

HISTORY OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM TRAINING WITHIN LOCAL
CHURCHES OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

by

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HISTORY OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM TRAINING WITHIN LOCAL CHURCHES OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Since its inception in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) continually emphasized evangelism as one of its core values, including it as the twenty-third article in the 1925 Baptist Faith and Message.¹ Throughout its history, Southern Baptist evangelism took on many forms, both in its methodology and training practice, each inseparable, defining the other in various respects. This paper attempts to show the various methods used to train individual believers in Southern Baptist churches in personal evangelism throughout the denomination's history. It will begin by examining the role of Sunday school as a vehicle for evangelistic training, followed by the SBC's emphasis on revivals, and will conclude with the rise of various formal evangelism training schools and programs.² These eras can be designated respectively as the Organic Era (1845-1947), Revivalistic Era (1947-1971), and the Programmatic Era (1971-present).

¹Southern Baptist Convention, "Comparison of 1925, 1963, and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message," [on-line]; accessed 18 August 2009; available from <http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfmcomparison.asp/>; Internet. The article on evangelism changed from article twenty-three to article eleven in the 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Messages.

²Lewis A. Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," *Baptist History and Heritage* 22 (January 1987): 34-35. Southwestern News Staff, "2003-Present - Paige Patterson: Eighth President," *Southwestern News*, Spring 2008 [magazine on-line]; accessed 23 August 2009; available from http://www.swbts.edu/swnews/articles_detail.cfm?Article_ID=136/; Internet. This paper will focus on training in the local church and thus will not deal with evangelistic training in the seminaries or colleges. Drummond notes, though, that all six Southern Baptist seminaries have always included training in evangelism as part of a student's education, led by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. L. R. Scarborough led the way while at Southwestern with his emphasis on evangelism, a zeal that led to the establishment of the "Chair of Fire"—currently held by President Paige Patterson—and the hiring of C. E. Autrey as the first full-time professor of evangelism at Southwestern.

Organic Era: Sunday School as Primary Method (1845-1947)

Sunday School Evangelism History

Developed in the 1780's by Robert Raikes and considered the "progenitor" of the public school system,³ Sunday school was originally not part of the church's work, but a vehicle for educating children for free using paid teachers. Many 18th century Baptists opposed the idea as "unscriptural" and "the devil's work." Ironically, though, when the interdenominational Sunday School Society was formed in 1785, "Baptist merchant" William Fox served as its first leader. By the turn of the century, Baptists warmed to the potential of the Sunday school as a tool for the church, establishing the first Sunday school in the South at Baltimore, Maryland's Second Baptist Church in 1803. The school was organized less around evangelism, choosing instead to focus on religious education as its sole objective. Within fifteen years, Sunday schools spread into Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.⁴

When the SBC was formed in 1845, members established the Domestic Mission Board (later named the Home Mission Board and presently the North American Mission Board) and "included Sunday School promotion" along with church planting⁵ as

³Boardman W. Kathan, "The Sunday School Revisited," *Religious Education* 75 (January-February 1980): 6-7.

⁴Lynn E. May, "The Sunday School: A Two-Hundred-Year Heritage," *Baptist History and Heritage* 15 (October 1980): 3. A. V. Washburn, "Sunday School: A Vehicle for Church Growth," *Baptist History and Heritage* 18 (January 1983): 56. Washburn claims that Southern Baptists did not accept Sunday school as a viable tool until the early 1900's, rejecting or merely "tolerat[ing]" it until that time; May seems to disagree. The difference may be due to the attitude of individual local churches rather than the denomination as a whole, with some churches accepting Sunday school and others rejecting it. At the national level, it appears that Sunday school was welcomed in the late 1800's.

⁵May, "The Sunday School," 4.

the primary tools for evangelism.⁶ As a result, the number of Sunday schools multiplied from 468 in 1845 to 1,460 ten years later.⁷ Seeing the potential of Sunday school to serve as means toward “educational evangelism,”⁸ in 1863 Basil Manly, Jr. pushed the SBC to emphasize Sunday school as “an agency for promoting evangelism, missions, Bible teaching, and training.” That year, the first Sunday School Board was formed in Greenville, South Carolina, electing Manly as president and John A. Broadus as secretary. The newly established Board soon began publishing various materials to (1) train church leaders in Sunday school administration and (2) train students in the Bible and church doctrine.⁹ Unlike early Sunday schools, Southern Baptists attempted to reach unchurched adults and children. However, most adult students were already members while over half of the children were unchurched.¹⁰ Manly and Broadus’ work contributed to the rapid growth of Southern Baptist Sunday schools, growing from 4,333 to 8,378 by 1870.¹¹

A permanent Sunday School Board was established in 1891.¹² As a vehicle for evangelism, the Board operated on the principle that the local church was responsible for

⁶James E. Carter, “Outreach Theology: A Comparison of Southern Baptist Thought and the Church Growth Movement,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 15 (July 1980): 37-38. Carter notes that prior to the 1970’s, church growth and education (Sunday school and Training Union) were the main tools of evangelism and evangelism training in the Southern Baptist Convention.

⁷May, “The Sunday School,” 4.

⁸Gaines Stanley Dobbins, “Denominational Evangelism and Training the Laity,” *Review & Expositor* 45 (April 1948): 184.

⁹May, “The Sunday School,” 4.

¹⁰Dobbins, “Denominational Evangelism and Training the Laity,” 185.

¹¹May, “The Sunday School,” 5.

