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Southeastern News

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January 26, 1982

EVANGELISM MUST BE WHOLESOME, INTELLIGENT, MILES SAYS

WAKE FOREST, N.C. - Today's Christians "are called to evangelize in a day of celebrity Christians and superstar saints," Delos Miles told a chapel audience during opening ceremonies of the spring semester at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

Miles, associate professor of evangelism at the Southern Baptist Convention seminary, was part of a three-fold emphasis on the seminary's purposes of education, evangelism and missions.

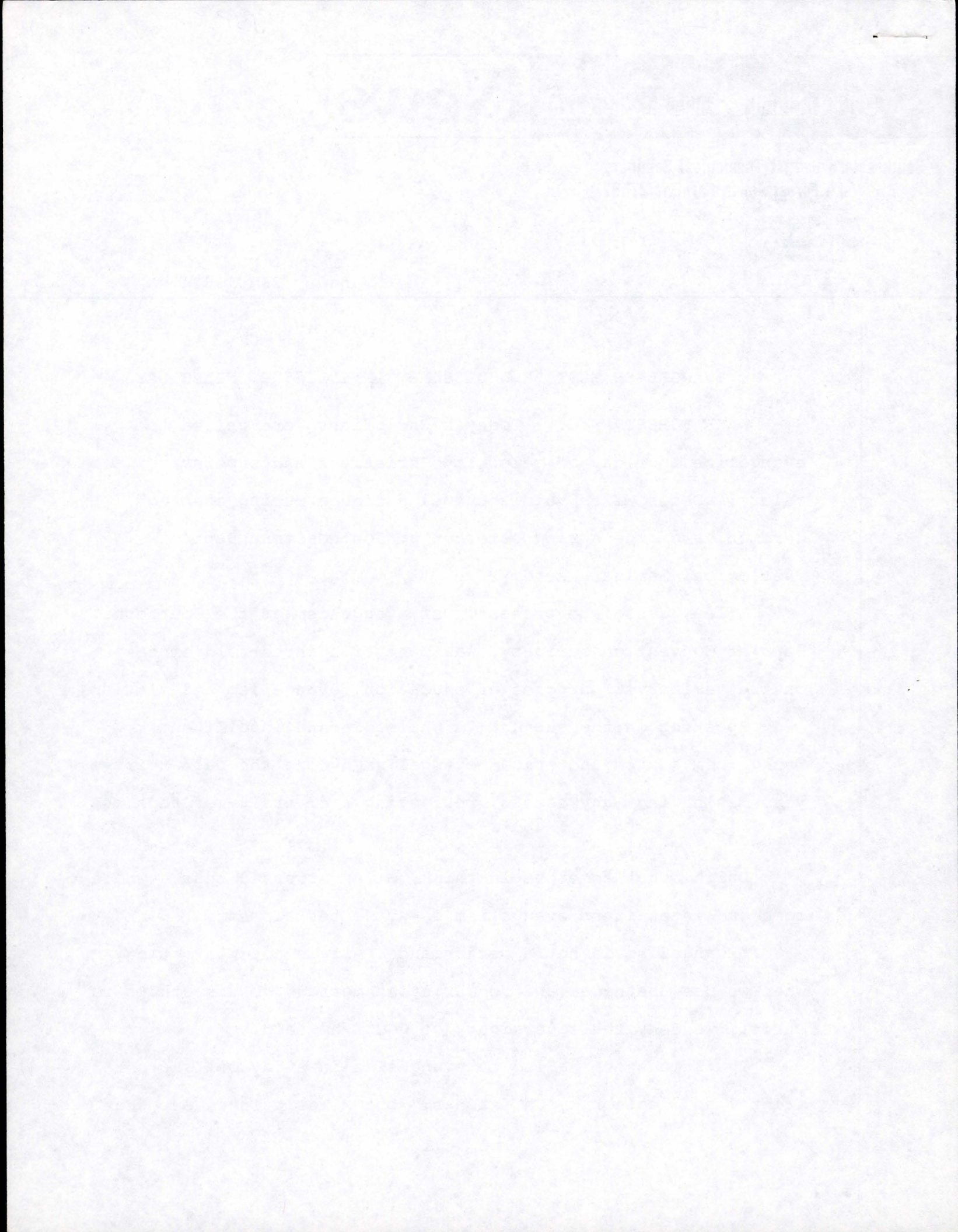
Speaking on the subject "A Wholesome and Intelligent Evangelism," he characterized evangelism during the past thirty years as having many facets, reflecting a diversity of fads and emphases.

Unlike what some people think, Miles stressed that a wholesome and intelligent evangelism is not entertainment.

"Evangelism is not a performance. It is not playacting. When we use unethical and un-Christian methods to win others to Christ, we deny the sovereignty of God," he said.

Christians are called to evangelize in a day of "superstar saints" and "celebrity Christians," but Miles pointed out that

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"celebrity Christians seem especially susceptible to producing celebrity stillbirths."

