

June 13, 1968

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND THE RACE PROBLEM
(Fifth in a series)

What Do Negroes Want?

By Edward A. McDowell
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One of the ironies of American history is that Negroes whose ancestors came to this country in early colonial days have been compelled to fight for rights that were granted to newcomers shortly after they arrived. Negroes have stood by as second class citizens and watched great crowds of Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Jews, Irish, Chinese, Japanese, and other immigrants join the ranks of American citizens with full protection of our Constitution and laws.

Yet another irony is that they have seen some of these same newcomers from other lands join the ranks of the Negro-haters! Even some who were persecuted in other lands have found it convenient and politic to join the chorus of the persecutors.

Once years ago when I was a young pastor speaking to a group of Negro ministers I thought it would be well to remind my hearers that as a sort of balance for the valid claims for justice the Negro had, he should be happy to be in America instead of in Africa. When I had finished my talk one of the Negro ministers arose and in very good spirit reminded me that the Negro helped build America. With his hands, the brother went on to say, the Negro helped clear the forests, break new ground, build railways, dig canals, construct highways, and perform many other tasks that were essential to the development of a new nation. The speaker declared that the Negro considered America his country and loved it as any man loves his native land.

I have never forgotten what my Negro minister friend taught me that day, and that is that the great majority of American Negroes love their country and want from white America only to be accepted as first class citizens with the same rights and privileges that all other citizens have under the Constitution and laws of the United States.

In ways that are often colored with pathos, the Negro has expressed his love for what white America has done for him, in spite of the injustice he has experienced. I visited a Negro Presbyterian church in Roanoke, Va., one day in company with a son of the honored pastor, Dr. Downing. I saw a beautiful memorial window that arrested my attention and almost startled me, for it was a memorial to General Stonewall Jackson. There was the General's tent, there was the river, and there were the famous words, "Let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees."

"How is this," I asked, "that your father placed a memorial in his church to Stonewall Jackson?" I realized that this was no ordinary thing for a Negro to do, since if the Confederacy had won, Negroes in the South would have remained in slavery. The son of the man who was responsible for that beautiful memorial window explained to me that his father, as a boy, was a member of the Sunday School class of Negroes that Stonewall Jackson taught at Lexington, Va., before he went off to war. The memorial window was an expression of his father's gratitude for what General Jackson had taught him and done for him.

What a beautiful expression of Christian love is this memorial window! How eloquently it testifies to the Christian spirit and patience of so many Negro Americans who have loved us and America in spite of the injustice we have inflicted upon them!

What is it the Negro wants? He wants above everything else to be accepted for what he is: a person. He is weary of being treated as an inferior being who must pay a penalty for something over which he had no control: being born with a black skin. As a person he desires to be able to move freely from place to place, as other persons move without hindrance, and to share, as do other persons, in all the privileges of a free society.

The Negro wants the freedom and benefits that all other Americans claim under the Constitution and laws of the United States. He can read the Constitution and he knows that the 14th Amendment says that no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." He also knows that the 15th Amendment provides that "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

The Negro wants to be freed from confinement to ghettos and slums, and he wants the same opportunities for employment that all other citizens have.

The great majority of Negro Americans believe in American democracy. They know it is on trial before the world, and they want it to succeed.

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SOUTHERN BAPTISTS AND THE RACE PROBLEM (Sixth in a Series)

How Laymen Can Help in Solving The Race Problem

By Edward A. McDowell
Professor Emeritus, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

The minister is key man in improving race relations in the South, but he must have the support and co-operation of his laymen if he is to accomplish much that is worthwhile.

Unfortunately, in some churches laymen have been so un-Christian as to oust pastors who stood with Jesus on the race issue. We cannot help but wonder what these laymen will hear from the great Judge when they stand before him at the last day.

Unfortunately, too, some pastors are afraid of their laymen. I believe that it is possible for pastors to show a good deal more courage than many of them have shown in speaking out on the race question, and at the same time retain their pastorates. Many laymen are manly enough to admire a pastor's courage and respect him for disagreeing with them. Others talk much but quail before a show of courage. Yet others are vindictive, we must admit, and determine to get rid of a pastor who takes a forthright stand on the race question.

But the number of laymen who are willing to be more Christian on race is growing. These laymen are the hope of Southern churches in their efforts to make a contribution to the solution of the race problem.

How can laymen (and laywomen) help in solving the race problem?