¹²*Ibid.*, 5.

reaching the lost and unchurched in their communities. Hence, those who were not enrolled in Sunday school became a prospect for Southern Baptist Sunday school membership. The methodology was centripetal: get people into Sunday school where they would be evangelized.¹³ This required properly trained teachers and well-organized schools. Three methods of training were developed to facilitate this need: trained field workers, formal training classes, and Sunday school administration literature.

The Board created the position of “field worker” in 1901 to help facilitate Sunday school growth. Field workers were trained Board employees “who went into the field to assist states, associations, or churches” in starting and operating effective Sunday schools, work that was done previously by “a few state Baptist conventions and independent Sunday School organizations.” The first field worker was Bernard W. Spilman, whose primary order of business was to make Sunday schools truly “Southern Baptist” entities, abandoning the non-denominational strategies and resources previously used.¹⁴ Field workers promoted a uniform structure for Sunday school following a “nine-point Standard of Excellence for Sunday School.”¹⁵

The Board encouraged field workers and pastors to establish Sunday School Institutes and protracted training schools to ensure teachers were properly equipped to teach the Bible and evangelize students. Sunday School Institutes were “three-day meetings consisting of inspirational addresses” designed to motivate teachers for

¹³James E. Fitch, “Major Thrusts in Sunday School Development since 1900,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 18 (January 1983): 20.

¹⁴Fitch, “Major Thrusts in Sunday School Development since 1900,” 18. Field workers were also known as “field secretaries.”

¹⁵May, “The Sunday School,” 6-7.

evangelistic outreach. The protracted schools generally lasted one to two weeks with “lectures on the Bible and methods each morning, training sessions in the afternoon, and inspirational addresses each night.” The first protracted school was held in Nashville, Tennessee in 1906 and “was met with instant success,” thus becoming the preferred training method through the South. By 1916, the Sunday School Board “issue[d] over 35,000 awards in thirty-four states and six foreign countries.”¹⁶

Under the leadership of Manly and Broadus, the Sunday School Board published a variety of materials in the late 19th century including *The Sunday School Primer*, developed to assist children with basic education and literacy, a children’s newspaper called *Kind Words*, and graded Sunday school literature consisting of *The Child’s Gem*, *Primary Quarterly*, *Intermediate Quarterly*, and *Advanced Quarterly*. After the Board was permanently established, it published a Sunday school administration series in 1902 called *Normal Studies for Sunday School Workers*, a series designed to train pastors and teachers in Sunday school operations and evangelistic outreach. By 1915, this series had expanded to eight volumes. The *Superintendent’s Quarterly* was introduced in 1905 and later renamed *The Sunday School Builder*. 1910 saw the arrival of the *Home Department Magazine*, a periodical intended “to encourage Bible study at home and to minister to persons unable to attend Sunday School.”¹⁷

Sunday schools grew exponentially both in enrollment and number of schools. Between 1901 and 1916, the number of Southern Baptist churches without Sunday schools dropped from one-half to one-quarter, doubling the number of Sunday schools in

¹⁶May, “The Sunday School,” 8.

¹⁷Ibid., 4-5, 8.

the Convention. Enrollment nearly tripled during that time, with a record 1,784,992 individuals enrolled. Between 1917 and 1930, little changed regarding the basic emphasis and structure of Sunday school, with materials merely updated or added in order to address specific needs and changing cultures.

The only major adjustment came in 1920, when the Convention adopted the Sunday school philosophy of Arthur Flake. Flake envisioned Sunday school as the primary “outreach arm of the church”¹⁸ and developed a five-step “formula for growth” known as “Flake’s Formula:” (1) find the prospects, (2) design the Sunday school to accommodate them, (3) provide facilities to teach, (4) enlist and train teachers, and (5) visit and enlist more people.¹⁹ Adoption of Flake’s formula, promotion of the “Enlargement Campaign” in 1923, and the introduction of Vacation Bible School in 1924, enrollment multiplied to 2,691,828 by 1925, a growth of approximately 40% in five years.²⁰ Another push to increase Sunday school enrollment came in 1954 with the “Million More in ‘54,” a program developed by J. N. Barnette intended to enroll one million more individuals in Sunday school. However, only about one half were reached that year.²¹

¹⁸Charles S. Kelley, Jr., *How Did They Do It?: The Story of Southern Baptist Evangelism* (New Orleans: Insight Press, 1993), 31.

¹⁹Arthur Flake, *Building a Standard Sunday School* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1934), 29-55.

²⁰May, “The Sunday School,” 8. The Enlargement Campaign was a convention-wide push to expand Sunday school outreach and enrollment using training “clinics” along with state and national conferences. For more information on Vacation Bible School, see the forthcoming paper covering “special events and church growth (VBS)” by A. A. Ayandokun.

²¹B. Gray Allison, “Notable Achievements in Missions and Evangelism since 1845,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 24 (July 1989): 36. Fitch, “Major Thrusts in Sunday School Development since 1900,” 28-29.