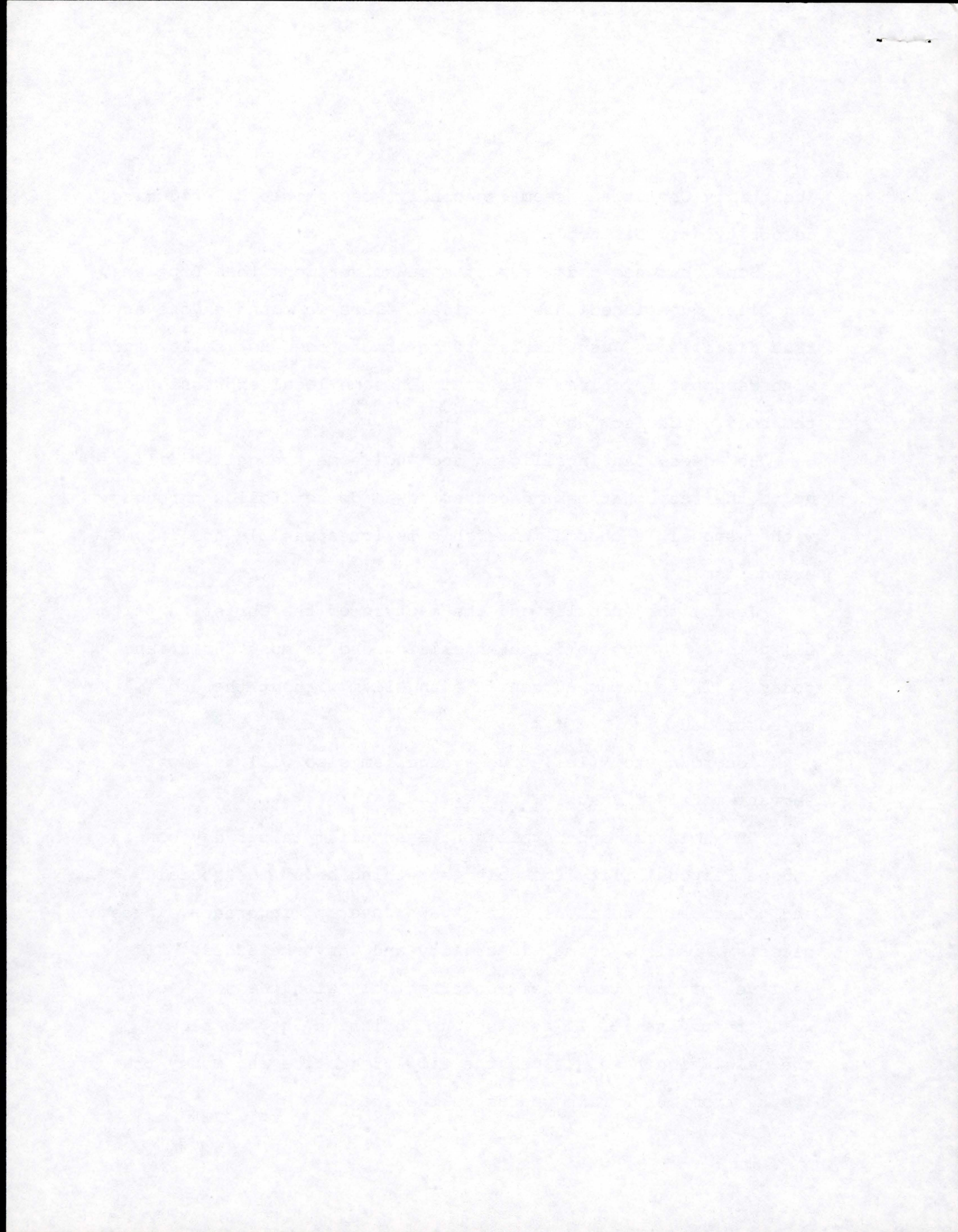
Some churches today report more conversions than baptisms, and Miles questioned this practice. "Dare we count anyone as a true disciple of Jesus Christ if he or she does not follow through with responsible church membership in some local expression of the body of Christ?" he asked.

He added, "An intelligent and wholesome evangelism will face up to the fact that making converts who do not follow through with responsible church membership is irresponsible and incomplete evangelism."

Jesus, the apostles and the martyrs of the Christian faith all paid a high price for evangelizing and so must Christians today. "There is no authentic evangelism without the cross," he continued.

According to Miles, true evangelism also will follow the servant model of Jesus.

"A wholesome and intelligent evangelism in our day cannot escape responsibility for doing something about the social and political conditions which spawn poverty, ignorance, injustice, classism, racism, crime, immorality and war," he added. "I believe that an evangelism concerned only with the souls of men will utterly fail...It is also our Christian duty to blow up the dams which have stopped the flow of justice and mercy that issues from our Lord's wounds on the cross."



"An evangelism which does not result in both changed individuals and changed society is a spurious evangelism," he concluded.

Miles joined the faculty at Southeastern in 1981, coming from a similar post at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Formerly he was a pastor and also headed evangelism work for Baptist Conventions in Virginia and South Carolina.

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