



**REGIONAL OFFICES**

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor, 161 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30303, Telephone (404) 523-2593  
DALLAS R. T. McCartney, Editor, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) RI 1-1996  
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

**BUREAU**

BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD Lynn M. Davis Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203,  
Telephone (615) 254-1631

June 30, 1967

590

630

**Texas Mexicans Protest  
Poverty, Magazine Says**

ATLANTA (BP)--The Mexican-American in Texas is mobilizing on labor, education and political fronts to draw the public's attention to long-overlooked conditions of poverty, illiteracy and job-wage discriminations, according to an analysis by Home Missions magazine.

"He is catching the scent of his own potential political power," the report states. "He feels the civil rights campaign has left him out, but he is seeing the Negro reap results from public clamor.

"Mexican-American leaders feel that their people are the chief victims of incongruities in the democracy, with poverty virtually enforced unconsciously on many to such a degrading extent that little if any progress can be seen from one generation to the next."

The social ills among the state's 2½ million Mexican-Americans are becoming of increasing concern to Baptists, who along with Methodists and Presbyterians were among the first to draw attention to their plight, the report says.

There is a struggle, however, especially for pastors as they attempt to identify with the poor "Mexican's" struggle for dignity and at the same time not estrange themselves from Anglo congregations who might consider it meddling in politics.

Editorially, the magazine stated:

"We have had plenty to say on alcohol, gambling, pornography and separation of church and state. Why then avoid poverty, civil rights, peace and government?"

"After a man's conversion, what do we have to say to him about the poverty, the discrimination, the oppressive forces of society? There is evidence that the witness of our silence speaks so loudly they cannot hear our verbal witness."

Twenty-seven pages of the July issue of the magazine published by the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board were devoted to the analysis of the problems facing the Mexican-American in Texas, and to interpreting the problems to Southern Baptists.

The report was prepared by Editor Walker L. Knight and Associate Editor Dallas Lee after a seven day reporting trip to Texas. Knight was for 10 years associate editor of the Texas Baptist Standard, and Lee is a native of South Texas whose father is now head of the missions work among Spanish-speaking Baptists of Texas for the state convention.

The magazine reported that the Mexican-American in Texas has an average education of about 4.7 years, compared to 8.1 for the Negro and more than 10 for the Anglo. Income averages run a similar scale.

Segregated elementary schools were eliminated by the courts nearly two decades ago, but that policy of segregation, because of language problems, still is blamed for the high rate of illiteracy among Mexican-Americans today.

Community leaders agree that education is the primary problem, the report says, but all link the attention necessary to improve the classroom to their efforts on political and labor fronts.

Specifically, they are calling for a concerted drive to eliminate illiteracy, establish better pupil-teacher ratios in predominately Mexican-American schools, recruit better qualified teachers and enforce mandatory school attendance up to 16.

One popular Mexican-American politician is raising funds to finance civil rights suits involving job and discrimination in the state.

"Legally we're white people but we're not treated as such," he said.

590

An Equal Employment Opportunity representative cites several examples of discrimination in the report, including a quote from a postmaster who boasted: "There will never be a Mexican supervisor as long as I'm in charge."

The magazine report keys on the critical farm labor situation in South Texas, where most Mexican-American field hands work without minimum wage protection, job guarantees, overtime pay, workman's compensation or any type of insurance protection. About 75 families are supporting a strike in the border area similar to the dramatic DeLand, Calif. union activity.

One outspoken Baptist doctor, who is critical of the lack of any support from churches for the poor "Mexicano," went so far as to suggest that pastors should be paid by state conventions or by the denomination to free them "from the purse strings" so they could speak out for social justice.

-30-

Authority Of Scriptures  
Urged As Ecumenical Basis

6/30/67

826

LOUISVILLE (BP)--A Baptist theologian here urged less rigidity on such doctrinal matters as baptism and the Lord's supper, and more emphasis on the authority of the scriptures as the basis for Christian unity and cooperation between denominational groups.