Sunday school enrollment peaked at 7,671,165 in 1964 followed by annual decline from 1965-1971. The following five years saw slight increase in Sunday enrollment, but a steady decline returned starting in 1977. Despite the disinterest in Sunday school, Southern Baptists continued to view the program as key to its evangelistic outreach. During that time, materials were updated regularly and multiple enrollment pushes were developed, each of which included further training of teachers and church leaders in evangelism. Some of the leading outreach programs included People-to-People, Reach Out, and Metro Reach. The most prominent training and outreach program in the 1970's was called "ACTION: A Reach Out Enrollment Plan for Sunday School." According to Lynn E. May, ACTION resulted in the increases in Sunday school enrollment from 1972-1976, with an average growth of 18% the final year.²²

Training Union and Auxiliary Organizations

Along with Sunday school, two auxiliary groups arose to serve the purpose of the church and especially the Sunday school program: Woman's Missionary Union and the Baptist Young People's Union. The Woman's Missionary Union was formed in 1888 when a "small group of women organized [the Union as an] auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention." The goal was to train lay women in missions and promote missionary activity. The Union soon initiated a fundraising campaign to support missionaries overseas and at home. The former was designated the Lottie Moon Offering in 1918; the latter, Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions in 1934.²³

²²May, "The Sunday School," 10-11. May seems to overlook or reject any impact the Jesus Movement of the late-1960's to mid-1970's may have had, instead crediting ACTION for the results.

²³Allison, "Notable Achievements in Missions and Evangelism since 1845," 35.

The Baptist Young People's Union developed around 1891 and was formally established as an auxiliary to the Sunday School Board in 1896. Its purpose was to train youth in how to "explain their faith" and help them grow spiritually. By 1898, churches held "hundreds of study classes" and the Sunday School Board published materials especially for the Baptist Young People's Union. Classes generally took place on Sunday evenings so as not to conflict with Sunday school but rather supplement it. The Union's name changed in 1934 to the Baptist Training Union and expanded to all age groups.²⁴

Until 1968, no radical changes were made to the Training Union structure, merely adding or editing literature and adjusting the program based on changing needs and cultures. Following World War Two, the Training Union curriculum expanded to include age-graded materials spanning seventy-five volumes designed to cover a wide selection of topics within Baptist life. The first major change occurred from 1968-1970 when control over the lessons transitioned from the Training Union Department to the local church. While the previous material was still available, the focus moved to topic-based, undated materials that churches could select from based on their training needs. This was followed by the Training Union changing its name in the 1970's to the Church Training Department, and a decade later to the Discipleship Training Department.²⁵

In the 1980's, despite the Sunday school ceasing to be the main vehicle for Southern Baptist evangelistic training, the Discipleship Training Department released a discipleship and evangelism series called LIFE. The LIFE series served as an

²⁴Jack D. Terry, "Equipping Believers Through Discipleship Training," *Baptist History and Heritage* 28 (January 1993): 22-24.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 25-27.

in-depth training program in five ministry areas of church life: (1) Worship/Intercession, (2) Nurture, (3) Service, (4) Teaching/ Preaching, and (5) Evangelism. The LIFE series now includes: MasterLife, Experiencing God, Disciple's Prayer Life, Wise Counsel, Decision Time, Master Builder, Parenting By Grace, Christian Self-esteem, Covenant Marriage, Communication and Intimacy, Master Design, Bible Guide, Step by Step Through the Old Testament, [and] Step by Step Through the New Testament.²⁶

Department of Evangelism and Roland Q. Leavell

The SBC formed the Department of Evangelism as part of the Home Mission Board in 1906 as a means to further the denomination's Gospel outreach and enhance its training methods. It was believed that the Department would help local churches evangelize more effectively through regular revival meetings.²⁷ The Department employed a lead evangelist charged with implementing the program of regular revival meetings. In 1913, the Department developed the "Fisherman" program in order to train individuals to serve as associate evangelists in various assigned areas under the authority of the lead evangelist. They helped local pastors learn how to have revival meetings, raise money, and organize the church to for meeting promotion.²⁸ The revival meetings included sessions for training participants in evangelism, but these seminars were primarily "a study in contextualized education" rather than training in personal evangelism. Sunday school was still used as the primary means of evangelistic training, though that training was limited to Sunday school teachers and church staff.²⁹

²⁶Ibid., 27-29.

²⁷Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 13-17.

²⁸Robert L. Hamblin, "Home Mission Board Influence on Southern Baptist Evangelism, 1900-1985," *Baptist History and Heritage* 22 (January 1987): 18-19.

²⁹Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 20.

In 1936, the Convention chose Roland Q. Leavell to head the Department of Evangelism in part since he was one of the first Southern Baptists to emphasize lay personal evangelism. Just prior to taking over the Evangelism Department, Leavell authored a training volume called *Winning Others to Christ*, published in 1936.³⁰ The contents of this work were later published for training Southern Baptists throughout the convention under the title *Helping Others to Become Christians*.

Soon after taking the reins, Leavell terminated many of the associate evangelist positions, leading the Department to focus more on local church evangelism through personal evangelistic efforts rather than through mass revivals. It is unclear whether such an overhaul was motivated by Leavell's methodological and doctrinal convictions, the economic hardships of the Great Depression, or both. Whatever the reasons, Leavell chose local churches over paid evangelists.³¹

Leavell's personal evangelism emphasis shows him to be a visionary and a man ahead of his time. Based on John 1:41, Leavell envisioned an "Andrew Club" in every church, in which pastors would train a small group to share the Gospel who, in turn, would each train two or three others, who would then train more. However, this idea never came to fruition Convention-wide.³² Nevertheless, he continued to promote lay personal evangelism: he "wrote books, developed training programs, and led evangelism clinics to motivate Southern Baptists to share their faith." He recruited others

³⁰Ibid., 25-27, 160.

