

July 8, 1964

Civil Rights Law  
Viewed As A Test

By the Baptist Press

The president of the Southern Baptist Convention, in a statement from his pulpit, said enactment of civil rights legislation means that "not only our citizenship but also our Christianity is being tested."

Wayne Dehoney, who heads the largest non-Catholic denomination in the United States, told his congregation at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Tenn., that "as Christian citizens, we are charged by the word of God to give voluntary, peaceful obedience to every letter of this law."

Dehoney said he has accepted President Lyndon B. Johnson's appointment as a member of the National Citizens' Committee for Community Relations. Dehoney is a Tennessee member of the committee. He said the committee will help foster voluntary compliance with the new civil rights law.

"I believe that the vitality and relevance of the Christianity in Southern Baptist churches in the 'deep Bible-belt South' are now being tested as never before," Dehoney said to his church.

"As citizens, let every one of us give voluntary, peaceful, orderly obedience to law and to the orders of public officials. As Christians, let us continue with new zeal at the never-ending task of proclaiming a gospel that transforms the hearts of men," he preached.

"It still remains for the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform and change the individual hearts of men to eradicate the prejudice that spawns racial discrimination and to sow the seeds of brotherhood and respect for human personality in the hearts of redeemed men," Dehoney continued.

Response of other Southern Baptist leaders to the new legislation was sometimes cautious, sometimes plain-spoken. Some leaders in deep South states declined to give Baptist Press news service their views on the new civil rights law.

George E. Bagley, Montgomery, executive secretary of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, had this to say:

"Now that the so-called Civil Rights Bill has passed and been signed into law by the President of the United States, there will undoubtedly be a testing as to its constitutionality, particularly of the two most controversial sections, Title 3 and 7.

(Titles 3 and 7 concern public facilities and equal employment opportunity.)

"We shall join with the majority of Southern Baptists who voted in the recent Convention in Atlantic City a substitute motion to the Christian Life Commission recommendations, leaving the final solution of these problems to individual Christians and the local churches, to act in the spirit of Jesus Christ, to pray and work for peaceful solutions in racial relationships."

The attorney serving as chairman of the SBC Christian Life Commission, Orba Lee Malone of El Paso, said, "At last appropriate legislation has come from the Congress! The civil rights act is a long step forward in forming a more perfect union, establishing justice, insuring domestic tranquility, promoting the general welfare and securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

Malone asked other Southern Baptists to "set a Christian example by obeying the law" and to "give ourselves redemptively to the expulsion of racism from our beloved nation."

Henlee H. Barnette, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, pointed out the new civil rights law "is not a perfect one which will usher in social utopia and right all wrongs in human relations. But," he added, "its passage is a legal beginning toward the removal of human injustice and the reduction of racial tensions."

Professor Barnette said "Christians must, in the spirit of Christ, act responsibly in the implementation of these new laws which aim at first-class citizenship for all Americans."

E. S. James, Dallas, editor of the Baptist Standard, said, "I do not regard the civil rights law as perfect....It is evident that without some such law some areas would have refused to comply with the Court decision for another 50 years. Now that Congress has spelled out the meaning of human rights, the opponents can no longer deny that the majority has spoken."

James, whose paper has 375,000 circulation and is the largest of 28 Southern Baptist weekly newspapers published in the states, declared that "every Christian is obligated to obey the demands of every law unless it contravenes his obligations to God."

"As the largest group of Christians in the South, Southern Baptists should immediately take the lead in implementing the demands of the new law. If they do not, this may be their last chance to be the determining voice of the Southland," James concluded.

Foy Valentine, Nashville, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission, said the civil rights debate in Congress apparently was the cause for an increase in requests for tracts the commission issued on race relations.

Valentine, commenting on passage of the law, said, "Southern Baptists can become the most influential single group in America in making these laws meaningful."

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#### Pastor In Germany

(7-8-64)

FORT WORTH (BP)--Kenneth B. Coleman, recent master of religious education graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here, has accepted a position as pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Frankfurt, Germany. Bethel Church, organized in 1956, is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist General Convention of Texas. It is an English-speaking church and its membership is mainly United States military men and American service employees.

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#### Anderson Calls Mandrell

(7-8-64)

ANDERSON, S. C. (BP)--N. Eugene Mandrell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Walhalla, S. C., will become chairman of the psychology department at Anderson College (Baptist) here in September. Mandrell, who received a doctor of theology degree in psychology of religion and in pastoral counseling, is the immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Counseling and Guidance Conference.

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