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April 15, 1969

Reaction Roundup

Letters, Editorials Protest
Professors' Book Resolution

By Jim Newton
For the Baptist Press

Editorials and letters-to-the-editor in nearly a dozen Baptist state papers have registered strong protests against a resolution adopted by the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion which criticized the advertising campaign for Southern Baptist Convention President W. A. Criswell's new book, *Why I Preach That The Bible Is Literally True*.

Most of the letters and editorials strongly support Criswell and condemn the professors. One such editorial calls for investigations by the boards of trustees for some Baptist schools on what their professors are teaching about the Bible.

If the editorials and letters are any indication, the issue may have shifted from the publicity surrounding the book to the issue of the theological views of the professors who protested the advertising campaign.

It all started when the association, composed mainly of Baptist religion teachers from east of the Mississippi River, adopted a resolution claiming that the advertising campaign for Criswell's book "clearly suggests that the position espoused in this book is the official position of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The resolution further stated that any action by a denominational agency which gives or appears to give denominational sanction to a denial of the historical-critical approach to Biblical interpretation "inevitably undermines the work of biblical teachers and alienates students from both the denomination and the Bible itself."

The executive secretary of the Sunday School Board, James L. Sullivan of Nashville, denied the charge in the resolution, saying that "books published by the Sunday School Board do not necessarily reflect an 'official position' of the board.

"The official position of the board," said Sullivan, "is to publish, through Broadman Press, books of differing points of view so long as they contribute to the objectives of undergirding Christian faith and contributing to the Christian growth and development of those who read them."

Sullivan said that the board has received an unusually heavy volume of mail on the matter, adding that it has been "almost unanimous in support of our publication of the book, the promotion of the book, the contents of the book, or all three of these."

The book has sold about 12,000 copies since January of this year, and is now in its second printing, Sullivan reported.

Throughout the controversy stirred by the professors' resolution, Criswell has remained silent. His closest advisors have urged him to let his friends come to his defense and not get involved personally in the controversy, according to sources in Dallas where Criswell is pastor of the 15,000 member First Baptist Church, largest in the SBC.

Strongest support for Criswell editorially has come from the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger, which suggested editorially the investigation of the professors' teaching.

"No Baptist school should have on its faculty a teacher who believes the Bible is made up of myths, fairy tales, and falsehoods," wrote Editor Jack Gritz of Oklahoma.

"The fact is," added the Oklahoma editor, "that some of these professors do not like Criswell's ideas concerning the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible."

In an editorial entitled, "Why This Attack on Criswell," the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger said that Criswell's book did not deny the validity of the historical-critical approach to biblical interpretation, and added that Criswell "knows more about the historical-critical approach to the Bible than do most of the professors."



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In a letter to the editor, the author of the controversial resolution, Professor Robison B. James of the University of Richmond (Va.), denied that the resolution was an attack on Criswell, and argued that the Oklahoma editorial was trying to shift the issue to one of personalities.

"Our resolution upholds not only the right but the responsibility of Broadman Press to publish such books as Dr. Criswell's; and we have not even protested the fact that the Sunday School Board gives publicity to his book," wrote James. "We have only protested the nature of that publicity."

An editorial in the Mississippi Baptist Record said that the resolution certainly did not represent the thinking of all Southern Baptist college and seminary professors of religion, and urged those who voted for the resolution to come forth with their names so all Baptist religion professors would not be charged with espousing the position of a few.

The secretary-treasurer for the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, Howard McManus of Mercer University in Macon, Ga., said he had been enjoined by the association's executive committee from releasing the names of the members of the organization.

McManus said there are about 130 members of the association from Baptist colleges and seminaries in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, plus three from Texas and Oklahoma. T. C. Smith of Furman University, Greenville, S. C., is president of the organization, and Robert Alley of University of Richmond was chairman of the resolutions committee.

In Dallas, the secretary-treasurer of the Southwestern Association of Baptist Teachers of Religion, Joe Boles of Dallas Baptist College, said that Baptist religion teachers of the Southwest have their own organization, and were not represented at the meeting in Atlanta when the resolution was adopted.

