

September 24, 1974

Miss America

She Prayed for Help
'Just to Do My Best'

74-49

By Dan Martin

DALLAS (BP)--Miss America 1975 is a Christian.

"I think people have already picked up that I am a Christian and that I glorify Jesus for being where I am," says Shirley Cothran of Denton, Tex., a Southern Baptist.

As she stepped out onto the runway in Atlantic City on a recent glittering Saturday night, the attractive young woman from North Texas breathed a little prayer.

"I wasn't worried about winning, but that I would do my best. I thought, 'Lord, just help me not to trip and fall and help me to do my best,'" she recalled.

She prayed before she stepped out into the lights at the Miss Texas Pageant in Fort Worth, too.

"You know, that's a pretty frightening thing for a girl of 21 who's not a professional entertainer. So, even before I went out on the stage in the Texas pageant, I prayed that God would help me do my best.

"I wasn't concerned about winning but just to do my very best in representing the people who had worked so hard for me," she added.

Prayer and perseverance have played a large part in Miss Cothran's reaching the pinnacle of beauty pageants. So has her faith and her church, First Baptist Church of Denton, she says.

"I thought I became a Christian when I was nine," she said in a telephone interview from the Miss America suite in a New York hotel.

"But I found He was not really in my life like He should be...not in the proper perspective. So, when I was in the eighth grade--about 14--at Falls Creek (encampment), Okla., I really accepted Christ as my Saviour and since then He has played an extremely important role in my life.

"I have found that when I try to take over my own problems and try to take hold of what I think the answer is, I'm quite often wrong. But, when I let Jesus take over, I find out the problems aren't really as big as I thought they were," she said.

She has been a member of First Baptist Church of Denton since she was "three weeks old...when my mother enrolled me in the cradle roll.

"My church has always been a vital dimension in my own life. I've been active in Vacation Bible School where I believe I got a lot of my fundamentals about what life is all about.. my morals and my beliefs.

"I've been active in Sunday School...and my church family is a very dear one to me," she added, crediting her pastor, L.L. Armstrong and the church's minister of music, Bill Shadle, as being "milestones" in her life.

Her trek to the Miss America Pageant began four years ago when she entered the Miss Denton Pageant. That first year she was runner up.

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"I worked very hard, but I wasn't really deserving of winning...The girl who won was extremely talented so I wasn't bitter about losing," she explained.

She entered again the next year and "really went in with the attitude that I wanted to win. I didn't win. I was first runner up. It really did crush me.

"But, I found out I had not put God in the proper perspective and I feel like now that everything turned out for the best. By proper perspective I mean keeping God first and yourself second.

"I had gone into the pageant doing it all myself...wanting to win and making that most important. I failed, but I'm glad I did, because it made me realize I can't do it myself. That's not the way to succeed," she said.

She entered a third year, this time in the Miss Oak Cliff Pageant, and won. She was third runner up in the Miss Texas Pageant.

This year, she won the Miss Haltom-Richland Title, the Miss Texas Pageant and finally the Miss America crown.

"It sounds like I was very determined. I was," she says. "I'm not easily discouraged."

Questioned on various topics, she says:

-- "I've never tried marijuana. I don't see any need for it, as I don't alcoholic beverages. I don't believe in stimulus things in my body because I don't need them. I have a natural high in which is the Lord Jesus Christ."

--"I enjoy being a woman. I'm not necessarily caught up in women's lib, although I do sympathize with some of their issues as far as equal pay for equal work is concerned. I respect what they are doing and I think they should respect me for what I am doing. I don't worry about all the door opening. Personally, I enjoy it.

The day after she won the pageant, Miss Cothran went to Calvary Baptist Church in New York City.

"It was great to be with Christian friends there," she said.

Looking forward to her reign as Miss America, Miss Cothran reflected that as a Christian, "I think that will be one advantage I have. I look forward to spreading His word."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

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Clergy-laity Gap Acknowledged;
Healing Suggestions Offered

9/24/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--A battery of prominent Southern Baptists acknowledged a widening gap between clergy and laity and offered a variety of suggestions for narrowing that gap during the recent "Fulfillment in Ministry" conference held at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board here.

The conference, attended by 350 persons--mostly pastors from 29 states, the District of Columbia and five foreign countries--dealt with meeting the vocational needs of Southern Baptist ministers.

Gene Garrison, pastor of Oklahoma City's First Baptist Church, suggested that the clergy-laity gap has been caused by the division in life between the sacred and secular.

"God never intended this to be so," Garrison pointed out. "Life is not divisible; all of life is sacred. What a man does on Monday is just as important as what he does on Sunday."

The clergy-laity gap has been widened by poor interpersonal relationships, said E.B.

