



BAPTIST PRESS

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Louisville Baptists And
Busing: 'Individual Action'

By Michael Duduit

LOUISVILLE (BP)--When U. S. District Judge James F. Gordon ordered the desegregation of Louisville and Jefferson County schools by busing 23,000 children, the city's educational, political and business leadership began preparations for a time of transition, which eventually erupted into violence.

Among those involved with or affected by the controversy have been the area's 100,000 Southern Baptists, by far the largest body of evangelicals in the city.

Baptist leadership in the busing controversy has been almost entirely on an individual basis, according to G. Allen West, executive director of the Long Run Baptist Association. "The Baptist constituency covers the spectrum from the poorest and least educated to the richest and best educated. How can you get a united statement from such a diverse group?"

West says that "for the most part, Baptist pastors have taken the position that we should obey the law."

The only statement on the busing controversy by a group of Baptist leaders came in a resolution unanimously adopted by the 60-member faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here, many of whom had young children being bused. The statement urged "the peaceful implementation of the law," and appealed to Jefferson County citizens to "work cooperatively with school officials to assure the safety of all children in the public schools."

Opinions vary concerning the impact of Baptists on the situation. John Howell, pastor of Crescent Hill Baptist Church, says that Baptist influence has been limited, "because the majority of people who are demonstrating and boycotting are non-church people, I would guess."

Another report indicates that a Louisville Baptist preacher showed up at a Ku Klux Klan meeting in the height of the controversy and informed them their influence was not needed. Information on the incident is sketchy. The pastor prefers not to be identified nor elaborate on his role.

LaVerne Butler, pastor of Ninth & O Baptist Church, a large, integrated, inner-city congregation, thinks Baptists have been a "stabilizing force" in the crisis. "We as Southern Baptists have had a major calming effect without compromising our position."

Don Randolph, pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church and also chairman of the Jefferson County Board of Education, indicates that he knows of no Baptist meetings to deal with the situation outside of the interdenominational groups that have been organized. He feels that the religious community "could have been more vocal. We at the Board of Education have not heard from the religious community."

Randolph, in his position on the school board, has been at the center of the controversy since it began. One Baptist leader has expressed the opinion that "the one real courageous figure to come out of this has been Don Randolph."

Still in his first term, Randolph was elected to the county board on a platform which opposed busing and merger with the city school system (the city and county systems were merged this summer).

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Randolph's church is located in an area of Louisville that has been most torn by violence. Southern High School, located near his church, was the site of the burning of two school buses during a recent night of violent demonstrations. But it is also an integrated church; the pastor points out that one of the deacons is black.

Many of his church members have been active in the demonstrations--"the vice-president of Concerned Parents (largest of Louisville's antibusing organizations) is a member of my church," says Randolph.

Though he is personally opposed to busing ("People should be able to go to church and school where they like."), the school board chairman has encouraged his congregation to obey the law as a Christian duty. He has spoken out strongly against violence. "To destroy or hamper someone else's freedom because I feel mine has been restricted is not right," says Randolph.

Some of his members have urged the pastor to join them in their protests. "Some feel I ought to get out and march with them--that I ought to go to jail or resign. I tell them that's not my thing."

The head of Louisville's school board feels that God has put him in this position for just such a time as this. "The exciting thing I've found is that a witness for Christ is not always made within the four walls of the church," Randolph explains. "If there's a need for a Christian witness, it's in the educational field."

Two pastors who have been outspoken on the busing issue are Butler and Howell.

Butler recently preached a sermon, televised on the church's regular Sunday morning broadcast, entitled, "Desegregation--Right; Forced Busing--Wrong." He says the sermon came about through "a deep impression from the Lord that I was under a mandate of God to try to clear the air and set forth the issue in the light of right and wrong."

After preaching the sermon, in which he defended desegregation as a Christian responsibility but leveled his attacks on court-ordered busing, Butler received numerous requests that he preach it again. One anti-busing group, Save Our Children, purchased advertising for the Sunday evening service in which he preached the sermon to "a packed house," Butler says.

The sermon indicated that there may be grounds for keeping children out of school, though Butler said in a later interview, "I do not encourage or discourage the boycott (of the public schools). This is a secular term, not a Christian approach to protest. Some feel it is and I do not argue with them."