McManus said the resolution on Criswell's book publicity was not adopted unanimously by the 64 professors attending the meeting, but the vote count was not recorded. He estimated that only four or five voted against it, and said a second resolution protesting "a spectre of harrassment, biblicism and witch-hunting" at a Southern Baptist seminary passed unanimously.

McManus said that some of the professors present in Atlanta indicated they were displeased with advertisements appearing in curriculum materials and SBC publications. One such ad had a caption reading, "It's About Time Somebody Put This In A Book," and a line saying, "Published Proudly By Broadman Press this month!"

With varying degrees of intensity, editorials in Arkansas, Florida, Missouri, Texas, Kansas, Ohio, Indiana, Mississippi and Oklahoma Baptist state papers gave either support for Criswell or criticism of the professors' resolution.

Resolutions commending Criswell and the Sunday School Board have been adopted by Baptist pastors' conferences in Memphis, Tenn.; Greensboro, N. C.; Northeast Georgia, and Atlanta, Ga. There have been no published reports of resolutions supporting the professors.

Support for the professors came from the Western Recorder in Kentucky and from Virginia's Religious Herald, edited by Reuben Alley, who wrote that many of the comments prompted by the resolution have "proven misleading and harmful."

"Apparently many writers who objected to the statement by the professors failed to read the resolution with care," said the Religious Herald editorial.

"Once again the members of the denomination have involved themselves in a controversy which centers around professors of religion who employ and defend the historical-critical method for instruction," the editorial continued. "It is extremely regrettable that this issue arouses feelings to such an extent that one editor suggests division as a corrective measure while another advocates disciplinary action against the teachers."

The Western Recorder, edited by C. R. Daley, said that the Sunday School Board "deserves criticism for its advertising approach on this book.

"In this case as in too many others, commercialism is the determining factor in Sunday School Board merchandising policies," wrote Editor Daley of Middletown, Ky. "Integrity has been sacrificed at times for popular approval and selling success."

Daley said he believed if Criswell and the professors sat down together to discuss the Bible, they probably would agree on their understanding of the Bible "as the true revelation of God for man."

"The problem comes in the understanding of terms like 'literal,' the editorial continued. "If by 'literal' it is meant Christ is literally a door or his disciples are actual salt, then Criswell is not a literalist."

An editorial in the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine quoted Criswell's book on this point, adding that the term "literal" in the title of the book was used not in the dictionary sense, but in a popular sense.

"What Dr. Criswell is asserting is that he really believes the Bible is divinely inspired and true without any mixture of error," the Arkansas editorial concluded. "And here he will find most of us Southern Baptists in his corner."

Said a similar editorial in the Florida Baptist Witness: "It is our conviction that the overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists are largely in agreement with the content of Dr. Criswell's book, even though members of them might have given it a slightly different title if they had been naming it."

And so the editorials and letters go, most of them chiding the professors and defending Criswell. In it all, the publicity surrounding the book has become the secondary issue, with the debate mostly centering around the theological views of the professors and the proper method of scripture interpretation--literalism or historical-critical.

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**Dozen Speakers Named For
Baptist Men's Congress**

(4-15-69)

NASHVILLE (BP)--A dozen major speakers have been named to speak on the program for the Baptist Men's Congress on Evangelism and Lay Involvement slated here July 3-5, according to Owen Cooper of Yazoo City, Miss., president of the sponsoring organization.

Included in the roster of speakers will be the president of the world's largest Negro Baptist convention, the president of Holiday Inns of America, a Baptist missionary to Venezuela, a South Carolina legislator, plus two top leaders of the Crusade of the Americas.

