



BAPTIST PRESS

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'Cultural Jesus'
Won't Attract Poor

By Jim Newton

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (BP)--Southern Baptists have not been effective in reaching the cities because they are preaching a cultural Jesus the poor, disinherited people of the cities cannot accept, a Philadelphia sociologist told Southern Baptist evangelism leaders.

Anthony Campolo, head of the sociology department at Eastern College, warned against preaching "a Jesus just like yourselves . . . a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant Republican" who is an incarnation of American culture.

"The Jesus preached in most Southern Baptist pulpits is a white, Southern Baptist Jesus, tailor-made to order in Nashville, programmed by the official board, voted on and approved by the national convention, ordained and sanctified by the people--but an incarnation of who we are culturally, not an incarnation of God," he said.

The Jesus of scripture is radically different, because the Jesus of scripture calls his followers to self-sacrifice, not to materialistic success, Campolo charged.

"I get tired of your Miss Americas coming to the annual convention saying, 'Look what Jesus has done for me,' or football and baseball stars saying Jesus helped their scoring or batting averages," Campolo added. "Jesus never promised success--he promised a cross."

Campolo, speaking in a bombastic style that angered some attending the annual national conference of evangelism directors in San Juan, called for prophetic preaching that confronts the immorality of a wealthy, materialistic society in America.

Most Southern Baptists have fled from the inner cities to the comfortable suburbs where they preach an inoffensive gospel that appeals to the wealthy and successful, he said.

"The pastors don't want to preach anything that will threaten the powerful, rich people in their congregations because if we preach the tough message of scripture it will stop the flow of the big bucks to the church and the rich will become Presbyterians. But Jesus doesn't need or want their bucks," he charged.

Campolo, an American Baptist active in a black Baptist church in Philadelphia, said he is "more of a fundamentalist" than most Baptists who say, "When the Bible says it that settles it." Many such people, he suggested, are selective in what scripture passages they accept literally, in actual practice.

"Somehow we keep trying to figure out how we can be millionaires and still be followers of Jesus. But Christ said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom--and most Southern Baptists don't accept that."

The affluent American lifestyle and the lifestyle of Jesus Christ stand diametrically opposed, he insisted.

"The problem," Campolo observed, "is we have made Christianity a means of getting the things this world has to offer . . . a magic formula to get what you want from God."

Thus many Christians have become slaves to getting all the things the media and society say are good. "The worst kind of slavery is when the slaves don't even realize they are slaves," he lamented.

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The Jesus of scripture calls people not to embrace society but to be revolutionary agents of social change, Campolo insisted. "The reason Jesus saves us from sin is not so we can go to heaven when we die but so we can be God's instruments for the transformation of the world today," he said.

Campolo called for Christian condemnation of a social system in which banks, real estate agencies and government agencies oppress the poor in the cities, but acknowledged most pastors don't know what to say to bankers, real estate agents and government leaders in the churches.

"The church is full of materialistic, self-centered people who want a personal piety that avoids social responsibility," he said.

Too many Christians feel there is nothing they can do to bring about social change but even a small church can do a great deal if they depend on the power of God's spirit, he said.

Campolo told how students in his social change class became involved in helping create jobs for 700 unemployed people in two Dominican Republic villages by training them to manufacture several products and then marketing the products in the United States for the villagers.

But the students realized 700 jobs were only a drop in the bucket for a country with two million unemployed so they began to research why there is so much poverty, unemployment and hunger in the Dominican Republic. They discovered an American company, Gulf & Western, was buying up most of the farmland (which once grew food for the people) to grow sugar.

So the students bought 11 shares of stock and went instead to the Gulf & Western stockholders' meeting. During "new business" the students read passages from the Bible to the stockholders and told them "God is calling this corporation to repentance."

Last April a vice president for Gulf & Western called Campola to report the company was establishing a comprehensive social reform program in the Dominican Republic and funding it with \$400 million.

The program included testing the soil of Gulf & Western farmland and shifting soil suitable for food production to that purpose, building new housing for 14,000 sugar workers, setting up an educational program to eliminate illiteracy in 10 years and building infirmaries and dispensaries in every village as part of a comprehensive health care program.

