

From TEXAS REGIONAL OFFICE

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**Dallas Sessions Study'
Moral, Social Ailments**

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist groups heard pleas here for church members to give more attention to America's mushrooming moral and social problems.

The call for concern about the increase in crime, pornography, alcoholism, divorces and general moral decay was sounded at sessions of the Woman's Missionary Union and the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference.

The missions-minded women and preachers were among four Baptist groups conducting related meetings preliminary to the Southern Baptist Convention which opens its four-day annual meeting at Memorial Auditorium. Baptist educators and musicians held similar meetings.

Arthur B. Rutledge of Atlanta, head of the 2200-missionary Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board, outlined the problem to the women this way:

"Crime is increasing five times faster than the population. Pornography has become a 500 million dollar a year business. Drink and divorce continue at distressingly high levels. A revolution in race relations breeds tensions and violence. Minority peoples stand in need of a faith with moral and spiritual dynamic."

The answer is to diffuse the gospel into all of these areas of human struggle, Rutledge said.

And the place to concentrate is in the large metropolitan complexes called megalopoli which span a 500-mile stretch from Boston to Washington and to a lesser extent in the Great Lakes area, the Florida Gold Coast, Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast and Southern California, said Fred B. Moseley, assistant to Rutledge, who shared the podium with his boss.

Moseley disclosed his mission board, which supervises missionaries in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Panama, will concentrate its ministry in the large cities in the future.

Southern Baptists have been slow to identify themselves spiritually with these modern cities and it's time for the metropolitan complexes to get some attention, Moseley said. He pointed out they occupy only 6 per cent of the land area of the nation but contain 55 per cent of the people.

An analysis of the moral standards of the nation and the Southern Baptist Convention was unveiled to the preachers by seminary professor William Walter Adams of New Orleans.

Adams, professor of New Testament interpretation at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said the nation and denomination is decaying and not much is being done to check it.

As for the nation, the decay may be beyond the point of no return, he said. Proof of the denomination's deterioration is in the loss of Christian conviction and moral standards, he explained.

Adams said he based his analysis on a mountain of data covering over 1,000 pages of dependable reports given by leaders in many nations, primarily Southern Baptist leaders.

The data cited cases of immorality, some among Baptist leadership, Adams said. It also told of churches which had substituted social contacts and recreation for worship.

Adams also told the preachers it was ignorance, not modernism that threatened Southern Baptists.

An ignorance of Scripture and Christianity "makes it impossible for us to discuss the pressing issues of today and keep a workable unity," he declared.

"The hope of tomorrow is to start now and teach our people the Bible so that, out of this body of authentic truth, we shall practice the great Biblical principles God revealed," he said.

Browning W. Ware, pastor of Calder Baptist Church, Beaumont, Tex., suggested the preachers look at themselves in a spiritual mirror for guidance in future actions.

There are some preachers, he said, who buckle on the armor of protector of public interest and fight such forces as gambling, liquor and enemies of separation of church and state but take little notice of conflicts in human relations, adequate education and poverty.

Ware also decried preachers who fail to voice their convictions because they fear other ministers would misunderstand them.

"The terror of labels is real. Not to be called liberal or conservative seems more important than a greater loyalty to God and denomination by being open, democratic and creative," he said.

Within a list of confessions, he said he confesses to indignation when Southern Baptists hail themselves as God's last hope for the salvation of the world.

"If this true, God help us. Integrity demands that we speak less of God's singular blessing upon our denomination and humble ourselves so that we may bless God."

Vander Warner Jr., pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church, Bel Air, Md., warned the preachers about their images as status seekers.

There is nothing wrong with status seeking if you are seeking the right status, he said.

But Warner said that didn't mean to desire the church with the largest auditorium in the area, the best pipe organ or a luxury car while fellow preachers have the economy models.

Ware and Harper Shannon, a Dothan, Ala., preacher, both contended many ministers are afraid to preach on controversial issues, especially the integration subject.

The civil rights movement will result in civil wrongs if the demonstrators have uncivil attitudes. The answer to the problem is preaching the gospel and applying it to every area of life, Shannon said.

He added that ministers must have strong backbones, not weak knees. "Every true minister of God will someday face the ultimate decision--will it be to succumb to the pressure of men or to submit to the will of God?"

Another speaker, Don Anderson of San Antonio, Tex., said neurotic pastors in the pulpit have produced neurotic Baptists in the pews.

"Neuroticism is on parade in our churches," said the pastor of Manor Baptist Church in San Antonio.

He added this is not necessarily bad. It only becomes bad "when our churches fail to exercise a healing influence over the neurotic or when we create and perpetuate neurotic responses in the personalities of our people."

Anderson said neurotic feelings of guilt, power and rigidity among people in the pew are often reflections of similar neurotic feelings of the pastor in the pulpit.

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Rutledge Confirms
Cuban Sentencing

5-30-65

DALLAS (BP)--The U. S. State Department has confirmed that two Southern Baptist missionaries have been sentenced to prison terms by the Cuban government, the denomination's top home missions leader said here.

Arthur B. Rutledge, Atlanta, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board, made the announcement at the beginning of the Woman's Missionary Union Convention in Dallas Memorial Auditorium.

Confirming earlier unofficial reports, Rutledge said Herbert Caudill had received a 10-year prison sentence and Caudill's son-in-law, J. David Fite, got a six-year sentence. Both were reportedly convicted in Havana on charges of illegal foreign currency exchange.

When the missionaries were arrested last April 8 with 47 Cuban Baptist pastors and laymen and four women, Caudill was also charged with counter-revolutionary activities and ideological diversionism. Nineteen people remain to be tried.

Caudill and Fite admitted in a public hearing May 14 they had exchanged dollars for Cuban pesos, Rutledge said. Rutledge told reporters after his message that the exchange had been carried out with full consent of the Home Mission Board.

He said a number of Cuban Baptist workers employed by the Home Mission Board in Cuba had left assets with Caudill before leaving for the United States. They were reimbursed by the Home Mission Board in this country, and the assets they had left in Cuba were used in carrying out programs of the churches in Cuba.

"We are doing everything possible for the well-being of the missionaries and we hope for their ultimate release," Rutledge said. "We have had to be cautious lest we jeopardize the safety of Cuban Baptists."

Rutledge compared the imprisonment of the Baptists to "some of the things that happened in New Testament days." He urged the women to remember in prayer the missionaries and their fellow Baptists in Cuba.

Caudill, 61, a native of Clinchport, Va., is superintendent of missions for the Home Mission Board in Western Cuba. Fite, 31, a native of Fort Worth, Tex., is a teacher in the Cuban Baptist Theological Institute and pastor of the Buena Vista Baptist Church in Marianao.

Wives of the missionaries are allowed to visit their husbands once a month and to take food to them twice a month, Rutledge said.

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