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CAN MORALS BE LEGISLATED?

By Daniel R. Grant

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One of the oldest myths in the rhetoric of opposition speeches against governmental action in the field of race relations is that "you can't legislate morals."

There are many variations of this myth, such as "forced integration will do more harm than good," and "racial discrimination is a problem of the heart, not of law." All of these have a strong appeal but are only half-truths at best, for the law is strongly related to morals.

Many laws change behavior patterns which ultimately change the morals of the community, particularly of the younger age groups.

Some of those who have argued most strongly against civil rights legislation because it will not change the hearts of men, have been leading spokesmen for legislation to prohibit sale of alcoholic beverages, gambling, narcotics, and pornographic literature. In all fairness, it should be pointed out that "liberals" opposing legislation against liquor, gambling, or obscene material because "you can't legislate morals" are usually in the forefront of those fighting for civil rights legislation.

Both groups are wrong half of the time, for laws can and often do change the morality of a community or a nation.

Some of the most ridiculous and degrading of our old segregation laws, such as those requiring Negroes and whites to drink from separate water fountains and to use separate waiting rooms in transportation terminals, had the effect of strengthening the segregationist morality of the South. The laws simply had to be changed to make real progress in changing the "hearts" of many white people.

The attitude of white Southerners toward the refusal of restaurants and hotels to serve Negro customers is a case in point. Although it may have bothered the conscience of a minority of white Southerners for such service to be refused, there was always the easy answer that segregation is required by law and that discrimination, if immoral, is the fault of the system and not of any particular individual.

Thus we had a perfect arrangement of reciprocal buck-passing. The individual did not change his behavior because of the legal and social system, and it was argued that the system could not be changed without first changing the individual.

The simple truth is that political action is important in changing race relations and attitudes. If Congress had not passed legislation requiring public accommodations to be open to all persons without regard to race, we might have perpetuated the myth for several more decades that it was an economic impossibility for Southern restaurants, hotels, and motels to serve Negro customers.

It is true that we were making some limited progress without such legislation, but we were moving with the speed of a glacier. If we had waited for a change in the hearts of men on this point, who knows how many more decades this grievous injustice to Negroes would have persisted?

It is not my intention to claim too much for what can be accomplished by political action and changes in the law. Obviously, popular support is essential in a democracy to secure long-term compliance with law.

We are in a period of history, however, when a national majority has favored an end to compulsory segregation practiced in one geographic section of the nation. In such a situation few would claim that changing the law will accomplish more than perhaps one-half of the desired result. But changing the law has been a necessary point of beginning.

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**Professor Urges SBC Leaders:
Accept Opponents As Christians**

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists must come to the point that they will respect those who disagree with them on social issues as their fellow Christians, rather than "breaking down into bloodletting," a Baptist seminary professor said here.

Clyde Fant, professor of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, told the Southern Baptist Convention Communication Conference that Baptists must never doubt that both liberals and conservatives can be Christians.

"The truth is that a man who is a conservative is just as much a Christian as a liberal, and a liberal is just as much a Christian as a conservative---he just takes another side," Fant said.

The seminary professor said Baptists must be willing to accept a "multiplicity of views" with many shades of degrees and differences within the 11 million-member denomination. "We must stop thinking that everyone who disagrees with us is wicked," he declared.

He said that there are Southern Baptists who feel that all social action is "Communist inspired" and others who feel that the doors of the churches ought to be nailed up and Christians should go out into the streets and "bring in the kingdom." The tendency is for those with one point of view to feel the others are not Christians.

Baptists must avoid falling into the trap of classifying their Christian brothers into the "good guys" and "bad guys" categories, Fant said.

He called for Baptists to be peacemakers, but also warned against the tendency of some ministers and laymen to seek to be amiable, never wanting to be caught between two opposing viewpoints. "The only time they ever deal with controversial issues is when the issue is already settled," said Fant of some ministers.

The professor further warned that there are still "head-hunters within the church who spend their time ferreting out those with whom they disagree."

He observed that the tension comes not when Christians seek to minister to the world, but in trying to communicate within the church. "Not many people have had their heads chopped off by the world because they ministered to it, but rather by the church because some didn't understand."

"The social gospel has been soundly damned from pillar to post," he observed, "but you cannot preach that you want a Christian America and not touch social issues. He said that the Southern Baptist Convention has always been concerned with social issues, even from its beginning.

In 1845 at the first convention, a statement upholding slavery was adopted, and it was a statement dealing with social issues. "To defend slavery is as much a social involvement as to attack it," Fant said. "The only difference is in conclusion, not whether the gospel should be applied to social issues, You might even say we were born out of social concern."

"We must recognize that when pastors or Christian workers fight the federal government, support a conservative presidential candidate from the pulpit, advocate prayer in schools, oppose the Supreme Court as Communistic, or advocate movie censorship or liquor legislation as Christian endeavors, they are becoming involved in social action," he observed.

"To be involved on one side of the social issue would not exonerate a Christian from the charge of 'social gospel' any more than opposing the other side," he said.

"We must be able to admit our different points of view on social issues, and love each other, and go forward together as the gospel might invade all of society in Jesus' name," Fant concluded.

