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Church Has Adopted "Rear View" Approach To Drugs, Speaker Says

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--The Church has been more of a "tail light" rather than a "head light" in the whole area of use and abuse of drugs, and has adopted a "rear view mirror" approach to its ministry to the drug culture, a Baptist seminary professor charged here.

Speaking at a Southern Baptist conference on the "Drug Crisis in the Church" at Glorieta Baptist Assembly, Henlee H. Barnette of Louisville, said that all too often the church stands in the midst of the drug revolution, confused and concerned.

"There is a prevalent kind of church leadership that tends to indoctrinate church members with a cocaine-type religion that makes them insensitive to the problem of drugs, or war, racism, poverty and political corruption," said Barnette, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

"The Church must kick its own addiction," he observed, "to class consciousness," and to a kind of religion "that promises 'pie in the sky when you die', and to its obsession with self-enhancement."

He added that the church must also cease its emphasis on constructing bigger buildings, enlarging the budget, increasing the membership for "its own self glory." Rather, he continued, "to minister effectively today, the Church must take the form of a servant.

"Until the Church offers a viable alternative to drug induced religion, the proponent of the psychedelic cult asserts that the Church should not knock the psychedelic scene," Barnette said.

He told the conference, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, that the church has done little to develop a theological understanding and stance toward the use of drugs, and the church has never considered the issue a major one.

"Now the church is left theologically unprepared and without a practical strategy in the midst of a drug crisis," he observed.

"If it is to speak relevantly to the problem and develop effective programs of ministry to drug abusers, the Church needs a theology of involvement for engagement in the drug culture."

The conference leader stressed that the church can immediately establish ministries for drug abusers which would involve providing a fellowship of sharing.

Small groups in the church characterized by a fellowship of sharing can help the addict to break through the chemical walls that separate him from others, he suggested.

"The Church has no real choice except to minister to these type people if the Church is to be what Christ intended it to be," he stated. "Wherever men stand in need of help and healing, this is where the church is to be."

He suggested that any church desiring to start ministries to the drug abuser must have the full backing and support of the pastor who should initiate such ministries.

Giving specific tips to pastors considering such ministries, Barnette said he must be knowledgeable about the problems, must know the techniques of counseling, and must have a conviction that many people can be released from the bondage of addiction "only by the power of God."

He warned that pastors must not attempt to impress an addict with his knowledge of drugs, and said that rather his task "is to help the addicted person to find alternate non-drug ways of handling hangups, anxiety, guilt and boredom."

It is also essential for churches to cooperate with other community agencies, because no agency or institution can handle the problem alone, Barnette said.

Professor Claims Rock Music
Popularizes Drug Culture

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--A Christian ethics professor charged here that much of the drug culture language in America has been popularized by rock musicians, and that young people tend to make such musicians as models of behavior.

Henlec L. Barnette, who led a Southern Baptist conference on "The Drug Crisis in the Church" at Glorieta Baptist Assembly here, said that rock band names often reflect the language of the drug culture.

Among these, said the professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, are "The Loving Spoonful," which is a reference to the spoon in which heroin is cooked, and "The Jefferson Airplane," which is an instrument for holding a marijuana cigarette when it is burned short.

Such rock songs are filled with references to drugs, Barnette told the participants at the conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

As an example, Barnette cited The Beatles' song, "I Get High with a Little Help from My Friends," or the "Crystal Ship," recorded by The Doors, which refers to drugs supplied in white crystals such as methedrine.

Whether or not these and other songs laden with references to drugs encourages their usage is debatable, Barnette observed.

"However, these songs are replete with psychedelic terminology and young people do tend to identify with such performers and the message of the experience of psycho-active drugs comes through loud and clear," he suggested.

Speaking on the "Dynamics of Drug Abuse," Barnette explained that one of the many reasons why young people become drug abusers is that they want to escape from reality.

Other motivations for using drugs he cited included curiosity, low self-image, desire for recreation, search for self-identity, meaninglessness, a search for a direct religious experience and rebellion.

"Beyond the problems of adolescence, revolutionary changes have created an identity crisis for many young people," he said.

"Confronted with the tragic war, poverty, racism, adult hypocrisy, and computerized culture, many of the young people have broken step with the 'establishment' to pause and query, 'Who am I?', and 'What am I to do?'," observed Barnette.

"They often feel the system cannot be changed to conform to their ideals, so some seek to escape through drugs," he added.

"Failing to discover self-identity in the outer world, they seek it in the inner sanctuary of the self, hoping to find a 'cool place' to put their head," he observed.

Among the sociological forces contributing to the drug epidemic, Barnette listed such factors as inadequate family relations, peer group pressures, mass media, rock music, and an oppressive society.

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Collision With Baptists
Saves Man Bent On Suicide

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RATON, N.M. (BP)--A bizarre accident that nearly claimed the life of a Texas Baptist leader near Raton apparently saved the life of another man.

R. H. Dilday, director of the Texas Baptist Church Services Division, was waiting out a rainstorm with his wife at a reststop. The couple was returning to Dallas from a week at Glorieta Baptist Assembly, Glorieta, N.M.

Dilday had fallen asleep in the couples camper trailer when an automobile collided with it, embedding itself to within about 12 inches of one interior wall. The mattress on which Dilday was sleeping was jammed between the front of the car and the wall, but the Baptist worker was thrown clear.

"The Lord just knocked me out of the bed and clear of the car," Dilday said. "I received a minor cut on the head."

The driver of the car, a Raton father of two young children, was uninjured but seemed intoxicated, Dilday said.

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At the hospital, however, he learned that the man had become depressed after losing his job and taken a bottle of sleeping pills.

"He told us that he meant to drive off a cliff, but hit our trailer first."

The man's physician at first refused flatly to let the Dildays visit his patient. But when they suggested that his patient needed spiritual help more than medical help, the doctor said, "you are right and if you have any trouble getting into his room, let me know."

At the hospital, the Dildays talked to the man about his relationship with Christ.

When they prayed for him, he wept: "I don't understand you all. Here I go out and wreck your trailer, and you're down here praying for me."

The Dildays left the man's name and story with a Baptist church in Raton.

"The Lord let that man run into us to save his life," Dilday said. "There were other cars and trailers in that reststop, but the Lord picked ours."



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