

**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**Take Population Study  
Seriously, Leaders Urge**

WASHINGTON (BP)--A prominent group of 18 religious executives, including two Baptists, have called on President Richard M. Nixon and other national leaders to give "serious consideration" to the recent report of the President's Commission on Population Growth and the American Future.

In a press conference here, spokesmen for the ecumenical group suggested that the report be distributed widely among denominational and church groups and that it be used as a reference work for discussion and study groups.

The final report of the 24-member commission, chaired by John D. Rockefeller III, stressed the importance of the nation's moving toward a stable population. Such a goal would become possible, the commission suggested, if the means to prevent the birth of unwanted children were made universally available.

"As individuals concerned with the religious life of this nation, we welcome the report . . . as an important contribution to the search for solutions to the growing ecological crisis facing all nations today," the religious leaders declared in their statement.

Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, and Mrs. Marcus Rohlf, president of the American Baptist Convention, were among the 18 persons signing the statement. The group urged also that other Americans be "publicly encouraged" to study the commission's report and recommendations.

In addition to Valentine and Mrs. Rohlf, the list of signers included the elected or appointed heads of most major Protestant denominations in the United States. Five Jewish executives, representing a number of associations and national synagogue groups, also signed.

Four of the 18 signers were present at the press conference. They were Mrs. Cynthia Wedel, president of the National Council of Churches; Bishop John Wesley Lord, past president of the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church; Mrs. Lois Stair, moderator of the United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.; and A. Dudley Ward, general secretary of the Board of Christian Social Concerns, United Methodist Church.

The statement of the religious leaders said: "We regret the immediate condemnation of the report by some on doctrinal grounds, because of specific recommendations such as those on abortion law reform or wider access to contraception."

Adding that "none of us may agree with all the recommendations in the report," the religious executives urged that controversy over these points should not be allowed to obscure the need for discussing the commission's call for a national population goal and policy. Such discussion is necessary, they said, "to meet a crisis which threatens the well-being of people everywhere and of generations to come."

Criticism of the commission's report has come particularly from the Roman Catholic Church. Recently a spokesman for the United States Catholic Conference said the population commission was leading the nation "into an ideological valley of death" primarily because of its endorsement of abortion on request.

The population report was released late in March after two years extensive research. Concerning abortion, the commission recommended that the United States should "liberalize access to abortion services with the admonition that abortion not be considered a primary means of fertility control."

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Making it easier to avoid unwanted children will contribute to the lives of the people involved as well as help to slow population growth, they said. The report urged the nation to welcome and to plan now for a stabilized population.

In order to enable all Americans, "regardless of age, marital status, or income," to avoid unwanted births, the commission recommended a number of goals. Among them, in addition to liberalized abortion services, the panel urged an increased investment in research on human fertility and the extension of health services related to fertility, including contraceptive services and voluntary sterilization.

The population panel asked also that more sex education materials and programs be made available through responsible community organizations, the media, and especially the schools.

It urged the extension of subsidies for family planning programs and the establishment of a National Institute of Population Sciences within the National Institute of Health. It asked also for an Office of Population Growth and Distribution within the Executive Office of the President.

During the ecumenical press conference called to "welcome" the report of the commission and to urge President Nixon's support of the recommendations, Bishop Lord charged that church people are not paying sufficient attention to the problems discussed in the report.

Lord urged that church people should consider the morality or immorality of abortion against the reality of so many "unwanted children" who, he said, make up many of the hostile members of our society.

Mrs. Wedel, president of the National Council of Churches, asked that the group's statement not be used "to draw lines between Protestants and Catholics." She stressed that neither she nor the other signers was offering a blanket endorsement of the population report. Their concern, she urged, is that the report receive careful study.

"It would just be beautiful," Mrs. Wedel said, "if this is one presidential report that actually got something done."

Bishop Lord concluded that "if this report is shelved because it contains something the President does not like on abortion . . . it would be a tragedy."

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Louisiana Baptist Paper  
Names Contributing Editors

3/31/72

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--In an effort to minimize polarization and increase communication, the Baptist Message, weekly newspaper of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, has named 20 contributing editors who will write editorials expressing "grass roots" opinions about "matters of current interest and spiritual significance for Baptists."

The Baptist Message is the first of the 33 Baptist state papers to establish a system of contributing editors who will write on current issues.

Appointment of the contributing editors was announced in an editorial in the March 30 issue of the publication, by Editor James F. Cole.

The group includes 11 pastors, eight professors and administrative officials of universities and a Baptist seminary; and one editor of a daily newspaper, all from Louisiana.

Editor Cole, in an interview concerning their appointment, called the new approach a "break-through" in Baptist journalism.

He added there is so much polarization of thought among Baptists, that diversification of editorial perspective in the state paper would help bring about better communication.

In the editorial announcing the new approach, Cole wrote that "at times the strongest advocates of free speech among us are the first to castigate those who disagree with their stated position. It is a strange paradox," the editorial continued, "for we as Baptists maintain on scriptural grounds that a man is individually responsible to God and then we refuse to allow him the right and privilege of self-determination.

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"There are many in the Southern Baptist fellowship who are capable writers, but who perish the thought of submitting anything for publication," the editorial stated. "They are fearful that their motives will be impugned. Consequently, they refuse to be sacked and labelled."

Under guidelines published in the editorial, each contributing editor will serve for one year, submitting at least one but no more than six 450 word editorials. Each editorial would be signed, with the writer assuming full responsibility for its contents. The writers are free to choose the subject on which they will write.

Stated purpose of the new feature "is basically to improve communication among Baptists," and to encourage "diversity of expression" and avoid polarization.

