

**BAPTIST PRESS**

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Early Conversion May Cause Problems, Professor Declares

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--Children who make professions of faith in Christ too soon run the risk of emotional damage, a Baptist seminary professor declared at a child conversion conference sponsored here by the Illinois Baptist State Association (convention).

William L. Hendricks, a faculty member of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, said 21 of his 81 students last year told him they were victims of a "spiritual stillbirth" when they were young.

Hendricks said these students were baptized at an early age, reassured everything was okay, then left to flounder on their own.

The revival sermon an evangelist prepares for a hardened sinner might have no ill effect on him, Hendricks told more than 320 participants from 10 states, but it "terrorizes" the typical eight-year-old.

The seminary professor gave an illustration of a youngster who one week hears in Sunday School that God loves him and that God made all that is beautiful. Then suddenly the next Sunday, a visiting evangelist tells him God is sending him to hell.

He reminded the conferees at the Southern Baptist gathering that there is not one gospel for adults and another for children. A child, he said, may know God loves him, but still not be ready for a meaningful conversion.

Hendricks cited one church where two youngsters, thought to be responding to an invitation, were "snared" on the way to the bathroom and baptized the same night.

It may take more courage for a pastor to tell a parent, "I just don't feel your child is ready," but that such a stand may mean more in the long run, Hendricks said.

At the same time, Hendricks warned against an arbitrary age for conversion and expressed regret that in a recent year Southern Baptist churches baptized 4,000 boys and girls, ages four and five.

He also told about one youngster who boasted he had "been saved three times on four busses" run in church bus outreach programs.

Children, facing attendance at adult worship services for the first time, have distinct problems, said Robert Fullbright, a children's worker for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

A typical four-year-old, up until his first experience in adult church, has been cared for in a nursery where he could nap on the floor and enjoy crackers and juice, Fullbright said.

Now, he is expected to act like a grown-up and when the Lord's Supper is observed, no wonder he is confused when refused the crackers and juice he was accustomed to in the nursery, Fullbright added.

Fullbright said the ideal children's worship is built around a Bible story, just as an adult service is often built around a specific scripture. He added that children's worship should involve boys and girls in activities, not just as spectators.

Other conference speakers, including a layman and a bus consultant, both from Atlanta, and a pastor from Nashville, emphasized the need for churches to be concerned

about reaching children for Christ and responding to their questions about salvation and the Christian faith.

Several participants indicated a need for more Southern Baptist literature dealing with the subject of children and the church.

Besides Illinois, participants came from Ohio, Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Indiana, Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia and Arkansas.

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Mission Study Book Banned;
Denied Entry Into Spain

2/7/74

MADRID, Spain (BP)--A mission study book published by the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Tex., has been banned and denied entry into Spain by censors here.

Jose Cardona, executive secretary of the legal organization of evangelicals, and the person who released the information about the censors, plans to ask them for additional information explaining why the book was rejected and will request that they reconsider their decision.

Mas Alto Que Montgo (Higher Than Montgo), written for children nine to 11 years old, is a "fiction-based-on-fact" book about a girl from an interior Spanish village who had a personal encounter with Christ at the Denia Baptist Camp.

The story told that the girl's family was originally opposed to her attending the camp because they were not Baptists. The girl went to camp hoping to climb the Mountain Montgo at the back of the grounds, and after she had an experience with Christ, she left camp thinking she would tell family and friends that she went higher than the mountain, up to where God was.

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The Spanish Baptist Publishing House is operated by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

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Church, Baptist Agencies
Benefit from Large Estate

2/7/74

TEXARKANA, Tex. (BP)--First Baptist Church here has been named beneficiary of nearly \$1.5 million from the \$4.75 million estate of the late J. K. Wadley, a deacon at the church for more than 50 years.

Five other Baptist organizations shared another \$957,486 from the estate, channeled through the Baptist Foundation of Texas, with \$527,915 of that amount going to Baylor Medical Center, Dallas. The remainder was divided in unequal shares to Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and four Southern Baptist Convention agencies: the Radio and Television Commission, Fort Worth, the Home Mission Board, Atlanta, the Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Undisclosed amounts went to Lory Hildreth, pastor of the Texarkana church, and two of its former pastors, James E. Coggin, pastor of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and Carl E. Bates, pastor of First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N. C., and immediate past SBC president.

