

September 30, 1974

White House "Superaides"
Hold "Amoral" Philosophy

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Third of a Series by Wallace Henley
for Baptist Press

"The factor that I have missed in most of the works on the presidency I have read," says George Reedy, "is the impact of the institution on individuals. The literature on the subject seems to assume that the White House somehow molds the man and his assistants into finer forms."

Working in the White House is a soul-rending pursuit of trying to live up to myth. Conventional wisdom--the myth--has it that the White House is crammed with brilliant people who roam its caverns uttering profound thoughts. At least that was the myth prior to Watergate. But it was the atmosphere of expectation into which I moved in the first Nixon term.

The truth is that the White House was crammed with young people--some of them brilliant. And they were roaming its halls. Most often, tragically, the pursuit was not profundity, but being crowned Superaide, that epitome of the faceless but faithful, upward bounding, unquestioning servant of the awesomely placed people who run the country. I entered that contest early on my arrival at the White House.

And it was a vicious one. The warfare raging behind the iron fence of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue only rarely had its smoke and blood glimpsed by the public. But rage it did.

Harry Dent, my superior, and Bob Haldeman had been in such a battle, and it wasn't cooled until the president sniffed the gunpowder and issued instructions to "leave Harry Dent alone."

If such war was fought at the higher levels, that of the lower was just as intense, and sometimes more so. One of my friends was an aide to a major presidential assistant.

I watched my friend deteriorate from a calm, self-assured person to a man resembling a fox under pursuit. A fellow just below him was nibbling at his job, trying to undercut my buddy at every point. Such skirmishes went on all over the White House.

I learned that to grow into superaide, one must develop a thoroughly pragmatic spirit. One of the prime complaints about the Nixon administration--even from its friends--was that it had no theme in domestic policy. Indeed, Nixon himself had once remarked that the country needed a president for foreign policy.

Domestically, the nation could manage on its own. Patrick Moynihan's "benign neglect" approach was the philosophical base for the non-policy. There was little doubt about the need for professional expertise in foreign policy, hence Henry Kissinger.

But the chief domestic post was up for grabs, as John Erlichman, a former Nixon campaign advance man, learned when he edged out men like Arthur Burns for the job of chief domestic advisor to the President.

There is a place for a measure of policy pragmatism in government. Flexibility is a requirement. But through the White House warp, and fed by the stinging flames of the political issues of the period, that policy pragmatism was generalized and carried over into ethical pragmatism.

It was too easy for some to go from the line of reasoning that whatever policy would help the nation should be followed, to the idea that whatever was done to keep the administration in office was just as alright.

Thus, there was the ironic twist that the ethical relativism used by the leftwing "counter-culture," and so despised by the administration, became the ethical principle by which powerful people in government guided themselves.

To be superaide, there seemed almost the requirement that one become, not immoral, but amoral. "What we must do, we must do," is still a lyric sung too often in Washington.

The salvation for the world's superaides--in Washington and everywhere else--is the scriptural theme that, under the transcendant God, morality and truth are absolute. That goes for people hurling garbage cans and people festooned with the entrapments of the White House. There is equality in moral responsibility under God that is utterly democratic in scope. Washington needs urgently to learn this truth.

If superaide was expected to be propelled by pragmatism, he was also expected to make abject surrender to the awesome authorities above him. Lower level superaides have no options but to make assumptions that the orders they get from their superiors are honorable, just as those superiors must assume that their orders are on the up and up. This chain curls right into the Oval Office.

It's possible some of the junior aides trapped in the Watergate mud got in the dilemma because they assumed the orders they received were legitimate. One can imagine a senior aide coming to his assistant, for example, and saying, "We suspect Daniel Ellsberg is a KGB--(Russian secret service) agent. The security of this country rests on you finding out everything you can about him."

Junior aide assumes that his bosses have met, that all options have been weighed, that CIA and FBI supersecret reports have been digested, and that a course of action has been decided upon that he must implement. The moral considerations of what he must do have little if any bearing. The White House warp suggests what's done at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue transcends traditional ethical realities.

Professor Stanley Milgram has done some extraordinary research into the way people respond to authority.

"The disappearance of a sense of responsibility is the most far-reaching consequence of submission to authority," he said. And I can recall well the attitude of junior aides in the White House who felt they were not responsible for the ethics of their actions, because such responsibility was absorbed into the mass.

Obedience to authority is essential for ordered society. The question man must face whether he is in the White House or sweat house is: To which authority will I surrender myself? If this question had been asked prior to Watergate, the tragedy might have been avoided.

For man must give ultimate allegiance to Authority transcending finite authorities. Our ultimate allegiance must belong to God. That's a lesson from Watergate!

