



BAPTIST PRESS

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October 17, 1972

**Baptist-Catholic Dialogue
Examines Warts, Shortcomings**

By Erwin L. McDonald

HOUSTON (BP)--Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists confessed their shortcomings and explored ways of helping each other and fellow Christians during the second annual Baptist-Catholic Regional Conference here at the Sheraton-AstroWorld Hotel.

During the conference's opening session, Thomas Starks, secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of interfaith witness who presided over the meeting, pointed out the importance of the dialogue session.

"It is imperative that we as representatives of 30 per cent of the nation's total population come together to get better acquainted and to have dialogue on problems of mutual concern," said Starks, pointing out that Baptists and Catholics number more than 60 million.

Both a Catholic bishop and a Baptist pastor shared the podium in the opening discussion on "Living the Faith in Today's World." Both agreed Baptist and Catholics could learn much from each other.

James Flamming, pastor of First Baptist Church, Abilene, Tex., suggested that Southern Baptists could teach Catholics a few things about stewardship, how to get people to study their Bibles, Christian fellowship, and methods of evangelism.

Flamming told the 80 Baptist and Catholic participants that Catholics, on the other hand, could teach Southern Baptists a lot about how to pray, how to worship, and the power of example.

"Christians of all communions must eventually come to grips with the Church, with all of its warts showing," Flamming said.

He listed as some of the "warts" of the church, including both Catholic and Protestant churches, such things as: preaching more than we practice, more often reflecting the culture rather than the person and work of Christ, and getting so bogged down in traditions and mechanics that we lose the joy of the gospel.

The church, he added, often suggests more mercy than we are prone to mete out; it stresses more urgency than our daily habits allow; it declares more love than we practice; it preaches more forgiveness than we in reality forgive; and it declares more dedication than our weekly schedules permit.

"we are, in fact, perennial hypocrites," he confessed.

Flamming argued that facing these problems should not cause church members to quit their churches, but rather should challenge them to give of themselves in seeking solutions.

Bishop William W. Baum of the Springfield-Cape Girardeau (Mo.) Catholic Diocese deplored another conflict which he said had divided both Protestants and Catholics in recent years--debate between those who emphasize social aspects of the gospel and those who emphasize personal salvation.

"The gospel of Jesus Christ must be applied to the needs of man living in today's world," the Bishop declared. "Standing fast by the whole gospel, Baptists and Catholics, along with all other Christians, can live their faith and serve their world--the human family," he said.

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Bishop Baum called on Baptists and Catholics alike to help with another problem, that of correct Biblical interpretation.

Although he admitted there are honest differences of opinion on Biblical interpretation, he stressed the need for "commonly accepted principles of Biblical interpretation" toward helping people ascertain the true meaning of the scriptures.

About 80 Baptists and Catholics attended the conference, the second of its kind. Last year, a similar dialogue session met in Daytona Beach, Fla.

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Annuity Board Shifts
Health Plan to Aetna

10/17/72

DALLAS (BP)--A new health benefit plan, featuring a change in insurance companies, has been announced here by the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board.

The new plan will cover pastors and other church staff personnel in the 11.8 million member convention.

Darold H. Morgan, board president, said the medical insurance program will be moved from Blue Cross-Blue Shield to Aetna Life and Casualty Insurance Company, effective Jan. 1, 1973.

The change responds to feelings expressed at the 1972 session of the Southern Baptist Convention in Philadelphia, Morgan said.

There, the convention adopted the motion of a Knoxville, Tenn., pastor who asked the Annuity Board to consider finding another health insurance company. Ray O. Jones of Knoxville made the motion.

There are 12,771 pastors, ministers of education, ministers of music, and other church employees taking part in the present health benefit plan, which offers hospitalization and medical insurance coverage.

Employees of denominational agencies and institutions are not affected by the changes, since they are in group health plans for agencies.

Morgan pointed out that Blue Cross-Blue Shield, which has provided health benefit insurance to SBC churches since 1965, increased rates in the SBC plan 36 per cent in 1971 and another 36 per cent in 1972. At the same time, the board received complaints about slow payment of claims.

Claims against Blue Cross-Blue Shield in 1971 exceeded premiums, however, by about \$500,000 according to the board's report to the convention at Philadelphia.

With Aetna Life and Casualty, the annuity Board believes it has gained improved benefits, service, and stability, Morgan said.

Aetna's contract bars any rate increase until July 1, 1974.

Another new feature of coverage under Aetna classifies insured persons by age and geographical locations. "There is a very direct relationship between the costs of medical insurance with area and age," Morgan explained. "The only fair way is for each of us to assume his share of the cost."

To be most effective, group hospitalization and medical insurance must include 75 per cent of the individuals in the group to be insured, Morgan said. Under Blue Cross-Blue Shield, less than 50 per cent of church-employed personnel in the SBC signed up.

Churches, being autonomous, are not required to use the health benefit plan offered by the Annuity Board, Morgan said, and thus are different from commercial business and industry, which can make employee participation mandatory.

