



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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

March 5, 1969

Nixon Confirms Rumor Of Possible Vatican Envoy

REGIONAL OFFICES

ATLANTA 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

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Richard M. Nixon told the nation at a news conference that an envoy to the Vatican as a permanent representative is under study by the State Department and by himself.

"What is important," the President said, "is that the United States have with the Vatican close consultation on foreign policy matters in which the Vatican has a very great interest and very great influence."

This, supposedly, was a reference to the Vatican's interest in world peace and in Vietnam and the Mid-East in particular.

For several weeks prior to President Nixon's visit to Europe rumors were spread that he was considering the appointment of a personal envoy or other representative to the Vatican. Although the White House refused comment on the rumors, they were reportedly confirmed by sources at Vatican City.

The President made a special trip to Rome to visit with Pope Paul VI at the conclusion of his eight-days of talks with world leaders on the continent.

During an hour-long nationally televised press conference in the White House, the President was asked and responded to a question on the rumor of his appointment of an envoy to the Vatican. Here is the question and the President's answer:

Question: "Is it true, Mr. President, in your talks with Pope Paul at the Vatican there is any possibility that the United States might send an envoy to the Vatican as permanent representative?"

The President: "The possibility has been considered by the State Department and by me, because we have been concerned that we should have the very closest consultation and discussion with the Vatican. I found, for example, my conversations with Pope Paul extremely helpful. It was far ranging, and I received information and also counsel that I considered to be very important. I want that line of communication kept open.

"Whether we can have it kept open based on the present facilities that are available, I have not yet determined. The matter is still under study. But what is important is that the United States have with the Vatican close consultation on foreign policy matters in which the Vatican has a very great interest and very great influence."

Two weeks earlier, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in session at Nashville, approved a statement to the President of the United States in response to the rumors about the possibility of U. S. representation to the Vatican.

This statement was communicated to the White House by C. Emanuel Carlson, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, prior to the President's departure to Europe.

There has been no official response, however, from the White House to the statement from the SBC Executive Committee.

The Southern Baptist communication to President Nixon was based in part on his announced goal to unite a nation that has been fractured by severe divisions and conflicts in recent years. It expressed the view that the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Vatican would "seriously erode civic and religious goodwill in this country."

The Southern Baptists appealed to President Nixon for the "preservation and strengthening of the American tradition of free churches in a free society." They urged that no church be "used" even for worthy purposes of foreign policy, nor for the domestic policies of state.

The SBC Executive Committee pointed out to President Nixon that "there is a growing mutual spirit of respect and goodwill among the various religious bodies in the United States today." It further said that "American representation to the Vatican would not aid our progress away from rivalry and fear."

A number of views have been advanced as to why President Nixon would consider representation to the Vatican. The prime reason being advanced is that he must believe that this arrangement could hasten the end of the Vietnam war and could contribute to stability in the Mid-East.

One Washington correspondent has written that the President "could represent the designation of a Vatican envoy as another example of ecumenism and get away with it despite whatever storm might be stirred by aroused Protestants." This might be true, the correspondent wrote, in view of the intense evangelical tone of the Inauguration and the close association of the White House with Norman Vincent Peale and Evangelist Billy Graham.

Yet another reason has been advanced. It goes like this. The President is running for re-election in 1972. He feels that he has already lost what support he had in the South and that he must find ways to build support in the large cities. Catholics are strong in these centers and he might win their support by establishing close ties with the Vatican.

The old arguments for U. S. representation at the Vatican were along two lines: (1) it would be to a state rather than to a religion, and (2) it would open new sources of information and influence to American government.

To these old arguments a new one has been added: that progress in ecumenism has made such a relationship acceptable and even desirable. This is an argument that most Protestants and many Catholics would deny.

President Nixon said that he had not yet decided whether existing channels of communication between the U. S. and the Vatican are adequate. This means that he is still keeping his options open and that his decisions may yet depend on public reaction in the United States.

