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460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

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REGIONAL OFFICESATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Editor, 1350 Spring Street, N.W., Atlanta, Georgia 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Billy Keith, Editor, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) RI 1-1996
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Editor, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226**BUREAU**BAPTIST SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203,
Telephone (615) 254-1631**"Frustrating, Gratifying" Says
Baptist Observer of Conference**

AUSTIN, Tex., (BP)--A Southern Baptist observer at the historic first meeting of the newly organized Texas Conference of Churches--which has been wooing Southern Baptists--found the experience both "frustrating" and "gratifying."

Jimmy R. Allen of San Antonio, first vice president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas said he found it frustrating that the conference does not seem to intend to limit its role to one of simply correlating action of member denominations on community concerns in the areas of moral and ethical problems.

Allen noted that provision for such correlation is being made, and he thinks the formation of the conference is a strong effort to find a broader common denominator.

But he said these efforts also seem to be strategies to "reach the ecumenical goal of oneness in 'faith and order'" and do not really represent a shift from the basic position that the goal should be union, rather than just correlation of efforts.

The conference, a reorganization of the old Texas Council of Churches, is believed to be the first time that Protestants and Catholics in a state have joined together on such a large scale to form a new organization mutually inclusive of each other's aims and purposes. It is also believed to be one of the few times such an effort has been made on any scale.

The organizers, recognizing that Southern Baptists and some other denominations cannot commit all their individual churches, are allowing individual churches to join the conference.

Nearly every major denomination in Texas, except Southern Baptists, Missouri Synod Lutherans and the Church of Christ, have joined the new organization.

Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church, San Antonio, and Darold Morgan, pastor of Cliff Temple Baptist Church, Dallas, and second vice president of the Texas Convention, "observed" for Southern Baptists.

Conference spokesmen have made assurances that the whole structure is set up to recognize differences and that it has no binding power on any group in its membership. It has also been noted that the Texas Conference of Churches has no connection with the World and National Council of Churches.

Allen felt there will be no great surge among Southern Baptist churches to join because the center of the emphasis, in his opinion, will go beyond correlation of action.

Although he said he finds nothing in Baptist doctrine which would prevent individual churches from joining, Allen believes that churches which do join will be unable to exert much influence. He pointed out that representation on the conference assembly and board of directors is made on the basis of numerical proportion.

The San Antonio pastor added, "The price of a wider common denominator will have a direct bearing on the issues to which the conference can address itself."

Allen observed that differences of position are too great to make the organization effective on such moral issues as gambling, birth control and liberalization of abortion laws.

"Time will only tell," he said, "whether this structure will mute the traditional Protestant voice on such issues as aid to parochial schools" with state tax money.

Gratifying aspects of Allen's two-day observation of the proceedings were not lacking. He observed that such issues as mental health, education, civil rights and penology may be greatly strengthened by the new coalition.

"It was an opportunity," said the former secretary of the Texas Convention's Christian Life Commission, "to fellowship with men of good will and to sense sincere allegiance to Christ."

"Though the rituals and robes were foreign to Baptist experience, one could not deny an undercurrent of genuine conviction on the part of these men that avenues of mutual understanding had to be found in order to please God," he said.

Allen added he was also pleased to note that participants recognized the significant role the local church must play in finding solutions to the challenges which face modern-day Christians.

Stating that the way is now open for local churches to join the conference, Allen observed that "some Baptist congregations will undoubtedly do so.

"This is certainly their right of autonomous decision," he added. "No doctrinal position is at stake in the decision.

"...The fact that most Baptists regard unity as the bond which binds all born-again Christians and as having little or nothing to do with structure decreases their concern for ecumenical organization," Allen said.

"...There would have been, in my judgment, a far greater attraction to participation by Southern Baptist congregations (in Texas) if the thrust of the organization had centered on building a clearing house for correlation of efforts on common concerns in community life," he stated.

"Many of us feel that true unity comes not through 'faith and order' but through allegiance and action," Allen concluded.

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Mercer Action Historic,
Reaction Would Indicate

(2-28-69)

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Instantaneous reaction to the action by Mercer University trustees here to seek three federal grants for building construction seems to indicate the trustees' vote was one of Georgia Baptists' more historic moments.

The Mercer board voted to apply for \$570,000 in matching federal grants for a new infirmary, an auditorium, and a physical education building. The trustees knew well that the Georgia Baptist Convention has three times in the past five years voted to refuse federal funds of any kind for its schools.

Reaction was immediate, in both the secular and religious press.

The Macon Telegraph, whose general manager Bert Struby is a Mercer trustee, carried an editorial commending the Mercer trustees "for its strong sense of duty and its determination to do what is in the best interest of the university.

