



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

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
Telephone (615) 244-3355  
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

March 4, 1970

Letters, Editorials Protest  
Seminar on "Authentic Morality"

NASHVILLE (BP)--Final details for nation-wide Southern Baptist seminar in Atlanta on the theme, "Toward Authentic Morality for Modern Man," a meeting which has caused considerable controversy, have been announced by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission here which is sponsoring the meeting, March 16-18.

More than 100 letters and at least two editorials in Baptist state papers have criticized the commission for sponsoring the seminar, slated at Atlanta's American Motor Hotel.

Most of the letters have protested the commission's inviting as speakers to the meeting three of the 15 program personalities--Joseph Fletcher, Episcopal Theological School professor and author of the book, Situation Ethics; Anson Mount, public affairs manager for Playboy magazine; and Rep. Julian Bond, Negro state legislator in Georgia.

An editorial in the Mississippi Baptist Record questioned whether such speakers should be given a platform at a Southern Baptist meeting.

An editorial in the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector argued that the seminar would hurt giving to the convention's Cooperative Program unified budget.

An editorial in the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine published in October, 1969, before the controversy really broke publicly briefly outlined the purpose of the seminar and observed that the "Christian Life Commission is well within the purview of its job description in charting this seminar."

Most of the nearly 100 letters received by the commission here have opposed the seminar on the basis of mis-information, or on a misunderstanding of the format and nature of the seminar, said Foy D. Valentine, executive secretary of the commission.

Many of the letters seem to have been prompted by a misleading article and radio broadcast put out by Billy James Hargis' Christian Crusade in Tulsa, Okla., Valentine said.

Most of the people who have written do not seem to understand that following the presentations by Fletcher and Mount, two Southern Baptist seminary professors who have done detailed study in the field will debate their views, Valentine pointed out.

Henlee H. Barnette, ethics professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, will respond to Fletcher; and William M. Pinson Jr., ethics professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, will discuss the negative aspects of the Playboy philosophy.

Following each of the program periods involving Fletcher and Barnette, Mount and Pinson, and Bond, there will be a period of open discussion for the conference participants to express their views or question the speakers further.

"The seminar will allow the participants to hear widely differing points of view, with full freedom for debate between speakers and ample time for questions and statements from the floor," Valentine said.

The SBC agency leader said the seminar was planned to include two messages from those "with whom we have basic differences," Valentine pointed out that the views of the speakers "are not necessarily those of the Christian Life Commission or of the commission staff."

"In order to understand what God is saying to Christians about morality in 1970, many thoughtful people want to know what those who proclaim 'another morality' are saying," he added. "We need to understand the heavy pressures and subtle temptations inflicted upon the Christian as he seeks to live his faith in today's world."

He added that the commission is attempting to follow in the seminar the New Testament pattern set by the Apostle Paul when he went to Mars Hill in Athens to confront and challenge the "unknown gods" with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Valentine pointed out that attendance at the seminar is by invitation to those who have attended previous national seminars and to those who have requested invitations, and that the \$20 registration fee will cover the program costs of the seminar, not the SBC Cooperative Program (unified budget).

Nearly 400 persons from almost every Baptist state convention have registered for the seminar. Usually, attendance in past seminars has been limited to about 250 persons, but the response for the Atlanta meeting far exceeded previous seminars, Valentine said.

Those who register do so with an understanding of the subjects to be discussed, the kinds of speakers who will participate and the approach to be taken, he added.

Baptist and Reflector Editor James Lester wrote that "despite the rebuttal that 'we want to have a representation of opinion,' this type of approach to a 'problem' isn't calculated to make a lot of churches want to increase their gifts to the Cooperative Program."

Editor Joe T. Odle in Mississippi wrote that "it appears that the positions held by these men are pretty widely known, so that any informed Baptist can know what they are saying, without our giving them a platform or paying their expenses or an honorarium to say it."

