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September 3, 1970

**Church Should Join Sexual Revolution, Speaker Asserts**

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--The church needs to join the sexual revolution so that a wholesome, Christian view of sex can be heard in the world, a national Southern Baptist conference on "Christianity and Sexuality in Contemporary Society" was told here.

Harry N. Hollis, Jr., leader of the conference sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly, said that Christians need to share in the new quest for meaning and genuine fulfillment in sexual behavior.

"The place to begin," asserted Hollis, "is with a rethinking of the Christian understanding of sex."

Hollis, director of special moral concerns for the SBC Christian Life Commission, urged Christians to scrape off the barnacles of "unbiblical tradition and unscientific superstition" so that a wholesome, Christian view of sex can appear in today's world.

"The purpose of this conference is to try to make a beginning in that direction by examining what the Bible teaches about sex," said Hollis, who led ten sessions in the week-long conference.

He decried a negative attitude toward sex that often appears in church sermons and articles that concentrate on denouncing sexual sins to the virtual exclusion of a positive treatment of sexuality as "a good gift of God."

"The church cannot afford the excess baggage of negativism," he declared. "The harm that this heresy has done is immeasurable, because it has robbed men and women of the ability to appreciate and enjoy their sexuality as a gift of God."

He added that many half truths and errors have stemmed from this negativism and found their way into the thought and teachings of the church.

Such teachings include the ideas that sexual sins are the worst kind of sins in the eyes of God; that pleasure even in responsible sexual acts is unwholesome and unworthy of a child of God; that sexual desire itself is a result of sin; that the body and all material things are displeasing to God; that refraining from sexual relationships in marriages is especially pleasing to God and that celibacy is holier than marriage.

Hollis asserted that the church can still have a positive influence upon sexuality and the sexual revolution in the world, despite the church's negativism in the past on the subject.

"What is needed is for the church to take positive initiative, so what it says about sexuality will be good news for modern man--liberating instead of repressing," he said.

Hollis explained that this does not mean that the church should adapt its standards to conform to popular behavior, but rather to seek to interpret its standards in the spirit of forgiveness and love, and interpret what God is doing as creator, judge and redeemer.

"The church can bring judgment upon the misuse of sexuality as it condemns exploitation of a sex both within and outside marriage," said Hollis. "It can also work for the reform of unjust laws which aim at mere punishment instead of rehabilitation of sexual offenders, and work for responsible sex education in the home, church, and school."

He also suggested that the church bring judgment against commercial exploitation of sex in advertising and mass media.

"What the church must be concerned about," said Hollis, "is the fact that every day mass media bombard youth and adults with exploitation of the 'erotic for profit'.

"Until something is done to reverse these avenues of sexual stimulation," he claimed, "the church's positive witness will have much less impact."

He suggested that the church could have its most significant impact upon sexuality by teaching within its fellowship what the Bible says about sex as a gift of God and by fostering Christian values and cultivating sexual integrity within its membership.

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Resist Women's Lib Attacks  
On Marriage, Hollis Urges

9/3/70

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Attacks by the Women's Liberation Movement on the institutions of marriage and family must be resisted, participants in a Southern Baptist conference on "Christianity and Sexuality in Contemporary Society" were told here.

Harry N. Hollis, director of special moral concerns for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission that sponsored the meeting, said that the feminist movement wants to ignore the differences between male and female.

"Such sheer negativism against God's good gift of sex must be condemned," Hollis said during the week-long series of 10 lectures at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here.

Hollis urged support of those who "genuinely seek to eliminate obvious discrimination against females in education, business, church government and social life."

He opposed, however, more extreme positions advocated by "Women's Lib." Such positions include support of efforts to abolish all laws against abortion, elimination of instruction about sex roles in sex education programs, abolition of marriage and child bearing as a means of escaping sexual enslavement, and support of female communes with no physical relationships with males at all.

Touching on the subject of contemporary sexual behavior by America's "hippies," Hollis charged that some such youths advocate "moral chaos" and "sexual anarchy."

Although some hippies preach the importance of love, their transitory and temporary sexual encounters do not provide the opportunity really to love another in a meaningful sense, he added.

Hollis observed that the "hippie culture does serve as a reminder of the failure to society to deal adequately with many things, including sexuality."

He advocated positive efforts by the church to communicate an understanding of sexuality as a gift of God within the discipline of love and marriage.

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Commission Staff Member Blasts  
Fletcher's "Situation Ethics"

9/3/70

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Joseph Fletcher's philosophy of "situation ethics" was blasted here by a staff member of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission during a conference the commission sponsored on "Christianity and Sexuality in Contemporary Society."

