

December 9, 1954

127 Ninth Avenue, North Nashville, Tennessee

BINGO FOR CHURCHES
NOT LIKELY IN SBC

NASHVILLE, Tenn.--(BP)--"Bingo for churches!" is never likely to be a Southern Baptist battle cry, if comments received here by the Baptist Press reflect the main opinions of Baptist pastors.

J. W. Storer, Tulsa, Okla., president of the Convention, while stating that Southern Baptists held no official "church position" he did believe that repeated resolutions indicated that without doubt the position of our people is against bingo or any other form of gambling. He also said that in his view Baptist opposition to bingo goes deep to the roots of their church belief.

Bingo is also seen as a means used by Roman Catholics to help maintain their state-built institutions. J. M. Dawson, Washington, D. C., said, "Some churches, notably the Roman Catholic, under stress of need for money with which to maintain their ambitious church institutions, seek to violate the constitution of the land in order to obtain public tax funds; but they willingly violate anti-gambling laws of the state which uphold moral order to obtain corrupt funds for their enterprises. By so doing they destroy hope of retaining the good will of all patriotic citizens and call down upon themselves responsibility for disunity in the nation."

There seems little doubt in Baptist minds that bingo is gambling, Porter Routh, executive secretary of the Executive Committee, said. "Gambling in any form is inconsistent with the basic Christian concept of the value of the individual. The individual finds his values in the concept that energy spent is rewarded, and a concept that man should receive something for no effort is a direct contradiction of the inherent worth of man." Foy Valentine, director of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, agrees with the idea that bingo is dangerous, being an elementary form of gambling which both attracts novices and enables professional gambling interests to make their rotten profession more palatable to the public.

Also in agreement is another noted authority on Christian ethics, O. T. Binkley, Wake Forest, N. C. "I am firmly opposed to bingo as a source of revenue for religious organizations or professional gamblers. Bingo for economic gain is a

(more)

form of gambling and gambling damages personality and community and is inconsistent with Christian motives for the support of noble causes."

"Bingo does not require any skill and certainly has no character-building value," is the comment of Dr. T. B. Maston, professor of social ethics, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex. "Request for legal permission to conduct bingo games in churches would imply that the purpose for which the money would be used would sanctify the gambling."

"Certainly if churches resort to bingo parties, selling chances on automobiles and horses, and similar money raising projects, they ought to be dealt with in the same manner as bookies, professional gamblers, and others who live as termites and leaches on society," is the opinion of Ray Roberts, state mission secretary for Southern Baptists in Ohio.

"Bingo is intolerable to the Baptist mind," Wallace R. Rogers, pastor, Citadel Square Baptist Church, Charleston, S. C. said. "Bingo for churches is somewhat like cockroaches for refrigerators: One is about as illogical as the other. Anything that places the church in a position of compromise with gambling is so completely out of character as to be unthinkable."

"Bingo can never substitute for God's plan of church finance," C. C. Warren, Charlotte, N. C., chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, said. "It tends to substitute a materialistic, compromising emphasis for a spiritual regeneration. It cultivates an evil instinct, a greed for godless gain and degrades human personality. The fruits of gambling are poverty, rackets, starvation, drunkenness, murder, etc. To engage in anything which corrupts another is morally wrong. A church that so digresses from the New Testament pattern will lose the respect of genuine Christians, and sooner or later answer to God himself for the perversion of his truth."

Southern Baptist opinion was well summarized by T. C. Gardner, youth leader who lives in Dallas, Tex., "A Trojan Horse forecasting irreparable moral disaster to our nation."