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June 19, 1973

**Apathy, But Hope Describe
Race Relations, Baptists Told**

By David Gooch

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Apathy, inactivity, regression, mingled with some signs of hope characterize race relations in America today, participants in a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Conference were told here.

"Much of the apathy and inactivity in racial affairs is the result of the widespread belief by white America that since the riots have stopped, the problems are solved," said Larry McSwain, assistant professor of church and community at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

"America is more segregated than it was five years ago," McSwain observed. "There is more residential segregation and more school segregation than five years ago. The quality of ghetto housing in most cities of the nation is worse than five years ago."

Both McSwain and T.B. Maston, retired professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, cited figures that show that the dollar gap between the average white and black annual income has actually increased during the last decade.

Both were major speakers at the Christian Life Commission-sponsored conference on "Race: New Directions for a New Day," at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center here.

In a paper which presented an overview of "Where We Are in Race Relations," Maston said that while there has been progress--educationally, politically, economically--there is still a long ways to go in bringing an end to racial injustice.

He discussed the current impact of the busing to achieve racial balance in public schools, noting that some say it is a "phoney issue" since buses have long been accepted as a part of educational procedure.

Maston said arguments against busing that claim the practice will lower the educational standards for their children "may be a part of the problem that white people in general will have to pay for a while for the inferior education that Negro youngsters have received for years in segregated schools."

Speaking about segregated Baptist churches, Maston said, "What really concerns me is when a preacher refers to the present state of race relations as the 'will of God.'

"The more our churches really become the churches of God, the body of Christ, the wider their doors and arms will be opened to men and women, boys and girls of all classes and colors," Maston concluded.

Thomas Bland, professor of Christian ethics and sociology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., spoke about the "challenges Southern Baptists face in race relations."

Bland said we must seek "what is happening in race relations today as expression of God's judgement upon us." He said we are learning that "the consequences of sin are shared across generations."

Calling the church, "the most segregated major institution in American society," Bland condemned the general passive attitude in seeking to deal with race relations.

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"The local church has the challenge before us to make visible in the human community the love of God for all people. This surely means a racially inclusive membership," he said. And, it requires an aggressive program of outreach which is racially inclusive, he said.

"As the largest non-Catholic body in the United States, and as the numerically dominant denomination in those regions with the greatest involvement in race relations, we should be exceedingly careful to fulfill our Christian service as citizens," Bland admonished.

He called for Southern Baptists to "stand by our public schools," during "these times of transition" marked by racial desegregation, by busing and "by what may feel to be a loss of educational quality."

Bland said, "we should resist all efforts to have our church buildings become private, segregated 'Christian schools.'"

Bland called for the church to exercise its power in social and political structures of the world, working with secular agencies and individuals in racial concern.

Along a similar line, McSwain told the conference that "every person ought to be personally involved in at least one kind of community action project," and that ministers should be leading laymen toward involvement in such issues.

"Any church which is not involving its membership in the needs and life of its community is failing to fulfill the fullest imperative of the gospel," McSwain asserted.

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Ward Joins
Music Department

6/19/73

NASHVILLE (BP)--Jim H. Ward of Hampton, Va., recently joined the church music department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board as editor of adult and youth music materials.

Ward served the last five years as minister of music and organist at Hampton Baptist Church, Hampton, Va., and also has served in Belmont Baptist Church, Charlottesville, Va., as minister of music, and at Harvard-Terrace Baptist Church in Fresno, Calif.

A native of Fresno, Calif., Ward is a graduate of California State University of Fresno, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

During the past year he was president of the Virginia Baptist Male Chorale and accompanist for the Virginia Baptist Church Music Conference.

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