The list of speakers now includes:

- Joseph H. Jackson, president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., and Negro Baptist pastor in Chicago;
- Wallace E. Johnson, president of Holiday Inns of American and Baptist layman from Memphis, Tenn.;
- Roy Lyon, Southern Baptist missionary in Venezuela;
- S. E. Grinstead, director of public relations for the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., with offices in Nashville, Tenn.;
- Preston H. Callison, state legislator and attorney from Columbia, S.C.;
- Kelly Miller Smith, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Capitol Hill, a Negro Baptist church in Nashville, Tenn.;
- H. G. (Jerry) Clower, sales manager for Mississippi Chemical Corp., in Yazoo City, Miss.; and
- Gerhard G. Panke, general manager and secretary of the Baptist Life Association, an agency of the North American Baptist General Conference, with offices in Buffalo, N. Y.

Previously, four other speakers had been announced for the meeting. They were: Pastor Rubens Lopes of Sao Paulo, Brazil, president of the hemisphere-wide Crusade of the Americas evangelistic campaign; Wayne Dehoney, pastor from Louisville, Ky., and North American coordinator for the Crusade of the Americas; Dr. Robert A. Hingson, developer of the famed "peace gun" which inoculates masses against disease; and Lambert Mims, mayor of Mobile, Ala.

The speakers have been enlisted by Cooper and by a steering committee which includes members from 10 Baptist conventions in the United States with a combined membership of 20 million people.

The meeting is to be sponsored by the Pan American Union of Baptist Men, and by the Men's Department of the Baptist World Alliance.

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SBC Sunday School Board
Files to Stop Tax Assessment

SANTA FE, N.M.(BP)--The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board has filed a complaint against the tax assessor, the Board of Commissions and the treasurer of Santa Fe County, following the placement of Glorieta Baptist Assembly on the county assessment list at a value of ten million dollars.

The complaint, filed in the district court in Santa Fe County, calls for a judgment acknowledging that the assembly property and all its buildings are Southern Baptist church property used for religious, charitable and educational purposes and thus exempt from taxation under the New Mexico Constitution.

The board is also asking for an injunction against the collection of any tax on the Glorieta property or the listing of the property on the Santa Fe County tax rolls pending the final outcome of the litigation.

Further, a permanent injunction is requested restraining the County from assessing the property or collecting or attempting to collect any real property tax as long as the property is owned and possessed by the Sunday School Board, and continues to be used for religious, charitable and educational purposes.

The board's complaint states that the "valuation of ten million dollars was done without any appraisal and is completely arbitrary and void as a matter of law."

The assessment is termed "discriminatory because similar educational and religious institutionally owned and used property within the state of New Mexico and within the County of Santa Fe is not subject to taxation and said taxation and assessment for taxation is contrary not only to laws, Constitution of the State of New Mexico, but also the Constitution of the United States.

In commenting on the suit, James L. Sullivan, executive secretary-treasurer of the Sunday School Board, stated:

"We regret the necessity for this action, but have no alternative in view of our charter purposes and the laws as we understand them. In all of our operations throughout this country, we pay full taxes, without protest, on every piece of property that is nonrelated to our specific religious responsibilities."

"But we feel that the law clearly calls for exemption of that property which we use for religious, charitable and educational purposes. Attempts to tax such properties move us dangerously close to violation of sound principles of church-state separation."

As nearly as can be determined by Baptist Press, this is the largest valuation ever placed on Southern Baptist properties which are used specifically for religious, charitable and educational purposes. A valuation was placed on such Sunday School Board properties in Nashville in 1960.

This valuation, according to Sullivan, was more than the actual cost of the properties involved. This taxation attempt on property used for religious purposes was challenged by the board and finally taken to the Supreme Court of the State of Tennessee.

The ruling favored the Sunday School Board, in that only the employee parking lots and employee cafeteria were ruled subject to property taxes in addition to those already being paid by the board.

Dear Mr. Woolley:

Thank you for your letter of April 10, 1969, regarding the historical commission.

The commission is currently reviewing the information provided and will contact you again as soon as a decision has been reached.

We appreciate your interest in the historical commission and the work it is doing to preserve our heritage.

If you have any further questions or information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below.

Sincerely,
[Signature]

Enclosed for you are two copies of the historical commission's report on the matter.

Very truly yours,
[Signature]

cc: [Name], [Address], [City, State, Zip]



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DAVIS C. WOOLLEY MO
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