



**BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Billy Keith, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-1631  
**RICHMOND** Jesse C. Fletcher, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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February 19, 1970

Editors Warn Churches  
Of Private School Danger

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. (BP)--Editors of two dozen Baptist state papers throughout the nation adopted a resolution here warning Baptist churches of the dangers involved in operating private schools in church buildings to avoid integration of public schools.

The resolution urged all Baptist people to pray for educational and governmental officials "as they seek to resolve problems incident to public school integration."

The editorial also asked that all Christians "recommit ourselves to the biblical teachings of equality, freedom and justice for everyone, regardless of race, creed, or national origin."

Members of the Southern Baptist Press Association, composed of the editors of 30 state-wide Baptist newspapers plus several nation-wide Baptist publications, adopted the resolution unanimously.

The association and the executive secretaries of thirty state conventions affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention met simultaneously at the Hilton Palacio del Rio Hotel here.

The editors resolved "that we respectfully remind churches and individuals of the serious financial, racial, political, social and religious dangers involved in conducting private schools in church buildings to avoid integration in public schools."

The resolution said that the entire public school system is being threatened by reactions to recent federal court orders to expedite integration, and response to those orders. It pointed out long-standing Baptist support of public school education guaranteeing "equal education to all."

Another resolution emphasized the role of the free press in providing full and accurate information on all sides of any issue, and pointed out increasing polarization in the nation over current issues.

The association recognized "the responsibility resting upon the editors and staffs of its member publications for courageous and accurate reporting as well as incisive appraisal of issues and problems."

In other actions, the association elected J. Harse Grant, editor of the Biblical Recorder, Raleigh, N.C., as president; and Joe T. Odle, editor of the Baptist Record, Jackson, Miss., as president-elect. Alvin C. Shackelford, editor of the Indiana Baptist, Indianapolis, was elected secretary-treasurer.

Next year, the editors will meet February 15-17 in Florida, (in a city to be named later).

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Robert Dixon To Head  
Texas Baptist Men

2/12/70

DALLAS (BP)-- Robert E. Dixon has been elected executive secretary-treasurer of Texas Baptist men, which directs brotherhood work among 1,8 million Texas Baptists.

The 42-year-old native of Chattanooga, Tenn., was elected unanimously by the Texas Baptist men's executive board to succeed W. L. Smith, who resigned last November to accept a position with the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond. Dixon will be formally presented to the Texas Baptist Executive Board at its March meeting here.

Dixon, who has served four years with Texas Baptist men, was co-directed of state Royal Ambassador work before being named temporary administrator after Smith's resignation.

Before coming to Dallas, he had served as minister of youth and recreation at Calvary Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss.; First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.; and First Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn.

He was the first man ever to serve as a combination minister of youth and recreation in either Mississippi or Tennessee and was the first one from his field to serve as president of the Religious Education and Music Association of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

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Polarization In SBC Predicted  
By Profs

SAN ANTONIO (BP)--Two professors from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary predicted here increased polarization within the Southern Baptist Convention during the decade of the 1970's.

William H. Pinson and Clyde Fant, both of the Fort Worth-based seminary, made the prediction in an examination of the issues within the denomination for the seventies during a meeting of the Southern Baptist Press Association here.

Pinson told the editors that they could expect more polarization between youth and their elders, and between denominational leaders and the people in the pews during the next decade.

Fant questioned whether in the next decade Baptists would develop a climate of freedom and openness permitting dialogue and discussion necessary to share differing opinions without shouting at one another and attacking the character of someone who differs.

One of the key issues, predicted Pinson, is the question of what is a Baptist. "Are we going to draw up a catechism, a set of articles of faith and demand adherence to it?" he questioned.

He pointed out that historically, Baptists have always been unwilling to do this, and he defined a Baptist generally as "someone who belongs to an institution that contributes to the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program and mission effort."

Historically, there has been no consistency on doctrine, practice, and belief among Baptists, Pinson said. He added, however, that several doctrinal and theological positions uniquely characterize Baptists.

Pinson quipped that he does not believe Southern Baptists would ever join the National Council of Churches of Christ because he didn't believe it would be helpful to "jump on a dead horse--it won't go very fast."

