

October 9, 1964

Hilda Spares
Louisiana Churches

By Grady Sparkman

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--A midweek investigation by telephone and airplane revealed Baptist churches sustained only slight damage from hurricane Hilda's visit to the lowlands of south Louisiana.

Worst hit were the First Baptist Church at Berwick and Highland Baptist Church at New Iberia.

Hilda was considered to be as vicious as was Audrey, killer of 400 in 1957, except that tidal waves that came with hurricane Audrey did not accompany Hilda. This lessened the death, injury and property damage toll.

Thurman Knight, pastor at Berwick, a city along the banks of the Atchafalaya River near its entry into the Gulf of Mexico, reported rain water and wind caused damage. Nine church windows broke under the gales and rain poured in to ruin carpets, floors and walls.

Wind racing through the building took the varnish off pews and pulpit as though a blowtorch had been used. "The pews look like they have been burned," Knight said.

At New Iberia, pastor Robert B. Woodring said the church was severely damaged by two feet of water, caused from floods after nine inches of rain fell without any place to drain immediately.

"When I opened the door, wastebaskets and tiles from the floor floated by," he related. Woodring said insurance does not cover damage from rising water.

He said one member of the congregation lost his home, possibly from one of the erratic tornadoes Hilda spawned.

This reporter visited the Larose community where 21 were killed by one of those tornadoes. None of the victims who lived along Bayou Lafourche was a Baptist. The Larose First Baptist Church was not damaged, according to Jack Tanner, pastor.

At least two pastors in the Hilda-stricken area were in Cameron Parish (county) when Audrey seven years ago brought its great tidal waves. One, W. Z. Lewis, is now at Erath, where this year winds toppled a water tank and killed six persons.

Wallace Primeaux, now pastor at St. Martinville, narrowly escaped drowning in the angry waves that destroyed his home and church in 1957.

Pastor after pastor said the sparing of life and property was a miracle. The relatively low toll was due largely to the fact no tidal waves moved in with Hilda.

In Alexandria, the Louisiana Baptist Convention announced it was acting as a clearing house for money donated as relief to victims of hurricane Hilda. Following hurricane Audrey, Louisiana Baptists and others gave more than \$160,000 to help rebuild churches and aid the victims.

Virginia Budget
Set At \$4 Million

RICHMOND (BP)--The Virginia Baptist General Board here passed a \$4 million Cooperative Program budget for 1965 which would furnish operating and capital funds to agencies of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

The budget, increased by \$430,000 over the current year, goes to the general association for final approval. The general association is the equivalent of a state convention, the title used in most states.

Thirty-seven per cent of the \$4 million would be sent to the Southern Baptist Convention to support its agencies in their national and world ministry. The rest of would be used inside the Virginia general association.

The Virginia portion of the \$430,000 increase is mainly for capital needs of institutions.

In other action, the Virginia board let a contract for an \$87,650 Baptist Student Center at a state-supported woman's college, Radford College in the Virginia city of the same name.

It put in the budget funds to send the state Baptist weekly paper, the Religious Herald, to all pastors, retired pastors and regional superintendents of missions; This becomes effective Jan. 1. This means the people covered by the action do not pay for the paper from their personal funds.

It will also recommend to the general association two actions on behalf of Virginia Baptist Hospital at Lynchburg. One would permit the hospital to borrow \$750,000--from non-government sources--to upgrade its school of nursing. The other would put the school of nursing in the category of an educational institution so it could award degrees.

A committee issued a progress report on the establishment of a second Baptist-operated home for the aging in Virginia. Although making no immediate recommendation the committee appeared to agree that a second home is called for. It has narrowed the potential site for such a home to 13 cities, it said.

The only Baptist home for the aging now in operation is located at Culpeper.

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Congressman Calls For
Rediscovery Of Liberty

(10-9-64)

WASHINGTON (BP)--A United States congressman, in a prepared speech, told over 200 Baptists gathered here "each generation, in the light of its own experience, must rediscover for itself the meaning of our historic guarantees of liberty embodied in the Constitution."

Rep. Emanuel Celler (D., N.Y.) made the statement in an address for the 8th annual Religious Liberty Conference in its opening session. Celler, at the last minute, was unable to be at the conference.

His speech was presented by Stuart Johnson, legal counsel for the House Judiciary Committee. The conference, sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, has as its theme "The Meaning of the Free Exercise of Religion." C. Emanuel Carlson is executive director of the public affairs committee.

Celler's speech centered around the "school prayer" controversy. He is chairman of the House Committee on the Judiciary which held hearings earlier this year on proposed constitutional amendments to overturn the Supreme Court decisions barring required religious exercises in the public schools.

