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April 24, 1967

Furor Erupts When Mercer
Chaplain Quotes Obscenity

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MACON, Ga. (BP)--Mercer University trustees refused to fire the Baptist school's dean of chapel for using profane language in two chapel messages, but affirmed the authority of Mercer President Rufus C. Harris to deal with the matter.

The action came after F. Robert Otto had used "a vulgar expression" in two chapel messages (April 12 and 13).

A radio editorial, broadcast by General Manager George W. Patton of station WBML in Macon said that "the four-letter obscene word is so ugly and offensive that we dare not even give you the first letter."

An immediate furor arose after the messages. The Macon Baptist Pastors' Conference adopted a resolution saying the trustees should request the removal of Otto from the position as dean of chapel and consider asking for his resignation from the faculty.

More than 800 Mercer students and 84 faculty members, however, signed statements defending Otto's use of the remark.

The faculty statement said in part: "We believe that Dr. Otto is one of the most effective Christian influences on our campus and is so regarded by the overwhelming majority of the student body."

When Mercer trustees met for their spring business meeting here, President Harris read a lengthy statement, condemning the use of vulgarity, but praising Otto's contributions to the university.

Trustees voted overwhelmingly to give the authority to President Harris to make the administrative decision on the matter after hearing his explanation of the incident.

Following the board meeting, Harris issued no statement, but the statement he made to the board apparently means that Otto will remain in his present position at Mercer.

A local Baptist pastor, James W. Waters of Mabel White Memorial Church and a long-time spokesman for critics of Otto's theological positions, inserted a prepared statement in the trustee minutes, stating his opposition to Otto's remark.

President Harris in his statement explained, however, that Otto does not use profanity either in or out of the pulpit, but was quoting the vulgar expression often used by those he condemned for using such language.

Said Harris in the statement: "Dr. Otto is currently the object of an attack for recently having quoted in a chapel sermon on salvation a vulgar expression all too commonly used by thoughtless and foul-mouthed pagans. He identified the words as such an expression in quoting them, and he roundly scored those who use such language.

"I request that the simple facts be noted that Dr. Otto did not, and does not, in the pulpit or out of it, use such language. He cited them only to attack them.

"I personally would have preferred that this expression not be used. I personally would not have used it, nor, probably, would you. A particular word was offensive to some persons not only because of inherent disapproval of it, but also because of the occasion, the person and the audience.

"I share that feeling. I consider its use indiscreet, to say the least. But I heard the sermon as a whole. I felt its real impact and deep appeal, and it is on this basis that I had to judge it, and it is on this basis that any reasonable, fair-minded person should judge it.

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"This is an instance of a devout man, a sincere man, an earnest man, a proven preacher, exercising what many people including myself consider to have been dubious judgment in a single phrase of an entire sermon. I do not believe in so restricted a concept of the power of the gospel as to think that it is made impotent by one such phrase in a whole sermon.

"Moreover, I do not judge that the entire protracted and eminently successful ministry of this man over a period of years should be scourged by angry and even vengeful denunciation and censure because of this lapse...It is the total context of the ministry that must be taken into account, whether that of classroom or pulpit.

"The chapel means too much to Mercer, and Dr. Otto means too much to the chapel, and to those of us who know him best and therefore trust him most, to consent that he be subjected to rash, punitive and shortsighted official abuse and judgment. This would injure him no less than it would injure the stature of the university. This, no educator could ever accept."

The statement by Waters said in part: "It is not my intention in any sense of the word to bring reproach upon the personal integrity and character of Dr. Otto, who in my estimation is a Christian and a good churchman.

"The indictment which I bring concerning Dr. Otto is relative to his poor judgment in his choice of terminology used to express himself from time to time and more especially in the chapel services.

"This could not possibly be defended as appropriate language for a worship service on a college campus owned and operated by the Georgia Baptist Convention and dedicated to the glory of God.

"Since this has been continuing for some time, it is my opinion that it should now be brought to a halt. Inasmuch as Dr. Otto feels that the language is justifiable, I have no reason to believe he would quit using it even though reprimanded for it.

"I therefore feel that it is to the best interests of the present and future of Mercer University that the president request Dr. Otto to step down from the position of the dean of the chapel and that he be relieved by a person who will stay within the bounds of Christian ethics as well as spirituality."

In other action, Mercer trustees approved a new "guaranteed tuition program," which insures that a student's tuition will not be increased "as long as he continues to make normal progress toward a degree."

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Heilman Inaugurated
As Meredith President 351

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RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--E. Bruce Heilman was inaugurated here as the fifth president of Meredith College, and presented a gold medallion of the office of president.

Heilman has been president of the Baptist college for women since September of 1966, succeeding President Emeritus Carlyle Campbell who was president for 25 years.

Campbell presented Heilman the medallion, a solid gold seal of the college hung from double ribbons of maroon and white.

The inaugural address was delivered by Brooks Hays, former U.S. Congressman from Arkansas and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Hays is now a visiting professor at the University of Massachusetts.

In his response, Heilman said that Meredith can and must be different from other colleges and universities. "At Meredith," he said, "we must never cease to give something different and unique and contribute to perspective by exposing our students to the people and things that count."

During the week of the inauguration, ground was broken at Meredith for a new million dollar library to be named in honor of President Emeritus Campbell.