"We could have come up with 100 social aid programs from our denominational headquarters and still not match what Gulf & Western is able to do," Campola said. "We need to remember the same word of God which can bring a drunk to repentance can also bring a multi-national corporation to repentance."

The oppressed people of the city will respond to a gospel and church that brings about that kind of social change and tells them about the real Jesus who calls people to be agents of change, he stressed.

People are responding in the cities, especially in the storefront, black and charismatic churches, he observed, but they are not responding to traditional Southern Baptist techniques.

"There is a power blowing in the wind--a presence called the Holy Spirit that is changing lives in unexpected ways and unexpected places with a uniqueness and creativity that staggers the imagination," Campolo said. "Ultimately, the world is going to be won to Jesus," but it will take a radical commitment to a radical gospel to reach the oppressed people of the cities, he concluded.

Cothen Calls For Emphasis
On Democracy, Soul Competency

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A failure to understand and teach the Southern Baptist ideals of individual soul competency, a free church in a free state and democracy at every level of the denomination is a major source of current problems "plaguing the Baptist Zion," Grady Cothen said.

Cothen, president of the Sunday School Board, spoke to state convention executive directors and program leaders attending December planning and promotion meetings.

"I'm suggesting the Baptist ideals that have allowed us to be independent and taught us to be interdependent, that have led us to this good hour, are precious beyond our ability to imagine and ought to be protected and nurtured and discussed and promulgated and taught and saturated in every church in the Southern Baptist Convention," said Cothen.

Cothen cited a 1964 document on Baptist ideals written by a convention-appointed committee chaired by Ralph A. Herring and including Gaines Dobbins, Theodore Adams, T.B. Maston, Cothen and 15 other SBC leaders. The document is available as a tract from the board.

Cothen emphasized that biblical and theological orthodoxy are "infinitely important" and have been more adequately emphasized in churches than Baptist polity principles.

"Now hear me, I believe the Bible, all of it," said Cothen. "I do not understand all of it. What I do not understand I accept on faith. I believe it is the truth without any mixture of error."

At the same time Cothen said recent moves toward having delegates instead of messengers at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention show that "democracy in the denomination" is in danger in our time.

"We have moved to the time where there appear to be groups that seem to be instructed; when this happens they become delegates," he said.

Cothen said he was not concerned there were arguments about abortion and prayer in the public schools at the 1982 convention.

"I do not take exception to a group deciding what it believes about a specific issue. But when it attempts to force anyone to believe what it decides it ceases to be baptistic," he noted.

"I was concerned there was evidence of political structures of America at the Southern Baptist Convention pushing various political agendas," Cothen added. "When the White House discusses ways to persuade the SBC to do its business as it relates to resolutions something is amiss."

Democracy for Southern Baptists means freedom, not toleration, said Cothen.

"We are free from each other and for each other. We are independent and interdependent. We believe in soul-competency not only for me but for you and anybody else. The only coercion which should be among us is that of the Holy Spirit," he emphasized.

Despite the problems, Cothen said allegations by some that the denomination is drifting toward liberalism "are not substantiated by the facts."

"Not in my lifetime have the agencies of the SBC and the state conventions been so keenly sensitive to the will of Baptists as they are today," said Cothen. "I believe that with all my heart."

At the same time, he said, "I am aware that there is great diversity among Southern Baptists. May it ever be so."

Calling the present "a moment of dangerous opportunity," Cothen said, "it behooves us to be Baptists in the finest, most generous sense of the word.

"It is my hope and prayer that we will continue down the middle of the road--reaching people, developing believers, strengthening families and helping the churches. I pray we'll give ourselves unstintingly to an unbelieving world and to a confused Baptist world."

On another matter, Cothen, who has announced his retirement for medical reasons, said, "I expect to exercise the responsibilities of the office of president until the 31st day of January 1984." When he announced his retirement Cothen had said it would be effective no later than March 1, 1984.

Cothen, 62, added he will work closely in a six- to eight-month orientation process with a new president who is expected to be elected in February 1983 or soon thereafter.