The congressman said there was widespread confusion and misunderstanding over the "school prayer" decisions and "also over the vital subject of religious liberty in our time." Emotional reactions stemmed from this misunderstanding but also "because national attention had not been focused for some time on the meaning of religious liberty in our swiftly changing society," he said.

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Referring to the committee hearings on the proposed "prayer amendments," Celler said he felt they provided a "national forum" for hearing all points of view on the controversy. From the discussions he said better understanding has developed and the issues have been clarified considerably.

Celler summarized the leading arguments from the hearings on both sides of the issue. He said those favoring amendments voiced their concerns:

1. Whether public school authorities could restrain children from praying and reading the Bible.

2. Whether omission of religious exercises in a compulsory educational system places religion in an artificial and state-created disadvantage.

3. Concern over exposure to religion for those children whose parents are either anti-religious or irreligious.

On the other hand, he said "hard questions" arise when prayers and Bible reading are required in a public school classroom:

1. Who is to decide what prayers and which Bible are to be used?

2. Is it the business of the state to force a child to confess disbelief in the faith of the majority in order to be excused or to suffer in silence while the majority practices its beliefs?

3. Do "nonsectarian" prayers pose the danger of labeling non-participants, scrupulous believers as well as non-believers, as less than 100 per cent American?

4. Do such brief opening devotions provide meaningful religious experience?

"The constitutional touchstone appears to be the avoidance of the slightest pressure by public school authorities on children who do not wish to participate-- the avoidance, in short of 'the gentlest touch of governmental hand' upon a child's religious beliefs," Celler said.

The congressman commended the Baptist group for coming together to discuss the "broader implications of the free exercise of religion in today's world."

"I believe if these difficult questions are approached with a sense of accommodation, goodwill and good humor, common sense solutions appropriate at once to our constitutional traditions, to our religious heritage and to our religiously pluralistic society can be reached," he said.

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Taylor Interviewed
For Veterans Day

(10-9-64)

FORT WORTH (BP)-- Maj. Gen. Robert P. Taylor, chief of chaplains of the United States Air Force, Washington, will be interviewed in a radio program for use on Veterans Day Nov. 11 or during that holiday week.

The program, a half-hour session, has been offered by the Southern Baptist Convention's Radio and Television Commission here. Announcer Ben Grauer conducts the interview with Chaplain Taylor. Gen. Taylor tells something of the leadership program to provide moral and spiritual values to servicemen.

Another question discussed is, "What is the role of spiritual guidance in an anti-peace concept such as war?"

Because of variations in broadcast time, local radio station listings should be checked for day and hour where the program is aired.

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October 9, 1964

Baptist Committee Looks Toward Research Program

WASHINGTON (BP)-- The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in semi-annual session here authorized the development of a program for a Baptist research center in the nation's capital.

The need for a Baptist research center in Washington has been under study since 1961. The public affairs committee authorized its director, C. Emanuel Carlson, to proceed with the initial developments for such a program, with the hope that specific recommendations could be brought at the committee's next meeting in March 1965.

The committee also authorized special study of the physical facilities and needs of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, on both a short and long range basis. The committee offices are located on the fourth floor of the Baptist Building in Washington. The building, a renovated dwelling, is owned by the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Alliance.

Speaking of the possible research center Carlson said it should be "conceived as a center for the promotion of continuous research and study of the meaning of our Baptist understanding of Christian truth."

Possible programs of the center could be an educational service working with Baptist colleges, universities and seminaries; brief courses for pastors wishing to refresh their sense of relevance of the gospel to present-day issues; and expansion of the present Washington internship program enabling Baptist professors, editors, and responsible leaders to have first-hand research experience on the Washington front.

In other action the committee set the dates and selected themes for the religious liberty conferences for 1965 and 1966. The 1965 conference will be October 6-8, centering on the theme "Church, State and Public Funds." The theme for 1966 will be "The Christian's Role Through Church and State."

Walter Pope Binns, Falls Church, Va., was re-elected chairman of the public affairs committee. Bryan F. Archibald, Haddonfield, N. J., a former chairman of the committee, was elected vice-chairman. An operating budget of \$106,320, including special funds for the research program, was adopted for 1965.

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Baptist Leaders Urge Vital Christian Witness

(10-9-64)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Two Baptist leaders challenged over 200 fellow Baptists gathered here for a conference on religious liberty to make their witness in today's world relevant to the issues of the day.

Albert McClellan, program planning secretary Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, addressed the group on the subject, "The Place of Public Affairs in the Christian Witness." James D. Mosteller, dean and professor of church history at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, spoke on the "Free Exercise of Religion: A Historical Baptist View."