The Louisville pastor believes that Christians, as "the salt of the earth," must find ways to vocalize opposition without resorting to violence. Says Butler, "Our church has taken a stand without apology and held its head high."

Howell is pastor of the more suburban Crescent Hill Baptist Church, located in an affluent area of east Louisville, the section least touched by demonstrations and violence. Two of his five children are being bused this year, yet he has taken a more moderate position on the issue, stressing cooperation rather than confrontation.

"Our deacons and staff," says Howell, "led the church in adopting a statement saying that, since busing is here, we have a Christian responsibility to be reconcilers, to help people cope with their feelings, and to help the (desegregation) plan take place as peacefully and constructively as possible for the sake of the children."

Howell says that he does not favor busing but that he has tried to take a positive rather than negative approach to the issue. As a result, he believes, things have remained calm "I'm pleased with what we did here," he says. "I don't think we have a single family in our congregation that is boycotting the schools."

Crescent Hill Baptist Church sponsored a number of meetings for parents of school-age children being affected by the desegregation plan. The Sunday morning worship service preceding the opening of school in September was devoted to "the theme of love, peace and reconciliation in the midst of transition," according to Howell.

In a column in the church's newsletter written after school opened, the pastor urged both forbearance and patience. He asked his congregation to consider "how many decades black Americans have waited for even the progress they are now making toward equality of opportunity. We whites can afford to exercise a little patience, now that merely one of the many rights we enjoy has been abused."

Bicentennial Feature

Colonists Clash with Army;
Baptists Join in Fighting

HILLSBORO, N. C., May 17, 1771--(BP)--A band of independent pioneers who have revolted against excessive taxation and political corruption fought what may prove to be the first skirmish in imminent battle for American independence near here yesterday.

Although the poorly armed woodsmen were defeated and dispersed by the state militia, they served notice they are ready to fight and die, as many did yesterday, to throw off what they say is oppression.

About 2,000 colonists, less than half of them armed, engaged the militia of Governor William Tryon at Alamance Creek 20 miles west of here. The skirmish continued for about two hours, with losses on both sides, before the rebels were dispersed.

The Regulators, as the rebels call themselves, have banded together to oppose what they term "burdensome taxes" and the "graft of the royal government." The Regulators have vowed they will not pay a tax unless they are satisfied it is lawful, and say they will pay no additional "fees" to civil authorities.

Disturbances have occurred for several years in North Carolina involving the Regulators, and a law was passed making rioting a treasonable offense. Several Regulators were captured yesterday by the militia and face execution for participating in the disturbance.

Another issue between the Regulators and the royal government is a restriction prohibiting Baptist ministers from performing marriage ceremonies. Baptists are gaining strength in this section, but say they have faced oppression and discrimination at the hands of the authorities.

While Baptists have been urged by their leaders not to take up arms against the government, it is believed that many have joined the Regulators in fighting what they consider injustices. Throughout the colonies, Baptists have fought boldly for religious and civil freedom.

Many Baptists share the growing feeling that war with England is inevitable. Their action here and in other colonies leaves no doubt that Baptist sympathy is with the revolutionists.

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Associations in Louisiana,
Houston Lash Charismatics

Baptist Press
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By Dan Martin

H OUSTON (BP)--The Union Baptist Association (UBA), in its annual meeting here, has publicly condemned the charismatic movement, branding it as "being of the Devil" and "unscriptural."

Some 500 messengers representing the 230 churches of the association voted almost unanimously in favor of the resolution condemning the movement.

The vote came on the heels of a Dallas Baptist Association annual meeting, in which two churches with charismatic ministries--Beverly Hills and Shady Grove Baptist Churches-- were ousted.

Dallas Baptist Association has the most members of any Southern Baptist Association, while Union Association has the largest number of churches.

Meanwhile, reports have been received of ousting of a church with a charismatic ministry by the Trenton Baptist Association in Louisiana. Earlier the Cincinnati (Ohio) Baptist Association withdrew fellowship from two churches.

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The action by the three associations does not alter relationship with the state conventions of Louisiana, Ohio or Texas, nor with the Southern Baptist Convention's national body.

The UBA resolution was introduced by J. J. Wolf, pastor of Pinemont Baptist Church. His resolution was rewritten and toned down by the resolutions committee.