Campbell, who served as Meredith president from 1939 until 1966, comes from a family of Baptist educators in North Carolina. His father, the late Archibald Campbell, founded Campbell College in Buie's Creek, N.C., where his brother, Leslie Campbell, is now president.

Heilman was administrative vice president of George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, before coming to Meredith as president.

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Photo to be mailed to state Baptist papers

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British Church Joins Chicago Association 352

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CHICAGO (BP)--A Baptist church in Bedfordshire, England is now a member of the Chicago Southern Baptist Association in Illinois.

The Sharpence Southern Baptist Church in Bedfordshire is apparently the first church in England ever received into an Illinois association.

Howard Baldwin, a native of Virginia and pastor for six years of the Temple Baptist Church in South Chicago Heights, is pastor of the Bedfordshire church.

When the Sharpence church became pastorless recently, a former member of Temple Church in Chicago who was stationed at a nearby military base, recommended Baldwin, his home pastor. Baldwin was contacted, and the church asked for a tape recording of one of his sermons. In January, Baldwin moved to England as the church's pastor.

Since then, the church participated in the Annie Armstrong offering for Southern Baptist home missions, an annual offering in Baptist churches in the United States to support nation-wide missions efforts in America. The church also plans to give to the Chicago association missions program, and to world-wide SBC missions causes through the Cooperative Program.

The English church was organized about three years ago, mainly through the efforts of American military families stationed nearby. It is a member of the European Baptist Convention, comprised of English-speaking churches throughout Europe, many of which are also affiliated with Baptist conventions in the United States.

There is no other Baptist church of any kind in Bedfordshire, although there are about 70 Baptist churches in the area. J. D. Hughey, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's area secretary for Europe, says the church enjoys a close and warm fellowship with British Baptists.

Baldwin is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

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Illinois Church Starts Mission Where It Began 353

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BLUE ISLAND, Ill. (BP)--The First Baptist Church of Blue Island, Ill., is starting a mission at the same place it began as a mission several years ago.

The new mission meets in the Masonic Temple at 12757 Western Avenue here, exactly the same place that the First Baptist Church itself started as a mission. Owen Spencer has been named pastor of the mission.

First Baptist Pastor Paul Locklear said the church felt that Blue Island, a city of 25,000, needed more than just one Southern Baptist church. The church formed in the Masonic Temple succeeded so well, that it was decided to use the same place to launch a second mission, he added.

The Illinois Baptist State Association missions department is paying the first month's rent at the Temple for the new mission.

The sponsoring church also supports a unique ministry to physically handicapped persons, with Spencer as mission pastor. About 30 handicapped persons, including a few Roman Catholics and members of several other denominations attend.

Spencer said they are a closely-knit group, and each Friday night they go bowling. Most of them are in wheelchairs, he said.

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Binkley Gets North Carolina Social Service Citation 354

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CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP)--Olin T. Binkley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., was presented the Social Service Award by the North Carolina Conference for Social Service meeting here.

The plaque was given to Binkley "not only for his concern for his brother but for instilling in countless others a sense of social responsibility."

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"The award is not necessarily made each year; nor is it confined to social workers," stated Mrs. Kern Holomon of Raleigh, the executive secretary of the conference. "It is in the broad field of human welfare."

Binkley is a past president of the conference.

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Virginia Board Approves
Student Center, Staffers

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Executive Board of the Baptist General Association of Virginia approved construction of a \$177,500 Baptist Student Center at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg, Va., and recognized three new convention staff members here.

Earlier, the board had authorized the employment of the new associates. The new staff members introduced to the board were:

---James Shurling, associate in the Virginia Baptist Brotherhood department, and former pastor of Aulander Baptist Church, Aulander, N.C.;

---Jack Price, associate in the convention's Sunday School department, and former pastor of Fieldale Baptist Church, Fieldale, Va.;

---and Cecil Marsh, associate in the Training Union department, and former pastor of Randolph Memorial Baptist Church, Madison Heights, Va.

Construction is expected to begin immediately on the new student center, with completion expected within about 10 months.

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Three Missionary Educators
Named Visiting Professors

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Three Southern Baptist missionary educators have been elected to serve as visiting professors at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here during the 1967-68 academic year.

They are: James Edwin Giles, professor at International Baptist Theological Seminary, Cali, Columbia; George Raymond Wilson, teacher at Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary; and Kenneth Wolfe, professor at the Baptist seminary at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Giles, a native of Texas, will teach Christian ethics. He is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University (Baptist), Abilene, Tex.; Western New Mexico University, Silver City, N.M.; and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Wilson, a visiting professor of religious education at Midwestern Seminary, is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, and was minister of music and education at Clarendon Drive Baptist Church, Dallas, and Ridglea West Baptist Church, Fort Worth, before going to Hong Kong.

Wolfe will serve an additional year as teacher in the New Testament department, after teaching here during the 1966-67 school year.

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CUTLINES

BAPTIST PRESS PHOTO

MEREDITH PRESIDENTIAL MEDALLION PRESENTED: Bruce Heilman, fifth president of Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C., is presented a gold medallion of the office of president during his formal inauguration. Making the presentation is Carlyle Campbell, president emeritus who led the Baptist college for women for 25 years. Heilman assumed the presidency in Septmeber, 1966. (BP PHOTO)

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