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'Biblical' Names Run
In Minister's Family

SAN JOSE, Calif. (BP)--Geriell DeOlivira, the pastor of First Southern Baptist Church here, comes from a very "biblical" family.

In case there are any doubts, how many people have relatives named Proverb or Psalm? DeOlivira does. Two generations of the native Brazilian's family have carried names from the Bible, he says.

The Baptist pastor said it started when his grandfather was converted to Christianity under the teaching of Baptist missionaries to Brazil.

"My grandfather was so excited about becoming a Christian that when he married and his wife bore children, he wanted their names to reflect his newfound faith," the Latin American pastor says.

DeOlivira's mother was named Mary. His aunts and uncles were given such biblical names as Proverb, Psalm (now a Baptist minister in Brazil), Martha, Ruth, Zipporah, Peter and Deuteronomy.

It could have stopped with one generation but didn't.

When Mary was being courted by a man who wasn't a Christian, her mother objected. He found the only way to see Mary was to attend church.

Later, Mary and her suitor were married and he became a Christian. To please his mother-in-law, their children also received Bible names.

The couple's first child was named Genesis, followed by Bernice and Huldah (married to a pastor in Brazil), Eliel ("God is God"), and Geriel, a misspelling of a name in I Chronicles 7:2.

The whole family is involved in Christian work in some way, DeOlivira says.

Geriell DeOlivira, nicknamed "Gerry," came to the United States in 1963 where he continued his "biblical" lifestyle.

Besides ministerial duties and studies at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., DeOlivira is president of the California Baptist Bible Institute in San Jose, a small bi-lingual school started by his bi-lingual church.

DeOlivira and his wife, Sylvia, have broken the "biblical" tradition by naming their children Geriann Michele, Eric Antonio and Sherie Giselle--which he says are all French-influenced names.

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J. Clyde Turner
Dies at Age 95

2/7/74

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--J. Clyde Turner, 95, four times president of the North Carolina Convention of Baptists, a longtime pastor and former president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary board of trustees, died here February 1.

Turner, who retired from a 38-year pastorate in 1948 of First Baptist Church in Greensboro, N.C., fell at Hillhaven Convalescent Center here and suffered a broken hip on January 26, according to Marse Grant, editor of the Biblical Recorder.

The Southern Baptist leader was a member of the Southern Seminary (Louisville, Ky.) board 31 years, serving as chairman 12 years, according to seminary records.

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CORRECTION --In Baptist Press story mailed 2/6/74, headlined "January Cooperative Program Sets Record," change the 8th graph, first line to read--Even without the overage,-- (instead of, Even with the overage). Thanks. --Baptist Press

Baptists, Catholics Face
Each Other In Dialogue

By W. Barry Garrett

MARRIOTTSVILLE, Md. (BP)—Eighty-seven Southern Baptists and Roman Catholics from the northeastern part of the United States met in a three-day conference at the Marriottsville Spiritual Center here.

The two groups discussed their mutual interests in evangelism and social concerns. Both clergy and laity, men and women, composed the conference.

This was the third regional dialogue between Baptists and Roman Catholics. The first was at Daytona Beach, Fla., in 1971, the second at Houston, Tex., in 1972.

The conferences were planned jointly by the department of interfaith witness of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The aim of such conferences is to develop better understanding between two differing and often hostile communions. While both groups recognize that there appear to be irreconcilable differences, often they find many points in common. Just as often they discover that groups can hold opposing theologies but can work together in many projects to minister to human needs.

At the beginning of the Marriottsville conference, Catholic Bishop Joseph Durek of Nashville, Tenn., appealed to the Holy Spirit for open hearts, which he said might be "open heart surgery," for a better understanding between Baptists and Catholics.

M. Thomas Starkes, secretary of the department of interfaith witness, responded, "We will be honest enough to admit that within the sphere of denominational fellowship we feel strongly the compulsion to conform to the expected standards of that group--and in ecumenical gatherings the pressures are there to be more responsive to other Christian bodies."

At Marriottsville, a number of Catholic priests said that for the first time in their lives they had met a Baptist minister. Stephen Vidoczy of Allentown, Pa., was one of them.