He observed there is a "growing concern" that the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention are "getting top heavy" and have grown too fast in comparison with the rest of the denomination.

There is a "gathering storm in the churches" because of the gap between the professional leadership in the denomination and the people in the pew, Pinson said. While those in executive positions generally are highly educated and cosmopolitan, the reverse is true of the majority of the members, he said.

Pinson observed there is still conflict within the SBC over the relationship between evangelism and social action, even though Baptists now glibly say, "it is not either-or; it is both-and." That has become a cliché, he observed.

He added in a later speech, however, that he doubts a major controversy will arise on this issue because "Baptists have always mirrored society" and "society has now become social-action oriented."

Southern Baptists have no theology of social change, however, and have been slow to accept the idea that social change cannot come without changing social structures that oppress people, he said.

As an example, Pinson said Christians can only deal with the problem of pollution through corporate action, not individual influence.

Another major question for the seventies is whether Baptist churches will contribute to continued segregation by operating private schools in competition with public schools. "If we cop out on this one, we will never contribute to solving the problem of racial segregation," Pinson said.

Fant said that one solution is to provide more and better information on all side of the issues. This is one of the contributions Baptist editors can best make, he said.

Pinson urged the editors to deal with change and controversy creatively and responsibly. "Change can come about without controversy, but it almost never does," Pinson said.

Though controversy can be a creative force, it is often uncontrollable and leaves deep scars on the people involved, he said.

The press can help by keeping controversy issue centered rather than personality centered, and by holding down emotional factors, he added.

He observed that the degree of controversy depends on such things as the personalities involved, how much is at stake, the degree of change being advocated, the extent of

polarization that has developed and the basic climate of the controversy.

In bad times, controversy is more intense, and these are bad times (statistically) for Baptists, Pinson said.

He observed that because of increased polarization coupled with demands for change, the denomination is almost sure to face more controversy in the decade of the seventies.

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Executive Secretaries  
Elect Sanders President

2/13/70

SAN ANTONIO (BP)--The Association of Executive Secretaries for Baptist State Conventions elected Harold Sanders, executive secretary of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, as their new president during annual session here.

The state convention executives, meeting simultaneously with the Southern Baptist Press Association, also heard a report from a committee appointed to seek ways to come to the financial aid of the Kansas Convention of Southern Baptists.

Earl O. Harding, executive secretary of the Missouri Baptist Convention and chairman of a committee of state convention executives appointed to deal with the matter, reported he has written commitments thus far from 12 state conventions to give \$445,500 over a five year period.

Harding told the secretaries that nearly a dozen other convention executives have told him they plan to take proposals to appropriate committees or boards.

The Kansas Convention, faced with an indebtedness of \$1.6 million in its church loan and bond operation, recently successfully completed a \$500,000 fund campaign in the state, with pledges totalling \$623,540.

The amount raised within the state, plus a \$1,500 weekly allocation through the Cooperative Program budget in Kansas, and the \$445,500 pledged by the other state conventions would clear Kansas of its indebtedness, Harding said.

The Hawaii and Indiana Convention executives have written indicating their committees have approved pledges of \$500 a year each since an earlier report Harding had made in writing (Jan. 29) to the Kansas Convention.

In the earlier report, Harding said that Missouri Baptists had pledged half the amount--\$250,000--but added that he hoped commitments from other conventions would allow Missouri to reduce its pledge so that no one convention would have to carry a disproportionate load.

Georgia, Oklahoma, and Kentucky Convention executives have indicated their committees approved \$10,000 a year pledges for five years. North Carolina has pledged \$5,000.

Three smaller states, Alaska, Arizona, and New Mexico indicated five year commitments of \$1,000 annually and Ohio and Michigan pledged \$2,000 annually.

Harding said the executives of Illinois, Arkansas, South Carolina, Oregon-Washington, Texas and Virginia indicate they plan to present the matter to their committees or boards later this year.

Most of the three-day meeting for the state convention executives was spent discussing internal operations of state Baptist affairs, said Ray Roberts, outgoing president and executive secretary of the Ohio Baptist Convention.

The Executives elected John Baker, secretary for the Northern Plains Convention, as vice president, and re-elected James Smith, secretary of the Illinois Baptist State Association, as secretary-treasurer.

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