



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2855
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

REGIONAL OFFICES

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor, 161 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30303, Telephone (404) 523-2593
DALLAS Billy Keith, 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

September 18, 1968

**SBC Leaders Discuss Progress
In Race Statement Actions**

NASHVILLE (BP)--During two separate meetings here, Southern Baptist Convention leaders discussed for nearly six hours the progress Baptists have made in race relations and in implementing a statement on "The Crisis In Our Nation" adopted by the convention in June.

The basic conclusion of the discussion seemed to be summed up with the phrase, "We've done a lot more than probably most people think, but we've got a long way to go."

Much of the two meetings was devoted to listing things that SBC agencies, state conventions and local churches have done or are planning in the area of race relations.

"We've told it like we'd like to see it, but when we tell it like it is, it may not be quite as optimistic," observed Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Treasurer Porter Routh at the close of the session attended by SBC agency representatives.

Routh said that a surprisingly small number of negative responses criticizing the statement on "The Crisis In Our Nation" adopted by the SBC had come to the convention office here.

The convention-approved statement declared, among other things, commitment to obtain equal human and legal rights for all people, refusal to be a part of racism, and acceptance of every Christian, regardless of race, as a brother welcome in church fellowship.

The statement further called upon individuals, churches, associations and Baptist state conventions to join the SBC "in a renewal of Christian effort to meet the national crisis," and asked the SBC Home Mission Board to take the lead in implementing the statement.

At both the meeting of SBC agency representatives convened by the Home Mission Board, and the annual Southern Baptist Communications Conference here the following day, state and national leaders of the SBC itemized ways Baptists are seeking to implement the statement.

The list ranged from trying to obtain jobs for poverty-stricken Negroes in Louisville, to trying to hold integrated teas for white and Negro Baptist ladies in Alabama.

The actions included such things as pulpit exchanges of white and Negro churches, communication dialogues between black militants and white Southern Baptists, courses at Baptist seminaries on Southern Baptists' unique responsibilities in race relations, integration of Baptist institutions, conferences dealing with the urban crisis, dept studies on the problems involved, examples of churches ministering to, and involving, all races, new curriculum material, poverty programs, etc.

In a summary address to the Communications Conference, Baptist Program Managing Editor Leonard Hill said that more things have been done than could be listed in the time available, but "the list of things left undone would admittedly be much longer."

"It is not accurate to say Southern Baptists have done nothing to meet the problems of the national urban crisis, but neither can it be said that such actions are new in SBC history," Hill said.

He added that while some reports from the Houston convention claimed the convention was starting a new social action program, "social action" is not new for Southern Baptists, who have been engaging in "social action" since the convention started in 1845.

"Some Baptists fear that the increased emphasis on social action would dilute the denomination's emphasis on evangelism," Hill reported, "but this is not the case. The channel of evangelism is in its truest sense being deepened in order that ships of mercy carrying cargoes of spiritual ministries can move quickly to meet the needs of people."

Much of the time in the meeting of SBC agency representatives was devoted to discussing Southern Baptist attitudes that must be changed before actions can be meaningful.

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"If we don't have the right attitude, we might take the wrong action," said Victor Glass of Atlanta, director of work with National Baptists for the SBC Home Mission Board. "Some times in the past the SBC would have been better off not to have taken any action because we had the wrong attitude."

W. Barry Garrett, associate director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said Baptists must overcome an attitude of paternalism toward the Negro. Often, he observed, "it is such a subconscious thing that we aren't even aware of it, and it may be why we aren't accepted by them."

"Too often our motive is wrong," commented Loyd Corder of the Home Mission Board, "for we want to help people in need because we need to do it to satisfy our guilt complex, and not because they need help."

Glass called upon Southern Baptists to work on the problem of white racism among church members, saying it isn't really a Negro problem, it is a white problem.

The president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Duke K. McCall, agreed that this has an element of truth, but it is not all the truth. "There is both a black problem and a white problem," he said.

McCall warned against being trapped into a "kind of white masochism" that is popular among some Christians who say the problem is all the fault of white racists.

A pastor from Dothan, Ala., and Home Mission Board director, Harper Shannon, said the problem is complicated by a tremendous communications gap between SBC leadership and vast numbers of Southern Baptist people who still have a long way to go in overcoming culture.

One of the attitudes Southern Baptists need to develop is an attitude of patience, observed Foy Valentine of Nashville, executive secretary of the SBC Christian Life Commission. "The sort of action and social change we are talking about is slow in coming. We can't pull off any miracles in three months or three years."

The discussion at the Communications Conference closed with a statement by Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, who said that the convention action in June had greatly strengthened the work of Baptist missionaries in 68 countries, and that the influence of the statement was much broader than the Southern Baptist Convention alone.

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Baptist Leaders Warned Of Church Bond Frauds

(9-18-68)

NASHVILLE (BP)--An official of the Securities and Exchange Commission, speaking to the annual Southern Baptist Communications Conference here, warned top state and national Baptist leaders of fraudulent church bond schemes that have swept the south in the past year.

