

**BAPTIST PRESS**

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May 3, 1971

Stewardship Conference Stresses
Creation, Lordship; Not Tithes

by Al Shackelford

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Southern Baptists need to emphasize the creation of God and the Lordship of Christ rather than the law of the tithe as the basis for their stewardship emphases, a nationwide conference of Baptist leaders was told here by a battery of speakers.

More than 160 pastors, professors, state and Southern Baptist Convention leaders attended the conference at Glorieta Baptist Assembly. It was the first such national stewardship conference held in the denomination.

Those attending examined in depth over a four-day period "the biblical truths bearing on the Christian's role in the material world" and sought to discover "what should be his response in this economic order."

If suggestions coming out of the conference are followed, there may be a shift in emphasis in Southern Baptist stewardship programs for Baptists to go beyond "the tithe" to a theological understanding of the total stewardship of life and possessions under the Lordship of Christ.

There could also be more emphasis on the motivation for stewardship rather than on the amount of monetary contribution, if the conference suggestions are followed.

Cecil Ray, director of stewardship for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said in one of the 14 papers presented that "in the New Testament there is really only one distinctly Christian motive--that is in response to one's love for Christ and others."

He also noted that it is easier to present rule of the law than to present the meaning of the Lordship of Christ. "It is simply easier to demand the tithe."

During the conference, four speakers presented independently-prepared papers on the same subject, "The Christian and the Tithe." Although there were some slight differences and understandings of the Christian's relationship to the Old Testament legalistic tithe, all agreed that a Christian's giving under "grace," should exceed giving under the "law."

Jerry Horner, professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist College, Bolivar, Mo., stated, "The New Testament nowhere tells us to give less than a tenth and, while taking care to avoid a legalistic system, we should beware lest we fall into a reckless and haphazard system. "Christ did not die on the cross to enable us to give 2 per cent instead of 10 per cent, and the word 'grace' is not a cloak of covetness to do less instead of more," Horner said.

Stating that any argument for tithing in the New Testament is "very weak," Horner said that one-sixth of Jesus' saying dealt with money, but he never mentioned the tithe in his teaching concerning the attitude of a person toward his possessions. "In fact Jesus mentioned tithing only twice, and both instances were negative pronouncements pertaining to Jewish legalistic piety....

"The scriptures do not give the direct and unambiguous attestation to the tithe that many of its advocates presupposed," Horner said. Jesus made a higher demand than the law of the tithe, expecting his followers to commit all their resources to the service of God, not just a tenth, he added.

Franklin Paschall, pastor of First Baptist Church, Nashville, pointed out that though he said little about it, Jesus was a tither. "Even the enemies of Jesus never accused him of not paying tithes," Paschall said. "If he had been neglectful at this point surely they would have exalted in this obvious shortcoming,"

Both Paschall and William Hendricks, professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, pointed out dangers in over-emphasis of the tithe so that it becomes the end of stewardship rather than a small part of stewardship.

Hendricks listed among such dangers the implication that the tithe is a legal requirement for becoming "Christian," that God will bless a person materially for tithing, that a person pays his full obligation to God by tithing, or that the promise of giving (or withholding) the tithe might be used as an economic pressure in the church, especially to control the pulpit.

Brooks Wester, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Miss., told the conference that tithing is currently a controversial issue in religious circles. "There are those who declare tithing to be an integral part of the Christian life and is required of every Christian. There are others who reject tithing as being Old Testament legalism that leads to a self-righteousness of spirit in the one practicing the tithe,"

Wester concluded that tithing can be presented from the biblical message as being a spiritual exercise that honors God in his ownership. "Tithing is basically an act of worship that declares the greatness of God and the work of a man when he is obedient to God," he said.

In the panel that followed, Wester said he was impressed that four men could have worked nearly two years on the same subject and reached similar positions.

Other papers during the four-day conference dealt with God's relationship to material things in creation and redemption and a Christian's view of material things. Interspersed with the 14 messages were Bible studies and discussion sessions in small groups.

In another major paper, Malcolm Tolbert, professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said that Jesus' primary concern in his teachings and attitudes toward material wealth was an emphasis on the danger of worshipping material possessions in a form of idolatry.