Wolf's original resolution asked messengers to say they "have no part of" nor are they "in sympathy with the modern charismatic movement."

It also told persons who become involved to "find their fellowship and association" with other groups having more similar practices.

The approved resolution deleted those portions, but retained other strong words.

It noted every church "should be on guard against efforts of the Devil to infiltrate the fellowship with false doctrines and divisive influences."

It asked that "special attention be given to false teachings concerning the lordship of Jesus Christ, the preaching of 'another gospel' as discussed by the Apostle Paul, the person and work of the Holy Spirit (especially that reflected in the present day unscriptural charismatic movement) and the role of the church in the 20th Century."

The resolution noted the "Evil One, the Devil, is abroad in the land 'as a roaring lion, seeking all whom he may devour'..."

It said his influence is reflected in lives "blighted by sin", homes of America destroyed, influence of Christians weakened, morals of the nation deteriorating.

It added that "one of the most destructive influences of the Devil in our generation is his success in hindering the witness of the gospel by dividing and destroying many of our great churches."

The Trenton Association voted to withdraw fellowship from Claiborne Baptist Church, West Monroe, La., because, a spokesman said, "for the past three years the . . . church has persisted in the direction of neo-pentecostalism, openly calling themselves a charismatic church." He said the church has been "openly uncooperative with the association, has indicated no desire to remain a cooperating church other than using the name Baptist and has persisted in a course of action that is doctrinally incompatible with accepted Southern Baptist belief."

At the time the Trenton Association was taking the action to withdraw fellowship from the Claiborne Church, the church was host to a "Southern Baptist Charismatic Fellowship Conference" which included Howard Conatser, pastor of Beverly Hills Baptist Church, according to the Baptist Message, Louisiana Baptist state paper. Beverly Hills Church was one of the two ousted by the Dallas Baptist Association.

The action of the Cincinnati Association, reported earlier, withdrew fellowship from the Saylor Park and Oak Hills Baptist Churches on doctrinal grounds.

C. Wilson Brumley, metro missions coordinator of Union Baptist Association, said the resolution "was not passed with the idea of threatening churches at all. It was passed in recognition of the fact there is a problem among us as Baptists over the interpretation of the gifts (of the Holy Spirit)."

Brumley said no churches in the Union Baptist Association have become openly charismatic, as have Beverly Hills Baptist Church and Shady Grove Baptist Church in the Dallas Association.

"We have one church which lost quite a few members who felt like the church was becoming that way," Brumley said.

He added that "many churches have people who claim to have received the gift of speaking in tongues. But the fact that people in the churches claim to be neo-pentecostal does not mean the churches are neo-pentecostal in their intent and purpose."

According to Louis Moore, religion editor of the Houston Chronicle, "rumors abound that two of the 230 churches are becoming charismatic."

He said they are First Baptist Church of Bellaire and Nassau Bay Baptist Church, both in the Houston area.

"In both cases, the reports seem to be exaggerated," said Moore, who visited worship services at both churches.

Roy Ladd, pastor of Baptist Temple, Houston, said: "We do not have a major issue before us, but if and when an issue arises, we can deal with that." Ladd called the neo-pentecostal movement "devil-excited."

Wolf, who introduced the resolution, said he is not worried about a local church or individual, but he is "concerned with a principle." He added, "A man is free to believe whatever he wants to believe, but I do not think such a man can still be a Baptist," he said.

Charlene Warnken, religion writer of the Houston Post, noted Houston Baptists and Southern Baptists are becoming "exceedingly agitated by the growing numbers of their flock who are attending prayer meetings and charismatic services in other churches or in neighborhood groups."

McGary Ford, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacinto City, said, "Sooner or later the UBA will have to deal with this matter in order to keep ourselves Baptists and to keep from becoming mongrel-like in doctrine."

Brumley told Baptist Press that "unless the situation modifies somewhat, we will have to face it in a matter of two or three years."

He added there are "tongues speakers in a number of churches" in UBA and noted most Baptists "are hurt by the divisiveness."

"I do not think we ought to avoid controversy like the plague. I think when it comes we should deal with it in the Spirit of Christ."

He added however: "I guess it's a problem all over the United States; all over the world. I hope it won't deter us from the main mission of trying to win people for Jesus."