In the White House superaide surrenders totally because he sees himself as a necessary subject, occupying a strategic role in a hierarchy absolutely essential to the survival of his society. But if superaide belongs to God, he should be subject to God's society.

The order of God transcends human hierarchies. Washington is in dire need of commitments going beyond those based sheerly on the pragmatics of keeping alive the structures it sees essential for the survival of society.

Rather, the ultimate commitments of leaders must be to God's kingdom and its ethical demands. Otherwise, the moral chaos and confusion broiled up in the red-hot vat of power will only intensify.

Besides, commitment to God's order first is the best guarantee of the survival of ordered society.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and these things will be added to you..." (BP)

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Wallace Henley is writing this series for the Alabama Baptist on his transition from the "unreal" political world in Washington, where he served as a staff assistant to President Nixon, back "to the call God had placed on my life" and away from the Watergate-saturated mentality he saw eroding his values. He is pastor of Old Spanish Fort Baptist Church near Mobile.

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BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2555
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

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. 37234
Telephone (615) 254-5461
RICHMOND Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

September 30, 1974

SBC Sunday School Board Shoots for Attendance Goal

NASHVILLE (BP)--On "High Attendance Celebration Sunday," Nov. 17, 1974, Southern Baptists will aim toward a record 5,000,000 people in Sunday Schools across the 50 states.

High Attendance Celebration Sunday, the first such Southern Baptist Convention-wide attendance project, is designed to celebrate the highest one-day Sunday School attendance in the 129-year history of the SBC.

Presently, over 7,180,000 are enrolled in the 33,534 Southern Baptist Sunday Schools, according to A.V. Washburn, secretary of the Sunday School department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Reaching the 5,000,000 attendance goal would mean an increase of one-third over the 3,250,000 people who attend Sunday School regularly.

The special Sunday will climax a six week "Reach Out Project" in many SBC churches, in which an effort will be made to contact every known prospect. All churches are being encouraged to work toward having the highest attendance ever.

To begin the tallying process, each church is being asked to report attendance to its local association of Baptist churches as quickly as possible after the church service on High Attendance Celebration Sunday, a Sunday School Board spokesman said.

Associations will contact unreported churches Sunday evening and compile an associational report, which should be called to the Sunday School secretary of each state Baptist convention no later than the following Monday afternoon, he said.

In an effort to release results by Wednesday, Nov. 20, state Sunday School secretaries then will complete state reports and call Washburn in Nashville by 4:00 p.m., CDT, Tuesday, Nov. 19, he added.

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Southern Seminary Names Earl Guinn to Teaching Post

9/30/74

LOUISVILLE (BP)--G. Earl Guinn, president of Louisiana College in Pineville, La., since 1951, has announced early retirement to become professor of Christian preaching at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here, effective Feb. 1, 1975.

Guinn, 62, a native Mississippian, was pastor of First Baptist Churches in Louisiana in Sterlington, Jennings and Bossier City, and was chairman of the department of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Tex., before assuming the presidency at Louisiana College, a Baptist school.

He is a graduate of Louisiana College and holds the master of theology and doctor of theology degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Prominent as a preacher throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, Guinn has led special preaching weeks at Midwestern and Southeastern Baptist Seminaries and was co-author of "Southern Baptist Preaching," published in 1959 by Broadman Press.

The veteran college administrator is immediate past chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Education Commission and has served on the executive board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

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In 1970-71 he was president of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools. He is currently president of the Louisiana Foundation for Private Colleges and is a member of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana.

During his tenure as president, the college's annual budget rose from approximately \$300,000 to approximately \$2,000,000 and total assets have increased from \$2,003,285 to \$12,709,634.

Numerous physical facilities have been added, including the newest which carries his name, the Guinn Auditorium and Religious Education Building.

About two-thirds of all persons who have received degrees from Louisiana College have received them during Guinn's tenure; and faculty doctorates rose from approximately seven per cent to 60 per cent.

Calvin Hodges, a layman from Baton Rouge, president of the Louisiana College trustees, appointed a search committee to seek a successor to Guinn.

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It's a CRIME What
Some Typos Will Do

9/30/74

LUBBOCK, Tex. (BP)--Baptist preachers promoting CRIME!?

If you believe every telegram you read, that's what you would believe about Southern Baptist Convention President Jaroy Weber and Evangelist Billy Graham.

Baptist Press, SBC news service, recently reported an address in Memphis, Tenn., by Weber, a Lubbock, Tex., pastor, on the subject "Winning America to CHRIST."

Then a gremlin at Western Union got in the act--garbling the following congratulatory telegram from Graham to Weber.

"Just read in Baptist Press your statement about winning America to CRIME. I am with you and support you in this goal. God bless you," the telegram declared.

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