

September 16, 1960

Baptist Press

Kennedy Visit Rekindles Texas Baptist Reaction

By the Baptist Press

Widespread reaction among Texas Baptists followed in the wake of Democratic Presidential Nominee John F. Kennedy's swing through Texas.

Houston Baptist ministers finally got to query the Massachusetts Senator first hand concerning his Roman Catholic religion.

Following Kennedy's question and answer session in that city with about 500 Protestant ministers, the Dallas Morning News said that "while Kennedy gained respect by being fast on the draw, there was evidence that he may have been a little too fast for his own good."

Shortly before Kennedy's stop in Austin, local Baptist ministers there voted by about 25 to 3 in favor of a resolution declaring that religion is a vital part of the campaign.

The resolution was interpreted as a rebuttal to a Sunday sermon by Blake Smith, pastor of Austin's University Baptist Church. Smith urged Baptists not to make Kennedy's Catholicism a campaign issue.

The Senator had hardly finished his final Texas address before the 30,000-member Permian Basin Baptist Association passed a resolution, stating that Kennedy "is either denying the teachings of his church or is seeking to delude the American people."

Baptists stood out in Houston as Kennedy declared his belief in separation of church and state in a 30-minute discussion with ministers that was carried on 22 Texas television stations.

A question by K. O. White, pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church, concerned Kennedy's refusal to attend an interfaith event in Philadelphia in 1947 because a Catholic Cardinal forbade it.

White asked if Kennedy could attend a meeting similar to the one in Houston if it was held in a Baptist Church.

Kennedy replied that he could attend any meeting in connection with his public office and added that he did not know the 1947 invitation was extended to him as a representative of his church.

E. H. Westmoreland, pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston, asked Kennedy if he would comply with a resolution by the St. Louis Baptist Pastors Conference to have his views on separation of church and state passed on to the Vatican in order that such a belief could be authorized for all Catholics in this country.

Kennedy said he does not accept the right of a church official to tell him what to do in the realm of responsibility as an elected official; however, he would not ask the Vatican for such an action in that he does "not propose to interfere with their free right to do exactly as they want."

In direct contrast to the Dallas News' views on the meeting, was the opinion of Texas Democrat Sam Rayburn, who says he is a "hard shell" Baptist.

"As they say in my part of Texas," said Rayburn, "he ate 'em blood raw. They only asked silly questions."

Pioneer Missions Day
Aids 30,000 Movement

BROWNWOOD, Tex.--(BP)--The first pioneer missions day in Southern Baptist history was climaxed by a prediction here that every church in District 16 of the Baptist General Convention of Texas will be supporting pioneer missions financially within a year.

Clifford Nelson, missions secretary of the district, issued the prophecy, adding that five of the nine associations in his district had already been contributing to this program.

He said three other district missions leaders had indicated that they hoped to have similar programs in their districts. Like District 16, the three are largely rural in scope and faced with little opportunity of increasing the number of churches and missions.

The special pioneer missions program sent 50 Texas and Southern Baptist leaders into 90 churches in the district to speak on the 30,000 Movement. Emphasis was on the work which Texas Baptists are helping support in the Wisconsin-Minnesota Baptist Association.

Within the two-state area are 13 Southern Baptist churches, three missions and two home fellowships, says Frank Burress, superintendent of missions for the association.

Burress and four Wisconsin-Minnesota pastors, Charles Wood, Warren Littleford, Kenneth King and Tom Lawler, participated in the pioneer missions day program.

"The opportunities for mission work in Wisconsin and Minnesota are great," said Burress, "as there are more than 200 towns and cities of 1,000 or more population that do not have a Baptist witness."

Southern Baptist mission leaders who participated were Arthur B. Rutledge, director of the Home Mission Board's division of missions, and A. B. Cash, who heads the pioneer missions work for Southern Baptists. They said the program would be suitable for areas which have no mission possibilities within their own geographical bounds.

Nelson said pioneer missions day was set for the special district day observed in District 16 each year.

Speakers were invited to come at their own expense. On the Saturday night before the program, Nelson was host to all the speakers at a barbecue, where the program was discussed.

In addition, special programs were written and distributed to local church Training Union groups.

Nelson feels the special program will stimulate the churches of District 16 to make pioneer missions a definite budget item.

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Texas Baptists Elect
New Executive Secretary

DALLAS--(BP)--Texas Baptists' executive board meeting here elected Thomas A. Patterson, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Beaumont, as its executive secretary and approved a record-breaking Cooperative Program missions budget for 1961.

The budget, totaling \$13,688,000, tops 1960's by almost \$1 million. It includes \$2,796,290 for Christian education, most of which will go to Texas Baptists' eight colleges and universities; \$720,000 for Christian healing; \$897,518 for the denomination's four childrens homes; and \$3,350,000 for worldwide causes.

Final consideration will be given the budget by the annual Texas Baptist convention which meets in Lubbock in November.

Patterson, 54, was selected by the 191-member executive board to replace Forrest C. Feezor, who retires in December after holding the post seven years. The new executive secretary was chosen on the fourth ballot in an election system that includes no nominations or speeches.

