

There are a few areas of concern and interest in the Southern Convention that reflect more acutely the inroads of theological liberalism and the concern of the body.

- (1) The cooperative program
- (2) The publishing house
- (3) The Seminaries

The largest Protestant seminaries in the world have belonged to the Southern Baptist church although in recent years they have been crowded by some independent schools. But one of the interesting factors is that a lot of the men in the trenches never went to seminary at all. These (in my observation) for the most part are strongly evangelical and wary of liberalish, ecumenism and kindred modern expressions. They control the grassroots foundation and, due to soul winning, often have by far the most vigorous churches. In past years they have regarded the convention itself as sacrosanct ...an institution that probably originated with the Apostles but in more recent years they have been made aware of the liberal elements in the seminaries, etc., and from them is the anguished cry we have been hearing lately...a strong rebellious cry in favor of conservative thought and action. This modern conservative call has been holding the line in the convention and gaining new control of the seminaries. It is interesting to see where it will go. The liberal element has been forming schools of its own and if a power test should arise on the receipt of ministers into the convention who do not hold the essential truths of Christianity, it will be of interest to see how the majority holds in the line.

- (4) The convention proper:

The Southern convention is the largest Protestant denomination in the country by several million. How it will react to theological broadening and whether it will continue to allow modern unbelief to work in its center are both interesting concepts not yet resolved. Whether it can continue to endure the necessary pain of purging liberal forces remains to be seen. It is the hottest of several theological issues right now. The depth of liberalism is also hard to trace. Present day liberals speak of not touching the Bible's authority and interpret this as a substitute for inerrancy. Whether the convention proper can see through this guise or not remains in doubt...although at the moment the conservatives seem to have the deciding voice. It would be helpful if the liberal element decided to leave for a new community although I think it is doubtful that will happen without a major convention fight over some decisive issue. Of the major denominations, the Southern Baptist convention is the only one in which the conservatives have a decisive majority. (Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod is in a similar situation, however.)