Five New Mission Action
Guides Slated For Churches

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Writing teams met five new mission action guides to be produced by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union in July, 1969 during a meeting at the WMU offices here.

The materials will focus on witnessing and ministering with Negroes, ministering in resort areas, ministering to the aging, to the military and to "headliners."

Nine mission action guides are already being used by Southern Baptist churches to reach persons whose special needs or circumstances separate them from the usual church outreach. These guides deal with internationals, the sick, juvenile delinquents, language groups, the economic disadvantaged, nonreaders, prisoners, and combating moral problems.

Focal point of the mission action guides for working with the Negroes will be building relationships and racial understanding to establishing a base for joint action.

Writer for the team is Jerry Chance, a former Southern Baptist pastor who is on the faculty and chaplain of Baptist students at Florida A & M University, Tallahassee, a predominantly Negro school. Chance said the team hopes the guide will be a positive contribution to meeting the national racial crisis.

"In the spirit of love and redemptiveness we hope it will speak the truth about seeing ourselves before we minister," he said during the writer's conference. "Southern Baptists must do a great deal of house cleaning before we can minister effectively. We do not want this to be a patronizing ministry."

Three national Baptists served on the writing team. They were F. Leon Whitney, Detroit, Mich., W. H. Goatley of the Baptist Fellowship Center in Louisville, Ky., and John Cross, Alabama State College in Montgomery and former pastor of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

The "headliners" guide is based on a ministry devised by Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, Tex. Mrs. Buckner Fanning, pastor's wife who helped initiate the unique ministry three years ago explained that church members respond to the needs of people who make the news each day. She will be writer for the guide. These persons include victims of accidents, national disaster, family crises and other sudden situations as well as with those with continuing problems.

The Trinity "headliners" ministry has touched famous people and unknown she explained. Experiences of the San Antonio church as well as other churches who have picked up the "headliners" idea of ministry will be incorporated in the WMU-Brotherhood guide.

Willis Bennett, associate professor of Christian ethics for the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, will write the guide to ministering in resort areas. "The question is whether we'll minister to the increased number of persons in resorts not whether we'll close down the resorts," Bennett said.

A former Air Force chaplain who is now a Southern Baptist pastor is writer for the team dealing with the military. Donald Whitehouse, pastor of the Shawnee Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., will incorporate into the guide suggestions for reaching both men and women before, during and after military service.

The ministry to aging persons needs much flexibility, writer of the guide in that area pointed out. Miss Pat Thompson, psychiatric social worker at the Muscle Shoals Mental Hospital in Alabama said that one of the suggestions in the guides she is writing will be to involve the aging in ministering to each other. The guide will be useful in ministries to persons who are shut in as well as to persons active in the community.

Mission action guides are used in the churches by WMU and Brotherhood groups who concentrate on meeting the needs of one group of persons. Each guide will contain a personal preparation section for mission action group members to use privately. An orientation section will build understanding of the needs of persons to be reached. Another section will include a comprehensive description of possible ministry and witnessing activities.

It will also suggest planning procedures and in-service training activities.

Crusade Rallies Draw
17,000 In Missouri

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Missouri Baptists attracted 17,000 people to two rallies aimed at inspiring concern and involvement in the Crusade of the Americas, the hemispheric-wide evangelistic campaign scheduled for 1969.

In St. Louis, more than 11,000 people packed the city auditorium to hear W. A. Criswell, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Manual Scoll, pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church (National Baptist) in Los Angeles.

Luther Dyer, evangelism secretary for Southern Baptists in the state, who helped plan the rallies, said the state was divided in half for promotion of the inspirational meetings. National Baptists and General Baptists also participated in planning and conducting the meetings.

More than 6,000 people showed up in Kansas City, Mo., the same week. Scott and C. E. Autrey, director of evangelism at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, shared the program there.

Southern Baptists also conducted evangelism clinics for associational officers the afternoon before the evening rallies, Dyer said.

Charter busses came to both metro rallies from all over the state, he said. In St. Louis, Illinois Baptists from East St. Louis, Ill. provided perhaps 1,000 of the huge audience.

"I have heard a great number of negative statements about the crusade," Dyer said. "I believe that in our state the crusade is gaining momentum and more people are becoming convinced of the desperate need for revival."

Dyer said he felt the size and the enthusiasm of the meetings composed a good testimony statewide. "We made the front page of the Kansas City Star--that's almost unheard of," he said.

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Corpus Christi University
Gets Curriculum Study Grant

(9-19-68)

CORPUS CHRISTI, Tex. (BP)--The University of Corpus Christi has been awarded a developing institutions grant of \$84,560 for curriculum development study and faculty supplement.

The grant came from the U. S. Office of Education under Title III program of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

The Baptist school was funded for a year's study with \$69,560 allocated for curriculum development and improvement, and \$15,000 designated for faculty supplement through national teaching fellowships.

The study will identify current trends in higher education, examine innovations and experiments on various campuses, analyze the present curriculum and its relation to accrediting agencies, area and denominational needs, and will recommend recommended changes, said Carl Wrotenbery, the schools library director and religion professor.

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