³¹Charles S. Kelley, Jr., "An Investigation of the Changing Role of the Revival Meetings in the Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism, 1947-1980" (ThD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983), 20.

³²Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," 31. Kelley, "An Investigation of the Changing Role of the Revival Meetings," 26.

to write “articles for the many Southern Baptist periodicals, study courses, tracts, pamphlets, and books” to further train the laity how to evangelize.³³

In his work *Helping Others to Become Christians*, a training resource developed for the SBC that captures the content of his seminal work, *Winning Others to Christ*, Leavell argues that evangelism is the mission of every believer. In order to do personal evangelism, one must first be transformed by the Holy Spirit (a true believer), prayer for the lost is “a necessity,” they must have a “passion” for locating and interacting with the lost, and finally they must share a biblical plan of salvation.³⁴

The basic Gospel presentation Leavell made famous depended greatly on Scripture and revolved around three points:

1. Salvation needed
 - a. All have sinned (Rom 3:23)
 - b. Sin brings death (Rom 6:23)
2. Salvation provided
 - a. Sin wiped away (1 John 1:7)
 - b. Whoever will can be saved (John 3:16)
 - c. Salvation is a free gift of grace (Eph 2:8)
3. Salvation accepted
 - a. Through repentance and faith (Acts 20:21)
 - b. Repent or die (Luke 13:3)
 - c. Believe or end up in hell (John 3:18, 36)³⁵

Leavell followed his Gospel presentation outline with sections addressing things such as dangers to avoid, scriptural responses to common excuses, and the role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.³⁶ It is worth noting that in this work, Leavell placed

³³Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 27-28.

³⁴Roland Q. Leavell, *Helping Others to Become Christians* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1939), 9-63.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 61.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 64-72.

personal evangelism (chapter two) before his discussion on mass evangelism (chapter three). This likely is due to his emphasis on personal evangelism over revival meeting evangelism.

This does not mean that he opposed revival meetings as a viable tool for evangelism. In 1939, he authored a booklet intended to guide churches to organize and participate in a “cooperative, coordinated, comprehensive campaign for souls” in a massive revival meeting-based evangelistic outreach.³⁷ In this short volume, Leavell discusses three types of biblical evangelism: personal, mass (revival meetings), and home evangelism (sharing the Gospel with family and close friends). Describing the value of all three, Leavell writes, “No one way will win all. No scriptural way can be omitted without loss. . . . The ‘Eight Mighty Objectives’ of the Southwide Baptist Revival plans encourage the use of each of these scriptural methods.”³⁸ Thus, Leavell strove to incorporate all forms of evangelism, though his vision incorporated personal evangelism more so than did the plans of his predecessors.

Despite his best efforts to promote personal evangelism and train the laity to share the Gospel, evangelism remained in the purview of Sunday school and revival meetings while training was reserved for the leadership and done primarily through Sunday school and its auxiliaries. Leavell’s vision of a convention-wide focus on personal evangelism training would not come to pass for another thirty-five years.

³⁷Roland Q. Leavell, *A Handbook for the Southwide Baptist Revival of 1939*, Texas ed. (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.), 6.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 15-22.

Revivalistic Era: Revivals as Primary Method (1947-1971)

Various cultural, economic, and numerical issues led the SBC to rethink its method of evangelism and evangelism training: (1) financial calamity of the Great Depression altered the focus to local church led evangelism, (2) a “continuing emphasis upon revival meetings,” (3) growing interest in developing a “unifying” method of evangelism practicable by all churches, and (4) a reduction in the number of annual baptisms.³⁹ Following the Second World War, the SBC returned to the use of revival meetings, placing greater emphasis on them than they had done in the past.⁴⁰

From about 1940-1960, Southern Baptist evangelism was scaled down to “essentially . . . revivalism” in the local church. The Evangelism Department was organized to teach pastors how to have revival meetings and to focus on publishing literature geared toward winning souls through them.⁴¹ The foremost leader during this transitional era was Charles Everett Matthews from Texas.

C. E. Matthews: Simultaneous Crusade

On September 1, 1922, the membership of Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas issued a call for C. E. Matthews to serve as their pastor, a position he held for the next twenty-four years. As pastor, Matthews used revival meetings as his primary means of evangelism—he held twenty-three revivals at Travis during his tenure as their pastor,⁴² convinced that they were the “most effective” method of reaching the

³⁹Kelley, “An Investigation of the Changing Role of the Revival Meetings,” 20-31.

⁴⁰Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 160-61.

⁴¹Drummond, “Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life,” 30.

⁴²C. E. Wilbanks, *What God Hath Wrought Through C. E. Matthews* (Atlanta: Home Mission

lost⁴³ and motivating others to evangelism: “[O]nly mass evangelism will stir the hearts of church members, restore moral standards that have sunken to a level with the world, and promote holy living.”⁴⁴

Matthew’s life changed one spring morning in 1936. His biographer, C. E. Wilbanks, records Matthew’s description of the events of that morning:

One day in 1936, the Jewish evangelist, Hyman Appleman, was in conference with me and the subject we were discussing was evangelism. I stated in the beginning that it appeared to me that the simultaneous crusades on the associational level came nearer meeting every phase of the New Testament evangelism than any other method. Brother Appleman agreed with me, but said, “There is too much jealousy among pastors and churches for the simultaneous method to succeed.” All these things were food for thought.