"Had the trustees, against their better judgment, knuckled under to the convention's recommendation, they would have nullified any reason for having a board of trustees," added the Macon editorial. "And worse, they would have acted dishonorably toward Mercer, themselves and the Georgia Baptist Convention."

The Atlanta Journal said editorially, "We applaud the decision (by Mercer) to seek federal funds, as well as the obvious determination of the Mercer governing body to keep control of its own destiny."

From the student body at Mercer, the reaction was even stronger.

The president of the Student Government Association at the Baptist school said that 750 students had signed a petition giving "overwhelming" approval of the trustees' action.

"We view the action of the board as nothing short of life-saving," said Edwin Bacon of Jesup, Ga., the student government leader. "We are very grateful to the trustees...for making possible the continuation of the quality of Christian education that Mercer has been noted for in the past."

Reaction from at least one Georgia Baptist church in official action, however, was on the other extreme.

"If the program at Mercer has grown to the extent that a 'handout' from the federal government must be obtained in order to continue, then the program is too big and should be reduced," said a resolution adopted by the Baptist church at Sunnyside, Ga.

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The Sunnyside church's statement added that if "President Rufus C. Harris (of Mercer) and the trustees are not happy in their position under the prevailing conditions, then let them resign, with our blessing, and find employment elsewhere."

The Christian Index, official publication of the Georgia Baptist Convention, published a full page of letters to the editor in its Feb. 27 issue, and two pages of such letters, all dealing with the Mercer action, in its March 6 issue.

Editor Jack U. Harwell said that the letters are about evenly divided between those who want to reverse the trustee action and bring the university back in line with the convention's rulings, and those who feel the school should be deeded to the trustees and become a private institution.

The Christian Index earlier had carried a full-page editorial by the editor, who called Mercer's action "a declaration of desperation."

Harwell urged that Georgia Baptists deed the university to the trustees and sponsor a Christianity department or Baptist center adjacent to campus.

"My personal belief is that the principle (of religious liberty and private support of religious institutions) is more important than the university's denominational affiliation," Harwell said.

But the Georgia editor added: "I am told that I am in a dwindling minority in holding such a belief."

John Roberts, editor of the South Carolina Baptist Courier, seemed to agree when he wrote: "Many, perhaps a growing number of Baptists in South Carolina, now believe that federal building grants for the denomination's schools is no longer of question of whether, but when."

Roberts added: "Our state will therefore be not only interested, but involved spectators as Georgia Baptists pursue their course (in regard to the Mercer action.)"

Hudson Baggett, editor of The Alabama Baptist, called the Mercer trustee action "a straw in the wind," saying "no doubt Mercer's action is a straw in the wind which may indicate the direction other schools will take."

The historic significance of the Mercer action, and the effect it will have on other Baptist colleges and universities, is, of course, yet to be seen.

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Killinger Challenges Students To Embrace Both God, Culture

(2-28-69)

LOUISVILLE (BP)--More than 1,000 students were challenged here to stand boldly on their Christian commitment while embracing the culture of the times, confident that this is God's way of communicating redemption through events.

The challenge was issued during the Student Missions Conference at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here by John Killinger of Vanderbilt University, Nashville.

Young people who do not tense-up in the situation, but who "will hold both to God and culture," can bring about a reconciliation between contemporary man and His creator through Jesus Christ, Killinger said.

The professor of preaching at Vanderbilt Divinity School added that modern man has lost control of the world about him--he cannot keep up with the population explosion, the knowledge explosion, or the technology explosion.

But God has not deserted this world of "death, violence, fear and fragmentation," Killinger told the conferees.

On the contrary, the Christian is in a position "to feel the power of God serging in a new way in the world, to feel God breaking out of old containers and vessels."

Facing the Christian mission in such a time of transition, Killinger said that "the church must not be guarded or defensive, but must feel and be sympathetic with those who have chosen to drop out of the acceptable ways of society in honest search for personal identity.

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"The church must be open, ready to listen and then we must speak in the rhetoric of grace," and become full participants in our culture, he said.

The students were exposed to some contemporary ideas about inner-city church ministries by two other conference speakers.

Two home missionaries---intense, hip-talking Ron Willis of the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, and James S. Wright of the Queens area of New York City---emphasized that the Christian ministry must follow "the Jesus approach."

"I walk the streets and try to meet need where I find it," said Willis, whose ministry touches people ranging from college students to hippies and members of the militant Black Panther Party.

"If a man needs shelter, I let him sleep in the church," said Willis, pastor of Golden Gate Baptist Church in Oakland, Calif. "If he needs food, I try to get him some. This is what Jesus did."

Wright, pastor of Highland Avenue Baptist Church in Jamaica, N. Y., a suburb of New York City, said: "People get sick of the church that becomes an end in itself, when all activities are centered on Sunday morning at 11:00 o'clock."