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Bratcher, consultant on the ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. There is a gap between clergy and laity concerning their understanding of the church, the role of the minister and basic Christian beliefs.

"Many times the minister is blamed and criticized for matters over which he has no control or responsibility," said Bratcher. "Also, most ministers are not trained in conflict management. In fact, it might be added that most ministers are afraid of conflict."

Bratcher added that he feels many ministers tend to look upon any difference of opinion as a personal affront. Therefore, when many ministers meet opposition they take it personally and become exceedingly defensive.

Layman Guy Rutland said that the minister is not looked up to as the all-knowing person on biblical subjects and is facing more frequent questions from the laity.

"On the other hand, the laity is sometimes overstepping its bounds," said the president of Motor Convoy, an automobile transportation firm. "The layman has a job to do, but he wants to hire it done rather than doing it himself."

In Rutland's opinion, the church is a business and must be run as a business. "The pastor and minister of education are gauged on their productivity just as I am as a layman," added the Georgia businessman. "The pastor is the leader and has to have a knowledge of how to get that productivity through the laymen."

Participants of a discussion group called "Measuring Success in Ministry" took exception to Rutland's view of the church. They agreed that far too many people measure success in numbers, using the three B's--buildings, budget and baptisms. They contended that the church is more than a business and that the pastor is more than just a production manager. However, this group did not clarify what the church and pastor's role are.

Continuing, Rutland turned his attention to higher education and called for a stronger foundation for pastors. This foundation would include a new curriculum in the seminaries and specific guidance in helping seminary students understand where they are, who they are and why they are there.

As a denomination, Southern Baptists need to find more ways to involve lay people in the work of the association, state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention, Rutland concluded.

In response, Ira J. Porter, chairman of the executive committee of Louisville (Ky.) Trust Bank, took issue with Rutland saying, "I'm wondering if the problem isn't a God gap rather than a clergy-laity gap. There is bound to be a difference between the clergy and laity. I can't imagine being on the same level with my pastor. There is a difference between the clergy and laity just as there is between a bank president and a bookkeeper."

Calling for the recognition of areas of responsibility by pastors and lay persons and for a sense of security for the clergy was W. Ches Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tifton, Ga.

There is a desire for security in the call of the pastor, Smith added. He then explained, "Pastors are considered to be in a different category from other professions. An executive who gets the short end of the stick can move out and find another job, but the pastor can't. If he conveys the idea he is jockeying for another position, he's viewed as being less than Christian."

Nearly all the participants voiced agreement when Garrison stated that the application of theological principles would heal the gap between clergy and laity. Also, there must be a balance between authority and responsibility in the churches.

"There has to come a willingness by both parties to cooperate and work together," said the Oklahoma City pastor. "The key to overcoming the clergy-laity gap will be found in a balanced unity where laity and clergy grant to each other the same prerogative of openness without hostility."

The two-day conference was sponsored by six SBC agencies--Annuity Board, Brotherhood Commission, Home Mission Board, Seminary Extension Department, Southern Seminary and the Sunday School Board.

Pastoral Problems , Solutions
Discussed at SBC Conference

NASHVILLE (BP)--Immediate denominational consideration of the pressing problems of placement, salaries, role expectations, loneliness and isolation of pastors was called for by a task force of Southern Baptist leaders during the recent "Fulfillment in Ministry" conference here.

Speaking in the opening address of the two-day confab held at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, James W. Hatley, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., revealed his ministerial struggles as an example of what many pastors are going through today. He told how he had come to be a seminary graduate with a "theological education, but I was not a very theological person. I was unprepared for what was waiting for me in the ministry."

Hatley said that at no time during his seminary experience "did anyone tell me I had a tendency to manipulate people, in certain areas of my ministry I was outright paranoid, and for some reason of my make-up I tended to make people dependent upon me under the guise of religious trust."

"The minister's humanness means that he experiences the same type of crises in terms of age, career decisions, workload, family matters, economics, personal identity, and health conditions--among others--that befall his congregation," said Darold H. Morgan, president of the SBC Annuity Board, Dallas.

E. B. Bratcher, consultant on the ministry from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, cited studies that showed, "Many pastors feel they cannot approach or expect much understanding from the hierarchy of the church as to their pain and confusion. The greatest complaint heard from ministers is that when they are facing difficult situations no one seems to care and there is no one to turn to."

Bratcher revealed a survey finding that more than half of the pastors interviewed reported they had experienced at some point in their careers a crisis of faith reducing their competence or conviction about their vocation as a minister.

Concerning this crisis, 83 per cent reported they handled it alone rather than seeking the advice or counsel of their church. The study indicated about one-half of the ministers responding felt they had no one with whom they could talk freely about their problems as ministers.