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McClellan compared the 20th century to a complicated New York World's Fair, changing both dramatically and subtly from one image to another. Christians are impelled to speak to this world, he said, "but too often we stand as helpless children shouting at the New York World's Fair with a papier mache horn."

He said that Baptists need to find ways of bringing their theological thinking and their personal and institutional practices together. Today's world will not respond to the methods of the last generation, he stated.

The denominational leader called for a "strong public corporate witness." This, he said, was not any kind of organic unity but instead a "strong public corporate witness derived from the new and yet unannounced leadership that will lead us to discover at the grassroots level the common denominator of conviction and action."

"First hand experience in one generation degenerated to second hand shibboleth in another generation must not happen to us." he challenged.

Mosteller, speaking of the heritage of Baptists in religious liberty, cited Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams and Isaac Backus as examples of men unafraid to apply the principles of freedom to the issues of their day.

Of these men he said all ministered in a "political and religious climate quite similar." He said the issues they faced relating to the free exercise of religion were: coercion at the point of forced attendance at worship, prohibition at the point of illegal "conventicles" or secret meetings for worship according to conscience, and taxation for the support of religious practices.

"There are two sides to the coin of religious liberty, the positive side which is freedom of exercise without coercion, and the negative--freedom of exercise without hindrance," the seminary professor states. There is still a third aspect he said, "the freedom of exercise not to worship."

Maintaining that the issues which Helwys, Williams and Backus faced are not different from those Christians face today, Mosteller asked:

"Have we the courage today to face up to the implications of the issues in the same spirit, though it may cost us federal grants, tax exemptions, 'moral suasion,' and cast us out upon a cruel and unbelieving world without a stitch of support--except that of Christ, the only king and lawgiver?"

McClellan described some of the forces that confuse the Christian in his message to man. Mass mind, mass knowledge, mass institution, mass government and the pluralism of America complicate the human situation, he said.

He called attention to the relevance of public affairs involvement to a number of areas:

1. Home missions and evangelism. He recognized the effectiveness of "our evangelism" in certain groups but questioned its effectiveness among the academic, the scientific and the affluent. Revival meetings and personal witness, though necessary, must go beyond to "authentic public witness based on an analyzed understanding of the public mind," he said.

2. The well-rounded Christian education of church youth. "We can no longer pursue this question sheltered from the impact of the public mind and public institution. We must admit that in this area we need to find and use a corporate witness to be effective," he stated.

3. The preaching of the gospel. "What is lacking is the leadership to analyze the relevance of the daily newspaper to the Word of God, to give a technique for tying truth to experience."

McClellan strongly stated that he was not arguing for a change of message. However, he said the way the sermon, the public witness and the confrontation are used must always be related to (1) "the God who never changes" and (2) "the fickleness of the mind of man that is always changing."

The addresses were brought to the 8th annual Religious Liberty Conference sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director. The theme for this year's conference was "The Meaning of the Free Exercise of Religion."

Baptists Uphold Free
Exercise Of Religion

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Baptists from nine different conventions in North America agreed here that "free exercise of religion" depends upon the prevention of government interference in religion.

Approximately 200 Baptists, in a three-day consultation, repeatedly emphasized that the individual's response to God is voluntary and cannot be coerced by government. The free exercise of religion was one of the liveliest issues in the country following Supreme Court decisions barring required religious exercises in the public schools.

At least four Baptist bodies earlier took positions in support of the First Amendment to the Constitution, opposing the so-called "prayer amendments." These were the American Baptist Convention, Baptist General Conference, North American Baptist General Conference, and the Southern Baptist Convention. The 200 Baptists were gathered here for the 8th annual religious liberty conference. The conference theme was "The Meaning of the Free Exercise of Religion."

Working in 12 study groups, they discussed such questions as (1) why Baptists are concerned with the free exercise of religion, (2) what benefits come to the nation and to the individual from the free exercise of religion, (3) the school policies necessary for the practice of free exercise of religion in both public and parochial schools, (4) what public policies are necessary for the free exercise of religion, and (5) what the church policies and responsibilities should be in free exercise.

Reports from the study groups repeatedly emphasized the voluntary nature of man's response to God. They upheld the free exercise of religion as a God-given right "essential to the fulfilling of the individual's responsibility to God."

The conference, sponsored annually by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, is for study only. No position was taken by the group. C. Emanuel Carlson is executive director of the public affairs committee.

Represented in the conference discussions were the American Baptist Convention, Baptist General Conference, Baptist Federation of Canada, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., North American Baptist General Conference, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, and the Southern Baptist Convention.



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