Richard M. Hewitt, senior trial attorney for the Southwest office of the Securities and Exchange Commission in Fort Worth, issued a plea for Baptists to provide some kind of counseling service for churches and individuals to help them avoid the pitfalls of church bond frauds.

"There are many, many excellent church bond programs," Hewitt added however, "But as a trial attorney for the SEC I only deal with the bad ones." He observed that the number of bad ones has been on the increase during the past 15 months.

Citing numerous examples, the SEC attorney said that hundreds of individuals are being swindled out of their life savings. He specifically mentioned the case of a widow with four children from Houston who invested her savings, \$50,000, in five church bond issues, four of which have defaulted and the fifth is going under; plus a widow in Henderson, Tex., who invested her life savings in church bonds, with the interest to pay her nursing home expenses. When the church defaulted, she had to leave the nursing home with no money to pay.

"We're dealing with fraud," Hewitt declared. He defined fraud for the Baptist leaders as "the violation of two of the 10 Commandments--stealing by lying."

Asking why the SEC is encountering fraud in the sale of church bonds, Hewitt answered: "It's because you have instances of unscrupulous ministers, contractors, promoters, and investors taking advantage of unknowing people, who have little experience in finances."

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He cited several reasons for the attractiveness of church bonds, including the high rate of interest return, coupled with the fact that most people are told they'll be doing the "work of the Lord" by investing in church bonds.

The SEC official said that church bond problems especially hit denominations which emphasize independence of the local church, especially Southern Baptists, the Baptist Fundamentalist Bible churches, and the Churches of Christ. "As a Methodist, I've always said the independence of Southern Baptists congregations was both a blessing and a curse," he observed.

Hewitt urged Baptists, working through their present structure, to work out some way to counsel churches considering bond programs so they wouldn't get stuck with a bad one. He suggested the idea of a committee of a banker, attorney or Certified Public Accountant to serve a local or regional association of Baptist churches with such a counseling service.

He strongly urged Baptist seminaries to offer courses in church finance to train ministers how to cope with the problems they will face. "Ministers are often taken advantage of because they have an inadequate understanding of church finance," he said.

For individual investors in church bonds, he suggested: (1) don't buy church bonds without knowing what you're buying, (2) demand sufficient financial information, (3) beware of guarantees, and (4) beware of church guarantees to buy back bonds before they mature.

Saying, "I haven't seen an ironclad guarantee yet," Hewitt cited the example of a church with \$18,000 a year income with \$350,000 in church bonds and a sinking fund requirement of \$15,000, that was "guaranteed" by the local Baptist association. Yet the association had no plan for backing the bonds if they defaulted, and assets of only \$15,000.

Hewitt prefaced his remarks by saying, "I come bearing an Olive branch from the SEC." He pointed out that the SEC would not tell Baptists how to run their business. But the SEC is concerned about the problem affecting Baptists, and wants to do anything it can to solve the problem, he said.

Hewitt expressed hope that the churches, and the church bond industry itself, would solve the problem rather than for Congress to consider legislation to police the church bond industry.

Earlier, Bob Kilgore, director of the church loans division for the SBC Home Mission Board, told the Communications Conference, that he felt the SEC was asking six major questions of Southern Baptists. Kilgore has held lengthy conferences with SEC leaders over the problem.

The questions concerning both Baptists and the SEC are, Kilgore said: (1) Is the SBC doing anything about the problem, (2) what will be the posture of the SBC if the SEC takes action against SBC churches and pastors, (3) how can the SBC help the SEC tell its story, (4) how can the SEC help the SBC tell its story, (5) can the SEC give counsel to the SBC about actions contemplated towards Baptists, and (6) What will happen if the SEC is forced to ask Congress for legislation to police the church bond industry?

Kilgore said he had received six letters last month from people asking what could be done to recover money lost in church bond frauds, including one letter from an elderly lady who lost her life savings, is unable to work, and now is on welfare.

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Ritchie Brothers
Indicted for Fraud

(9-18-68)

ABILENE, Tex. (BP)--A federal grand jury here has indicted two Fort Worth, Tex., Baptist pastors on charges they helped swindle 22 churches across the eastern half of the United States of about \$5 million in 1965.

The 13-count indictment accused Homer G. and Omer H. Ritchie, pastors of the controversial First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, of mail fraud, conspiracy, fraud in the sale of church bonds, and interstate transportation of fraudulently obtained bonds. Eleven other persons were also included in the indictment.

An assistant United States attorney said the case represented at least eight months of work by federal postal inspectors.

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He said 21 churches from Texas to New York and Michigan to Florida issued building bonds expecting to be purchased by insurance companies. Few of the churches received any monies and only a total of \$180,000 in construction work was ever completed on the proposed buildings.

Both the Ritchies are spiritual heirs of the late J. Frank Norris, who disassociated himself from the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1930's and formed his own association of churches. None of the other churches involved were affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

After posting \$1,000 bond the brothers maintained their innocence of any wrongdoing.

Homer Ritchie told newsmen he planned to "make the people aware" of circumstances surrounding the indictment.

Speaking of the members of the 5,000-member church, Ritchie said, "The people are 100 per cent behind us."

He added, "I plan to give a sermon Sunday on the salvation of men's souls in bringing them to Jesus Christ--that's our mission."