The opinion of the conference participants was that "as a human being, the minister needs ministry just like the church members. The congregation has the responsibility to minister to the needs of the pastor, however, pastors can best minister to other pastors."

The discussion group on "Crisis Points in a Minister's Career" recommended denominational, state convention and associational "minister support systems" to counsel pastors. It was agreed these systems should be composed of both ministers and lay people. This would afford a place for distressed pastors and churches to turn.

Quoting from the "Ex-Pastor," Bratcher said there are strong data to indicate that many men have dropped out of the pastorate simply because they could not endure the long time it took to be placed.

It was brought out in the conference that in informal systems of placement, such as the Southern Baptist Convention employs, pastors are placed according to their effectiveness, successfulness and political contacts. Participants registered distain for this system citing the first two criteria as hard to evaluate and said the third is not related to a pastor's abilities.

The reports of the "Ministerial Placement" discussion group called for the SBC and state conventions to review the present system to see if there is a better way in getting pastor-less churches and church-less pastors together. The SBC's total system of ministerial placement should be revised, this group stated.

Also, the group called for the appropriate SBC agency to provide literature and guidelines on placement for use on the state and associational levels. The South Carolina Baptist Convention was praised for its placement program called "Church-Minister-Denomination

Relationship. They acknowledged that nine other state conventions have such a program and that other state conventions should provide this service.

Various conference participants stated that the contemporary church is confused about the nature of the pastor's duties and responsibilities. "Neither ministers nor the schools that nurture them are guided today by a clear-cut, generally accepted conception of the office of the ministry," added a Mississippi pastor.

"The first major obstacle a pastor faces when he comes to a new church is a 'cultural shock' in adjusting to his church," added Morgan. "What the pastor sees as his primary tasks may differ from what the congregation feels should be his first and foremost concern. A conflict of interest ensues."

Much of the conflict surrounding the pastor's role has risen out of the lack of communication and interpersonal contact, reported the group on "Role Expectations and Role Conflict." Guidelines and materials should be developed by the SBC to help churches and ministers define their expectations and respective roles so that effective evaluation of individual pastors can be made by church members.

Concerning salaries, it was the consensus of the participants that pastors' salaries tend to be lower than those of the average church member. The present economic conditions tend to intensify this fact. "Many pastors and church staff members are falling further and further behind financially as inflation soars higher and higher," said George Knight, editor of "Home Life" magazine, representing the group discussing "Financial Support of the Minister."

In support of this opinion, Bratcher reported that various surveys show salaries for ministers are comparatively lower than those of individuals in other vocations that require comparable training.

The "Fulfillment in Ministry" conference, called to discuss the vocational needs of Southern Baptist ministers, was sponsored by six SBC agencies--Annuity Board, Brotherhood Commission, Home Mission Board, Seminary Extension Department, Southern Seminary and Sunday School Board.

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Truthfulness Cited As
Chief Watergate Lesson

9/24/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--The idea that America should put Watergate "behind us is both fallacious and dangerous," the director of Christian citizenship development for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission said here.

C. Welton Gaddy, one of three speakers at a meeting of the Nashville Religious Public Relations Council (RPRC) chapter, said specific details of the various incidents and particular personalities involved in Watergate "may properly be left well enough alone."

But, Gaddy said, "Factors which gave rise to this American tragedy and the principles determinative of behavior in it should be studied for years to come."

Other speakers, also Baptists, were Walter Harrelson, dean of the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University here, and John Killinger, professor of homiletics at Vanderbilt.

Subject of the meeting was "what lessons we have learned from Watergate that will help communicators and organizations to do a better job."

Gaddy and Harrelson both affirmed that a primary lesson of Watergate is the primacy of truth.

Harrelson, reflecting on the recent resignation of President Ford's former press secretary, Jerry TerHorst, said "we ought to be ready to resign anytime it's called for. . . There do come times in which a quiet, simple readiness to say we can't go on," is appropriate, Harrelson said.

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TerHorst resigned in disagreement with Ford's pardon of former President Richard M. Nixon.

Killinger also referred to the "big lie" of Watergate and said that too often in the mass media, "Language itself has become the prime commodity. We make business with words and may be a little freer to use them in a less responsible way than we ought to."

The three decried the coloring of truth and language. "Closely related to this basic lesson is the insight that there are no small lies," Gaddy said. "Untruthfulness is always consequential. Dishonesty is the breeding ground for distrust, the demise of justice, and the eventual outbreak of violence. . . ."

Another lesson, according to Gaddy, is that "Morally, the end still does not justify the means. At some point, our society moved from allegiance to the noble belief that it is not whether you win or lose but how you play the game that matters to the conviction that winning is everything.

