



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-5461

RICHMOND Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151

WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 25, 1973

**New Racism, Apathy Affect SBC
in Race Relations, Baptists Told**

By David Gooch

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Baptist leaders speaking here at a Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission conference painted a grim picture of the race relations scene affecting Southern Baptists today.

Citing the development of a new racism among both blacks and whites coupled with a growing sense of apathy, the conference speakers called for Southern Baptists to turn back the regressive tide that threatens to end progress in the area of race relations.

"Race: New Directions for a New Day" was the topic of the week-long conference held at the Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center here.

Cecil E. Sherman, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C., called problems Southern Baptists face in race relations, "tough, complex ones, with no easy answers."

Sherman, who is chairman of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, called for preachers to proclaim the gospel in the area of race relations. "Most Southern Baptist churches are still wrapped in a blanket of silence on this troublesome subject," he said.

"One of our major problems is that most pastors have never told their people that racism is really a sin against the living God," Sherman said.

"This racism is a part of the soul-sickness that has always blighted the human spirit," Sherman commented. "It is the ages-long struggle of the Church."

"Including race in the gospel will do more to do away with racism than anything I know," he said.

Sherman spoke of the struggles of his church to have an open membership, observing that "black separatism is the greatest barrier to further integration than anything else today."

He called on Southern Baptist pastors to condemn racism in all quarters--white or black--and warned them not to wait for black pastors to speak out against black racism before condemning white racism.

"Waiting for the black clergy to declare black racism to be evil is a wait that will let a thousand white pastors off the hook," he observed. "What is wrong is wrong. If they won't say it, we ought to say it."

He called for Southern Baptists not to tire in their efforts to bring about racial reconciliation. He said, "Most of the people feel, 'We've tried, and it didn't work. And I told you so!'"

"The more liberal among Southern Baptists need to come out, risk themselves, if necessary fly in the face of the establishmentarians among us, take our lumps, and declare again the biblical ideal," Sherman challenged. "We do not stop preaching on stewardship when we do not get all of the people to tithe."

Charles V. Petty, director of the Council of Christian Life and Public Affairs of the Baptist General Convention of North Carolina in Raleigh, cited some positive and negative contributions Southern Baptists have made in the area of race relations. "Southern Baptists are doing much

to promote brotherhood and alienation--love and hate--justice and injustice," Petty claimed.

As positive contributions, Petty listed the desegregation of Baptist hospitals, colleges, seminaries, institutions, and churches; increased ministries to minority groups; increased interracial dialogue; material by Baptist agencies on race relations; involvement of Baptists in seeking to change power structures to bring about racial justice; and prophetic preaching by some pastors.

"In a list of "sins" in the area of race relations, Petty included apathy, timidity, talk without deed, paternalism, failure to employ blacks to work with blacks, the support of legislation, programs and schools that promote segregation and racism, and punishment of persons who speak out for social justice.

In a speech entitled, "Race: Next Steps for Southern Baptists," Douglas Watterson, pastor of the Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Dallas, Tex., said that the basic assumption was that the doors of the church are open to all of the children of God.

From there, he said that pastors should "Call white flight (from racial problems and racially changing neighborhoods) a sin."

Not only should we stay in the community, but we should stay in the public schools, Watterson said. "We'll ride the bus if it is necessary to bring about reconciliation."

"We have to get involved in the governmental process in our city," he said, to bring about needed changes.

Speaking from the black viewpoint, Emmanuel L. McCall, associate secretary of the department of work with National Baptists of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, suggested that there needs to be "a re-reading of history." He claimed, "Most Southern Baptists still lack an adequate understanding of the black presence in America and what the attendant evils of slavery have done to both races then and now."

"One must try to understand the contemporary dynamics that form black opinions and attitudes," he added.

He cautioned Southern Baptists about over-compensation for feelings of guilt. "You cannot be held responsible for the sins of fathers, grandfathers, greats...One is responsible only for his time and his involvement in redeeming the corporate sin that affects us." McCall said.

If Southern Baptists expect to relate successfully to black Baptists, "we must be willing to be ministered unto as well as to minister," McCall explained. "Black Baptists have much to offer if Southern Baptists are willing to receive."

Edgar H. Burks Jr., Southern Baptist foreign missionary to Nigeria, spoke about problems that are caused for missionaries working among Africans by racist attitudes of Americans and, particularly, Southern Baptists.

"The practice of racial discrimination in the United States is a constant threat to every American who works abroad, especially in countries whose nationals have been discriminated against," declared Burks, who is executive secretary of the Nigerian Mission of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

He told of numerous incidents of racism against persons converted by Southern Baptist foreign missionaries when they had come to the United States.

He also told of "ugly Americans" who have imported their racism from their homeland. "Nigerians don't like racism in America, but they deeply resent it when Americans come as guests to their land and bring along their sickness," Burks explained.

Burks said that currently only two black missionaries are under appointment by the Foreign Mission Board--one career and one journeyman missionary. "We need more blacks to join us in sharing the truth that Christ can and does break down barriers and that Christianity is not just a white man's religion," he said.

"I trust that church doors will continue to be opened to black members and that we shall see a number of them seeking missionary appointment," Burks said.

Earlier in the conference, T.B. Maston, former professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, had presented a paper that gave an overview of "Where We Are in Race Relations."

Maston had concluded that while there had been some progress in several areas--such as economics, politics, and education--there is still a long way to go in bringing about an end to racial injustice.

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."

In another address, Larry McSwain, assistant professor of church and community at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., called Southern Baptists to active involvement in community action projects to help bring about changes.

He said, "Any church which is not involving its membership in the needs and life of its community is failing to fulfill the fullest imperatives of the gospel."

-30-

Churches Asked to Aid In Refugee Resettlement

6/25/73

ATLANTA (BP)--An emergency need exists for churches to aid in resettlement of refugees from Uganda, the director of immigration and refugee service for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board declared here.

L.D. Wood, associate director of the language missions department of the SBC Home Mission Board here, said three families who are refugees from Uganda now wait in Spain for immigration to the United States.

Southern Baptists have promised to serve as sponsors for the families, and Wood said he needs to hear immediately from churches willing to act as sponsors.

He said the families cannot enter the United States until they have assurance of sponsorship, jobs and housing.

The denomination already has placed three families in New York, Atlanta, and Spartanburg, S.C.

The refugees are natives of India who were forced out of Uganda when a new government under Maj. Gen. Idi Amin moved to make Uganda all black.

All Asian and British residents were forced to leave, and the government confiscated their businesses, property, bank accounts, automobiles, and new clothes.

The families leave with one suitcase each. The United States is allowing a thousand to enter the country.

Wood said churches should contact him at 1350 Spring Street N.W., Atlanta, Ga., 30309 or call 404-873-4041. He also wants to establish a waiting list of churches willing to minister to such needs.

-30-