

July 27, 1963

Open-Air Rally Ends
Youth World Conference

By W. C. Fields

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP)--Chamoun Sports Stadium here echoed to the hymns of a throng of young Baptists as the Sixth Baptist Youth World Conference came to a close.

Over the speakers' platform, written in Arabic and English, were the words of the theme for the seven-day meeting, "Jesus Christ in a Changing World."

To the east of the stadium the Lebanon Mountains, topped by ancient cedars, loomed gray and massive in the gathering darkness of Sunday night.

To the west the sun, climbing to high noon in mid-America, was disappearing beyond the blue rim of the Mediterranean.

Three thousand young people and their leaders from 52 nations sang and prayed and listened and said their goodbyes to new-found friends from many lands.

The parting challenge was given by a personable and brilliant young Negro pastor from Houston, Tex., William A. Lawson.

He said, "We have discussed problems and now we come to affirm that there is a solution."

Referring to the 150 discussion groups which met each morning during the week, Lawson told the crowd, "We have assailed your reason with paradoxes, crises, and deadlocks, but I come now to tell you that we have a resting place, a ground of strength in Jesus Christ."

"Man is a being inescapably related to God, but inescapably godless," he stated.

"And this is the source of all of his tragedies. He crucifies God and kills himself, but in the act of the dying Jesus, God redeems man. And Jesus Christ is the center of God's love act."

Urging Baptist youth to be skillful advocates of their Christianity, he said, "We do not impose our faith, we simply give witness to it."

Lawson was a last-minute substitute for Martin Luther King Jr., who was scheduled to bring the concluding message of the conference.

King's cancellation message to Baptist World Alliance officials said, "The civil rights struggle in the United States has taken a decisive turn. We are just at that point where the right move can take us to a level of attainment not heretofore reached in human-relations, or just the wrong move can set us back in relations in most destructive manner."

King added that he was remaining in the United States "to aid in keeping the mass demonstrations from getting out of hand by the plotting of more extremist groups in the Negro community."

Earlier in the week a colorful parade of flags marked the roll call of nations. As each flag moved to the center of the stage a national representative repeated in his own language, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."

Prolonged applause greeted the representatives of countries where Baptists encountered the greatest hardships--Spain, Russia and Cuba.

Wiry and slightly built, W. G. "Willie" Wickramasinghe of Ceylon, chairman since 1960 of the Baptist World Alliance Youth Committee, presided over the sessions.

He is principal of Carey College, Colombo. Robert S. Denny of Washington, D. C., is youth secretary of the Baptist World Alliance.

The 1700 youngsters from the United States, largest delegation at the conference, struggled with the jaw-breaking names of fellow conferees: like Sushil Adhikari of East Pakistan, Anis Shorosh of Jordan, Emanuel Dahunsi of Nigeria, Fook Choy Chong of Malaya, Fayez Sakhnini of Lebanon, Takashi Sugai of Japan, Alzemira Miranda of Brazil, Dietrich Wooch of Germany and Chett Sriponlamuang of Thailand.

A few miles north of Beirut is Byblos from which comes the word "Bible." On the coast to the South are Tyre and Sidon. Visitors were reminded the area which now makes up Lebanon was visited by Ezekiel, Paul and Jesus.

A short-lived revolution in nearby Damascus at the end of the conference week caused the death of 170 Syrians and closed off the country. Several Baptist groups were prevented from going there.

On the afternoon of the uprising in Damascus, the U. S. ambassador to Lebanon, Armin Meyer, the son of a Lutheran minister, briefed the U. S. delegation on the complex and explosive situation in the Middle East.

The Baptist visitors to the Arab world met with some of the baffling tangles of business in this part of the world. Several traveling groups were delayed one or two days in Egypt because of sudden cancellation of plane flights.

A Chinese student from Hong Kong was detained overnight at a desert border post of Lebanon because he did not have all of the necessary travel permits. Josef Nordenhaug of Washington, D. C., general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, interceded to get him through to Beirut.

Travel arrangements for the conference participants varied widely. A choir of 70 from Sweden flew to Beirut in a chartered plane. Forty-two Australians came by ship.

Peter Alton Thompson, 23, hitch-hiked to the conference from his home in New Zealand. It took him three months but he arrived in Beirut in time for three days of the conference. Across southern Asia he slept in Buddhist temples, Moslem mosques and occasionally in the homes of missionaries.

Young people in the Baptist Children's Home at Thomasville, N. C., washed cars and worked at various odd jobs to collect money for Jean-Pierre Siegrist of France to attend the meeting. He led the opening prayer of the conference.

The meeting was the largest international convention ever held in Lebanon. Public officials, the 30-plus newspapers in Beirut, and radio and television stations gave excellent coverage to the meeting. The fast-driving, sharp-trading taxi drivers talked many of the visitors out of extra lira (the Lebanese unit of currency), but like the populace-at-large they were generally friendly.

