation of the Scripture?
4. Restate one meaning of the concept, priesthood of believers, in your own words. Illustrate from your own experience of Christian faith and participation in a Baptist congregation a particular meaning this belief has for you.

Ask the subgroups to summarize their findings on newsprint or chalkboard and report them to the total group. The leader's role is to inter-relate the individual reports and to respond to questions which emerge from the group reports. If key issues are overlooked, you could report your own responses to the questions as a summary statement.

- 2) If your group does not have access to Baptist resources, or if the group is small, you may choose to consider these brief descriptions of the meaning of the priesthood of believers.

... all Christians share a common priesthood, a priesthood that is better understood when it is described as the mutual ministry of believers. All believers are called to bear witness to Christ and to pray for their fellows. And in the life of the church there must be opportunity for a responsible exercise of this common priesthood.

*The priesthood of all believers has sometimes been misinterpreted as if it meant that every man is his own priest. This, of course, would be to dissolve the church by making every man's hat his own church. Also, to say that every man is his own priest would be a contradiction in terms. A person can be a priest (a minister) only to his neighbor.<sup>1</sup>*

Invite individuals or small groups to respond to the following:

1. Write out a definition of the "the priesthood of all believers."
2. If we are mediators of Christ to our neighbors, list some specific behaviors which would evidence the acting out of this idea.

Belief in the priesthood of all believers has implications for understanding the ministry of the church. There are not ministers and laity as two classes of Christians; there are differences of roles and responsibilities.

*The priesthood of all believers means that every Christian is called to the ministry. There are no "laymen" in the strict sense of the term. The laity has been abolished. All members of the church are ministers. Since the church is a people, another way of saying this is to say that the church itself is the minister. And since the church is a*

*people, wherever the people are – in the home, in the office, on the farm, in the workshop, in the classroom, at the P.T.A. meeting, in the voting booth, at the seashore – there is the church.*<sup>2</sup>

Some suggested issues for small groups are:

- Would the mutuality of ministry be advanced if we were careful to use the word “pastor” to identify the leader of the congregation?
- How can the congregation affirm ministry in the community and recognize it equally with service to the congregation?

The written responses should be shared with the leader who should then select some ideas to be shared with the total group.

### **CLOSING THE SESSION**

Invite group members to rewrite their definition of “soul competency” and the “right of private judgment.” Has there been any significant movement in understanding as a result of this study? (For a form to obtain this data, see Martha M. Leypoldt’s Learning is Change, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1971, p. 145.)

<sup>1</sup>Winthrop S. Hudson, Baptist Convictions, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), pages 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

## SESSION THIRTEEN

**THEME:** *Review and Evaluation of the Unit*

As the concluding session of this quarter's study of The Story of American Baptists, it is appropriate to reemphasize the major concepts associated with Baptist belief, to relate those ideas to important persons in Baptist history when possible, and to identify significant learnings which hopefully have occurred as a result of your teaching/learning process.

The end of a quarter is always an appropriate time for the teacher and/or leaders of an adult group to formalize procedures in order to receive feedback from the group about how well the purposes and learning goals of the group are being achieved.

Reiteration and repetition are useful to the retention of learnings. Christians never ought to be satisfied with the mere transmission of information. We seek the re-formation of persons in the likeness of Jesus Christ and the building of a redemptive community of mutual support, witness, and service to the world. Since Baptists tend to be poorly informed about their own religious tradition, it is appropriate to make some assessment as to how well this unit has contributed to a more informed perception of Baptist beliefs and mission.

Finally, this session may provide an opportunity to try some of the learning experiences which could not be completed within the available time or schedule of group meetings.

### GOALS OF THE SESSION

- to recapitulate the Baptist story in some brief and clear account which reflects the perspective your group decides is most important.
- to evaluate your group's response to the teaching/learning methodologies of this unit, and to identify important learnings which have changed perceptions about the Baptist interpretation of Christian faith, order (polity and organization) and mission of the church.
- to assess how well you have functioned as leaders and learners in this unit on American Baptist history and theology.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Well in advance of this session you should assign to a planning team the task of evaluation of this unit. One such form is suggested as a part of the lesson plan. For additional ideas see Martha M. Leypoldt's Learning is Change, pages 132-148. If you choose Idea #1, determine the twelve persons who will write the summary statement for each session. Next, decide if the summary statements should be duplicated to permit sharing with other groups in the church. Then decide how the data from evaluation forms

will be shared with the group and by what means any additional evaluation will take place. Teachers ought to risk some evaluation of their own performance to assist them in personal growth and leadership development.

## **GETTING STARTED**

A fun idea is to post graffiti sheets numbered for each session with class members invited to express any feelings pro and con which they felt about particular sessions. Then share a summary of the written evaluations received prior to this session.

## **DEVELOPING THE SESSION**

Select from the following ideas those most useful for completing the reflection and evaluation.

*Idea No. 1.* Invite a person to be responsible for writing a brief summary statement of the major concept for each session. If the session focused on a Baptist leader, the key idea or contribution of that person can be made the point of emphasis. This report could take the form of the “Baptist Cameo” developed by William Keucher. However, it should reflect the reporter’s and the group’s perspective and not simply be a quotation of source materials.

The purpose of this statement is not to reflect some Baptist orthodoxy. It ought to reflect both the consensus and diversity of Baptist thought as perceived by the group. Its purpose is to bring into focus some clear statement about important concepts and personalities related to the Baptist story.

*Idea No. 2.* Invite group members to identify which of their Baptist beliefs were most seriously challenged by this unit of study. Ask participants to write a brief report on “How I changed my mind.” If possible, the situation, reading or discussion which evoked this change should be identified. Request that members volunteer to share these statements with the group.

*Idea No. 3.* Sidney Simon has identified a value as something we prize and are willing to own publically.<sup>1</sup> Which of the Baptist beliefs studied do you value the most? Explain briefly why this belief is important for you. Perhaps you can recall an experience which gave this belief particular meaning for your life. Identify any significant modification of your behavior which is the result of your “prizing” of this idea.

*Idea No. 4.* Prepare and distribute a form for evaluating this unit. If possible, distribute this form at Session 12 and use this session to report and summarize the data collected. The task of collating and reporting the data should be assigned to the officers of the group or an evaluation team which includes the teacher or leader. The following ideas for this form are only suggestive. Add others which are important for your own purposes.

<sup>1</sup>Sidney B. Simon, Meeting Yourself Halfway, (Niles, IL: Argus Communications, 1974), p. xv.

1. Evaluate the overall effectiveness of this unit for understanding the Baptist story and clarifying Baptist convictions. (Circle one.)

5	4	3	2	1
excellent	good	fair	poor	very poor

2. What specific experience, interaction, encounter, conversation, or feeling during the unit most influenced the rating which you indicated above?

3. Identify the session which has the most meaning for you. State why.

4. How well did the group members participate in the variety of learning activities which were suggested?

5	4	3	2	1
excellent	good	fair	poor	very poor

5. To what extent was the group able to express honest differences of opinion?

5	4	3	2	1
excellent	good	fair	poor	very poor

6. What was the general climate of the group?

relaxed _____	tense _____
warm _____	cold _____
friendly _____	hostile _____

7. What suggestions would you make to the leader and to the group members to improve the effectiveness of this unit?

8. How would you rate the effectiveness of the teacher or group leader?

5	4	3	2	1
excellent	good	fair	poor	very poor

9. Evaluate your own personal contribution to the effectiveness of the group.

5	4	3	2	1
excellent	good	fair	poor	very poor

