

March 5, 1961

Swirling Waters Harm  
Mississippi Churches

By the Baptist Press

Swirling flood waters swept through many Alabama and Mississippi communities forcing families to leave their homes and doing some harm to Baptist churches in Mississippi.

A spot check from hard-hit Hattiesburg, Miss., showed only a few churches had been invaded by the rampaging river. Many families attending these churches were evacuated from their homes.

River Avenue Baptist Church of Hattiesburg appeared to be one of the most seriously affected. The Petal-Harvey Mission there is located in a lowlying section, and reportedly had several feet of water in the building.

The pastor's home of First Baptist Church, Petal, Miss., was muddied by the flooding waters, Editor Joe T. Odle of the Baptist Record, Jackson, said.

Alabama appeared to be less critically affected. Checks by the Alabama Baptist newspaper showed the Alabama River flooded both Montgomery and Selma, a downstream city. Another flood threat was posed at Demopolis, Ala.

Editor Leon Macon in Birmingham said telephone contacts showed no Alabama Baptist State Convention affiliated churches to be seriously flooded. Most of the Baptist churches had contributed funds, clothing, and medicine for displaced families.

McLain (Miss.) Baptist Church had about one foot of water in the church building and more in the pastor's home. The pastor, J. L. Small, saved most of his furniture but lost some books in his study.

Riverside Baptist Church, Waynesboro, Miss., reported water in the church and parsonage. No estimate of damages had been made.

Alabama reported decreases in church attendance on the Sunday of the flooding in cities hardest hit by swollen streams.

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Cooperative Receipts  
Lagging 5 Per Cent

(3-5-61)

NASHVILLE (BP)--Cooperative Program income for the Southern Baptist Convention for the first two months of 1961 trails income for the first two months of 1960.

A report by Convention Treasurer Porter Routh here shows it is behind 5.1 per cent or \$143,000. The 1961 total to date is \$2.8 million.

Designations for the months of January and February, 1961 are up slightly over comparative months last year. The increase is from \$6,212,196 to \$6,304,595, about 1-1/2 per cent.

Total income for the year thus far, the sum of both categories, is lagging behind 1960--\$9,104,861 against last year's \$9,155,198.

Cooperative Program income for February at \$1,402,784 was about \$5000 higher than January receipts.

February designated receipts amounted to \$4,213,259 showing the first effects of the December, 1960 Lottie Moon Offering for foreign missions.

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Totals show only receipts for SBC agencies. They do not represent total offerings to churches nor amounts retained for state Baptist missions.

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Pagan Temple Likeness  
Converted To Church

(3-5-61)

(picture enclosed to state editors)

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--One of the world's most unusual homes is now one of its most unusual churches.

The likeness of a pagan temple, on a mountainside overlooking Birmingham, became the meeting place of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church.

George Ward, former mayor of Birmingham and a wealthy investment broker, built Vestavia Temple in 1925 as his own home. It is an exact replica of a small temple to the Vestal Virgins in the hills near Rome, Italy.

The church auditorium is in a building adjoining the temple Ward built. But Sunday school classes meet in the temple replica.

The temple replica is 60 feet in diameter and 50 feet high. A dome and a slightly lower facade are both decorated with Romanesque style etchings. A group of columns surround the circular building.

For a time before the church bought it in 1959, the temple likeness was operated as a tourist attraction.

John Wiley is pastor of the Vestavia Hills Baptist Church. The church has a membership of 350.

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Praise Kennedy  
For School Stand

(3-5-61)

ATLANTA (BP)--Two champions of religious liberty here praised President Kennedy for his press conference stand on federal aid to parochial schools.

Louie D. Newton of Atlanta and Dick H. Hall Jr. of Decatur, Baptist ministers, said Kennedy's statement "closes the door of controversy" on federal aid for parochial schools.

The President said in the press conference the Constitution and opinions by the Supreme Court of the United States prohibit appropriation of public funds for parochial schools. He added there "isn't any room for debate on that subject."

Newton and Hall said the statement "strengthened the wall that separates church from state, thus forestalling any and all sectarian raids upon the public treasury."

Newton is president of Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU) and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Hall is a vice-president of the church-state separation group and president of Georgia Baptist Convention.

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Mercer To Award  
Eight Doctorates

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Mercer University here will award eight honorary degrees when Rufus C. Harris is inaugurated as university president.

Doctor of divinity degrees will be conferred upon Penrose St. Amant of Louisville, dean of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; G. Earl Guinn, Pineville, president of Louisiana College (Baptist); Dick H. Hall Jr., Decatur, president of Georgia Baptist Convention and Harvey T. Whaley, pastor of Calder Avenue Baptist Church in Beaumont, Tex.

Whaley was pastor of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans when Harris was president of Tulane University there.

Doctor of literature and laws degrees will go to Ralph McGill, Pulitzer prize-winning publisher of the Atlanta Constitution; Walter C. Dowling, ambassador to West Germany; Robert O. Arnold, chairman of the board of regents for the university system of Georgia and Spright Dowell of Macon, president emeritus of Mercer.

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State Foundations  
Valid, Says Eddleman

(3-5-61)

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The validity of state Baptist foundations was stressed here in an address to the Association of Baptist Foundation Executives by H. Leo Eddleman, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The association is holding its annual convention in New Orleans.

Speaking at a dinner at the seminary with the foundation executives as guests, Eddleman called attention to the long-range objectives of state foundations.

"The foundations receive money which would not be received in the offering plates," he said.

Emphasizing the need for cooperation among all Baptist agencies, he said, "Institutions of the Southern Baptist Convention are not apt to be more successful than the foundations."

He stressed the strategic nature of theological education as the "key to man's needs."

But he called for a cooperation, saying, "There is a necessity of being sincere in our cooperation among various agencies and institutions of the Convention."

Projects of the foundations are valuable projects, he noted, and he termed it a mistake when some are not sympathetic and fail to support the foundations. He urged pastors of the Convention to support the foundations and to channel gifts through the foundations.

"Foundations help provide the program for total stewardship and help to reach people who are never reached by the church," he told the group.

There are 23 state Baptist foundations with assets of more than \$75 million, according to George L. Shearin, Dallas, director of the stewardship division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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Baptist Press Photos

Cutline A

TEMPLE CONVERTED--The likeness of a pagan temple has been converted to Christian purposes. Located high atop a mountain overlooking Birmingham, this is an exact replica of the small temple to the Vestal Virgins in the hills near Rome, Italy. It was built in 1925 by George Ward, wealthy investment broker and one-time Birmingham mayor. Vestavia Hills Baptist Church bought it in 1959 to house Sunday school classes. The church auditorium is the building adjoining the temple replica to the right. (BP) Photo.

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Cutline B

VALENTINE AIDE--Ross C. Coggins, missionary to Indonesia, has been called to be an associate to Foy D. Valentine, Nashville, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission. He will help fill writing and speaking assignments for the commission after he comes this summer. (BP) Photo.

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