The first responsibility of a layman is to get right himself on the race question. This may require what might be called a second conversion. But there is good precedent for this. It took a second conversion to convince Simon Peter that Gentiles could become Christians without taking on the yoke of the Jewish law. See what he said, as is reported in Acts 10:34: "Of truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." What Peter learned, according to the Greek, was that God was no prosopolempetes, which means "face receiver".

Peter got hold of a truth that for a Jew was revolutionary: God plays no favorites; the faces of men are all the same to him. Translated into modern, everyday language, God is color blind. It was this revolutionary truth that enabled the gospel to make such great headway in the Gentile world.

Our Baptist laymen, through their Brotherhood and other men's organizations, and our laywomen, through their missionary societies, express great interest in world missions. This is good, and worthy to be praised, but they should know that racial prejudice, and unfortunate racial incidents at home greatly embarrass our missionaries in their work in foreign lands. It is inconsistent, and even hypocritical, to send missionaries to Africa and discriminate against Negroes at home.

The layman who seeks to help in solving the race problem can learn to practice Christian brotherhood by crossing the racial line to become a friend to one or more Negroes. To do this requires giving up the old patronizing pattern and accepting Negroes as equals.

Try having a Negro friend out to lunch with you, or having him attend a baseball game with you. Invite him to your home and church. If he invites you to his home, accept his invitation. Visit his church and see how he worships. Pray with him.

The layman who is concerned about the race problem can be a good employer and treat Negroes fairly, if they are his employees. He can also make a contribution by learning how Negroes in his community live. He can speak out for better housing for Negroes and for just treatment for them in their use of parks and all public facilities.

An important contribution the layman can make toward solving the race problem is to vote for men for public office who think right and themselves vote right on the race question. Up to now most of our Southern politicians have followed the traditional line on the race issue. But times are changing. More and more Negroes are voting, and the Negro vote is becoming more important. As this development grows voters in the South will have a wider choice between politicians who believe in justice for Negroes and those who cling to the old philosophy of discrimination.

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If a layman wishes to become an intelligent contributor to the solution of the race problem he will learn from history and good books all he can about the history of the Negro in America, and he will read the biographies of some great Negro Americans.

He will teach his children these things and especially encourage them to accept as friends their Negro public schoolmates.

A layman who follows these suggestions may receive criticism, but he will find a new joy in living a true Christian life liberated from old fears and prejudice, and inspired in a new and powerful way by God's Holy Spirit.

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Contractor, Investor Named
To Lead SBC Foundation

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Stirton Oman, Nashville, an internationally known industrial contractor, was elected chairman of the executive committee of the Southern Baptist Foundation in a meeting here.

Elected president of the board of directors was Walton H. Smith, investor, Clarksville, Tennessee.

Both men succeeded L. B. Stevens, an investor from Nashville, who had held both offices.

Kendall Berry of Nashville, executive secretary-treasurer, reported the Foundation's trust corpus for the last fiscal year at \$9,121,101. This was up from \$8,614,788 the previous year.

Berry stated that income collections and disbursements to Southern Baptist causes last year amounted to \$318,352, with the Foundation's general fund showing an average rate of return of 5.42 per cent.

A return of 5.80 per cent was realized on the Foundation's annuity fund, he said. This allowed all commitments to annuitants to be met, with an income balance in excess of \$3,000.

Named to the Foundation's executive committee in addition to Oman and Smith were John Ellis, G. Frank Cole, John P. Gifford, Jack C. Massey, Steve Neely and Richard N. Owen, all of Nashville; Joe F. Rushton of Magnolia, Ark.; Guy W. Rutland, Jr., Atlanta; and Douglas Hudgins, Jackson, Miss.

The executive committee conducts the business of the Foundation and meets monthly in the Foundation office at 460 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville.

The board of directors is made up of forty business men and ministers from over the Southern Baptist Convention, representing the SBC agencies and the denomination at large.

New members elected by the Southern Baptist Convention at its Houston meeting in early June were Herman W. Cobb, Jr., Gadsden, Ala.; Ray Cullen of California; R. Paul Henry, Tulsa, Okla.; Louis L. Jones, Jr. of Georgia; Dotson M. Nelson, Jr., Birmingham, Ala.; James Riley, Houston, Texas; Finley Tinnin, Oklahoma City; F. Howard Walsh, Fort Worth; Fred D. Wright, Nashville; and Earl Wood of Virginia.

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