Vidoczy said enthusiastically, "I shall leave with a memory of having met many fine Baptists--men and women whose problems and challenges are at least as great as mine and whose search for Christian solutions is at least as sincere as Catholics." He expressed the hope that in the future Baptist and Catholic apprehensions of one another shall be "less dark and our answers to them more Christ-like."

On the other hand, several Baptists were overheard to exclaim, "These Catholics are becoming more and more like evangelicals!"

Mrs. Clarence Enzler, a Catholic from Bethesda, Md., reported for one of the discussion groups. She acknowledged that no converts had been made on either side, especially on the subject of public aid to parochial schools. Nevertheless, she said the Catholic and Baptist representatives agreed that both fellowships could work together in many Christian service projects.

Eight discussion groups in two sessions explored the problems of reaching unchurched people and of social issues as a concern of Christians. The Catholics were especially interested in learning the evangelism methods employed by Baptists. The Baptists were stimulated by the humanitarian projects carried out by Catholics.

Avery Dulles, theology professor at Woodstock College in New York and a noted Catholic scholar, addressed the conference on "The Church Always in Need of Reform." He enunciated a strong Catholic position, but acknowledged that Vatican Council II opened many areas of reform in his church.

"Prayer and the Holy Spirit are essential to reform. Prayer opens us up to the Holy Spirit who is the highest authority," Dulles said. He declared that, if every Christian

church would reform according to the Holy Spirit, then the doors to dialogue and Christian unity would be opened.

C. Brownlow Hastings, assistant secretary in the Home Mission Board's department of interfaith witness, discussed the problem of cooperation between Baptists and Catholics at the grassroots level. He declared that the biggest enemy to such cooperation "is not prejudice but apathy."

Hastings explained, "Apathy is in proportion to predominance." In other words, where Baptists are in the large majority they are not interested in interfaith dialogue and cooperation. The reverse is also true in regard to Catholics, he said.

In discussing what Baptists and Catholics can contribute to each other, Hastings said Baptists can help Catholics in training the laity for a larger participation in church life. Catholics, he said, can teach Baptists much about the practice of worship. He observed that Baptists have been so "activist" that they have not stopped long enough to be equally as effective in worship.

William J. Cumbie, executive secretary of the Mount Vernon Baptist Association, Alexandria, Va., discussed social concerns that face both Baptists and Catholics. Among the issues he listed are: the need for a sense of community in America, public morality, Christian involvement in the political process, the problems of war and peace, many aspects of human welfare, racism and justice.

On the moral picture of America, Cumbie said, "When the highest office in the United States is stained with scandal, when state governments are overridden by corruption, and when the office of Vice President is vacated by 'nolo contendere,' we need to give serious attention to public morality."

After raising the question of the ability of Christians to make a difference in society, Cumbie asserted that they can improve society because they pray, "Thy will be done on earth."

A high spiritual experience took place in the joint Catholic-Baptist worship service. It was led by pastor Ernest Gibson of the First Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church of Washington, D. C., a black Baptist church. The senior choir and the gospel singers from the church provided the music, and Gibson preached the sermon. The service was a typical Sunday service of the church.

Gibson used as his text the experience of the disciples in a storm on the Sea of Galilee and Jesus walking on the water. He said the modern churches are in the midst of a storm as much as were the disciples on the sea. He likened modern church institutional structures to the boat used by the disciples, who relied on the boat for safety from the storm.

But Jesus conquered the storm without the aid of a boat, Gibson declared. More reliance on Jesus and less on ecclesiastical "boats" would be more effective, he declared.

Before the service ended, black Baptists, staid white Baptists and roman-collared Catholics together were caught up in an ecstasy of song, rhythm, hand-clapping, and prayer. The Catholics were amazed at what was happening in their chapel. They were even more amazed at their participation in and enjoyment of the experience.

The conference concluded by an open discussion on how to carry forward the spirit of the meeting and to spread better understanding among Baptists and Catholics. One suggestion was that Baptists and Catholics should use their joint influence on the national media--radio, television, motion pictures and newspapers. It was felt that the media could do much to improve the national integrity by presenting more wholesome material and by more responsible programming.

Other suggestions were: Baptists and Catholics in dialogue situations should candidly face their differences; interfaith Bible study and prayer should be encouraged; both communions should implement the concepts of "reconciliation, renewal and evangelism;" and interfaith dialogue and programming should take place between local Baptist and Catholic churches.