"A man can tithe and still be an idolater," Tolbert said. "In fact, his tithing can deepen his idolatry if it relieves him of a sense of responsibility to God for the rest of his possessions.

Tolbert concluded, "The Bible teaches us to love God and people and use material things; however, the common tendency is to love possessions and to exploit God and people."

Jack Taylor, pastor of Castle Hill Baptist Church, San Antonio, Tex., said that God created things for his glory, man's good and Christ's exaltation.

J. Leo Green, professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., discussed stewardship in relation to creation, saying God created material things to serve his sovereign purpose and to serve the needs of man.

"But man has become his victim of his own victory," Green said. "In dominating creative things, he has become dominated by things."

James Leo Garrett, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said that whether material things are good or evil may depend on man's usage of them. "Christians as stewards of material things can participate responsively and joyfully in the transformation of material things into spiritual reality through Jesus Christ, his gospel, his spirit, and his church," Garrett said.

Morris Ashcraft, professor at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, urged Baptists to base their stewardship on the belief that God is creator of all. "Since God owns the world and all that is in it, it is highly unlikely that he keeps his ledgers on the basis that 10 per cent is his and 90 per cent is ours," Ashcraft said.

Richard Cunningham, professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., stressed that biblical stewardship also requires the Christian to exercise strong leadership responsibility in the use of the funds contributed.

Such responsibility includes efforts by Christians to insure the use of the money efficiently by the local congregation, to make sure the local church does not retain too high a per cent for its local ministry, and to assure effective and conclusive use of the funds at state and national levels.

Henry Parker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., added that a part of this responsibility is the Christian's role in society as a citizen and taxpayer. Man's stewardship includes responsibility to deal with the problems of poverty and hunger, war and oppression, graft and dishonesty, and ecology and pollution, Parker said.

The conference grew out of a request may be stewardship secretaries and foundation executive for state conventions, and was planned and coordinated by a committee of state secretaries and foundation executives and the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission.

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Nine Staffers Named As Part
of New Mexico Reorganization

5/3/71

ALBUQUERQUE, N. M.(BP)-- Nine staff members appointed in implementation of a new organization structure have been approved by the State Mission Board of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico.

Seven of the nine appointees had previously been on the staff of the New Mexico convention, with most receiving new assignments under the reorganization plan.

Bert Edmison, assistant administrator of the Mexican Baptist Children's Home in San Antonio for the past ten years, was named director of the Division of Special Ministries for the New Mexico convention. He will succeed Walker Hubbard who is retiring as superintendent of the convention's children's home in Portales, N.M.

Felix Wagner, pastor of Wayside Baptist Church in Miami, Fla., director of the Division of Mission Ministries. A native of New Jersey, Wagner as pastor of Baptist churches in Oklahoma, North and South Carolina before taking the Miami church in 1963.

Ed Storm Jr., formerly state Sunday School Secretary for the New Mexico convention, was named director of the Division of Educational Ministries. A native of Indiana, Storm has been on the convention's staff since 1953. His associate in the new division has not yet been named.

Miss Vanita Baldwin, executive secretary of the New Mexico Woman's Missionary Union since 1961, was named as associate in the Division of Mission Ministries. She is a native of Florida.

C. Eugene Whitlow, editor of the Baptist New Mexican and secretary of public relations for the convention since 1967, was appointed director of communication ministries. He is a native of Arkansas.

J. D. Ratliff, executive secretary-treasurer of the New Mexico Baptist Foundation and Church Loan Corp., was named director of the Division of Foundation and Church Loan Ministries. He is a native of New Mexico and former foreign missionary to Peru.

S. M. Mayo, Baptist Student Union (BSU) director at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, N.M., was given additional responsibilities for directing the BSU program at Western New Mexico University in Silver City, N.M.

Likewise, Don Wiley, BSU director at University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, was given added responsibility for directing the BSU work at Highlands University, Las Vegas, N.M.

Glenn McCoy, BSU director at Highlands University, was named BSU director at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales.

The appointments were made jointly by the property and personnel committee of the State Mission Board and the executive director of the state convention, with the full board approving the appointments.

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