-30-

February SBC Missions
Gifts Jump 12 Per Cent

(3-5-69)

NASHVILLE (BP)--A 12.26 per cent increase in Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program missions gifts during the month of February has offset a 16 per cent decrease during the month of December, a monthly SBC financial report indicated here.

The 12 per cent increase for February, coupled with 9.9 per cent increase during the month of January, offset the 16 per cent December decrease to put the convention 1.92 per cent ahead of contributions for the same three month period during 1967-68.

John H. Williams, financial planning secretary for the SBC Executive Committee which prepared the report, called the giving trends "encouraging."

Total contributions through the Cooperative Program, which supports the mission efforts of 19 different SBC agencies, for 1969 (January and February combined) was reported at \$4,981,690, an increase of \$497,462, or an average of 11.09 per cent for the year over gifts for the same two months of 1968.

Designated contributions to specific SBC mission causes during 1969 reached \$11,095,936, up more than a million dollars over the 1968 figures, and up 10.48 per cent. The \$11 million figure includes a total of \$10½ million given to the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions.

The combined total missions gifts through the Cooperative Program and designated contributions reached \$16,077,626 for the first two months of the year, an increase of \$1½ million or 10.67 per cent.

Williams said that he and Porter Routh, executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee, still had not been able to determine exactly why there was a 16 per cent decrease during the month of December, but they were greatly encouraged by the increased giving during January and February which has offset the December decrease.

Of the \$16 million in total gifts for the year to date, more than \$13.6 million has gone to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, most of it through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

The amounts reflected in the monthly financial report from the SBC Executive Committee include only funds given to support nation-wide Southern Baptist mission efforts, and do not reflect gifts to local and state Baptist missions.

-30-

Bennett Named Consultant
In Church Administration

NASHVILLE (BP)--Walter Bennett has been named consultant in church administration for the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention here.

Bennett came to the board's church administration department from Tabernacle Baptist Church, Decatur, Ill., where he has served as pastor since 1963.

He has also served as pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Donnell, Ill., and Glensboro Baptist Church, Glensboro, Ky.

A native of Monroe, La., Bennett earned his bachelor of arts degree in religion from Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and his bachelor of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

-30-

Texas Board Approves
Dental School Release

(3-5-69)

DALLAS (BP)--The Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, without debate or opposition, has recommended independent status for the Dallas-based Baylor College of Dentistry.

Reorganization of the college under an independent board of trustees will allow acceptance of federal or state aid.

Final approval of the recommendation will be sought at the Texas convention's annual session in San Antonio, Nov. 4-6.

Under the terms of the Executive Board motion, the school will be allowed to retain the Baylor name.

Due to the clear-cut and decisive nature of the Executive Board decision, the College of Dentistry will begin planning immediately with the Texas college and university system coordinating board for the new status, pending the convention in November.

Baylor University president Abner McCall was present to answer questions concerning the process, but the board voted swiftly and without comment.

The precedent for this move was set last year, when the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, was set free by the convention under essentially the same circumstances and procedure.

In other actions, the 192-member executive body approved a retirement program study, cost-of-living salary formula for Texas denominational employees, budget surplus distribution from 1968 receipts and several personnel actions.

Four new associates for the State Missions Commissions were approved. Robert Garcia (language missions), Cameron Byler (Texas Baptist Men), Ed Browning (Sunday School) and John Lanoue (church services) were officially added to the convention staff.

A charter change was passed reducing the number of trustees for Valley Baptist Hospital, Harlingen, Tex., and a debt ceiling limitation was waived to allow parking lot construction at Houston's Memorial Hospital.

Howard Payne College in Brownwood, Tex. was given permission to borrow \$250,000 for conversion of a Brownwood Hotel into a men's dormitory.

-30-



BAPTIST PRESS

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

RECEIVED
MAR 6 1969
HISTORICAL COMMISSION, SBC

DAVIS C. WOOLLEY HQ
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 NINTH AVE. N.
NASHVILLE, TENN. 37203