During his Sunday morning message to the congregation Ritchie called for prayer for the grand jury that returned the fraud indictment.

"Omer and I are completely innocent...The facts have been treated out of context," he told the church members.

Later the church unanimously pledged their "love and devotion, full support and assistance" to the preaching twin brothers.

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SBC Executive Committee Hears Plea For Unity From Criswell

NASHVILLE (BP)--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention, W. A. Criswell of Dallas, issued a plea for unity within the 11-million member denomination during an address to the SBC Executive Committee here.

"It would be tragic if we faced the challenge of this hour and time and were not together, Criswell told the 59-member Baptist group here.

He observed that he did not feel the Southern Baptist Convention was going to split, "but we can fray mighty easily....This is not the time to fray and fall into divisiveness and division."

During another session of the committee, an Alabama Baptist pastor warned against repercussions in Baptist churches concerning a trend he observed in the SBC toward emphasizing social and political issues.

"We call upon the leaders and agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention to lead us away from social and political involvements which deteriorate our strength and vigorously lead us to a recommitment of proclaiming the gospel to all men through evangelism and missions," said Sam Granade, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Evergreen, Ala.

Granade submitted a written "statement of concern", but no action was taken by the Executive Committee, and it met with almost no discussion from the floor.

Granade did not request the Executive Committee to approve his statement, but said his church had adopted it and that he was thinking about presenting it to the Alabama Baptist Convention next November and to the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Alabama pastor said he was concerned that convention leadership was "leaving our people behind," and that some Baptists interpreted the adoption of a statement on "The Crisis in Our Nation" by the SBC last June as a "mandate to move full speed ahead" in social action.

He observed that great numbers of Southern Baptists would not stand for this, and would cease to give financial support to missions through the Cooperative Program. "If the present trend continues, we will see that what has been 125 years in the making has been fragmented."

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In his address to the Executive Committee, Criswell said that some Baptist pastors and church members were going through "deep and troubled waters" at this time, but he issued a call for unity within the denomination.

Criswell offered five basic truths and commitments that "if we accept will enable us to stay together and work together" despite differences within the denomination.

The five, briefly summarized, were: (1) love for the Lord, (2) love for the lost, (3) love for the Bible, (4) love for the Brotherhood and for all humanity, and (5) love for right and moral rectitude.

Speaking with emotion, Criswell told the Executive Committee he had experienced a "battle in my heart" over the point of loving all mankind within the past several years. "Nobody in this earth knew that was going on in my soul, but I came to the firm conclusion that I had to change, and I've never been so blessed as I have been these last several years."

"Can't we agree on that---we shall love all men?" Criswell asked with emotion. "We are to love all mankind, and are to call no man common or unclean. Oh, I wish our whole Baptist denomination were like that," he pleaded.

Earlier during the Executive Committee session, Arthur B. Rutledge, executive secretary of the SBC Home Mission Board, brought a report on the Crusade of the Americas, and implementation of the statement on "The Crisis In Our Nation" which had been assigned by the SBC to the board.

Rutledge listed the three purposes of the Crusade of the Americas as being spiritual renewal, witnessing, and building a foundation for the true moral and spiritual issues facing society.

The third objective is binding expression in the response to the statement on "The Crisis in the Nation" adopted by the convention, Rutledge said. "It is most fortunate that when we are trying to face up to the crisis in the nation, we are in the midst of the greatest evangelistic effort we've ever undertaken."

The Executive Committee paid tribute to two Baptist leaders who died recently---J. B. Lawrence, former executive secretary of the SBC Home Mission Board, and Chester Quarles, executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Resolutions in memorial for the two Baptist leaders, plus addresses by Baptist leaders who knew them well, paid tribute to Dr. Lawrence and Dr. Quarles. Another resolution commended the work of Richard N. Owen on his retirement after 18 years as editor of the Baptist and Reflector, state Baptist paper in Tennessee.

In major actions, the 59-member committee approved a plan and procedure for a study of Baptist radio and television ministries at the request of the convention, asking the program sub-committee of the Executive Committee to make the study.

The Radio and Television Commission was authorized to solicit funds from viewers and listeners of radio and TV programs who first write to the commission, but it was pointed out that solicitation of churches and pastors was a violation of the SBC business and financial plan.

Loan requests were approved for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo and the SBC Brotherhood Commission, Memphis, and expansion of the SBC Building in Nashville by roofing and finishing a part of the third floor was approved to provide more space for the SBC Christian Life Commission and for meeting rooms.

The committee also approved a recommendation that a cooperative film be produced by participating SBC agencies as part of the 125th anniversary of the SBC for presentation to the 1970 convention in Denver. The Denver Hilton was approved as the headquarters hotel for the 1970 meeting.

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CORRECTION

On BP story dated 9-12-68, headlined "Lottie Mo n Million Goal Set at \$15 Million In '68," please change figure in headline and in graph one of st ry from \$15 million to \$15½ million.

--Baptist Press



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*460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

DAVIS C. WOOLLEY 60
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 NINTH AVE. N.
NASHVILLE, TENN. 37203

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