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Graham Says He's Been
Converted on Poverty War

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By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Billy Graham, world-renowned Southern Baptist evangelist, came to Capitol Hill here and proclaimed, "I am a convert" to the nation's war on poverty.

"This is the first time in 17 years," Graham said, "that I have come to Washington to speak for or against a government program." But now, he continued, "I have come to speak to various Congressmen in favor of the poverty program."

The vangelist addressed nearly 200 persons at a luncheon in the Rayburn House Office Building. Among those present were over 100 Congressmen, both Republicans and Democrats, and 45 of the nation's leading businessmen.

The business leadership advisory council, appointed by Sargent Shriver, director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, was in quarterly session. These business leaders advise Shriver on how to improve the poverty program and seek to enlist other business men in the interests of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Graham came to the luncheon after a lengthy visit with President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House. He was on his way to London for a long-standing engagement there.

Shriver explained that Graham's visit had no political significance, that it was an "accident" that he was in town at this time, and that "he just dropped in to have lunch with us."

The coincidence was that the evangelist's visit came at a time when both the Senate and the House of Representatives were holding hearings and considering renewal of the Economic Opportunity Act (War on Poverty).

Both the Office of Economic Opportunity and Shriver had been under heavy attack in recent weeks by Republicans and others who want to make changes in the program.

The immediate occasion of the luncheon was the showing of a film made three weeks earlier during a Shriver-Graham tour of poverty areas in North Carolina.

Graham was outspoken in defense of Shriver whom he described as one of the most dedicated men in America. He was equally enthusiastic about the War on Poverty.

Proclaiming that the War on Poverty should not be bogged down in partisan politics, Graham said that this is a national need that requires the action of government.

He said that there was a time when individuals and small groups could deliver themselves from poverty conditions. "But this is impossible now," he said "and only by government action can we win the poverty war."

When the War On Poverty first began, he explained, "I was against it, but now I am for it."

The reason for his conversion, he said, was an intense study of the Bible on the subject of poverty coupled with a study of the program of the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Graham read Deuteronomy 15:7-11 to the Congressmen and businessmen. This is a passage that commands care for the poor and needy. There are 175 more passages in the Bible, he said, that teach the same thing, making anti-poverty efforts a major teaching of the Bible.

Avowing close adherence to separation of church and state, the Baptist evangelist nevertheless said that there are many ways in which churches and government can and should work together to help eliminate poverty.

In an interview over Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) television following the luncheon, Graham denied that his appearance n Capitol Hill was politically motivated and that he was not there by design to save the poverty program.

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In the same interview Shriver was asked if he thought he and the poverty program would survive the Republican attack. He answered, "Yes."

"What makes you think so?"

"Votes," Shriver answered.

"Have you counted them?"

"Yes," he continued.

"Do you think that Billy Graham's visit to Washington will offset the recent attack on you and the poverty program by a North Carolina Congressman?", Shriver was asked.

"When it comes to a choice between one Congressman and Billy Graham, I will take Billy Graham," he replied.

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Glorieta Staffers Present
Christian "Folk Musical"

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GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--A new beat in Baptist church music was sounded at Glorieta Baptist Assembly here as 100 staffers presented the premiere performance of "Good News", a 55-minute folk musical which tells the story of Christianity.

The program, designed to be produced by teenagers, will be presented for conferees and assembly guests at Glorieta each week during the 16 remaining church leadership conferences, June 15 through Sept. 4.

"Good News" will be available in book form by early January for use in local churches, the Baptist Sunday School Board reported.

Twenty original folk songs written specially for the presentation constitute the main portion of the show which includes dramatic sequences, monologues, comedy numbers and personal testimonies.

With songs such as "We're Commin' On," "Wake Up and Live," "Come Alive" and "Do You Really Care" the mixed chorus and instrumentalists attempt to involve their audience in the business of spreading the "Good News" of what Christ has done for them.

"Good News" is a product of the church recreation department of the SBC Sunday School Board.

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Wire Service Reporter Joins
Sunday School Board Staff

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Larry Jerden of College Station, Tex., has joined the office of public relations of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board as a news writer.

Jerden will write news and features for release to all news media and will have other press relations responsibilities.

He is a graduate of Texas A&M University, College Station, and was a newsman for United Press International in Little Rock, Ark., before joining the board.

Jerden's previous news experience includes work on the Rutherford Courier in Smyrna and Murfreesboro, Tenn., the Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle and three years on the staff of the Texas A&M and College Station daily paper, The Battalion.

He is the son of Air Force CWO and Mrs. J. R. Jerden, now stationed in Austin, Tex. He lived with his parents in several states and went to high school at two American schools in Japan.

Jerden and his wife Kathy will live in Nashville.

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BEST Conference Takes No
Stand On Federal Aid

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NASHVILLE (BP)--The Baptist Education Study Task second national conference ended here without taking a definite stand for or against federal aid to Baptist colleges and universities.

