

November 23, 1962

**Baptist Pastors Urge  
Voluntary Religion**

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptist pastors in the nation's capital have taken sharp issue with the commissioners of the District of Columbia in the proclamation of November as "Religious Emphasis Month."

The commissioners in their proclamation said the "churches and synagogues...are deeply cherished symbols of an American heritage." They claimed that America is a "nation under God."

Further, the officials of the District of Columbia government urged "all families to attend worship services that their faith may be strengthened."

The Pastors' Conference of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, in a letter to the commissioners, objected to the implications of much of the proclamation.

"The genius and meaning of churches and synagogues alike is that they are not symbols of an American heritage," the pastors wrote. Pointing out that churches stand in many lands, they said "we sincerely hope that nowhere have they been reduced to a national heritage."

The pastors expressed the hope that through repentance America would become a "nation under God." They had little confidence that it is such at the present time.

A free, voluntary religious experience was defended by the ministers. They said, "The rising tendency to equate our national experiences with our religious commitments causes a genuine concern such equations tend to confuse the genius of our American heritage rather than strengthen it."

They continued, "Our true defense against secularism and atheism lies in the preservation of the genuine quality of religious experience which existed under our fully voluntary system. Conformity or compliance is in our estimation a poor substitute for religious commitment."

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**American Convention  
Contests Tax Ruling**

(11-23-62)

VALLEY FORGE, Pa. (BP)--The American Baptist Convention is contesting local taxes assessed on its new circular administration building and printing plant here.

Tax boards of Montgomery County, Pa., have ordered the payment of \$133,000 in annual taxes on the newly constructed offices, moved to Valley Forge from New York City and Philadelphia.

The money has been turned over to the county treasurer while the convention goes to court claiming it is a tax exempt organization.

The \$133,000 is being put into a savings and loan fund, drawing interest. If the court ruling favors the convention, the tax money and accumulated interest will be returned to the Baptists. If the court holds the property taxable, the principal and interest will be kept by the local tax boards.

The printing plant, formerly located in Philadelphia, prints only religious literature, convention officials said. The administrative offices, formerly in New York City, rented office space there.

There was n indication when the case would be called up for a hearing.

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Church Oversubscribes  
Million Budget Again

DALLAS (BP)--The largest Southern Baptist church here has oversubscribed a budget of \$1,433,016 for 1963, its third in a row to eclipse the \$1 million mark.

The 12,800-member First Baptist Church of Dallas oversubscribed next year's by more than \$28,000, said Clare Zachry, chairman of the stewardship drive. The current budget of \$1,218,600 was described by the church's pastor, W. A. Criswell, as "the largest of any church in the history of Christendom."

For 1963, \$641,037 is designated for missions and denominational purposes; \$568,463 will go for local church use, and \$223,516 is allocated for building indebtedness.

Seventy-one per cent of the pledges were \$300 or less, and 132 pledges were for \$1,000 or more, Zachry said.

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Illinois Boys First  
To Reach Rice Goal

(11-23-62)

MEMPHIS (BP)--Baptist boys in Illinois became the first Royal Ambassadors in the Southern Baptist Convention to reach their Luther Rice Memorial goal.

A check for \$75, which represented Illinois' portion of the \$5,000 goal, was received here by George W. Schroeder, executive secretary of the SBC Brotherhood Commission.

The Brotherhood Commission is overseeing the plans to erect a 10-foot memorial to the eminent 19th Century Baptist on the lawn of Luther Rice Memorial Baptist Church near Washington.

Unveiling of the monument will be one of the highlights of the Third National Royal Ambassador Congress planned for Aug. 13-15 in Washington.

George E. Wheeler, head of the Illinois Brotherhood department, said the most any chapter in his state contributed to the Rice monument was one dollar.

"The response was very good," he wrote. "We are glad the Royal Ambassadors of Illinois are having a part in this project."

Brotherhood departments in the various states are receiving the gifts for the memorial from Royal Ambassador chapters.

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He's The Firstest  
With The Mostest

(11-23-62)

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Billy Abney, a Georgia student who ranks first alphabetically at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here, also holds one other exclusive honor among the student body. He and his wife have the most children, seven, among 630 married couples at the seminary.

This semester, married students reported a total of 601 children in their families. Not included were the babies born to a dozen seminary couples since school began.

The figures set a trend that has always marked Southern Seminary. Dean of Students W. Peyton Thurman reported a total of 77 children born to seminary couples during the last academic year.

Nigerian student John Keku holds second place with six children, and one other exclusive honor as well. His family has two sets of twins, not just one set as do the families of four other seminary students.

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A teacher in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho, Keku is studying at Southern as a special student and will return to his family in Kaduna, Nigeria, next year.

Eighty per cent of the seminary's students are married, following a pattern evident in theological schools across the country.

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