

November 6, 1958

**South Carolina Elects
Sunday School Leader**

COLUMBIA, S. C.--(BP)--John K. Durst, associate professor of church administration in the school of religious education, New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary, has been named director of the Sunday school department of the general board of South Carolina Baptist Convention.

Assuming his new duties on Dec. 1, Durst will succeed the late Dr. J. L. Corzine. D. D. Lewis has served as acting director since the death of Dr. Corzine in February.

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**Reformation Emphasis
Needed In Modern Age**

NORRISTOWN, Pa.--(BP)--Religion without faith came in for heavy attack in a Reformation Day message here by C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D. C.

Carlson spoke at the First Presbyterian Church in a community service sponsored by the Norristown Council of Churches.

Some students of the Reformation, Carlson, said, may count it strange that a Baptist layman should be asked to give a Reformation Day sermon in view of the fact that "our Anabaptist forbears were not generally well received in those decades of upheaval." However, "there are points of spiritual insight in the Reformation that need to be shared by us all."

Luther's theme, "the just shall live by faith," has pertinence to the present day, the Baptist leader said, because of the current tendency toward the institutionalization of religion. "Totalitarianism is a part of our age...and... unfortunately institutionalized religion can also become totalitarian."

"Our modern age of religious freedom rests heavily on the understanding that the just must live by faith," Carlson declared. In view of the "hatred abroad in our land, even to the point of bombing schools, synagogues and churches" the spiritual insight that gave the Reformation movement meaning as a spiritual force must again be recaptured.

"Christian faith is not a subjective, ethereal experience of confident living," Carlson explained. "In Luther's experience the authority of a pretentious but disillusioning church was replaced by the authority of Christ as revealed in the Bible. The Book took the place of the church as the valid communicating medium."

Pointing out how predatory churches may become, Carlson said that the most positive thought that can enter a human mind is "the just shall live by faith." It is this basic insight that needs to be re-discovered by "people who are confronted with political and religious institutions that lord it over men, institutions which oppress instead of serving."

Luther learned the difference between "faith" and "religion" and from then on the whole scriptures took on meaning in terms of faith, Carlson observed. Although "Luther never saw the full unfolding of his insights in the processes of history, here is a basic premise of freedom. This is the theme of the Reformation."

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**Naylor's Installation
Scheduled on Nov. 25**

FORT WORTH--(BP)--Robert Ernest Naylor will be inaugurated as the fifth president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here in ceremonies Nov. 25.

Delegates have been invited to the installation from every area of Southern Baptist life. Welcoming ceremonies will begin at 10 a.m., followed by the inaugural lunch at noon, the inaugural dinner at 5:30 p.m., and the inaugural ceremonies at 7. A reception will end the day's activities.

Greetings will be extended to President Naylor from Estil Vance, president of the Fort Worth National Bank, representing Christian friends; Forrest Feezor, Dallas, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, representing Texas Baptists; and J. C. Segler, president of the Southwestern Alumni, representing alumni and students.

Congressman Brooks Hays, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will deliver the major address at the morning service.

William Fleming, chairman of the board of trustees, will preside during the evening service. Naylor will be presented by Thurmond George, pastor of First Baptist Church, Duncan, Okla. The inaugural prayer will be led by E. D. Head, president emeritus of Southwestern.

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A Meaningful Thanksgiving

Personal Experience in National Tradition

By C. Emanuel Carlson*

Thanksgiving Day can be either a national holiday or a spiritual experience. And if we so desire, it can be both.

"God Almighty may be specially thanked, praised, and blessed on next Wednesday forenoon -- the text to be appropriate and the sermon to be applicable thereto." This permission to give thanks was granted by the Governor of New Amsterdam in 1645. It is probably the first Thanksgiving proclamation in New York's history.

"Your Reverence will please announce this matter to the congregation next Sunday so they may have notice. On which we rely," said the Governor to the pastor.

Civil authorities in the new world had begun very early "to order thanksgiving" in the colonies. The pattern was normal, for all the colonists came from backgrounds in which their religious experiences were supposed to emanate from government authority.

In various colonies the practice had started by orders to give thanks for a safe crossing over the ocean, for the new harvest, for a treaty with the Indians, or for other special divine favors to these exposed colonial groups.

In 1775 the Continental Congress proclaimed a special day of prayer for all the colonies, thereby starting a shift of this function to the central government. Following the Declaration of Independence and the other events which moved toward a new united nation, the Continental Congress proclaimed December 18, 1777, as a Thanksgiving Day. This may be taken as our first national observance of the day.

Presidents Washington and Adams followed the above patterns and proclaimed days of prayer and thanksgiving. But Jefferson was sure that these were violations of the Constitution and refused to accede to such requests.

"Fasting and prayer are religious exercises; the enjoining of them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the times for these exercises and the objects proper for them," he said in reply to a Presbyterian clergyman.

"Civil powers alone have been given to the President of the United States, and no authority to direct the religious exercises of his constituents," he continued.

James Madison found himself in difficulty because his political opponents felt he was asking for partisan prayers during the war, but the proclamations have become standard procedure as part of the American culture.

Therein lies both a problem and an opportunity. We have Thanksgiving Day but that does not assure gratitude. The experience of gratitude does not come by political or national fiat. Perhaps the national holiday neither aids nor prevents the experience.

If the observance of the special day should cause us to feel that in merely having it we as an American people humble ourselves in adequate recognition of our dependence upon God, it may cause us to ignore personal expressions which are more meaningful.

Similarly, if our gratitude is limited to an expression regarding our national interests, thanking God for what he has done for us and for our friends, we may miss the soul-enlarging experience which we need to be Christians in today's world.

(more)

Our government declares the holiday. How we use it depends upon our insights and our devotion. The day will probably not be a day of fasting in 1958, although such an exercise of soul-searching discipline would be quite in order these days.

To be meaningful our gratitude must also include a renewal of our responsiveness to Christ and to the mind of God. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" is an old proverb with much wisdom.

If we will take time to seek the full counsel of God and thoughtfully recognize the greatness of God's wonderful care and provision, we will undoubtedly join the Psalmist in calling upon our own souls. "Bless the Lord, oh, my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

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*Dr. Carlson is executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, D. C.