Dale Moody, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here, made the appeal during an interdenominational Conference on the Concept of the Believer's Church at the Southern Baptist Seminary.

More than 150 theological leaders from a dozen different denominations and from six nations attended the five-day conference. James Leo Garrett, professor at the Baptist seminary here, was conference coordinator.

It was believed to be the first international and interdenominational conference ever held on the campus of a Southern Baptist seminary specifically to discuss the theological concepts of the church.

Moody, one of two Southern Baptists on the program, said that "believers' churches," such as Baptists, "have suffered much from an isolation from one another and lack of contact with other Christians."

Moody said that there must be communication between denominational groups if there is to be the one-ness in Christ that the scriptures talk about in referring to the church.

"The time has come for more contact between separated bretheren--even our bretheren who today may seem far away," Moody declared.

"Until recently those who are near have generally required that those far away agree fully in doctrine and practice before there is inter-communication," Moody added.

"On such grounds," he continued, "interdenominational conferences will need to wait a long while before the visible symbol of our unity in Christ becomes evident.

"It may be that less rigidity at this point would help not only the so-called believers' churches but all churches to draw near to that unity for which we all so fervently pray," Moody declared.

The Baptist theologian said that the doctrines of baptism and the Lord's supper can be points of scism in relationships between denominations, and that healing of this scism requires many contacts and discussion among all who are eager to maintain the unity of the spirit.

Moody said that the teachings of the scripture should be the unifying factor that heals the differences between denominations.

"The teachings of the scripture need to be put above all denominational traditions," Moody observed. "Scripture is our one authority," he said, echoing what several speakers earlier had said.

"It does not seem that authority can be escaped in any field of knowledge," Moody added. "It is not a question of whether there is authority, but which authority is supreme."

-more-

591

Moody said that if any two persons can agree that scripture is the final authority, they can communicate on this basis and work out the problems of differences of opinion about doctrinal matters and church ordinances.

Earlier during the conference, a Harvard divinity professor called for a wedding of evangelism and social action if the church is to escape moral indecision in the face of a society in revolution.

J. Lawrence Burkholder, a Mennonite, said that of all the denominations in America, the believers' (free church) tradition had the best chance of bringing these two religious elements together, because the individual members had a continual opportunity to change and reorganize their approach to current problems.

A prominent Methodist theologian, Franklin H. Littell, said however that the American churches had too long tied their faith to major Reformation figures such as Luther and Calvin.

Littell, president of Iowa Wesleyan University and adjunct professor at Chicago Theological Seminary, said that the first real "believers' church" was the *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of the Brethren), which broke completely with the established church in Bohemia (present-day Czechoslovakia) in the 15th Century.

Southern Baptist historian W. R. Estep of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth echoed Littell's comments, saying that recently-discovered writings of early Anabaptists had unearthed enough historical data to re-write the history of the Reformation Movement.

Estep compared the new discoveries in importance to the Dead Sea Scrolls, and said the newly discovered writings must be reckoned with in any critical interpretation of the Protestant Reformation period.

The year 1967 is the 500th anniversary year of the organization of the *Unitas Fratrum* in Bohemia, as well as the 450th anniversary year of the posting of Martin Luther's 96 Theses at Wittenburg, Germany.

It was partly because of these historical aspects that the conference was called, said Garrett, the conference coordinator.

Purpose of the conference, Garrett said, is to show "that in the believers' church heritage there exists an apprehension of the nature of the church which is specific and coherent, a theologically-valid option and a needed contribution to the ecumenical debate."

The idea of the conference was first discussed in Holland in 1964, but the project failed to then materialize. American Mennonite leaders later proposed the 1967 symposium and asked Garrett to serve as coordinator.

Attending the conference were observers from the ecumenical departments of the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in America, and the Roman Catholic Bishop's Commission.