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Mississippi Board Asks
Special Camille Offering

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The executive committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board voted in a called special session here to ask Mississippi Baptist churches to take a special offering on Sunday, Sept. 7, for Hurricane Camille Relief.

The recommendation adopted by the committee also asked that the convention "appeal for generous special aid from all areas of the Southern Baptist Convention" through the Home Mission Board, and convention officials who have issued such a plea.

The committee approved a recommendation of W. Douglas Hudgins, executive secretary of the convention, who told the group that estimates of unrecoverable, uninsured losses of Baptist churches in South Mississippi would range between \$1 million and \$1.2 million.

Hudgins, explaining that the greatest need of the Baptist churches there was money since most of the members lost everything they owned, added that the offering would go to help the churches and people who suffered such heavy losses.

A. L. Nelson, treasurer and business manager of the convention board, told the committee that nine days following Hurricane Camille's devastating blow, a total of \$17,391 had already been received from 26 churches and individuals.

The largest check for \$10,000 came from Calvary Baptist Church in Jackson, which pledged an additional \$15,000.

Hudgins asked that all funds be sent to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, Miss., 39205, and marked for Hurricane Relief.

Under provisions of the plan adopted by the committee, the executive committee of the board would supervise and direct the allocation and disposition of the funds in consultation with the executive committees of the Baptist associations in the affected areas.

Earlier, Southern Baptist Convention President W.A. Criswell of Dallas and SBC Executive Secretary Porter W. Routh of Nashville issued a statement suggesting that funds be sent to the Mississippi Convention office for hurricane relief.

The SBC Home Mission Board in Atlanta sent an immediate \$5,000 for emergency relief. More funds will probably come later, but the \$5,000 amount was the figure requested for immediate emergency relief by Mississippi officials.

Hudgins ironically was the person who made the proposal in 1966 that the SBC Home Mission Board create an emergency relief program for victims of natural disasters.

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Reaction To Racial Hostility
Testing SBC, Assembly Told

8/27/69

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--"The way in which Southern Baptists react to racial hostility in the next 10 years may be a far more crucial test of our commitment to Christ than the pressures brought on by integration in the past decade," a Southern Baptist leader said at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here.

"Since we failed at integration, we are now facing a whole new set of problems," said Elmer S. West Jr., of Nashville, director of program development for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"Regardless of the obvious shift from integration to Black Power with its emphasis on separatism, we dare not forget that as Christian people we are called to be ministers of God's reconciliation in Christ, above everything else," West told the annual Bible Conference at the SBC assembly.

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West observed that often "things are said from our pulpits which ought to disturb our people, but they don't because our words are unrelated to action.

"As Southern Baptists, we could remain orthodox forever if the test of orthodoxy were always by our words, not our actions," said the former North Carolina minister and former SBC Foreign Missions Board personnel secretary.

"I have a deep conviction," he stressed, "that if Jesus' words, as profound and provocative as they were, had not been authenticated by his actions we would not have the New Testament."

In another address to the same conference, West illustrated the need for putting action to words by suggesting that congregations--both black and white--could establish "companion churches" for dialogue and understanding of each other.

He listed tutoring programs, consumer education programs, better public school committees, responsible Christian citizenship and doing personal evangelism as some of the most effective methods churches would use to put action to their words.

West added that there was a need for rational and responsible work to be done in area of poverty by churches.

Dismissing the excuses made to avoid the poverty problem, West said, "To say the American poor are better off than the starving millions of Asia is a heartless thing. It is like telling a man with a painful ulcer that he is much better off than the man down the hall who has cancer."

"The true standard is not how much worse off others are but how much better off these people could be. Not survival, but fulfillment is the goal of human beings," said West.

"We know that poverty can be eliminated. Our problem is that we do not want to do it badly enough. Christian people are responsible for helping to alleviate poverty simply on the basis of being good citizens. We are much more responsible because of our Christian commitment," concluded West.

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Righteous Indignation Against
Human Misery Needed, Bland Says

8/27/69

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Christians need a rebirth of righteous indignation against those who hide behind institutionalism in their failure to minister to human needs, a Southern Baptist seminary professor said at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here.

"Southern Baptists must not allow a rigid institutionalism to keep them from meeting basic human needs," asserted Tom Bland, professor of Christian ethics at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Speaking at a conference on extremism sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Bland asked if Baptists following the example of Jesus who was often indignant with those who hide behind institutionalism and do not minister to human need.

Bland, speaking on "The Gospel and Extremism," added that some extremists have taken note that apathy too often characterizes Christians, and have written Christians off. "This ought not to be so," he declared.

"Some extremists, particularly of the leftist persuasions, have decided that Christianity has left the world's problems unattended and a mood of futility has settled upon them," he said.

"In attempting to separate God from the world, some right-wing extremists have rejected the idea of God's purposive, continuing work in creation and redemption," he added.

"These views are not Christian," Bland declared. "Christians should care about this world because it is God's world. God calls us to get busy with those very human problems of poverty, war, dehumanization, and racism."

Bland charged that all of life stands under the judgement of God, and that judgement begins at the house of God. "The axe is laid at the root of the tree of religious traditions long since divested of their vitality," he said. "Every structure stands under judgement."

"Any structure--nation, denomination, race, class, family or anything else that demands or receives ultimate loyalty of any person--is an idolatrous structure and it stands under the judgement of God," Bland concluded.

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