



BAPTIST PRESS

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Nation Building Not
Finished Conferees Told

By Floyd Craig

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--The job of nation building is not finished, participants at a conference on Southern Baptists and the Bicentennial were told at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center here.

It may not be completed unless basic issues of world hunger, civil rights, arms control, poverty, inflation, ecology and international peace are given top priority by both government and religious leaders, declared C. Welton Gaddy of Nashville.

The prediction by Gaddy, director of Christian citizenship development for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, came at the first of two conferences on the bicentennial sponsored by the Christian Life Commission. The second conference is set at Glorieta (N. M.) Baptist Conference Center, Aug. 16-22.

Gaddy told the conferees that Southern Baptists should lead the way in programming bicentennial observances which "preserve the distinctive identity of God's people and the prophetic content of God's word within a relevant relationship to the concerns of the nation.

"Will the 200th anniversary of this nation's beginning go down in history as a fine year, a year of national recommitment to the fundamental ideals of the founding fathers, a turning point in the ordering of national priorities or an empty political hoopla with an abundance of promising rhetoric but a shortage of significant action?" asked Gaddy.

Gaddy warned that Southern Baptists should practice patriotism which renders to "to 'Caesar' only that which rightfully belongs to 'Caesar.'" Some things belong to God alone--worship and unconditional allegiance," he said. "The nation should be appreciated but not deified. Government policies merit respect but are not necessarily expressions of the divine will.

"Little good can come," said Gaddy, "from the most glorious of hopes or the loftiest of plans for America unless the machinery of its political system is functioning effectively. This is why a commitment to active citizenship is important to Southern Baptists.

"Southern Baptists have the people, commitment, institutions and methods," challenged Gaddy, "for being a tremendous force for good in the life of the nation. For us to muster these resources, we must support those of our number who are even now serving in places of political responsibility and encourage our young people to accept politics as a Christian ministry and vocation.

"Unfortunately, in the past, Southern Baptists have tended to embrace those who were successful. We have had little time for political losers or those who conscientiously worked their way up the political ladder," observed Gaddy.

"During this bicentennial year, Southern Baptists should evaluate the ways the denomination and local churches have misused their influence and seek to use their power constructively," Gaddy urged.

"Much of the power Southern Baptists have exercised in the past has come in the support of the status quo. The 'do not rock the boat' philosophy has had a tremendous impact," observed Gaddy. "Perhaps the most destructive aspect of the church's use of power in support of things as they are is that this silences the prophetic witness of God's people.

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"When the church is fully aligned with the structures and powers of society, it is in bondage and its voice of prophecy is still. It can offer neither a word of help or hope," he declared.

"Because of the largeness of the Southern Baptist Convention, its place of prominence alongside other denominational bodies, and its undisputable influence in the southern region of the United States, its silence on a matter may speak as eloquently as a statement," Gaddy said.

"No matter whether it's convention-wide or in local Baptist churches, when we are silent on an issue it has much of the same effect as would an over overt use of power," he said.

Gaddy outlined that on many issues "Southern Baptists conclude 'religion and politics don't mix' because their own interests are not involved. But, of course, with the advent of taxation proposals which directly relate to church property they have no hesitancy for a mass power movement. The motivation has grown out of our own self-interest," he said.

"The church should be as morally responsible for its motivation for and actual use of power as any other aspect of its ministry," challenged Gaddy. "It is to be an institution which can demonstrate selflessness and care for others whether the issue is power or evangelism," he said.

"I can think," concluded Gaddy, "we could have no better identity in the community than as people who sound the prophetic word of God and then pursue its implementation with Christian compassion and political skill."

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Emeritus Missionary Comes
'Home' to Visit in Nigeria

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8/6/75

ABEOKUTA, Nigeria (BP)--I. N. Patterson came home. Not to his birthplace or to his retirement home, but to his real home in Nigeria where he spent 41 years as a Southern Baptist missionary.

I. N. and Sara Lou Patterson came to Nigeria in 1925, after appointment in 1924. They left Nigeria in 1965. Their return this year marked the 10th anniversary of their last departure and the 50th anniversary of their first arrival.

Hailed by Nigerian newspapers as a prominent church leader and educator, Patterson and his wife were greeted with elaborate receptions, according to press reports. At the airport he was called a devout and dedicated teacher and moralist.

The airport reception included a reunion with many of his former students from the 19 years he spent as principal of Baptist boys high school here. Patterson's former students included businessmen, lawyers, church leaders and educators.

In a speech at the 62nd annual session of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, the missionary urged Nigeria not to exclude religion from educational policy. Patterson also expressed his gratitude to God for sparing his life to come to Nigeria after 10 years to find his former students contributing to the economic growth of their country. The Nigerian Baptist Convention financed the Pattersons' trip.

Patterson held the top Baptist administrative positions in the country for most of the second half of his missionary career, serving simultaneously as general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and secretary-treasurer of the Nigerian Baptist Mission (organization of Southern Baptist missionaries).