At least two Baptist pastors' conferences in Memphis and Birmingham have reportedly passed resolutions or asked their officers to express opposition to the conference.

In Georgia, where opposition to the seminar seems to be strongest, about 75 persons have written letters to the editor at the Christian Index, Baptist state paper, opposing the seminar.

At least two churches, DeFoor Avenue Baptist Church in Atlanta, and Woodlawn Baptist Church in Baxley, Ga., have voted to withdraw financial support of the Cooperative Program, citing the seminar as an example of liberalism they oppose in the denomination.

In addition, about 20 churches or their deacons, associational executive committees, or pastors' conferences in Georgia have adopted resolutions criticizing the seminar.

Valentine said since opposition has developed toward the three most controversial speakers that most Baptists have failed to see the perspective of the program for the total seminar.

Of the 15 speakers, 10 of them are Baptists who will outline specific steps Christians should take towards upholding authentic morality, he pointed out.

Each session will begin with a Bible study on the theme, "Seedbed for Authentic Morality," by Clarence W. Cranford, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.

Roger O. Egeberg, assistant secretary for health and scientific affairs, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, will speak on "Population and Public Health."

David Mace, professor at Boman Gray School of Medicine, Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., will speak on "Sex Education and Moral Values," and Frank Stagg, professor at Southern Seminary, Louisville, will speak on "Authentic Morality and Militarism." Rep. Bond will speak on "The Constructive Uses of Black Power."

Other speakers are Clyde E. Fant, professor, Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth; Russel Noel, minister of education, First Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.; James M. Dunn, executive secretary, Christian Life Commission for Texas Baptists; John R. Claypool, pastor, Crescent Hill Baptist Church, Louisville; and Kenneth L. Chafin, director, evangelism division, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Atlanta.

The meeting will end with "A Call to Authentic Christian Morality" by Frederick G. Sampson, Negro pastor of Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, Louisville.

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Nixon Asks Congress For  
Aid To Parochial Schools

3/4/70

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Richard Nixon has proposed federal education reforms designed to strengthen both the public and private schools of the nation.

In a "Message on Education Reform" sent to Congress, the President (1) proposed a new National Institute of Education, (2) announced a President's Commission on School Finance, (3) asked for funds for a program to help every American learn to read, and (4) proposed a network of child development projects for pre-schoolers.

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Discussing his Commission on School Finance, Nixon said: "The specific problem of parochial schools is to be a particular assignment of the commission."

The President made it clear that he intends to find ways to help the parochial schools in the nation. He declared that such schools are essential to the education processes of the nation and that they must remain in operation.

"The non-public elementary and secondary schools in the United States have long been an integral part of the nation's educational establishment," the President said. They "provide a diversity which our educational system would otherwise lack," he continued.

Nixon championed the parochial schools as a safeguard against educational monopoly by the public schools. Further, he said that they offer parents a choice of schools for their children.

"Up to now," the President continued, "we have rallied to consider the consequences of declining enrollments in private elementary and secondary schools, most of them church-supported, which educate 11 per cent of all pupils--close to six million school children.

"In the past two years, close to a thousand non-public elementary and secondary schools closed, and most of their displaced pupils enrolled in local public schools.

"If most or all private schools were to close or turn public, the added burden on public funds by the end of the 1970's would exceed \$4 billion per year in operations, with an estimated \$5 billion more needed for facilities," he said.

The President further praised the parochial schools for their "dimension of spiritual value giving children a moral code by which to live. This government cannot be indifferent to the potential collapse of such schools."

The President urged the commission on school finance to keep two considerations in mind: "First, our purpose here is not to aid religion in particular but to promote diversity in education; second, that non-public schools in America are closing at the rate of one a day."

The purpose of the new proposed National Institute of Education is research and experimentation in the United States. Both public and private schools would be included in the program.

Under the President's "right to read" program, new curricula and better methods would be developed. Special funds for school libraries and special education projects were urged. Both public and private schools are included in the plans.