"A church that supplies what people need will draw people to it. This is the Jesus approach," he added.

Two other speakers, William Self, pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta, and Lewis Wilhite, pastor of West End Baptist Church of Birmingham, spoke on motivational factors and the Christian message.

A special feature of the conference was a mass liturgy performed by the seminary's School of Church Music students on Sunday morning.

Jack Noffsinger, pastor of the Knollwood Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N. C., closed the conference by asking the students to remember "to look to the source" of their lives.

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Heart Disease Increases Lead As Minister Killer

(2-28-69)

DALLAS (BP)--Heart disease increased its lead in 1968 as the number one killer of Southern Baptist ministers and denominational employes. Cancer held onto second place but showed a seven per cent decline.

Statistics released by the Southern Baptist Annuity Board here reveal that heart diseases claimed the lives of 65 per cent of members in the Southern Baptist Protection Program who died in 1968--an eight per cent increase over the 1967 figure.

Eighteen per cent of the deaths were caused by cancer.

Heart disease has been the primary killer of Protection Program members since 1959, the year the SBC Annuity Board started recording such statistics.

Auto accidents and pneumonia each killed seven per cent last year, while five per cent was attributed to suicide and four per cent each to arteriosclerosis and emphysema.

Other diseases claiming lives included gastric hemorrhage, brain tumor, uremia, renal failure and multiple sclerosis.

Heart disease also continued as the chief cause of disability. Forty-three per cent of the persons who were forced to give up their full-time ministry because of disability had heart trouble. This represents a one per cent increase over 1967.

Other causes of disability were: cancer, eight per cent; mental disorder, arthritis and diabetes, six per cent each; emphysema, four per cent; and three per cent each for tuberculosis, loss of voice, loss of hearing, chronic renal failure, accident, spinal disorder, parkinson's disease, brain disorder and multiple sclerosis.

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Texas Baptist Asks For
Continued Tax Benefits

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Texas Baptist Foundation executive at a hearing here appealed to Congress for continued favorable federal tax policies for churches and their institutions.

George L. Shearin, associate secretary of the Baptist Foundation of Texas, told the Congressional House Ways and Means Committee: "No step should be taken by Congress which might discourage or diminish the giving of the American people toward the vital work of these great religious, educational and charitable enterprises."

The committee is conducting full scale hearings on tax reform proposals for the federal government. Rep. Wilbur D. Mills (D., Ark.) is chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

The first subject under investigation by the committee has been tax-exempt organizations and the tax treatment of charitable and religious contributions.

The U. S. Treasury Department has made recommendations to Congress for extensive tax reform to correct what it alleges to be inequities, injustices and abuses of current tax law. Many of these abuses, the Treasury Department charges, are practiced by tax-exempt charitable foundations.

Among other items the Treasury Department is recommending:

* That the amount of allowable standard deduction for income taxes be increased from 10 to 14 per cent of adjusted gross income;

* That those using the standard deduction be permitted also to claim and itemize additional contributions for deductions;

* That the charitable deduction be limited to those amounts in excess of 3 per cent of adjusted gross income;

* That the present 30 per cent limitation on deductible charitable contributions be increased to 50 per cent;

* That the provision for the establishment of the two-year trust for the benefit of charity be eliminated;

* That the appreciated value of gifts of property to charitable causes be subject to the capital gains tax; and

* That existing provisions of the unrelated business income tax for certain organizations be repealed, but that they continue to be extended to churches and to social welfare organizations.

Shearin testified before the Ways and Means Committee that he represented the Baptist Foundation of Texas, 24 other state Baptist foundations and the Southern Baptist Foundation of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Baptist executive defended the policy of tax incentives to encourage charitable and religious contributions. He approved the thesis that "private giving serves the public interest."

"For this reason," Shearin said, "our laws have wisely encouraged charitable giving by granting liberal tax advantages to the donor or to his estate."

Specifically, Shearin favored the increase from 30 per cent to 50 per cent for deductible contributions, the increase from 10 to 14 per cent on standard deductions for charitable contributions, and the separation of charitable deductions from other personal deductions.

He opposed limitation of deductions of gifts of property to cost to the owner and tax liability for the appreciated value of such property. He further opposed the recommendation for income tax deduction beginning at 3 per cent of the adjusted gross income and the repeal of the provision for two-year charitable trusts.

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C O R R E C T I O N

On Baptist Press story mailed 2-25-69, headlined "25,000 Prayer Partners Paired in Crusade Effort," please change the word "partners" to read "partnerships" in line 1, graph 1, for more precise meaning. There are 50,230 "partners" and more than 25,000 "partnerships." Thanks.

--Baptist Press

