

**BAPTIST PRESS**

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April 2, 1969

**Racial Crisis May Be God's
Gift To Church, Nichol Says**

CHICAGO (BP)--The pastor of an integrated Southern Baptist church said here that the volatile racial crisis in the nation may prove to be "God's gift to His church."

The racial crisis is "testing our (the church's) integrity, forcing us to be theologically honest, no longer preaching what we are unwilling to practice," said John Nichol, pastor of Oakhurs Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga.

Speaking at a seminar on "The Church's Mission in the National Crisis" sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Nichol told of the Oakhurs church's struggle for integrity as it seeks to work and minister in a community changing from white to black.

Nichol said that the church made the decision to stay in the area and minister to the community on the basis of its understanding of the biblical revelation, and their identity as a part of the body of Christ.

In order to maintain its integrity, the church must be willing to risk failure in the minds of others, Nichol added.

"Nowhere is our bondage to secular standards of success more apparent than in our unwillingness to risk institutional failure in order to be faithful as the body of Christ," he said.

"The unbiblical cord of institutional success binds most of us like a leash and as a consequence, the crossway of discipleship is scarcely a live option for our churches," he said.

The Atlanta suburb pastor stated that someone has suggested Southern Baptists need to fashion its theology of failure, but what really is needed is to adopt some biblical standard by which to measure success.

"The Bible values relevancy above popularity, honesty over success, conscious over acceptability, truth over community consensus, venturesomeness over security," Nichol said. "Jesus would rather love all men than be loved by most men."

He added that there are indeed other criteria of success than buildings, budgets, and baptisms when the ministry of the church is measured by Christ's ministry rather than by cultural standards.

Nichol said that what he considered one of the greatest accomplishments of Oakhurs church would be regarded by many of his colleagues as a mark of failure.

He explained that the church decided to sell its newest building and move back into its older facilities in order to have the funds needed to continue its ministry to the people in the community.

"The real issue," he said, "is not the strength of the particular church which I pastor, but rather the weakness of our churches in general."

In some churches, "truth is constantly being sacrificed on the altar of peace and the end result is not peace at all, but an uneasy armistice.

"When we speak the truth we will expose tension and perhaps lose a measure of our acceptance with some people, but others will be challenged to a fresh commitment," Nichol said.

In another major address, Findley B. Edge, professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said he felt Southern Baptists are standing on the threshold of hope.

"To me, this is the most exciting time I have ever known in which to be a Christian and in which to be a minister of Jesus Christ," Edge said.

"True, we have a long way to go," he added. "True, the way ahead is dark and foreboding. True, the road is going to be rough. But we are moving!"

Edge said that five years ago he went through a personal "midnight of despair," and was completely discouraged about the future of the denomination. He said he felt the church was sicken to death because it had not understood what its real mission is.

He added however, that now he sees hope, even though "in my judgment, the days ahead for Southern Baptists will be days of agnony, heartache, and conflict. Forces are already present within our denomination that will sorely test the unity that has bound us together in our past history.

Edge said that opposition could be expected from both the world to which the church seeks to minister because "we have neglected and persecuted them in the past," and from within the church, and even from fellow Baptist ministers.

Southern Baptists are at a pivotal crossroads as a denomination, and at the crossroads, a cross is raised, Edge said. "It may be that we will have to get up on that cross before we can see far enough down the road to know which is the right one to travel."

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Stay In Church and Work
For Change, Grant Implores

(4-2-69)

CHICAGO (BP)--A political science professor from Vanderbilt University in Nashville declared here that those who leave the institutional church to go "where the action is" are making a serious strategic error politically.

Daniel R. Grant, a Baptist deacon, told a Southern Baptist conference on "The Church's Mission in the National Crisis" that this exodus from the local church by the socially concerned "is ultimately a self-defeating enterprise."

He lamented that many pastors, denominational workers, and college students have dropped out of the church because of their disappointment in the failure of Baptist churches to become actively involved in the battles against racial injustice, poverty, and other forms of suffering.

This exodus seems to produce change where it is needed most--"change in white attitudes, white institutions, and white power structures," Grant said. "Instead of leaving the local church we need to bring the action with us into the churches."

The political science professor said that the best way to bring about change in the power structures of Baptist churches is not to "confront the power structure," but rather to become an influential part of the power structure and bring about change from within.

Grant added that he did not feel the word "power" was either evil or immoral. "It is a neutral term that takes on morality as it is used for good or bad."

He cited nine factors or resources that govern an individual's effectiveness in influencing the church's power structure. They were: (1) access to money, (2) popularity and esteem in the eyes of others, (3) knowledge or access to knowledge, (4) availability of time to devote to the cause, (5) ability or skill, (6) experience, (7) interest, concern or commitment, (8) official position or legitimacy, and (9) the power of the vote.

Grant also offered several suggestions on how to effect or achieve change in Baptist churches.

Change is seldom achieved by proposing or arguing at a church business meeting for "an all or nothing resolution", or when the arguments are made by persons whose loyalty to, participation in, and respect for the local church is weak, non-existent, or doubtful.