The President said he has committed his administration to learning development of children during the first five years of life. He has established a new office of child development and is pushing for a network of experimental centers for pre-schoolers.

Goals set forth in the President's program include equality in education, new standards for measuring learning, accountability and responsibility of school officials, and local control of education.

In his message to Congress, Nixon declared that the educational programs developed under President Lyndon B. Johnson "are largely fragmented and disjointed, and too often administered in a way that frustrates local and private efforts."

The President acknowledged that "the tone of this message, and the approach of this administration, is intended to be challenging." But, he said, "America's educators have the capacity and dedication to respond to that challenge."

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Criswell Returns From Africa  
Tour, Praises Missionaries

3/4/70

DALLAS (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President W. A. Criswell has returned home here from a tour of Africa, praising Southern Baptist missionaries there and saying they offer the hope for Africans to overcome tribal differences and conflicts.

The pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, and his daughter, Anne Criswell Jackson, spent one month traveling in seven countries in East and South Africa.

Criswell preached and Mrs. Jackson sang in revival meetings prior to the opening of continental crusades in Africa scheduled later this year.

The tour, arranged by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, covered Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, and Rhodesia. The party traveled with missionaries into the government centers, as well as into the bush country.

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In a news conference on his return to Dallas, Criswell was asked about the Nigerian situation. He pointed out he did not visit Nigeria, but had been there three times previously.

"There is little difference between Nigeria and other areas of Africa," he said. "The curse of Africa is tribalism. It is in every one of these nations. I don't think there's any hope for it outside the missionary."

"They have confidence in the missionaries; they love them;" Criswell said. "When the missionaries introduced me, the people would just open up."

He continued, "If one tribe loves Jesus and another tribe also loves Jesus, you are not going to have any trouble there."

"The countries of Africa have infinite possibilities," Criswell said. "The resources are beyond imagination. Some day Africa will take its place as one of the great continents and great peoples of the world."

The SBC President said Africa is not an anti-white nation. "Africans are open hearted toward the white man even after centuries of exploitation," he said.

He said Africans are interested in everything American, devoting much newspaper space to events in the United States.

In many countries Criswell met government officials, business executives and religious leaders. However, he traveled primarily with missionaries who could talk with the people.

"It was an intimate trip, one of getting to know the people," Criswell said. He said it was not like the tour of Secretary of State William P. Rodgers, who was in Africa at the same time.

"That's one of the tremendous weaknesses of our political set-up," Criswell continued. "The government representatives will go into a place and immediately go to a palace for a banquet and leave. They never know what the people think and never touch the actual living conditions of the great masses."

Criswell noted that he was surprised to discover "Black Africa is pro-Israel." He said this sentiment is expressed not only in newspapers but by many of the people.

The Dallas pastor observed that there has been a noticeable penetration of Communism into East and South Africa. He said Red China is digging into both the economic and political lives of the continent.

Criswell quipped that he played a "secondary role" on the trip. He said his daughter Anne received "exuberant acclaim."

"They apparently had never heard a female singer reach such high notes with such explosive volume," he said. "She sings like I preach--loud and with much gusto."

The SBC President preached three times on Sunday and two to four times each day. "In some of the services I conducted, hundreds of people accepted the Christian faith," he said.

"The door is as wide open in Africa as the Lord could open it," Criswell said.

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#### BULLETIN

Seminary Trustees Delay  
\$125,000 President's Home

FORT WORTH (BP)--Trustees of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary here, after a four hour discussion, voted to delay construction of a proposed \$125,000 home for its president until "plans, appropriate to long-range campus development, are completed."

The proposed home has been the center of controversy for several months. Scores of letters to the editor of the Baptist Standard, Texas Baptist weekly newspaper, have criticized the proposed home as "extravagant," and have urged reconsideration of the plans.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Baptist Press will carry a full report Thursday, 3/5/70



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*460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

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

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