



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) 234-1631
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

November 4, 1970

**"Company of Committed" Splits
Away From Birmingham Church**

BIRMINGHAM (BP)--Members of the First Baptist Church who walked out in "moral protest" because of the church's refusing membership to two Negro applicants have voted to "divorce" themselves from the parent group and form a new church.

Calling themselves the "Company of the Committed," the group met at the Baptist Student Center located near the University of Alabama Medical School on the South Side of Birmingham when they took the action.

About 375 persons, including a number of Negroes and visitors, attended the session, and about an equal number, but no Negroes, attended the services of First Baptist Church.

The group mapped plans to meet the following Sunday (Nov. 8) to organize the new church, select a name for it, elect trustees and staff members, and file incorporation papers.

They voted to meet each Sunday morning and evening and Wednesday evening for regular services, making a clean break with the First Baptist Church of which they had been a part.

In previous meetings, the "Company of the Committed," as they first called themselves, had voted to support financially the church's staff, continue a downtown ministry, and maintain an open door policy for membership without regard to race or color.

A controversy over the race issue had literally split the parent First Baptist Church into the two camps.

The controversy began when Mrs. Winifred Bryant and her daughter, Twila sought to join the church last July. Both had been involved in the church's neighborhood ministry program, and Twila made a profession of faith in Christ as a result.

Since July, the church has narrowly defeated an effort to fire the pastor and staff, refused to adopt an open door racial policy on membership, rejected the two Negro membership applicants, accepted the resignations of 11 staff members, and watched as 300 walked out in "moral protest."

J. Herbert Gilmore, pastor of the First Baptist Church who resigned effective Oct. 31, is serving as temporary spiritual advisor to the group that walked out.

In his first sermon to the "Company of the Committed," Gilmore urged the group to have optimistic hopes for the future, but that their hopes should go beyond human optimism "to the fact that if God is for us, who can be against us."

Gilmore said he believed that from the group, something of "eternal impact will be made, not just in Birmingham, not just in the South, but in the entire nation."

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CORRECTION

On BP story mailed 11/2/70 headlined, "West Virginia Baptist Organize 33rd Convention," please correct typographical error in last sentence of graph 6 to read: "Mrs. Ola Cox will serve as part-time..." rather than "...past-time..." as sent! Our apologies to Mrs. Cox.

--Baptist Press

Bible Scholar Says: "They Don't
Burn Translators At Stake Anymore"

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--The chief translator of Good News for Modern Man--Today's English Version of the New Testament, traced opposition to new Bible translations, and quipped: "They don't burn translators of the Bible at the stake anymore, thank goodness."

Robert G. Bratcher, a Southern Baptist and former missionary to South America, said that opposition to the Today's English Version (TEV) which he translated is nothing new, for new translations of the Bible historically have met with sometimes bitter opposition, and persecution of translators has been widespread in the past.

Bratcher pointed out that opposition to John Wycliffe's first English translation of the entire Bible in 1382 was so strong that 44 years after Wycliffe's death, his body was dug up and the remains burned and thrown into a stream.

The 46-year-old Bible scholar was here to present the 22 millionth copy of Good News for Modern Man, often called the TEV, to Miss South Carolina, Claudia Turner of Spartanburg, S.C.

The TEV has been a bestseller, and has gained an overall acceptance that is unparalleled. The New York Times has called it "the most readable of existing translations." In England, it has been called "The Gospel of the Groceries," and Australians have dubbed it "The Plain Jane Bible." A New Yorker has also called it "The Swinger's Bible."

Illustrated by about 200 modern line drawings by Swiss Artist Annie Vallotton of Paris, the translation itself is written in the plain, every-day language of today's man in the street.

Bratcher noted that when the New Testament first appeared, it was written in the common Greek idiom used in the marketplaces. Bratcher said he sought to recapture this "market-place language" in today's English that is easy to read and understand.

While praise for the highly simplified, modern language version has been widespread, so has criticism. Perhaps the two word changes that have drawn the most fury from critics are the words "virgin" and "blood."

Some have objected to the designation of Mary in parts of the TEV as a "girl" rather than a "virgin."

Bratcher emphasized that the translation does not in any way deny Mary's virginity, but that the term was used in Biblical days as a synonym for a "young, unmarried girls." He added that where the term "virgin" is essential to the meaning, it is still used in his translation.

He further explained that the word "blood" has sometimes been changed to "death" when the reference is to Christ's redemptive death for men, and not the liquid that flowed in his veins. In other cases where the symbolic and spiritual use of the word is quite clear, the word "blood" is retained, he added.

The presentation of the 22 millionth copy of the TEV was held in conjunction with a statewide distribution project by churches of nearly every denomination, seeking to make a copy available to every family in the state that wants one.

Gov. Robert E. McNair of South Carolina proclaimed Sunday, Nov. 15 as "Good News Sunday" in support of the statewide effort to distribute half a million copies of the TEV.

The project was coordinated jointly by the American Bible Society and the South Carolina Christian Action Council.

SBC Mission Gifts Up 2.66%
For Year; 6.5% For October

NASHVILLE (BP)--An increase of 6.5 per cent in missions giving during the month of October boosted Southern Baptists contributions through the Cooperative Program unified budget for the first 10 months of 1970 to a total of \$231/2 million.

The total for the year represents an increase of \$609,824 or 2.66 per cent for Cooperative Program contributions thus far in 1970, compared to gifts for the same period in 1969.

Porter W. Routh, executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee which prepares the monthly financial report, said that the 6.5 per cent increase during the month of October "is an encouraging demonstration of continued concern of Baptists for missionary outreach, theological education and other SBC programs.

"If this rate of growth continues for November and December," Routh continued, "the convention will be able to meet its commitment to the agencies for operations and pay some on the 1970 capital commitment."

The Cooperative Program unified budget distributes operating and capital needs funds to 20 different national agencies in the denomination on a convention-adopted formula.

For the first 10 months of 1970, Southern Baptists gave \$23,567,467 to the programs of these agencies through the Cooperative Program, compared to \$22.9 million for the same period during 1969.

During the month of October, Cooperative Program contributions totalled \$2,516,171, an increase of \$154,986 or 6.56 per cent over gifts during October of 1969.

In addition to undesignated funds through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists gave a total of \$21.7 million to designated specific mission causes during the first 10 months of the year.

Designated gifts were down slightly compared to designations for the first 10 months of 1970. Last year, designations were \$39,582 (.18 per cent) higher than in 1970.

Grand total mission gifts (Cooperative Program plus designations) reached \$45.3 million, compared to \$44.7 million for 1970, during the 10 month period. This is an increase of \$570,242 or 1.27 per cent.

The amount reflected in the financial report does not include contributions to support local and statewide Baptist mission efforts, but only national programs of the Southern Baptist Convention.



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*460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

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HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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