Although the editorial pointed out this is not a new concept, it is the first time in recent years that a Baptist state paper has used such an approach. Most Baptist state papers give sole responsibility for writing editorials to the editor.

In the editorial, Cole wrote that "the editor of the Baptist Message lays no claim to being a complete answer man and is most fearful of any man who claims that he is. . . . None of the contributing editors lay claim to infallibility of thought. They are fellow Baptists who are in quest of truth."

Pastors named as contributing editors were Ronald Prince of Minden, Larry Baker of Monroe, Scott Tatum of Shreveport, Glen Edwards and Don C. Brown of Baton Rouge, J. D. Grey of New Orleans, Leon Hyatt Jr. of Houma, Clifton Tennyson of West Monroe, Damon Vaughn of Bosier City, Perry Sanders of Lafayette, and Robert McGee of Ruston, La.

Others appointed are Tom Kelly, editor, the Ruston (La.) Leader; Mary D. Bowman and Sara Frances Anders, both professors at Louisiana College here; L. R. Simmons, dean of the School of Education at Southeastern University, Hammond; William Greenlee, professor at McNeese University, Lake Charles; Harry Richardson, professor at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge; Leon Beasley, professor at Southwestern University, Lafayette; Clayton Waddell, professor, and Grady C. Cothen, president, both of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

At the same time the paper announced appointment of the contributing editors, it also published a new policy on publication of letters to the editor. The policy limits letters to 300 words, publication of only one letter by a writer per quarter, rejection of form letters and unsigned letters, and restrictions against personal attacks.

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Former ABC President  
Named St. Louis Pastor

3/31/72

ST. LOUIS (BP)--J. Lester Harnish, former president of the American Baptist Convention and president of Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, has been called as senior minister of Third Baptist Church here, effective Aug. 1.

The 3,000 member church is affiliated with both the American and Southern Baptist Conventions.

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Happiness, Hope Stressed  
At Bible Conference, West

3/31/72

DENVER (BP)--In an era of disillusionment and disenchantment, many people have given up on ever finding happiness, a Baptist pastor from El Paso, Tex., told the National Bible Conference, West, meeting here.

"We are becoming so obsessed with gloom that it is hard to convince people that happiness is possible," said Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church of El Paso.

Speaking to more than 200 people from 12 states, Garrison told the Bible conference participants that in a silly, shallow, frivolous, giddy sort of way, people are making themselves glad. They are trying to kid themselves into believing that they are happy.

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"Happiness is related to holiness, and without holiness there can be no happiness. True happiness is found in the presence of Jesus Christ. It is the byproduct of his presence and is a present possibility for everyone," said the El Paso pastor.

In the conference's opening address, Golden Gate Theological Seminary President Harold K. Graves said there was never a time when Christians need more to keep their heads to provide moral leadership for a confused people.

"Yet a Pollyanna, rose-colored view of things, like one who whistled in the dark to bolster his courage, is not the answer," Graves said.

The answer, he declared, is found in the Bible. "The most insistent movement in theology today is a theology of hope," the seminary president said. "It is rooted in the nature of the biblical faith and the biblical faith is impossible without it.

"Your hope is what makes you tick. You are, in a sense, what you hope to become. Hope gives meaning and purpose to life which looks beyond suffering and defeat--to victory assured in Christ. A theology of hope takes evil seriously by anticipating a power which can more than match it. We shall live because God's life is stronger than death," said Graves.

Theme for the three day conference at the Denver Hilton Hotel was, "The Bible--Message of Joy and Hope." The conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday School department, the Colorado Baptist General Convention and the Denver Association of Southern Baptist Churches.

The main Bible study, on "The Philippian Exaltation," was led by A. Stuart Arnold, consultant in the Sunday School Board department sponsoring the meeting.

Other Bible expositions were conducted by T. Miles Bennett, professor of the Old Testament, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth; Henry Adrion III, pastor, Polytechnic Baptist Church, Fort Worth; William B. Coble, professor of New Testament and Greek, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.; David Matthews, pastor, Seventh and James Baptist Church, Waco, Tex.; and Richard A. Jackson, pastor, North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz.

The Bible study sessions centered on the books of Genesis, Ephesians, Revelation, Romans, and I Thessalonians.

Purpose of the conference was to discover the relevance of the Bible to life today through Bible exposition, exploration and interpretation and the application of Bible truths to contemporary problems, conference leaders said.

Harold Marsh, conference developer, and conference coordinator Chester Russell, both of the Sunday School department of the Sunday School Board, stressed that a new emphasis is being placed upon the study interpretation of God's word. This is why these Bible conferences are being conducted, Marsh indicated.

Pastor David Matthews of Waco said that Bible study "is what we are all about. Even though Southern Baptists are a people of the book, we are among the biblical illiterates. We are not good students of the Bible."

Advocating regional, state and associational Bible conferences on the same basis, Matthews said he felt such Bible conferences should rival Baptist evangelism conferences in attendance. "Our evangelism will be shallow to the degree that we neglect the study of God's word," Matthews observed.

For Bob Harr, president of the Baptist Student Union, Metropolitan State College, Denver, the Bible conference was stimulating. He said, "Without digging into the Bible for myself daily, my work with the Lord stagnates. When my mind is stimulated by others about the Scriptures, my desire to find out for myself is increased. This Bible conference has fulfilled that promise."

Closing address for the three-day conference was brought by Charles L. McKay, pastor of First Baptist Church, Scottsdale, Ariz.

The National Bible Conference, East, will be held in Richmond, Va., April 24-27.