Following a season of prayer for divine guidance, secret ballots are polled, and the process continues until one man receives a majority of the votes.

A graduate of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Tex., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex., Patterson has pastored the 6,402-member Beaumont church since 1946.

He served as chairman of an important committee to conduct a survey that served as the basis for reorganizing the Baptist General Convention of Texas administrative framework recently.

He is also a member of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the boards of trustees of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Tex., and Southeast Texas Baptist Hospital, Beaumont, Tex..

Others named to positions Tuesday were Calvin B. Reeves, Midland attorney, to secretary of the Texas Baptist endowment department and Thomas A. Dempsey of Gainesville to associate in the Training Union department.

Dempsey is minister of education for the First Baptist Church of Gainesville.

A proposal for unifying the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas with the Baptist General Convention of Texas was also approved.

The unification plan will go before the November state convention with a board request that it go into effect immediately upon BGCT approval.

Debate on a resolution urging more Bible instruction at Texas Baptist colleges lasted more than an hour.

The resolution, introduced by W. A. Criswell, pastor of Dallas' First Baptist Church, requested that "each senior Baptist college or university in Texas place at the earliest possible moment into their curricula 12 semester hours of required Bible study, with no less than six of the 12 required hours being devoted to the study of the doctrines of the Bible."

Baylor University President W. R. White, representing other Texas Baptist college heads, said the resolution presented "a great multitude of problems" and urged that a careful study be made before the resolution was approved.

A revised motion expressed the board's approval of the objective of the resolution and asked the denomination's Christian Education Commission to work out details of implementation.

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Two Baptist Pastors Preach Political Views

DALLAS, Tex.--(BP)--Two prominent Texas Baptist pastors offered differing views on the religious issue in the coming presidential election during recent Sunday morning sermons.

The pastor of the largest Baptist church in Fort Worth, Tex., James Coggin, denied "bigotry" accusations against Southern Baptists and labeled Roman Catholicism as a "split personality" involved in both politics and religion.

Meanwhile, in Austin, the pastor of the 2,000-member University Baptist Church criticized "irresponsible apostles of discord" for making such a big issue of Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy's Catholic religion.

Neither pastor knew that the other was preaching a sermon at the same time offering opposing viewpoints.

Blake Smith, Austin pastor who claimed that religion should not be an issue, said that the current religious controversy "threatens to divert attention from the vital and really important issues at stake."

"America can not afford the luxury of a religious issue in the political campaign," said Smith. He challenged his congregation to uphold the Constitutional provision that no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the United States."

Coggin, pastor of the 5,364-member Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Tex., disagreed.

"American heritage," he said, "stands in mortal jeopardy in the event a Catholic is elected president."

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He painted a picture of a future Catholic president's using his influence in getting legislation passed, strengthening diplomatic ties between the Vatican and the United States, and using his power in the appointment of Roman Catholics to state positions that would eventually subjugate the citizens to Catholic pressure.

Labeling persons as "bigots," "prejudiced," and "anti-Catholic" is being done "maliciously" as part of Roman strategy, he said.

"If on Nov. 8 Senator Kennedy becomes President," said Coggin, "Pope John XXIII will kneel somewhere in Rome in thanksgiving for the most significant victory of Catholicism in all history.

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Seminary Students Urged To Raise Missionary Zeal

FORT WORTH, Tex.--(BP)--More than 1,300 students at opening chapel sessions of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here were urged to help raise Southern Baptist missionary zeal and preaching standards.

"The aim of true religion is not to qualify men to live with one another, but to qualify men to live with God," Robert Naylor said in the annual president's chapel.

Naylor told the students, "Obedience to Jesus is the breath and life, the today and tomorrow, the whole substance of the Christian. The good soldier of Jesus Christ endures hardships, but you only understand hardship as you look into the face of our Lord," he said.

In the formal opening seminary address, H. C. Brown, professor of preaching, called for a re-emphasis on the preacher's primary function...preaching.

"The discrediting of preaching is one of the discouraging marks of our time," he said. "Some find alarm today in the clown complex among our preachers."

"But there are hopeful signs," Brown added, "in that some of our finest preachers are placing new emphasis on content of sermons, others are taking time to pray and study that they may present God's truth in a better manner, and there is a quickening interest in preaching in our theological seminaries across the land."

Frank Stagg, professor of New Testament and Greek at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, told the opening session of the theological fellowship that "when nine million Southern Baptists can send only a few missionaries across the world it proves that we are guilty of isolationism and aloofness."

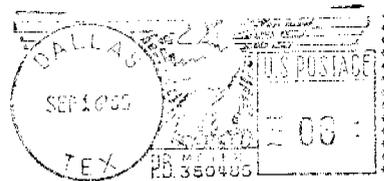
He said that Christ so identified himself with his people that what hurt them hurt him.

Other fellowship speakers during the year will include Billy Graham; Kenneth Scott, professor emeritus of history at Yale University, New Haven, Conn.; and G. Ernest Wright, professor of divinity at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

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