The literal truth of Appleman’s words has been observed. A few days after this conversation, exactly on the morning of September 28, 1936, I was in my study preparing a funeral message for a sainted mother, Mrs. E. J. Tarlton. All of a sudden I found my mind centered on evangelism and completely lost my thoughts in meditation on the subject. Suddenly there came to me a complete program of evangelism as though I had read it all in a flash from a book. It was so vividly indelible in my mind that not a semblance of it has ever left me. I was so electrified by the experience that I wanted to tell everyone that I met.⁴⁵

Wilbanks comments that this account shows that “there is no hesitancy in saying that the . . . voice of God spoke to C. E. Matthews” that day, comparing the event to direct revelation and visions given to Apostles.⁴⁶ Whether the vision was divinely inspired or a man’s dream may be debated, but there is little debate that the event

Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1957), 60, 87.

⁴³Kelley, “An Investigation of the Changing Role of the Revival Meetings,” 35-37.

⁴⁴C. E. Matthews, “Evangelism on the March,” *Home Missions* 18 (August 1947): 5.

⁴⁵Wilbanks, *What God Hath Wrought Through C. E. Matthews*, 110.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 108-09.

impacted a man known for his stubbornness and uncompromising rigidity.⁴⁷ The vision Matthews saw was a program of evangelism through simultaneous revival meetings throughout the SBC.

Ten years after the vision, Matthews authored *The Department of Evangelism and the Simultaneous Revival Program* which outlined his vision for convention-wide simultaneous revival meetings in Texas. In this work, he described three types of mass evangelism: (1) periodic local church revival meetings, (2) city-wide meetings held in a central location with multiple church participation, and (3) simultaneous meetings, which blend the first two. The latter occurs when each church coordinates together to hold local revival meetings at their individual locations at the same time. Churches coordinate promotion, training, and organization for the meetings, treating it as a singular event in multiple locations.⁴⁸

In 1946, the SBC named Matthews as Secretary of the Department of Evangelism⁴⁹ and immediately encouraged the convention to adopt his evangelism program. The following year, the Convention approved the following resolution:

1. That a unified program of evangelism be recommended to our states and churches;
2. That each state in the Convention create a Department of Evangelism;

⁴⁷Ibid., 9. Wilbanks notes that throughout his life, Matthews could “not be moved by persuasion or by pressure” once he made up his mind.

⁴⁸C. E. Matthews, *The Department of Evangelism and the Simultaneous Revival Program* (Dallas: Department of Evangelism, Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1946), 6-7.

⁴⁹Hamblin, “Home Mission Board Influence on Southern Baptist Evangelism,” 21.

3. That all associations be organized with two officers; namely, an organizer and a general chairman; and
4. That all types of evangelism that God sees fit to bless be emphasized, but the stress be on mass evangelism, chiefly the associational simultaneous method.⁵⁰

In 1949, Matthews published his seminal work, *The Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism*, which, like his 1946 volume, outlined in detail his vision for convention-wide simultaneous revival meeting evangelism.⁵¹ This work has undergone revisions in 1956 and 1958.

Matthews attempted to emphasize both denominational unity throughout all levels, personal evangelism training, and mass evangelism with his program.⁵² However, his plan “majored on mass evangelism,”⁵³ directing nearly every aspect of the program toward the simultaneous revival meetings. In the twenty-five chapters of the 1958 update of his program, Matthews spends the first twelve chapters detailing how to organize and administrate simultaneous meetings. Chapters thirteen and fourteen move into personal evangelism, chapter fifteen offers a sample training outline, and the final ten chapters return to the revival meetings.⁵⁴

⁵⁰Southern Baptist Convention, *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nineteen Hundred and Forty-Seven, Ninetieth Session, One Hundred Second Year* (Nashville: Executive Committee, Southern Baptist Convention, 1947), 119.

⁵¹Kelley, “An Investigation of the Changing Role of the Revival Meetings,” 39.

⁵²Kelley, “An Investigation of the Changing Role of the Revival Meetings,” 33-35. Donald John Wilton, “A Critical Investigation of Charles Everett Matthews’s Concepts of Evangelism and an Assessment of His Impact Upon the Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism” (ThD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986), 75-82, 116.

⁵³Wilton, “A Critical Investigation of Charles Everett Matthews’s Concepts of Evangelism,” 116.

⁵⁴C. E. Matthews, *The Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Convention Press, 1958).

In the two chapters regarding training for and practicing personal evangelism, chapter thirteen discusses “visitation for evangelism” and chapter fourteen discusses “conservation in evangelism.” Matthews teaches that in visitation evangelism, church members are to gather the names of prospects gathered through Sunday school, learn how to evangelize through Sunday school and Training Union, and then visit each prospect. The believer has three goals at this visit: “secure” the prospect’s attendance at the revival meeting, attempt to share the Gospel if possible, and obtain “agreement” for the person to move their membership. Of these three goals, only evangelism is optional; getting the person to attend a meeting and join the church are given greater importance.⁵⁵ Overall, one notices three foci for workers doing visitation evangelism: getting people to revivals, increasing church membership, and filling out paperwork (for use with conservation evangelism).

Conservation evangelism, according to Matthews’ program, is follow-up and discipleship of those who respond positively to visitation evangelism. It includes “(1) Baptizing the converted into the church, (2) Rightly orientating them, (3) Enrolling them in the church organizations, (4) Indoctrinating them, [and] (5) Enlisting them in service of Christ in the church.” Much of the discussion on discipleship focuses on membership rolls and maintaining quality numbers rather than on training, discipleship, and spiritual growth.⁵⁶ The emphasis on numbers seems to be reinforced by chapter twenty-one, which promotes a promotional activity called “Pack-a-Pew Nightly.” This aspect of Matthew’s program is exactly what it implies: get more people in the pews every night.

