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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director**REGIONAL OFFICES**

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor, 1350 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Billy Keith, Editor, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) RI 1-1996

WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

BUREAUBAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203,
Telephone (615) 254-1631

September 10, 1969

Congress Told Church Moves
On Race Only When Run Over

by Walker L. Knight

MINNEAPOLIS (BP)--A prominent evangelist told the U. S. Congress on Evangelism here that with some notable exceptions, the Christian church has moved only when run over from behind in facing the racial revolution.

Leighton Ford of Charlotte, N.C., a vice president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, dealt sharply with those who would stop their evangelism at conversion, saying God wants Christians to give a preview on earth of the love and peace and justice which will mark his Kingdom.

"Too often," Ford said, "converts keep looking back to see what happens when they were converted, instead of what happens next."

Speaking on "The Church and Evangelism in the Day of Revolution," Ford said that today "revolution is fueled by a freedom drive which is surging up through the entire world in a struggle for identity, dignity, security, and equality. In America, the flash points of the freedom revolution are poverty and racism."

Ford called the controversial Black Manifesto demands "racist and Marxist," and added: "If our reaction is simply to lash back at (James) Forman and really not seek to heal the gaping, aching, rubbed-raw wounds of racial strife, then we shall deserve 'the fire next time.'"

He related this to evangelism by asking: "Why should the black man listen to us talk about our home in heaven, when we refuse to make him at home in our neighborhood and our schools?"

Ford also touched on extremism and the sexual revolution. He said that those who recast Jesus into the patron saint of ~~guerilla~~ fighters are foolish, and asked for a repudiation of coupling evangelism with a crude, sword-rattling, anti-Communism.

Seeing a close link between the sexual rebellion and political subversion, the evangelist said that there is something demonic about the current obsession with sex.

"The sex of the 60's is sick," he declared. "Four letter words have become a tool of protest. The philosophy of sex as recreation is now almost outdated; it is now sex as revolution.

"If we ignore this connection between sexual and political anarchy and go around patting all radical revolutionaries on the head as God's secret agents, then we are spiritually blind, theologically naive, and politically stupid," he stated.

Insisting that conversion is only the beginning, Ford said that Christians have "sometimes said too blithely, 'The best way to change the world is to get men converted,' This statement," he said, "has an important kernel of truth, but it can be misleading."

"Let's beware," he added, "of saying that the preaching of the Gospel will solve all of society's ills. There is no biblical word for believing that, and we know there are 'Bible belts' where the gospel is preached and people are converted, but there are built-in structures and attitudes of prejudice that change very slowly."

Ford said that this does not mean that the people in such circumstances are not converted, but it does mean that the Holy Spirit has a great deal of work to do in the hearts and minds of men after conversion.

The Congress, an outgrowth of the World Congress on Evangelism held in Berlin in 1966, attracted more than 5,000 persons. Among them were 500 Southern Baptists. In tone, the Congress seemed to be characterized by a conservative, evangelical tone.

No attempt was made to define evangelism. Each speaker presented his own interpretation. Most of the participants from the more than 95 denominations would have probably defined evangelism close to the Billy Graham terms, though many would have a broader definition.

The Congress, instead of defining evangelism, sought to create a spirit. In his opening remarks as honorary chairman and presiding officer, Graham called for "a new puritanism, and a new discipline center of our lives."

The keynote speaker and chairman of the Congress, Oswald C. J. Hoffman, a noted Lutheran leader from St. Louis, told the delegates, "we are not here to fumigate the church, but to invigorate it." There seemed to be throughout the meeting a conscious attempt to stress the positives and avoid any heavy criticism.

"We are just as concerned about the major issues of human life as anyone," Hoffman said. "When it comes to Christian unity and the desire to improve human relationships on every level, we take second place to no one," he observed.

Graham added: "We need to say to all denominations that evangelism is urgent and that all of America is a vast mission field."

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NOTE: Final wrapup will follow later.

Many Elderly Americans
Face Hunger Problems

9/10/69

WASHINGTON (BP)--Millions of elderly Americans often go hungry because they cannot stretch their meager incomes to cover the cost of medicine, rent and mortgage payments and still have money left for nutritious food, said Sen. Harrison A. Williams Jr., (D. N.J.) chairman of the senate special committee on aging here.

The nutrition problems of the elderly **poor** were discussed by Sen. Williams in testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs. The committee, headed by Sen. George McGovern (D., S. Dak.) held several days of hearings on malnutrition among the elderly.

Church facilities were among the community resources mentioned by the senator as possibilities for the development of special food services. Sen. Williams and others praised the "meals on wheels" program developed by some churches and community groups to take hot meals to elderly shut-ins.

The New Jersey Senator said that of the 20 million Americans now 65 or older, there are from six to seven million who are "too poor to buy enough food." Each year their fixed incomes must be stretched farther because of risings costs of living, he said.

As the income is stretched, the food budget "is squeezed tighter and tighter," the reports show. As a result of this, Sen. Williams said elderly poor persons are having to make "impossible choices" each day. They must choose between paying for drugs, rent, mortgage and taxes and buying nutritious food.

"Food is the expendable item," according to the testimonies of poor persons before the committee on aging, Sen. Williams said.

Since most of the elderly poor did not become poor until their old age, the use of the government's Food Stamp program creates special problems, according to the Senator.

Applying to a local welfare office for Food Stamps "is demeaning" he said. It is also "degrading and embarrassing" for persons who have been financially independent during their working years to use the stamps when they go to the grocery stores.

The present commodity program, another effort of the government to feed the poor, also has deficiencies that affect aged persons, Sen. Williams pointed out. The people have a problem carrying the heavy, bulky commodities home, even if transportation is available to the distribution centers.

Dental problems, the need for special diets and the general unattractiveness of the surplus foods offered in the commodities program add to the problem of the elderly poor getting balanced meals, he added.

One of the major reasons for poor nutrition among the aged is loneliness, the Senator said. This was echoed by Sen. Frank Church (D., Idaho) who said that loneliness and a lack of mobility were the main barriers to good nutrition among the aged.

Money alone is not **the** answer, Sen. Williams declared. He urged that new food services be developed in communities.

Among the suggestions he made were: Hot meals provided for a nominal fee at a central dining room, such as a local school or church; home-delivered hot meals; help with transportation to supermarkets and to commodity distribution depots; nutrition education; recreational activities; and friendly visiting services.

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Sen. Church praised the work of rural community action groups in Idaho which had organized what they called "pot luck dinners" and offered them twice a week to isolated elderly persons. Funded by a government grant, elderly persons are employed to do the cooking, plan the activities and provide transportation for isolated persons to come to a central place for meals.

In describing the success of the program, Sen. Church said that in addition to hot meals, the program also provided companionship and social activities, including weddings of some of the members.



SOUTHERN BAPTIST PRESS
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Nashville, Tennessee 37203
Telephone (615) 244-2667
W. C. Fields, Director
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