Harry N. Hollis, Jr., director of special moral concerns for the Baptist agency, told conferees at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly here that Fletcher's ethical approach to moral decision-making is an "ethic of exception" this is devoid of theological foundation.

Earlier this year, Fletcher had spoken to another conference sponsored by the Christian Life Commission in Atlanta, and outlined his philosophy in debate form with another Southern Baptist ethics scholar, Professor Henlee Barnette of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Hollis repeated some of the arguments Barnette had used against Fletcher's point of view last March, and added some of his own during one of ten lectures he delivered at the assembly conference here.

Calling Fletcher's approach an "ethic of exception," Hollis charged that situation ethics draws popular approval from some sources because "every person tends to see the exception in his case, and therefore the possibility of moral breakdown becomes great."

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He explained: "The teenagers searching for identity, the husband whose wife is frigid, the bored housewife, and others like these will have little difficulty in convincing themselves that they are exceptions if they rely on Fletcher's approach."

Hollis said it is not enough for Fletcher to advocate that persons "do the loving thing in every situation," because Fletcher leaves unclear what he means by both "situations" and "love."

Charging that Fletcher is "careless" and "ambiguous" in the use of the terms "love" and "situation," Hollis said that it is unclear what Fletcher means when he tells a person making decisions about sexual behavior "to wait until he gets into a specific situation and then to do the most loving thing."

"In sexual behavior," Hollis added, "the emotions often override the ability to make mature decisions. It is for this reasons that principles are needed."

He charged that in spite of some positive contributions by Fletcher's position, there is much in it that is "dangerous and even heretical."

"A situationalism devoid of theological foundation can only lead to a shallow and inadequate view of sexuality," he observed.

"Fletcher's situation ethics fails because it does not have the necessary theological framework to give to the love that it stresses. It fails," he continued, "because it does not have an adequate Christology. It fails because it does not give a proper basis for that religious faith which Fletcher himself says is necessary...."

Hollis proposed that what is needed "is a Christian ethic of sex based on the teachings of Jesus."

Such an ethic, he observed, will be an "ethic of celebration in stewardship. Awareness of sexuality as God's good gift can lead to genuine celebration," he continued.

Stating that "we do not hear many prayers expressing praise to God for sex," Hollis questioned: "Why not?"

A Christian ethic of sexuality involves an understanding of the body as God's temple, and includes discipline, love, and hope, he said.

"It means that all sexual acts must reflect an acceptance of God's intention for male and for female," he continued. "Anything that violates the stewardship of another (person) must also be rejected.

"Furthermore, a Christian sex ethic will be an ethic of discipline...that enables us to reject short term sensations in favor of long range fulfilment" he said.

"In response to God's activity as redeemer, the Christian sex ethic will be an ethic of love and hope," Hollis concluded. "Any sexual act must reflect awareness of the value of one's self and others as persons to be loved, and not things to be manipulated."

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McKay Resigns, Sutton,  
Childress Names In Arizona

9/3/70

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--The Executive Board of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention accepted the resignation of its top executive, Charles L. McKay, elected Roy Sutton of Phoenix as acting executive secretary; and named Irving Childress as the state convention's weekly newspaper editor.

McKay, executive secretary of the 70,000-member convention for the past 14 years, resigned to become pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church, Scottsdale, Ariz.

In resigning, McKay indicated he "had it in his heart for some time to get back to the cutting edge of the pastorate in the local church."

Sutton, the associate executive secretary of the convention, becomes acting executive secretary until the convention's board elects McKay's successor.

In a "retrenching" action, the board voted to combine the Sunday School and student work programs, under the leadership of Harvey Kimbler, and to combine the roles of the state evangelism secretary and state paper editor.

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Irving Childress, former evangelism and student work director for the convention, becomes editor of the Arizona Baptist Beacon, the weekly newspaper of the convention, in addition to his work as evangelism secretary.

Sutton, the acting executive secretary, came to Arizona from Dallas where he was pastor of Hampton Place Baptist Church.

He has been superintendent of missions for the Catalina Baptist Association in metropolitan Tuscon, Ariz., director of stewardship and missions for the Arizona convention, associate executive secretary of the convention, and former vice president of Grand Canyon College, Phoenix.

Personnel assignments attracted most of the board's attention during the meeting. An attorney for the convention brought a progress report on litigation concerning ownership of Arizona Baptist hospitals, indicating that a suit will be brought to trial probably in December to settle the ownership question:

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Birmingham Church Takes Steps  
To Bar Negro Members, 240-217

9/3/70

By Jack Brymer and Jim Newton

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BF)--Members of the First Baptist Church here took the first step in what is apparently a move to prohibit Negroes from becoming members of the all-white congregation.

By a 23 vote majority (240-217), members of the church defeated a substitute resolution proposing that all applicants for membership be considered on an individual basis without regard to race or color.