⁵⁵Matthews, *The Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism*, 122-30.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 135.

Underlying this is the principle that the more people who attend, the more will be evangelized.⁵⁷

Following the implementation of Matthew's program, Southern Baptists experienced annual increases in baptisms. From 1950-1951, states west of the Mississippi River brought in 751,610 new members, contrasted with only 455,073 new members between 1940-1950. Between 1949-1954, 1.85 million were baptized nationally and 2.2 million joined Southern Baptist churches by letter; a net gain of 1.4 million in five years. In that same period, 2,861 new churches were formed through the United States.⁵⁸

For about the next fifteen years, Southern Baptists continued to use Matthew's program and revivals as the primary tool for evangelism training and practice, publishing annual simultaneous crusade "plan books."⁵⁹ Revival meeting plan books guided churches in organizing for that particular year's theme and meeting schedule. Forms were included for ordering record-keeping resources and revival meeting promotion products, and suggested schedules for worship services were provided. Additionally, a yearly revival meeting organization calendar was included to help the church draft its revival meeting activities and evangelism training plans for the year.⁶⁰ Such revival

⁵⁷Ibid., 181-86.

⁵⁸Wilton, "A Critical Investigation of Charles Everett Matthews's Concepts of Evangelism," 134-36. Wilton seems to credit Matthew's program with the increases from 1949-1954 compared to the numbers in the 10 years prior. However, he seems to overlook how the end of World War II, when thousands of soldiers returned home may have had, regardless of Matthew's program.

⁵⁹Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," 30.

⁶⁰Division of Evangelism, *New Life For You Revival Plan Book: 1959 Simultaneous Crusade: A Detailed Calendar for a Baptist Church* (Dallas: Division of Evangelism, Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1958).

meeting plan books continued to be published, though by at least 1993, the focus moved away from the simultaneous meetings to the local church revival.⁶¹

C. E. Autrey: Transition to Personal Evangelism Training

1960 brought both a new leadership at the Department of Evangelism and a time of transition when Cassius Elijah Autrey became the new director. Before taking the position at the Evangelism Department, Autrey served as pastor for over two decades and taught evangelism full-time for five years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.⁶²

David Leavell notes that “Autrey understood personal evangelism as a central element in every Christian’s life.”⁶³ It was this passion that motivated Autrey to move the Department of Evangelism away from its over-emphasis of revival meetings and toward training the laity to share the Gospel more effectively one-on-one. His belief, based on his study of Scripture, that like Christ, a true believer should be compelled to evangelize, for winning the lost “was not an option.”⁶⁴ Autrey’s passion drew the praise of Roland Leavell, who said, “The tragic lostness of people will stir a Spirit-filled Christian with love, zeal and compassion. . . . [w]hen one identifies with what Christ has

⁶¹Mass Evangelism Department, *Revival Planbook for the Local Church* (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1993).

⁶²David Earl Leavell, “A Critical Investigation of Cassius Elijah Autrey’s Concepts of Evangelism and an Assessment of His Impact Upon the Southern Baptist Program of Evangelism” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 53-65.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 69.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 70-71.

done for him or her, the convert is eager to help others have what they have found.”⁶⁵

One could say that Autrey was the successor of Leavell and his vision for more effective training in personal evangelism.

Though promoting personal evangelism, Autrey was no opponent of revival meetings, advocating every church hold such regular meetings as part of its evangelistic outreach program.⁶⁶ As such, Autrey continued the simultaneous revival meetings started by Matthews, but supplemented them with greater efforts at training the laity for personal evangelism. In order to accomplish this, he initiated three major adjustments to the Southern Baptist evangelism program. First, he motivated churches to modify their evangelism programs. He encouraged the local churches’ evangelism committees to refocus their training from inviting people to revivals to teaching them how to share their faith. Furthermore, he endeavored to train 700,000 Sunday school teachers how to more effectively reach the lost in their classrooms and communities. Second, Autrey appointed a new staff member to the Evangelism Division, whose purpose was to deal exclusively with personal evangelism training.⁶⁷

The third and most prominent change was the introduction of the Cultivative Commitment Witnessing Program (CCWP), which Autrey considered the flagship of his evangelism program.⁶⁸ Using this program, believers learned how to share the Gospel

⁶⁵Roland Q. Leavell, *Evangelism: Christ’s Imperative Commission*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 31.

⁶⁶C. E. Autrey, *Basic Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 71.

⁶⁷Leavell, “A Critical Investigation of Cassius Elijah Autrey’s Concepts of Evangelism,” 107-24.

