



BAPTIST PRESS

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December 9, 1971

Christian Life Commission
Urges Open Door Racial Policy

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in annual session here, adopted a resolution encouraging "our fellow Southern Baptists and all other Christians to work faithfully and educate persistently for open hearts, open churches, open housing, and equal opportunities for all people."

The commission acknowledged "that our racial prejudices have not been wiped out, that complacency threatens to mute our witness, but that God is still working to lead us through our fears along the road toward racial justice and Christian brotherhood."

It was one of three resolutions adopted by the commission on recommendation of its promotion committee. Others urged support for legislation to help the plight of the aging, and encouraged Baptist efforts in citizenship to work for peace, justice and righteousness.

In other major actions, the commission adopted a budget for a nine-month 1972 period leading to a new fiscal year in September, discussed results of a survey on Southern Baptist attitudes toward freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, and requested program assignment transfers and exchanges with the SBC Home Mission Board concerning the areas of aging, social work, and drug abuse education.

The resolution on "the continuing racial crisis" stated that "misunderstanding between races in our nation continues to produce deep hostility," and observed that "there is a tendency for some within the Southern Baptist Convention to withdraw from the struggle for reconciliation."

The commission, however, affirmed "our desire to advance for Christ in the racial arena rather than withdraw; to witness a reconciling love which puts out the flames of racial animosity and fear; to risk being peacemakers by facing racial conflict, not evading it."

The resolution noted that equal justice under the law for racial minorities is often violated, and pledged the commission's efforts "to join love and justice in the continuing racial crisis."

The commission expressed gratitude for the progress which has been made on racial relationships in recent years among many Christian groups.

In a resolution on aging, the commission pledged urgent support of Baptist efforts to minister to the total needs of the aging, and support of national legislation to help provide adequate income and transportation, suitable housing and a substantially improved program of health care for the aging.

Noting that 1972 is a year for national election, a resolution on Christian citizenship urged Baptists to work for politically effective and morally meaningful expressions of peace, justice and righteousness.

Each of the resolutions was adopted unanimously with little discussion.

Only debate during the two-day meeting centered around a recommendation to publicize findings of a survey the commission requested by the research services department of the SBC Sunday School Board concerning Southern Baptist attitudes toward freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

In the debate, Herbert Howard, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, questioned whether the commission should "publicize the findings" as recommended by a subcommittee, arguing that results would hurt the image of the SBC if carried in the secular press.

Cecil Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Asheville, N. C., countered that the survey results simply reflect Baptists, and society, as they are, and that any efforts to keep the results from being publicized would in effect be an indication the commission members did not believe in freedom of the press.

The survey, patterned after a Columbus Broadcasting System (CBS) news poll taken in 1970, asked nearly 500 Baptist pastors, Sunday School directors, women and student leaders the same questions used in the CBS poll.

In summary, the results revealed that Southern Baptists polled gave very similar responses to the general public respondents in the CBS poll, with only a few percentage points separating the two polls on almost all questions.

The Baptist survey response showed that 67 per cent of those responding would be willing to restrict in some cases the right to peaceful assembly, 76 per cent would be willing to restrict the right concerning privacy, 59 per cent would be willing to restrict the right to a free press, and 52 per cent would be willing to restrict the rights concerning freedom of religion.

While the Baptist pastors and Sunday School directors generally reflected similar responses to those responding to the CBS poll, the Baptist Student Union presidents responding to the Baptist poll were in several cases at opposite ends of the poll in response to questions on free press, free speech, peaceful assembly, double jeopardy, etc.

Generally, the respondents most likely to express a willingness to restrict various freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights were women, older people, and those with relatively low levels of education, the Baptist survey summarized.

Charles Sullivant, supervisor of the research section who worked with the commission in conducting the study, told the commission that his personal judgment on results of the survey "is that this is scary." Sullivant observed that most of the people surveyed probably want these rights for themselves, but do not want to give them to those with whom they disagree.

The committee's recommendation to thank the research department for conducting the survey, and to call for the commission to publicize the findings in an effort to utilize the information to strengthen Baptist convictions concerning the principles passed unanimously.

In major business actions, the commission adopted a nine-month budget of \$187,500 for 1972. The agency will move to a new fiscal year in October, 1972; hence calling for a nine-month budget for January through September.

Re-elected chairman of the commission was Charles Trentham, pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn.

The commission also expressed appreciation for the work of W. L. Howse III, who resigned as director of organization for the commission to coordinate alcohol and drug abuse programs of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health.

The commission also voted to request the transfer to the SBC Home Mission Board of portions of the present Christian Life Commission program statement relating to aging and to social work; and to request that Home Mission Board efforts in the area of drug abuse education be transferred to the Christian Life Commission.

The commission voted to hold four regional conferences in 1972, if possible, in Illinois, South Carolina, Tennessee and Oklahoma, and to hold a national seminar in 1973 on the theme of family life. A subcommittee had recommended Jackson, Miss., as the site, but the commission voted to leave the place open for other possibilities.

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Duck Named PR Administrative
Assistant for Alabama Baptists

12/9/71

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--Robert M. Duck, acting director of public relations for the Alabama Baptist Convention Executive Board, was named administrative assistant in public relations for the convention board during its December meeting here.

Duck has worked on the public relations staff for the convention since 1968, and has held positions with various communications media for 17 years.

He was a radio newsman and announcer for stations in Sylacauga, Montgomery, and Andalusia, Ala., and Canton, Ga., from 1950-53, and has also worked in television at station WSFA-TV, Montgomery.

A native of Bessemer and Sylacauga, Ala., Duck has been minister of education at Baptist churches in Marion, Ala., and Valdosta, Ga. He is a graduate of University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

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