



May 8, 1969

PROBLEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
(Another in a series)

RACE AND THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

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The nature of the church creates for it some very real problems and yet some tremendous potentialities in the area of race. The church is a divine-human institution.

Its human nature is evident in the fact that it cannot help but be influenced by its environment. It is always located in a human situation. It cannot totally ignore or detach itself completely from its culture. To do so would mean that it would not be able to minister effectively to the culture.

Also, the church is a human institution in the sense that it is composed of men and women. Those men and women are immature and imperfect. If the church is to minister effectively to them, it must begin where they are and seek to lead them to where they ought to be. This is just as true in the area of race as anywhere else.

It is most unfortunate, however, if any church fails to recognize and to respond to its divine nature. It ministers to men and women in a particular cultural situation, but it ministers to them in the name of the Lord. It gets its commission from the Lord. Its basic purpose is to promote the cause of Christ or the kingdom of God among men.

Also, the message that the church teaches in the classroom and preaches from the pulpit is of divine origin. It is the word of God addressed to men. How unfortunate if that message on race or on any other issue is trimmed or toned down to fit the particular human situation.

As a result of its divine-human nature there tends to be a continuing tension within the church. If that tension is not there, then the dual nature of the church is not being kept in proper focus. This tension in recent years in many churches has been more evident regarding race relations than in any other area. It should be remembered that there is no real hope for the movement of the church toward God's ideal for it without such tension.

There is a continuing temptation to excuse the church's limitations or imperfections on the basis of its human nature. For example, many people excuse the clear violation by many churches of the Christian spirit in the area of human relations in general and race relations in particular. The claim is made that the churches cannot do otherwise or they will lose the opportunity to minister to the spiritual needs of people.

But what about the divine nature of the church? Can any church properly claim to be the "church of God" or claim to have Christ as its head and yet fail not only to proclaim the word of God on human relations but also to practice that word in its own fellowship?

It may not greatly damage the church and the cause of Christ if a church considers it impossible for it to "go all the way" in the area of race relations at a particular place and at a particular time.

It will do irreparable harm, however, to the church and to the cause for a church to contend that its very imperfect expression of its divine nature is God's ultimate will for the church in the area of race.

There is no hope for advance toward God's ideal for our churches unless there is maintained a constant tension between where those churches are now and where by his grace they should be.

Churches can never lift the world toward God's ideal for the world unless there is maintained a wholesome tension between what they teach, preach, and practice and what the world believes and does. There is no area in which this is more true than in the area of race.

May 8, 1969

NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY will be one of the main "tourist" attractions to messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, June 10-13. Here Helen Falls, professor of missions, teaches a class on missions. (BP) Photo courtesy Home Mission Board.

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THE PORT OF NEW ORLEANS is the scene of an unusual Baptist witness--the New Orleans Baptist Seamen's Service, directed by John Vandercook (left). Vandercook spends much of his time witnessing and ministering to sailors whose ships are docked in the port. (BP) Photo courtesy Home Mission Board.

May 8, 1969

WEEKDAY MINISTRIES abound in New Orleans churches and mission centers. Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention June 10-13 in New Orleans will have an opportunity to see a broad range of mission approaches, such as this handcraft class directed by Miss Edna Keller (standing right) at Coliseum Place Baptist Church, New Orleans. (BP) Photo courtesy Home Mission Board

May 8, 1969

NEW ORLEANS BELLES: Mrs. A. Morgan Brian, a member of the Woman's Missionary Union of the First Baptist Church of New Orleans, models the costume which ladies of the New Orleans Baptist Association will wear during the Southern Baptist W.M.U. Convention during the week of June 9-13. The costume is like those worn by the women in the middle 18th century in Acadian Louisiana, said Mr. Brian who designed the costume. (BP) Photo

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May 8, 1969

**Churches Asked to Help
Nixon's Hunger Campaign**

WASHINGTON (BP)--Churches and other community organizations will be asked by the Nixon administration to participate in the drive to fight hunger and malnutrition, according to Clifford M. Hardin, Secretary of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The appeal to private groups to help escalate the war on malnutrition among the poor came in Hardin's testimony before the Senate select committee on nutrition and related human needs. Sen. George McGovern (D., S.Dak.) is chairman of the committee.