⁶⁸Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 44.

with a lost person by first developing a relationship with them. Through multiple visits—ideally, four visits in three months—the believer would spend time getting to know the lost person. CCWP taught the believer how to identify the lost person’s specific needs, which would be used as doorways to share the Gospel in a more personal way.⁶⁹ Despite the program’s focus on personal evangelism, it was not without its weaknesses, as noted by Charles Kelley. He points out that the program contained no defined plan of salvation. Instead, it made only general references to how a person may be saved by using a “brightly colored, sixteen-page brochure used for home visitation.”⁷⁰

During the first visit, the believer would leave the prospect a tract “designed to get [their] attention” and introduce them to their need for Christ. During the second visit, the believer would invite the person to Sunday school. The third visit allowed for resolution of any problems the person may have about committing to Jesus. A pastor, deacon, or other church leader would join the believer during the fourth visit “for the purpose of preparing the prospect for the week of commitment visitation,” at which time the visits became more evangelistic and the person is encouraged to commit to Christ.⁷¹

Autrey’s training program opened the eyes of Southern Baptists to the potential of dedicated personal evangelism training. As the culture underwent radical changes during the 1960’s, the Jesus Movement captured the nation’s youth, and evangelistic organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ rose to prominence, Southern Baptist

⁶⁹Leavell, “A Critical Investigation of Cassius Elijah Autrey’s Concepts of Evangelism,” 126-27.

⁷⁰Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 161.

⁷¹Leavell, “A Critical Investigation of Cassius Elijah Autrey’s Concepts of Evangelism,” 126-27.

leaders strove to find new ways to reach to a new generation. Future leaders believed that Autrey's initial success through purposed training methods provided the key.

Programmatic Era: Formal Programs as Primary Method (1971-Present)

Kenneth Chafin and WIN/LES

Personal evangelism rose to greater prominence during the 1970's, influenced heavily by the Jesus Movement which brought "unprecedented" and "phenomenal" growth in seminary enrollment.⁷² Following Autrey's retirement, the Home Mission Board appointed Kenneth Chafin the new Directory of Evangelism.⁷³ Chafin led the Evangelism Division to concentrate more on evangelistic training and practice, "[seeking] to make personal evangelism the most important aspect of the program of evangelism" in the SBC.⁷⁴

Almost immediately, Chafin "brought together a 'think tank' to develop lay training in personal evangelism" like never before seen in the Convention. Unlike all other modes of training, Chafin envisioned a program that would exclusively focus on training the laity to share the Good News with unbelievers, unlike its predecessors that blended revival meeting and Sunday school invitations with personal evangelism. Southern Baptist churches had been using the training materials from Bill Bright's Campus Crusade for Christ, D. James Kennedy's Evangelism Explosion (EE), and

⁷²Alvin Reid, "The Effect of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention," *Baptist History and Heritage* 30 (January 1995): 45.

⁷³Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," 31. Hamblin, "Home Mission Board Influence on Southern Baptist Evangelism," 25. Hamblin claims that Chafin became Director of Evangelism in 1970.

⁷⁴Hamblin, "Home Mission Board Influence on Southern Baptist Evangelism," 25.

Navigators for evangelism training, and Chafin believed Southern Baptists needed their own training program.

In 1970, Chafin and his team introduced Witness Involvement Now (WIN) schools as the new centerpiece of Southern Baptist evangelism, superseding revival meetings and Autrey's CCWP. The first WIN school was held in Atlanta that year, where pastors and laity together participated.⁷⁵ The school's design borrowed heavily from Campus Crusade's formula of using a one-week intensive training session that included lectures, group activities, and evangelistic visitations. Tracts were heavily emphasized by WIN. Graduates would then go and train others.⁷⁶ Following WIN's initial success, Southern Baptists opened WIN schools throughout the Convention in 1971-1972, teaching thousands of laypersons how to witness personally to others.⁷⁷

Chafin led the Convention to expand WIN's training by offering a longer version called Lay Evangelism Schools (LES),⁷⁸ which lasted approximately two or more weeks, employed less intensive training methods, and included a ten-week visitation program. Like in WIN schools, LES students learned through "lectures, individual/small group activities, and at least one evening of actual evangelistic visitation" using both tracts and personal testimony.⁷⁹ The tract of choice for LES/WIN schools was "How to

⁷⁵Hamblin, "Home Mission Board Influence on Southern Baptist Evangelism," 25.

⁷⁶Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," 32. Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 77.

⁷⁷Reid, "The Effect of the Jesus Movement on Evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention," 45-46.

⁷⁸Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," 32.

⁷⁹Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 46, 77.

Have a Full and Meaningful Life” which used a five-point Gospel presentation: “God’s love, Christ’s death and resurrection, the spiritual birth, man’s sin, and how to receive Christ.”⁸⁰ The year following LES/WIN’s introduction, baptisms in 1972 rose to about 445,000.⁸¹

C. B. Hogue and the Birth of CWT

Chafin left the Evangelism Division soon after, succeeded in 1973 by C. B. Hogue, who reorganized the Division to focus on three areas: evangelism training, personal evangelism, and mass evangelism. Hogue was a fan of WIN/LES, but wanted more formats and greater in-depth training than offered under Chafin’s schools. Building off LES, he replaced WIN with three new or expanded programs: Win Our World (WOW), Training Evangelistic Lay Leadership (TELL), and Continuous Witness Training (CWT),⁸² of which he “believed that CWT would be the most popular evangelism tool ever developed by Southern Baptists.”⁸³

WOW schools targeted youth using much of the same formula and tactics as WIN, but with a younger flair and techniques designed to reach young people.⁸⁴ TELL already existed since 1971,⁸⁵ but was expanded by Hogue into a multimedia version of

⁸⁰Ibid., 161.

⁸¹Ibid., 46. Kelley seems to credit LES/WIN for the increase in baptisms, overlooking the impact the Jesus Movement may have had. It is uncertain to what extent either may have led to the increase, though it is reasonable to believe both had roles.

⁸²Hamblin, “Home Mission Board Influence on Southern Baptist Evangelism,” 25-26. Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 47-48.