He chided the "discontented liberal Baptist who leaves the downtown church to attend services at the university chapel except for the one business session when he attends and makes an eloquent plea for racial integration, and then cannot understand why he was voted down."

Grant said that some local church action for change is achieved by winning a majority vote in a business session, but most such changes are usually preceded by many earlier decision steps made or influenced by people who have become effective in the power structure.

Change is most often achieved by careful and patient involvement, even by small minorities within the church "doing their own thing" without waiting for the whole church to agree, Grant concluded.

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News Analysis:

Military Reviews Army Ban
On Religion in Character Talks

WASHINGTON (BP)--The tempest that is brewing in the Army's teapot regarding a policy to delete all passages "with religious connotations" from certain training materials may turn out to advance the cause of defining more precisely the meaning of church-state separation.

Among the ingredients in question are these:

(1) Should the Army's character guidance program, compulsory in varying amounts for every officer and enlisted person, be used for religious indoctrination?

(2) Should any program, prepared under the direction of the office of the chief of chaplains and "normally" conducted by chaplains who are ordained ministers, be compulsory for all servicemen and women?

(3) Should the chaplain be asked by his commanding officer to perform this teaching as a "military function" when his chief role is that of "spiritual adviser" to those who come to him voluntarily?

These questions began to boil recently when Congressman William G. Bray (R., Ind.) found on the shelf some year-old correspondence from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to the U. S. Army.

In a letter dated April 15, 1968 Lawrence Speiser, director of ACLU's Washington office objected to the Army's character guidance program as it is now conducted as a "prohibited establishment of religion."

Speiser's letter cited the "religious flavor" of the character guidance program in "religious references and the use of Biblical texts as a part of these lectures." He asked that the program be reviewed in light of the first amendment guarantee of freedom of religion.

The letter from ACLU was acknowledged first in a telephone call promising a review of the program. Then in December 1968 the request was taken from the back burner in a letter to Speiser from Robert E. Jordan III, General Counsel of the Department of the Army.

Jordan said that after reviewing the program, the Army was "revising all of the materials in question to eliminate passages with religious connotations."

"I think it is fair to say that the number of such references indicated clearly that inadequate attention had been given to assuring that the character guidance program is wholly secular in its approach to training our personnel on matters of duty, honor and patriotism," the letter from Jordan stated.

"Finally," the Army spokesman said, "we have again emphasized that Army chaplains, in conducting this program, are performing a military function on behalf of the command, and are not to use the program in any way as a religious training program."

He concluded: "The chaplain has an entirely proper role in dealing with the religious problems of those who come to him of their own volition for religious counseling and guidance, but it is quite important that he separate that role from the one involved in the character guidance program."

The Army's response to ACLU's request that it has eliminated "passages with religious connotations," has produced a mixture of reactions:

* The top Army chaplain in Europe, (Col.) Aloysius McElwee, said the decision is "perfectly proper and no threat to the chaplaincy." Character guidance in 1969 will be "a program of ethics--which concern everybody--rather than a program of religion. The chaplain should not use this hour to encourage church attendance or anything else of a religious nature."

* George Cummins of the Chaplains Commission of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board agreed that the chaplain is not assigned to conduct character guidance programs primarily for religious purposes, but for "moral leadership." Even so, he said, the chaplain has the right to bring in the relation of religions to moral principles, but not "to preach a sermon."

Cummins also told Baptist Press that the policy is "nothing new." He pointed out that the chaplain, as the program was originally designed, was only one of a team of persons giving the lectures.

* Former Chaplain A. Ray Appelquist, now executive secretary of the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel, praised the program as serving a useful purpose. "But it runs into some sensitivity when occasionally a chaplain will bring his own theological point of view in support of ethics and basic morality," he said.

* Larry Fitzgerald, another staff member of the Chaplains Commission, a civilian agency of 35 denominations, said the chaplains have a tendency to preach and "for a long while have been instructed not to preach."

* The president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Sterling W. Brown, said he considered the Army directive to be constitutionally sound and in line with the democratic principle of religious freedom. "The prestige and other resources of the government should not be used for sectarian purposes or for atheism, for that matter," Brown declared.

* C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, pointed out that the programs have been consistently announced as part of the trainee's preparation for his military duties. "Constitutionally, therefore, these stand on the government's war powers, and not on the military man's right to 'free exercise of his religion.'"

"How much the chaplains have confused these two distinct roles, I do not know," Carlson continued. He said a study would have to be made of the manuals and a lot of lectures would have to be analyzed to determine the extent. "However Carlson said, the counsel's statement seems to admit that there was considerable coerced religious exposure."

The upshot of the Army's announcement and the discussion both in congress and elsewhere have caused Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird to order a high-level Pentagon review of the entire program and the Army's announced intention to eliminate references to God and religious philosophy from the character guidance program.

Laird has ordered the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and the Pentagon's General Counsel to review the situation "since this is a matter which affects all the services."

The Army orders to the chaplains to stop referring to God and religious philosophy in the character lectures have not been sent out. An Army spokesman has said that the new policy will not be implemented until the Pentagon review is finished.



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