"So long as I am legally responsible the decisions will be mine," said Cothen. However, he noted, "As we move near his (new president's) installation time he will participate in more and more decisions."

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BSSB Search Committee
Reports Progress, Harmony

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Two members of the Sunday School Board presidential search committee reported their work is progressing harmoniously without pressures from any special interest group.

"Our work is progressing well but no decision has been made yet," Raymond Langlois told board employees in their weekly chapel service Dec. 10. He said 70 persons had been nominated for the position and every one is being considered.

Langlois, pastor of Judson Baptist Church and John Daley, pastor of Brook Hollow Baptist Church, asked to speak to employees to share information about the search process.

Daley, chairman of the trustee executive committee and an ex-officio member of the search committee, said the group is "working in a marvelous harmony and trust with one another as seek a new Sunday School Board president, perhaps the most strategic position in the denomination. We feel God has chosen us for this task because of this harmony and trust."

"We have not had any pressure from any outside group and no advice," Langlois reiterated. He said he was grateful the committee had been allowed to do its job in a spirit of confidentiality.

Langlois said he expects the committee to make a recommendation to Sunday School Board trustees at the semiannual meeting here in February.

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SMU Prof. Replies
To Draper's Charges

By Helen Parmley

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DALLAS (BP)--While doubting the wisdom of replying to "groundless charges," Southern Methodist University professor Schubert Ogden has replied to allegations made against him by Southern Baptist Convention President James T. Draper Jr.

Draper, president of the 13.8 million member denomination and pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, warned Baptists that if they don't strengthen their evangelism program the denomination "will end up like SMU which has a professing agnostic as head of the religion department."

Draper told the Dallas Morning News he was referring to Schubert Ogden, an internationally recognized theologian and director of the graduate program at the Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology.

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Draper said he did not intend his remarks to apply to Lonnie Kliever who heads the religion department at SMU.

"We drew this conclusion (that Ogden is a professing agnostic) from reading his book, Christ Without Myth," Draper said.

In reply, Ogden quoted author H.L. Mencken, who said, "Only to a savage in the bush or the American gospel tent preacher supposes that religion is primarily a matter of knowledge. Religion is 99 percent trust and one percent knowing."

Ogden further cited a passage from St. Thomas Aquinas: "We know that God is, but we don't know what God is."

Draper made the reference to Ogden during an appearance before a conference of Baptist directors of evangelism meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The Baptist Press, a daily news service of the SBC, reported that Draper was critical of Baptist churches with thousands of members and \$1 million dollar budgets that year after year have no more than five or 10 baptisms.

"We are not trying to make everyone like us but if we don't stand firm we will have no evangelism," Draper told the directors. "You will have no jobs and we will end up like SMU in Dallas which has a professing agnostic as head of the religion department."

Ogden pointed out that, unlike other denominational institutions, SMU does not apply a test of belief to its faculty.

Ogden's Christ Without Myth was written for completion of a doctorate in philosophy he received from SMU in 1958. The thesis won the Susan Colver Rosenberger Education Prize, presented by the University of Chicago for the best dissertation on education, sociology or theology.

Ogden said he did not know what Draper had drawn from the book to develop his accusation.

"We are not called to know everything," Ogden said. "We are called to live in trust in God's word to us and in loyalty to that word."

"And if that's not good Reformation Christianity, Mr. Draper and I have lived in the wrong history."

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Evangelism Directors
Elect Williams Director

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (BP)--Otis Williams, director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist Convention, Montgomery, Ala., was elected president of the Southern Baptist Fellowship of Evangelism directors.

Williams, former vice president of the group, succeeds Calvin Cantrell, associate director of evangelism for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, Alexandria.

Elected vice president was Irving Childress, evangelism director for Arizona Baptists. J.W. Hutchens, North Carolina Baptists' evangelism director, was re-elected secretary-treasurer.

During the organization's meeting members honored four who are retiring this year: O.M. Cates, Georgia evangelism director; Carlos Paredes, associate in the Texas evangelism division; A.C. Queen of Nevada and Leonard Sanderson of Louisiana.

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