

5-Point Statement
On Ideals Released

August 24, 1963

By the Baptist Press

A five-point statement telling Baptists' purposes and expressing their hopes and ideals has been released by a Baptist Jubilee Advance committee.

Available in tract form, it is titled "Baptist Ideals."

It was drafted by a committee of 19 appointed by C. C. Warren of Charlotte, N. C., chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Baptist Jubilee Advance Committee.

The Ideals Committee included Baptist scholars and other denominational leaders. Ralph A. Herring, Nashville, director of the Extension Department of Southern Baptist Seminaries, was chairman of the Ideals Committee.

The five points are (1) authority, (2) the individual, (3) the Christian life, (4) the church and (5) "our continuing task." Under each of these major headings come several sections.

The Baptist ideals statement should not be confused with the report of the SBC Committee on Statement of Faith and Message adopted at Kansas City earlier this year, it was pointed out.

The Statement of Faith and Message was a formal report adopted by the Convention. The statement on Baptist ideals was not presented for Convention action. It is a summary about Baptists prepared as information for use as the Baptist Jubilee Advance draws to its climax in 1964.

The statement on ideals also is a draft only of the SBC committee and not of the Interconvention Baptist Jubilee Advance group representing seven Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

The 38-page tract (excluding cover) has been published by the SBC Sunday School Board. Those wanting copies of it, however, should address their orders to the Baptist convention offices in their states.

"Through the centuries Baptists have reformulated their beliefs and reevaluated their practices," the committee says in a preface to the five-point statement of ideals.

"These statements were never intended to be final and authoritative, and that is also true of this report. It does not speak for all Baptists, nor does it include all their beliefs.

"An effort is made to restate in relevant terms only those historic principles of Southern Baptists which with certain emphases serve to make clear their unique position and mission.

"Such a restudy must be made periodically if Baptists meet the challenging needs of a changing world," it continues.

"We pray that this report may serve to exalt our ideals; to sound both clearly and concisely our basic convictions regarding them; to correct unwise or hurtful trends among us; to unify and inspire our people; and to point out guidelines for all who seek by God's grace to meet the years to come with the rich heritage of the past," it concludes.

In the first point on "authority," the report makes the following summaries:

"The ultimate source of authority is Jesus Christ the Lord, and every area of life is to be subject to his lordship.

"The Bible as the inspired revelation of God's will and way, made full and complete in the life and teachings of Christ, is our authoritative rule of faith and practice.

"The Holy Spirit is God actively revealing himself and his will to man. He therefore interprets and confirms the voice of divine authority."

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In the second section, "the individual," these are the report's summaries:

"Every individual is created in the image of God and therefore merits respect and consideration as a person of infinite dignity and worth.

"Each person is competent under God to make his own moral and religious decisions and is responsible to God in all matters of moral and religious duty.

"Every person is free under God in all matters of conscience and has the right to embrace or reject religion and to witness to his religious beliefs, always with proper regard for the rights of other persons."

"The Christian life," third section of the ideals report, focuses on these remarks:

"Salvation from sin is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, conditioned only upon trust in and commitment to Christ the Lord.

"The demands of Christian discipleship, based on the recognition of the lordship of Christ, relate to the whole of life and call for full obedience and complete dedication.

"Each Christian, having direct access to God through Christ, is his own priest and is also under obligation to become a priest for Christ in behalf of other persons.

"The home is basic in God's purpose for human well-being, and the development of Christian family life should be a supreme concern of all believers in Christ.

"The Christian is a citizen of two worlds--the kingdom of God and the state--and should be obedient to the law of the land as well as to the higher law of God."

In the fourth section, "the church," the committee said:

"The church, in its inclusive sense, is the fellowship of persons redeemed by Christ and made one in the family of God. The church, in its local sense, is a fellowship of baptized believers, voluntarily banded together for worship, nurture, and service.

"Membership in a church is a privilege properly extended only to regenerated persons who voluntarily accept baptism and commit themselves to faithful discipleship in the body of Christ.

"Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two ordinances of the church, are symbolic of redemption, but their observance involves spiritual realities in personal Christian experience.

"A church is an autonomous body, subject only to Christ, its head. Its democratic government, properly, reflects the equality and responsibility of believers under the lordship of Christ.

"Church and state are both ordained of God and are answerable to him. They should remain separate, but they are under the obligation of mutual recognition and reinforcement as each seeks to fulfill its divine function.

"The church is to be responsibly in the world; its mission is to the world; but its character and ministry are not to be of the world."

The final section, on Baptists' continuing task, brings out these comments:

"The individual and his worth, his needs and moral freedom, and his potential for Christ should have primary consideration in the life and work of our churches.

"Worship--which involves an experience of communion with the living and holy God--calls for a new emphasis on reverence and orderliness, on confession

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and humility, and on awareness of the holiness and majesty and grace and purpose of God.

"Every Christian is under obligation to minister or to serve with complete self-giving, but God in his wisdom calls many persons in a unique way to dedicate their lives to a full-time church-related ministry.

"Evangelism, which is primary in the mission of the church and the vocation of every Christian, is the proclamation of God's judgment and grace in Jesus Christ and the call to accept and follow him as Lord.

"Missions seeks the extension of God's redemptive purpose in all the world through evangelism, education, and Christian service and calls for the utmost dedication on the part of Christians to this task.

"Christian stewardship conceives the whole of life as a sacred trust from God and requires the responsible use of life, time, talents, and substance--personal and corporate--in the service of Christ.

"The nature of Christian faith and Christian experience and the nature and needs of persons make teaching and training imperative.

"Christian education grows out of the relation of faith and reason and calls for academic excellence and freedom that are both real and responsible.

"Every Christian group, if it is to remain healthy and fruitful, must accept the responsibility of constructive self-criticism."

In printing 500,000 copies of the tract, the Sunday School Board used up all supplies in Nashville of the quality paper needed for the tract. It ordered a fresh carload just to print the Baptist ideals material.

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