Dozens of conference participants, however, stood to express their personal views during a two-hour session on financing Christian higher education, but there seemed to be no consensus among the entire 300 participants or the six small groups on financing in answer to the federal aid question.

Said Erwin L. McDonald, recorder for the two sections and six small groups on financing in his report to the full conference: "There seemed to be a growing feeling that we ought not to decide what we're going to accept or reject."

Significantly, the six small groups deleted from a paper outlining the possible solutions to financial problems an item which offered three possible solutions to the federal aid question.

They chopped from the report all three of these alternatives: "(a) Flatly and positively reject all federal aid, OR (b) Outline some conditions under which federal aid may be taken such as for science and other secular oriented subject, OR (c) Permit colleges to accept federal aid provided no effort was made to control the college."

Instead of these statements, one of the six groups said that "the decision as to what kinds of federal funds, if any, are to be accepted by a college should be left to its boards of trustees."

Generally, all six groups on financing higher education seemed to agree, for all approved as a statement of principle: "The trustees of a college should exercise responsibility in matters of policy and control in keeping with the terms of the charter" and the purposes of the institutions.

One group even strengthened the statement by saying that the trustees should respect the views of the convention, but should be "protected from undue directives and pressures."

Two of the six groups, however, voted 18 to 12 in a hotly debated session to approve a statement saying: "Baptists have traditionally stood for freedom of conscience and religious liberty. From this principle has come the emphasis of freedom of worship, the separation of church and state, and opposition to the use of the taxing power of the state to compel an individual against his conscience to support any church or religion.

"Therefore," the statement continued, "it is the sacred duty of the college, its trustees and the sponsoring body to preserve the principles of religious liberty in all college funding activity."

Another group, in an unofficial poll, voted unanimously to favor research grants and federal loans, and voted 12 to one in favor of outright government grants. "All agreed that the trustees should decide whether or not grants and loans are to be accepted," said McDonald's report.

Whether or not the actions of the six groups on financing were for or against federal aid was not completely clear.

"There still are many different schools of thought among us, ranging from those who regard 'separation of church and state' in its strict construction as a Baptist tenet of faith, to those who see no threat to religious liberty in the acceptance of federal aid," said McDonald, editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, in his report to the conference.

There obviously was general agreement that more financial support for Baptist schools is one of the most critical problems facing the schools, and that several things are needed as part of the myriad of solutions to the problem.

First on the list was the need for a definition of the purposes and philosophy of Christian higher education, and better interpretation to the Baptist constituency of the nature and the cost of Christian higher education.

Also suggested was a national colloquium to find solutions to the financing crisis. It was suggested that the Education Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention sponsor such a colloquium.

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Several other suggestions were made, including limiting most Baptist colleges to undergraduate work because of the high cost of graduate education, proper financing of existing colleges before establishment of new Baptist colleges, and adequate support for higher education from denominational sources.

Four of the six groups on financing deleted as a possible solution an item which said Baptists should "frankly recognize that Christian higher education is as important as missions and should receive not less than one-half of the total Cooperative Program dollar."

During the hour-long discussion following the report, two conference participants urged the BEST Findings Committee to recommend that a special offering be established to aid Christian higher education, and that the offering be promoted just as well as special offerings for home and foreign missions.

"Special offerings don't hurt the Cooperative Program," said Tom Neely of North Greenville Junior College, Tigerville, S. C. "We have special offerings for everything except education, and this says that education just isn't important."

Lloyd Simmons, president of California Baptist College, Riverside, agreed. Simmons also criticized the report of the financing sections for not including this.

Simmons strongly opposed federal aid to Baptist schools and any violation of the traditional Baptist view of separation of church and state. "We no longer have separation of church and state. "We no longer have separation of church and state," he charged. "We have the rape of the First Amendment, and an undeclared establishment of religion."

He was critical of those who claim there is no attempt by the government to exert controls over schools that accept federal aid, saying that tax support could eventually bring such a control as to change the very nature of Baptist schools.

Gordon Blackwell, president of Furman University in Greenville, S. C., however, disagreed. "We've been accepting various types of federal aid at Furman and we've never found any undesirable federal controls," he said.

John Hamrick, president of the new Baptist College of Charleston, S. C., said that if Baptists don't take federal aid, there still will be "an establishment of religion" because federal aid is going to other religious schools and to public schools that are teaching secularism and agnosticism.

"We've said here that aid to students is all right," Hamrick said. "The college exists for the student. If a college gets funds for a library, it is helping the student." Hamrick added he was concerned that Christian witness in higher education will survive.

The meeting closed with an address by Charles Trentham, pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., who said Baptists are entering into a new kind of society that is changing rapidly.

"We look on the gloomy side of things, and wish for the good old days that really weren't too good," he said.

"But these could be golden days ahead for the church related school," adding that church schools have an opportunity to enter into this new society and make a real contribution if they will quit hanging onto the past.

"It is far more Christian," he said "to try to meet the needs of society than to be harnessed to the past," he concluded.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Final wrapup story on the BEST conference will be mailed to you tomorrow.

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