"As a result," Gaddy said, "Persons become dehumanized--rendered unimportant, stereotyped as enemies, or respected only for what we can get out of them--and morality becomes utilitarian.

"Denominational boards and agencies face particularly strong temptations at this very point," Gaddy noted, "Convictions about a 'holy cause' often produce extremely unholy strategies."

Gaddy continued, "When institutions become laden with power, the temptation exists to expend more efforts protecting the life of the institution than in facilitating the programs for which it exists.

"In such a situation, image becomes more important than credibility. . . . However, Watergate has taught us that what the institution or office is actually doing--even when it is the executive branch of government with 6,144 public relations staffers--is ultimately more important than anything else."

Gaddy noted he believed as a result of Watergate, the field of public relations is generally misunderstood as a discipline with negative connotations. But, rightly done, public relations is an authentic service in which a person is accountable to the agency, to the public, and to God.

"That latter accountability is far more basic than the other two and thus shapes actions accordingly," Gaddy said.

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Baptist Leader Urges More
Support for Public Schools

9/24/74

By Stan Hasteley

NEW YORK (BP)--The country's best hope for alternatives in education lies in strengthening the public school system and not in diverting public funds to nonpublic schools, the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs said here. James E. Wood Jr., head of the Washington, D.C.-based agency, spoke during a three-day ecumenical consultation on education at the Statler Hilton Hotel.

The consultation was sponsored by the National Council of Churches and had as its theme, "Values and Education: Pluralism and Public Policy."

In his address, Wood argued for broader educational alternatives within the public school system rather than dependence upon private schools to provide such alternatives.

He noted that the overwhelming majority of private schools in the United States are religious, including the vast parochial school system of the Roman Catholic Church.

"Roman Catholic parochial schools," he stated, "with 8,500 elementary schools and 1,719 secondary schools and an enrollment of 3,614,000 students in the 1973-1974 school term, account for almost 90 per cent of the students in private schools."

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Wood made reference to a series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions since 1947 which have ruled against direct public funding of nonpublic schools.

"If 'alternatives in education' is interpreted to mean that public funds are essential to maintain the pluralism which church schools provide," he said, "the Court has denied the validity of such alternatives."

He argued also that acceptance of public funds by a church group for its schools "inevitably invokes public policy regulations and a high degree of uniformity," thereby defeating the objective of providing educational alternatives.

"The one best hope for pluralism and viable alternatives in education," Wood stated, "lies in the state supported public schools." He then called for revitalizing and reshaping the public schools by making available more, not less, funding.

In the course of his address, Wood noted four methods which operators of private schools have attempted to utilize in securing public funds: tuition vouchers, tax benefits, instructional grants and aid to children.

The tuition voucher plans would make available an equal share of public funds to parents of all school children in a given district to be spent in the school of their choice, public or private.

Wood noted that because some of the vouchers would be spent "to purchase a religious education," the practice "both legally and philosophically constitutes coercion of taxpayers into religious participation and flies in the face of separation of church and state and the principle of voluntarism."

The voucher proposals could further lead to divisiveness within society, Wood warned.

"To make financially advantageous the use of private schools which parents may choose as giving the type of education they want for their child is to encourage, at public expense, the creation of a multiplicity of divisive school experiences for the nation's children."

Wood argued against providing tax benefits such as tax credits, tax forgiveness or exemptions from school taxes to parents who send their children to nonpublic schools.

"Such programs," he said, "would tend to weaken the public school systems by depriving them of needed tax money and relegating to the public schools the children of the poor and those children who for reasons of religion, emotional and physical problems, severely limited intellectual ability, lack of discipline, or racial identity were not acceptable to the nonpublic schools."

On the question of whether the state should provide instructional grants to church schools, Wood noted, "Legitimate public programs should and do have first claim on limited public funds." He said that if public funds were made available to private institutions, the ones with the most political clout would benefit at the expense of the powerless.

Wood noted that the Supreme Court, while holding voucher plans, tax benefits and instructional grants to be unconstitutional, has held that a distinction can be made between aid to children as opposed to aid to religious schools. Examples of such help are transportation and school lunches. Even those programs must meet the tests of not advancing religion or providing "excessive administrative or political entanglement," Wood added.

The consultation was the second such effort to bring together representatives from Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic groups to discuss educational issues facing both public and private schools.

ADD

In Baptist Press mailing dated 9/20/74, add the following as the third from last graph in story headlined Missions Study: 'Crisis Communities May Lose 500 Churches'--"In concluding the survey report, Mabry says that about 11,000 SBC churches are in the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas of the United States." Thanks.