For one thing, church groups will be on the list of those invited to participate in a White House conference on Food and Nutrition soon to be called by the President, Hardin said.

President Nixon had announced earlier his plan to bring together in such a conference executives from the food industries, labor leaders and others to advise him concerning improvement of the nutritional status of all Americans.

Hardin and Secretary Robert H. Finch of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare appeared together before the committee to detail President Nixon's recently announced plans to reform the government's food programs for the poor.

A major push in the administration's proposals will be to involve persons in the private sector in voluntary community action, a phrase used often by Nixon. Hardin told the committee that the success or failure of federal efforts to eliminate hunger depends heavily on the level of concern and action by the states and local communities.

"We are going to ask everyone active in church groups, civic groups, civil rights and business and labor organizations to support us in this drive to bring good nutrition to every child and family in this country," he stressed.

Hardin suggested that these private groups take a good look at what their state and communities are doing and "join wholeheartedly in wiping out in this land of plenty the scourge of poverty-caused hunger and malnutrition."

In what is easily the most sweeping reforms presented by any President to end hunger in the United States, President Nixon has proposed an increase of more than \$1 billion in federal food programs for 1970. This would bring the total for all the programs involved in feeding poor persons to \$2.5 billion.

Under his plans, which were received on Capitol Hill with strong bipartisan praise, free food stamps would be given to families with the lowest cash income, estimated to be about 300,000 persons. Other poor families would pay no more than 30 per cent of their income for enough stamps for an adequate diet.

In addition to cash subsidies, the President proposes expanding the program for nutrition education. From elementary to medical schools, new programs will emphasize nutrition, and more funds will be available to train persons to diagnose and treat the malnourished.

Both secretaries Finch and Hardin emphasized that the problems of malnutrition could be attacked best by reforming the welfare system and employment programs. The President and Finch have promised the welfare reforms later this year.

Finch stressed the need for cash assistance in the form of income maintenance as the best way to preserve the dignity and freedom of the individual who is in need.

The administration's proposals on hunger, eagerly received on Capitol Hill, will probably get quick action. Sen. McGovern, whose committee has led the fight for expanding the food stamp program, said he was "very deeply gratified" that the Nixon administration had faced up to the problem in such a "meaningful way."

Sen. Jacob K. Javits (R., N.Y.) called the program a "historic step." However, both Javits and McGovern said it fell far short of what is needed to feed the hungry. A billion dollars is "probably less than a third of what is needed" in the years ahead, McGovern said.

Sen. Ralph Yarborough (D. Tex.) chairman of the Senate's labor and public welfare committee, praised the administration for admitting "that there is hunger," as well as for planning to do something about it.

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5,500 Rooms Requested
For SBC In New Orleans

5/8/69

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Nearly 5,500 hotel rooms have been requested during the week of the Southern Baptist Convention here, June 10-13, the chairman of the SBC housing committee, G. Avery Lee, reported.

This does not include approximately 350 Southern Baptist missionaries who will be housed at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, relatives or friends who will be staying in the homes of New Orleans residents, or about 400 hotel rooms booked directly and not through the convention housing bureau, Lee said.

"We are pleading with the Hotel-Motel Association for rooms," said the pastor of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church. "We certainly need them, and we are hopeful," Lee added. "There are a few rooms unassigned, but all of the downtown hotels are booked solid."

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Indiana Missions Leader
Resigns To Enter Pastorate

5/8/69

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. (BP)--James H. Currin, a staff member of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana for the past six years, has resigned effective June 30 to become pastor of Northside Baptist Church, Indianapolis.

Currin also plans to do graduate study at Christian Theological Seminary, in Indianapolis.

After serving as pastor in Tennessee, Indiana, and Kentucky, he became Indiana Baptist state Sunday School secretary in 1963. Two years ago he assumed the position of state missions secretary for the Indiana convention.

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