⁸³Hamblin, “Home Mission Board Influence on Southern Baptist Evangelism,” 26.

⁸⁴Drummond, “Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life,” 32.

⁸⁵*The Continuing Manual for the Lay Evangelism School in the Local Church: A Manual in the*

WIN that used audio and video media and a workbook rather than a human teacher. Eventually, TELL replaced WIN altogether. TELL offered the student a flexible learning environment. Tapes could be played in any order; students set their own pace, and arranged their own training program. However, the program lacked structure, was expensive (\$500.00 per kit in the mid-1970's), and failed to answer some questions. Thus, TELL's potential declined rapidly.⁸⁶

Continuous Witness Training was Hogue's pride and joy, though it was not introduced until the time he left the Home Mission Board. CWT offered in-depth, on-the-job evangelism training to adults interested in learning how to more effectively share their faith with others. Its curriculum is modeled closely after the widely-used Evangelism Explosion school since Hogue intended it to be a Southern Baptist version of EE.⁸⁷ Like its Presbyterian counterpart, CWT employs a mentoring approach of training students following the model given in 2 Timothy 2:2. The pastor would undergo "intensive training at a regional center" in order to be "certified," after which he trained the laity, who once certified, would train others.⁸⁸ Training at the school included memorizing a prescribed Gospel presentation, going on evangelistic visits with a mentor, and learning how to train others. CWT's Gospel presentation followed a four-point formula: God's purpose, man's need, God's provision, man's response;⁸⁹ it continues to

TELL Series of the Lay Evangelism Training Materials (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1971).

⁸⁶Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 47-49.

⁸⁷Ibid., 48-49.

⁸⁸Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," 32.

⁸⁹Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 80-81, 161.

be used by Billy Graham's ministry, as seen in his "Steps to Peace With God" tract series.⁹⁰

Though substantially influenced by EE, Southern Baptists incorporated their own distinctive characteristics into CWT. Unlike EE, CWT addressed believer's baptism following an individual's conversion; CWT placed greater emphasis on the lordship of Christ than does EE. Southern Baptists designed their program to last thirteen weeks, contrasted to the seventeen weeks necessary for EE students. Finally, CWT cost less than EE, which made it more accessible to small churches with limited finances.⁹¹

Southern Baptists began its Continuous Witness Training program as a pilot in only sixty churches the first year. After seen the success and excitement it instilled in those who took the course, the Convention released CWT to all churches. For over two decades CWT was "the most successful of the training programs in evangelism among Southern Baptists."⁹² Such success led Southern Baptists to develop additional training programs similar to CWT in order to promote, train, and energize lay evangelism.

Training Programs Post-CWT

In the wake of CWT's success, a multitude of Southern Baptist programs designed specifically for training laity in evangelism began appearing in the 1980's. One of the earliest post-CWT programs was Building Witnessing Relationships (BWR), a training method similar to C. E. Autrey's Cultivative Commitment Witnessing Program.

⁹⁰Billy Graham, "Steps To Peace With God," [on-line]; accessed 24 August 2009; available from <http://www.atsdirect.org/epages/atsdirect.sf/4a93bd5c043b02012717ac100357058d/Product/View/41683/>; Internet.

⁹¹Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 80.

⁹²Drummond, "Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life," 32.

BWR teaches students how to share their faith with family and friends through relationship development, a method also known as lifestyle evangelism. Students of BWR learn to identify the prospects “spiritual development,” how to “develop a strategy for sharing the gospel” based on the observed condition, and finally how to bring the person to a decision. However, BWR shares the same weakness found in CCWP: lack of a clear plan of salvation. Instead, BWR seems to assume the student can already share their faith.⁹³

One of the most recent Southern Baptist follow-ups to CWT was a program published by LifeWay known as FAITH Evangelism, a three-series program made up of twelve to sixteen sessions each designed similar to CWT.⁹⁴ Other Southern Baptist evangelism training programs developed after CWT include Bill Fay and Ralph Hodge’s *Share Jesus Without Fear*, *The NET* developed by the North American Mission Board, and Ken Hemphill’s *EKG: Empowering Kingdom Growth*. Each shares similar characteristics with one or more of its predecessors.

Conclusion

Lewis Drummond asserts that prior to the Lay Evangelism Schools, Witness Involvement Now, and Continuous Witness Training programs of the 1970’s, “there was no real lay training in evangelism.”⁹⁵ Southern Baptists throughout history have considered themselves an evangelistic denomination, yet Drummond is correct in his

⁹³Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 81-82.

⁹⁴“FAITH Evangelism,” [on-line]; accessed 24 August 2009; available from <http://www.lifeway.com/faith/>; Internet.

⁹⁵Drummond, “Training for Evangelism in Southern Baptist Life,” 33.

claim. For 130 years, Southern Baptists desired evangelism yet did not provide adequate personal evangelism training of the laity, reserving that for pastors, Sunday school teachers, and professional evangelists. As the methods evolved over time, so did the means of training others to share the Gospel, for one cannot separate the method from the means of teaching.

As one examines the methods of training for personal evangelism in the SBC, one will likely agree with Charles Kelley, who observes that the method of training and practicing evangelism is a reflection of its particular era.⁹⁶ From Sunday school to FAITH Evangelism, Southern Baptists have attempted to find new and more effective method for training others to share the Gospel. As time passed, each new program resembled the generation responsible for its development, and such is unlikely to change in the future.

⁹⁶Kelley, *How Did They Do It?*, 160-65.

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