Mrs. Patterson taught English and religious education at the boys' school. She is a native of South Carolina; he is from Alabama.

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Teenage Boy's Confession
Spurs Dramatic Service

By Orville Scott

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--A youth's spontaneous confession to an apparently unresponsive Monday night crowd here for Southern Baptist Foreign Missions Week opened the floodgate for an outpouring of commitment to Christ.

Observers said it served as a reminder that God stills works in unexpected ways.

For half an hour just prior to the evening service, a standing room only crowd prayed for the decision service.

The program featured stirring messages by missionaries and a dramatic audiovisual presentation on world hunger.

But, it appeared the invitation would end with little response from the 2,000 people--mostly youths--gathered in Holcomb Auditorium at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

Suddenly, Kevin Pile, 17, stepped down from the choir and asked permission to speak.

In a voice choked with emotion, but filled with resolve, Pile said he felt that God had inspired him to tell what had just happened to the conference youth choir from Olivet Baptist Church in Wichita, Kan.

Pile said he was "scared to death," but, "You don't argue with God."

Earlier in the day a young man had told one of the choir members it was apparent that they weren't being honest with God and the audience in their musical presentation. When one of their members accepted Christ a "revival" broke out in the choir, Pile noted.

"Last night we were singing for ourselves," Pile said. "Tonight we're singing for God.

"You could become a missionary and say, 'Look out. God, here comes a Southern Baptist,' but if you're not right with God, it wouldn't do any good," the youth told a shocked audience. Then he urged those who weren't Christians to raise their hands.

High in the balcony a dark-haired teenage girl lifted a slim arm. A girl friend slipped quietly to her side and the two embraced. As the first girl wept another youngster took her hand, and the three made their way down the winding staircase to the waiting counselors at the front of the auditorium.

Already, others were slipping out from their seats and moving down the aisle, many sobbing.

Two teenage girls walked hand in hand to the counseling room. Close behind followed a husky athlete wiping tears from his eyes.

They kept on coming until 57 persons had made decisions. Two accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour; 31 reaffirmed a prior commitment to Christ; 24 came forward saying they felt God's leading to some special vocational calling.

It started with a prayer service and then "there came a fine boy trusting Jesus," said Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

As one observer noted, "God can't be programmed. He shows his power in the most unexpected ways."

Violence Continues in Beirut But Missionaries will Stay

By Bill Marshall

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--"It's all over," I heard for the second time in as many months from an optimistic Beirut neighbor. But few really believed the outbreak of violence had ended.

There appeared to be too many loose ends, too little indication that the heart of the situation had been penetrated. Most people seemed skeptical that any combination of political leadership could solve the enormous political problems. A pervasive pessimism settled with the heat from the afternoon sun.

In late June, with the late-night thud of distant rockets, residents sensed it was coming again. Come it did, this time with even greater force. Within three days all of Beirut was grimacing from the fierceness of fighting which left no area untouched and no persons unaffected.

No one knows with certainty how many died this round--some estimates top 300 with over 2,000 wounded, but others are found daily in the rubble, bodies of "missing" and some known only to God.

Lebanese pride themselves in remaining independent of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The past several months have awakened them to the fact that they are being drawn, almost helplessly, by a powerful undertow into a deeper sea of conflict.

With people confined to homes and business interests waning, many Lebanese closed their shops and left jobs and went to the mountain villages which cradled their childhood. Most have returned now. Some Lebanese are talking about leaving their country permanently, but most will remain where their roots lie deep and they have families to feed.

Many "foreigners" will remain with them. About 6,000 Americans live in Beirut, at least half of them near the predominantly foreign district of Ras Beirut, which has thus far been the least devastated of Beirut's many districts.

Among the foreigners who will remain are missionaries, not a few of whom have lived here over 25 years. The greatest concentration of American Protestant missionaries in the middle east is in Beirut, where many are connected to headquarter facilities which service the broader area.

Some 35 Southern Baptist missionary personnel in Lebanon, all in Beirut, are a small part of the missionary community. Southern Baptists arrived later than the American Presbyterians, who established a prestigious university here.

The Baptist ministry shows itself through a Baptist seminary, a program of publications and a radio ministry, all in Arabic and each one with an international outreach.

When one thinks of a distinctly Lebanese ministry, one pictures the Beirut Baptist School which enrolls more than 800 students, and unlike many local schools, caters to both Christian and Muslim. The Baptist school remained open until bus drivers called in saying they were pinned down by gunfire.

If the pattern continues, families will be forced to spend long hours confined to relatively small apartments high above the streets. Day-laborers may see their children go hungry for want of work; the poor will suffer most.

Southern Baptist missionaries will stay on, admittedly frustrated by the situation but feeling somehow their presence may make a difference, and knowing that "brotherhood" is formed when people suffer together.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Bill Marshall, a Southern Baptist missionary stationed in Beirut, is field representative for the middle east.

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