The action leaves undecided, however, whether or not to accept as members a Negro woman and her daughter, reached by the church's ministry to people living in the immediate neighborhood, along with four other candidates for membership.

No one seems to know at this point what will happen next.

Mrs. Winfred Bryant, and her 11-year-old daughter, Twila, have been waiting along with four other candidates for membership since mid-July for the church to vote on their acceptance, which must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the church. Twila, who had been involved in a tutorial program by the church, came on profession of her faith in Christ.

The vote on the resolution rejecting acceptance of all applicants for membership without regard to race or color came as a substitute to a recommendation of the deacons calling for church business conferences concerning Negro membership, and asking that "all six candidates remain under the watchcare of the church pending a decision by the congregation."

In addition to the six persons who have been waiting since mid-July for action, 18 persons have sought membership in the church since that time. None has yet been accepted.

The substitute resolution was offered by Dr. Byrn Williamson, a physician who has made several summer trips to work on foreign mission medical projects.

Two successive Wednesday nights, Aug. 26 and Sept. 2, were spent discussing the recommendation of the deacons and the substitute motion by Dr. Williamson.

The strain of continued debate was apparent on the last meeting, when a call to end debate and vote on the main resolution passed by a two-thirds majority after only two members had spoken for one hour on the resolution in the Sept. 2 meeting.

Former U. S. Fifth Circuit Court Judge Hobart Grooms, now retired, spoke 55 minutes, using scripture passages which he said dealt with the question of race. He called for the members to approve the resolution offered by Dr. Williamson.

During the Aug. 26 meeting, members approved a motion to cut off debate until Sept. 2. In making the move, Curtis Knapp charged that proponents of the motion were using stalling tactics in order to force older people to leave before a vote could be taken.

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During a business session on Aug. 19, members debated a motion to fire the pastor and youth director (later amended to include the entire staff) for eight hours. At 2:30 a.m., after 10 ballots, the motion was defeated by four votes, 237-241.

Ollie Blan, an attorney who figured prominently in efforts to dismiss Herbert Gilmore as the pastor, supported the motion to accept members without regard to race on an individual basis.

He said he wanted to "vote now because the church could never get ready spiritually as long as Dr. Gilmore is here." As a member of the membership committee recommending Mrs. Bryant for membership, Blan said he had asked Gilmore to delay presenting her application to the church because he "felt the church was not ready for such a vote." The pastor, however, declined.

Blan warned the members not to vote against Mrs. Bryant in order to force the pastor to resign, since Gilmore had told the church he would not be pastor of a "racist" church.

Two members of the church argued that the members have "a perfect right to exclude persons who are going to cause dissention," and that "... if we let down the bars and accept Negro members the membership will be 90 per cent black within three years."

Grooms, however, cited scriptures which he interpreted as giving no church the right to reject anyone who is a fellow believer in Jesus Christ.

A layman in the church, Hubert Caraway, told the members that "no one was more prejudiced than I against blacks," a few years ago, but his whole outlook had changed because of Gilmore's influence.

"I wish all of you could know the feeling of relief that is in my soul at this time because I have learned, thanks to this great preacher, how to handle my prejudice," Caraway said. He added that if the members would accept the present leadership of the church, it could become "one of our greatest churches" in the denomination.

The associate pastor of the church, Mac Goss told the church he was concerned not only about First Baptist Church, but the future of "the Church."

Goss charged that what was happening at First Baptist Church has been happening on the Southern Baptist Convention level. He observed a "constant bickering and fighting," and a "lack of love and concern."

He cited statistics that he said reveal that young people are not going into the ministry because "they cannot bear physically or emotionally the strains of the present day ministry."

He pointed out there were 511 men preparing for the ministry at three Baptist colleges in 1950, compared to only 101 last year at the same three institutions--Mercer University, Macon, Ga.; Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N. C.; and Furman University, Greenville, S. C.

Goss claimed that the issues run much deeper than simply the acceptance of the pastor as leader, or the acceptance of two Negroes as members, but rather that the very life of the Church is at stake.

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W. C. Reed, Carolina Child  
Care Leader, Dies At 77

9/3/70

KINSTON, N. C. (BP)--Weston C. Reed, 77, retired general superintendent of the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, died in a local hospital after suffering a heart attack at his home.

Reed was one of the founders and first presidents of the Child Care Executives of Southern Baptists, an organization of administrators of Baptist children's homes across the Southern Baptist Convention.

He was superintendent of the Kennedy Home operated by North Carolina Baptists from 1943 to 1950 when he became general superintendent of all Baptist children's homes in the state. He retired in 1958.

Funeral services were held at First Baptist Church, Kinston, N. C., on Aug. 31.

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