The stadium, where the evening sessions were held, is along the traffic pattern of the busy Beirut International Airport. When it became apparent aircraft in the landing pattern would disturb the open-air sessions of the youth conference, the airlines readily agreed to shift to another runway where the planes would not disturb the meeting.

Finlay M. Graham, a Scotland-born Southern Baptist missionary in Beirut, headed the local arrangements committee. With only about 400 Baptists in the entire country of Lebanon the host group performed something of a miracle in arranging a smooth-running week.

The Baptist Youth World Congresses are generally held every five years. The time and location of the next one will be decided sometime within the next two years by the executive committee of the Baptist World Alliance.

Congress Again Faces Church School Issue

WASHINGTON (BP)--Rumors and facts combine to reveal renewed efforts in Congress for tax aid to church schools on elementary, secondary and higher education levels.

Rumors: Frequently these are planted by informed sources on Capitol Hill. There is growing talk there has been a shift in public opinion in favor of public aid to parochial schools. Strong efforts in this direction can be expected in any proposed legislation affecting general education.

Facts: Three education bills have cleared the House Committee on Education and Labor and are now pending in the Rules Committee. High priority for these bills has been agreed upon by both majority and minority leadership in the House of Representatives. Hearings are now in progress on other education bills.

The three bills now awaiting a rule for debate on the floor of the House are (1) to authorize \$1,195,000,000 in grants and loans both to public and private colleges for construction of academic facilities, (2) to provide \$450 million for vocational education and (3) to extend for another year aid to public schools in federally impacted areas.

A major battle on the college aid bill may develop first in the Rules Committee, then on the House floor. Last year a similar bill was defeated in the House by the narrow margin of 214-186. It lost largely because of opposition by those who opposed tax aid to church colleges. Its passage in both houses of Congress this year is much more likely.

Although the vocational education bill would authorize grants to states, these funds could be used for public agencies, for contracts with private schools and for research in both public and other "non-profit" schools. Church-sponsored vocational schools obviously could be included.

Church schools are not involved in the federally impacted areas education bills. However, a new feature is being proposed by the committee this year. No school that discriminates among students because of race, religion, color or national origin could receive federal assistance. Because of the popularity of this bill the past several years, and because of the national debate on civil rights, this amended bill may pass with little difficulty.

The proposed Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 (H. R. 6143) is being pushed by Rep. Edith Green (D., Ore.). It provides (1) \$690 million in grants for construction of classrooms, laboratories, libraries and related facilities for both senior and junior colleges, both public and church-related, (2) \$145 million for existing and new graduate schools and for the development of "cooperative graduate centers," and (3) \$360 million for 50-year low-interest loans for college academic facilities.

Under the grant program, the federal share would not exceed one-third of the total cost of the project, while the loans could be up to 75 per cent of the total cost. After three years the program will be reexamined to determine the amount of appropriations for the last two years of the overall five-year program.

Excluded from the college bill are facilities where admission to the general public is charged, gymnasiums and recreation facilities, buildings used for sectarian instruction and for religious worship, divinity schools, and schools of medicine, dentistry and other health institutions.

Hearings are now in progress in the House on elementary and secondary education proposals. Both proponents and opponents of aid to parochial schools will be heard before the hearings are concluded. Rep. Carl Perkins (D., Ky.) is chairman of the education subcommittee conducting these hearings.

Also, certain provisions of the National Defense Education Act are under review. It is rumored that the current "loans" for science equipment in parochial schools may be changed to "grants."

Thus far the administration's omnibus education bill has been held intact by the senate subcommittee on education, headed by Sen. Wayne Morse (D., Ore.). No report from the Senate committee has yet been agreed upon. In the House, many of the provisions of the omnibus bill have been divided into separate bills in the hope of getting some of them through Congress.

Edmond R. Walker
To Lead Hawaii Work

(Will send picture in a day or two.)

HONOLULU (BP)--Edmond R. Walker of Fresno, Calif., is the newly elected executive secretary of the Hawaii Baptist Convention here, which cooperates with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Walker will leave his post as assistant executive secretary of the Southern Baptist General Convention of California Sept. 1 for the new office.

He succeeds Stanton H. Nash who moved to Atlanta.

Walker, 44, is a native of Elizabeth, Ark. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist College, Arkadelphia, Ark.; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.

He is former pastor of churches in Little Rock; Owensboro and Westport, Ky., and Modesto and El Monte, Calif. He left the pastorate of Calvary Southern Baptist Church, El Monte, in 1957 to assume his position with the California convention.

He is a former moderator of Los Angeles Association of Southern Baptist churches. He also was a member of the Baptist Sunday School Board and a trustee of Golden Gate Seminary at one time.

Walker was ordained to the ministry in 1940 at First Baptist Church, Lake Village, Ark.

He has the doctor of theology degree from Golden Gate.