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"We will make a renewed and determined effort to convince churches of the value of the plan for their staff," Morgan said, "and try to enroll 75 per cent."

In some cases, change of companies will mean the individual will pay more, in others less, than he has been paying for Blue Cross-Blue Shield, Morgan continued.

The annuity Board had three courses of action open to it for its health benefit plan, according to Morgan.

One, the plan could operate without change. Two, the board could close the plan, and quit offering hospitalization and medical insurance. Three, it could change the plan and the company, Morgan said.

"To leave the health benefit plan without change would violate the spirit of the SBC action at Philadelphia," Morgan said. It would also lead to increased complaints about service.

To close the health benefit plan would expose too many ministers to "no health coverage" status because of restrictions due to their health conditions, Morgan said. It would also remove needed protection for ministers and their families who would have to start over in some other type health plan.

"The only feasible alternative was to change the plan and change the company," Morgan said.

"Aetna has agreed to insure all employes and dependents now insured by the health benefit plan without evidence of good health, if application is made on or before Jan. 1, 1973," he added.

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Supreme Court to Hear
Baptist College Case

10/17/72

WASHINGTON (BP)--A case involving the Baptist College of Charleston, S.C. will be argued before the U.S. Supreme Court sometime this session.

The case of Hunt v. McNair concerns the constitutionality of the state of South Carolina helping the Baptist College of Charleston refinance its debt and build new facilities for non-sectarian teaching with funds from a tax-free revenue bond issue.

Both the general Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention and the full convention approved of the \$4 million bond issue by the school in a tax-free category and at a low interest rate.

Under the unique arrangement, the college agreed to deed to the state certain buildings and lands not otherwise encumbered, with two stipulations--that the college be permitted to lease the property for 30 years at no charge, and at the end of the period to repurchase the property for \$1.

The South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that the plan was constitutional, but the plaintiff in the case appealed the state court's ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court sent the case back to the South Carolina Supreme Court, asking that it be reconsidered in the light of 1971 U.S. Supreme Court opinions which concerned "excessive entanglements" between government and religion.

The second time around in the lower court, the earlier judgment was affirmed and the South Carolina Supreme Court again said that the plan was constitutional.

"There is no conflict between the preservation of religious freedom and the preservation of higher education," the state court declared.

In the second appeal to the high court, Richard W. Hunt, identified only as "a resident and a taxpayer" argued that the South Carolina plan violates a number of recent decisions of the court and that it specifically involves "excessive entanglement" between government and religion.

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In defense of its position, the new brief filed by the state of South Carolina maintains that the issue is not one of "excessive entanglement" between government and religion.

Daniel R. McLeod, South Carolina attorney General, argues that the case should be decided in light of earlier decisions sustaining federal grants to sectarian schools for the purpose of financing non-sectarian buildings.

"There is no...involvement and surveillance on the part of the state under the proposed financing plan of the Baptist college," McLeod declared in his brief.

No date has been set for argument before the Supreme Court.

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SBC Televangelism Slated
Feb. 11 on 20 Stations

10/17/72

ATLANTA (BP)--"Spring Street USA," Southern Baptists' first attempt at presenting the gospel in a variety show format through television media, will premiere Feb. 11, 1973, on 20 television stations across the nation.

The half-hour color program, first of a 13-week series, will feature evangelism leader Kenneth L. Chafin as host. Producer of the program is Truett Myers of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, located at 1350 Spring Street, N.W., here, had been responsible for content of the show, while the Radio-TV Commission located in Fort Worth is cooperating with the production and distribution of the programs.

Although the premiere of "Spring Street USA" is not a major network showing, it will be broadcast over 20 stations mostly in the southern states, with plans to triple the number of stations by the end of the year.

The format includes music, interviews and a message by Chafin, former director of the Home Mission Board's Division of Evangelism who is now pastor of South Main Baptist Church in Houston.

Guests for the program include such notables as Norma Zimmer, soloist for the Lawrence Welk television show.

The Spring Street Singers, a newly formed musical group, will appear regularly. Music by Beryl Red, president of B-R Productions and Generic Music Co. in New York City, one of Baptists' best-known composers and arrangers, will be used for the telecasts.

Chafin said that the show attempts "in music, interviews and in message to communicate Jesus Christ and invite men to a personal relationship with him."

Fred B. Moseley of Atlanta, assistant executive secretary of the Home Mission Board and acting director of the Evangelism Division, said that before the year is out, the program will be broadcast on 75 or more stations throughout the nation.

Expansion of the program to additional stations depends partly on financing, Moseley said. He added that Baptists who would like for the program to be broadcast in their area and who would provide financial support toward purchase of time should contact the board.

The half-hour program and the singing group derive their names from the 1350 Spring Street address of the Atlanta-based Home Mission Board.

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C O R R E C T I O N

On BP story mailed 10-12-72, headlined, "Foreign Board Adopts 1973 Budget, Names New Officers, Missionaries," please change graph 2 to read: "The 1973 budget exceeds that of 1972 by nearly \$3.6 million" rather than "...that of 1973 by \$3,594,198.73..." as sent.



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