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May 26, 1969

Churches Urged To Make
Aid To Poor Equal Assets

ATLANTA (BP)--In a challenge that made the Black Manifesto's demands for \$500 million in reparations seem weak in comparison, former-theologian Clarence Jordan dared churches to spend as much aiding the poor as they spend on themselves.

Speaking before about 500 religious journalists here at the joint meeting of the Associated Church Press and the Catholic Press Association, Jordan said:

"I would like to see churches begin immediately a crash program to invest in housing for the poor a sum equal to their assets in church buildings. We ought to spend at least as much building houses for our brothers whom we have seen as we do building houses for God whom we have not seen."

Jordan, the former Southern Baptist minister who founded and still directs the interracial efforts of Koinonia Farm near Americus, Ga., said such an investment would be only a beginning.

To keep the momentum, he suggested that churches calculate what their taxes would be were they not exempt and then continually pay that amount into a "fund for humanity" that would help produce housing and jobs for the disinherited.

The meeting marked the first time in American history for a Catholic and a Protestant organization to meet in a joint convention. Both organizations have member publications from the USA and Canada.

Other speakers included the Roman Catholic archbishops of Atlanta and New Orleans; Albert Outler, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University; and Mrs. Martin Luther King, Jr.

W. C. Fields, public relations secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and editor of The Baptist Program, presided over some of the convention sessions and addressed the 500 delegates twice. He completed at the convention a two-year term as president of the Associated Church Press.

Succeeding Fields is Kenneth L. Wilson, a Baptist who is editor of The Christian Herald. Wilson predicted that such joint conventions will be regular events within a few years.

Jordan cited several examples of "foolish extravagance on church buildings," including the case of a Georgia church that spent \$25,000 on a decorative fountain.

"That church," he said, "ought to spend a like amount to get running water for a few families."

Referring to the National Black Economic Development Conference's Black Manifesto, which demands \$500 million in reparations to Blacks from American churches, Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr. said in a keynote address:

"It was encouraging to note that some church groups resisted the impulse to evade the issue by concentrating on the provocative method of introducing the subject.

"Actually, a substantial sum of money is too little to demand of churches. Their help can be more effective if the enormous influence of their 80 million members were mobilized behind demands upon Congress."

Mrs. King, the widow of the slain civil rights leader, said the church need not face crises in the nation with helplessness.

"The church speaks directly in person to more people every week than does any other institution in our society," she said.

According to Jordan, the church's prophetic role is crippled at least in part because "its prophets too frequently are paid by the men who listen to them."

Pastors, he said, also are forced to prophesy on schedule. "These are wing-clipping devices--preachers need to be free."

Jordan, a farmer with a doctorate in New Testament Greek and translator of the cotton patch version of Paul's Epistles, told the editors that Koinonia Farm--which since 1942 has been an interracial witness in south Georgia--was moving into a new thrust that includes preaching, teaching and housing and jobs.

He and others at Koinonia Farm are speaking, writing and recording as part of the proclamation phase, he said. And schools of discipleship are scheduled periodically for small groups to study what Jordan calls "the simple demands of the gospel."

In the housing and jobs phase, Koinonia Farm has established a fund for humanity to buy land for poor rural families to farm in partnership, to establish low-overhead, rural-based industries, and to loan money for housing at no interest.

Interest is one of the major contributions to the cycle of poverty, Jordan said. Commenting on the no-interest loan phase of Koinonia's new effort called partners, Jordan said: "We're not giving anybody anything, but we're taking the foot of interest off their necks."

He told about one church that loaned a poverty-ravaged Georgia farmer \$40,000 to relieve him of an oppressive mortgage and then tacked on a charge of six percent with the comment, "we could have gotten eight percent."

"Six percent equals \$2400 to a church that doesn't need it, and that amounts to 10 semi-trailer truck loads of corn just for interest," Jordan said. "I'm going to suggest he pay interest to the church in corn."

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Christian Life Commission
Hollis To New Staff Post

5/26/69

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission has named Harry N. Hollis, Jr., of Louisville, Ky., as director of special moral concerns, effective August 1.

Hollis, 30, is instructor in Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and pastor of Finchville Baptist Church, Finchville, Ky.

Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the commission, explained that the election of Hollis fills a vacancy about which the commission has long been deeply concerned. The new staff member will deal specifically with alcohol education for Southern Baptists.

"Both of these issues will be given major attention by Dr. Hollis along with other moral concerns such as peace, gambling, drugs, pornography, and crime. He will develop practical programs to help Southern Baptist churches deal with these issues," Valentine said.

A native of Memphis, Hollis is a graduate of University of Tennessee and holds both the bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Hollis wrote his doctoral dissertation on the subject, "Toward a Christian Interpretation of Sexuality in the Context of the Church."

Hollis has pastored the Finchville church since 1961 and has been instructor at the seminary during the past school year.

In 1966, Hollis was named national finalist in the White House Fellows Program in Washington, D. C. Previously, he was elected president of the University of Tennessee Baptist Student Union (BSU) in 1958, and during the next year was elected president of the Tennessee state BSU. During 1963, he was elected president of the student body at Southern Seminary.

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Photo mailed by Christian Life Commission

CORRECTION: On BP story mailed 5-23-69, headlined "Volunteers Sought For N.D. Flood Areas," please correct name in graph 3. Should be J. T. Burdine, not John T. Burdine.

Thanks Baptist Press



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MAY 27 1969

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