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February 12, 1971

**E. Y. Mullins Fellowship  
Dissolves--Lack of Interest**

**RICHMOND (BP)**--The E. Y. Mullins Fellowship, an organization of liberals in the Southern Baptist Convention, is dead.

The organization, born during a period of doctrinal dissent in the SBC, was dissolved by its leaders due to lack of interest.

Thomas D. Austin, chairman of the continuing committee for the Mullins Fellowship announced the decision to discontinue the organization in a letter to the Religious Herald, Baptist state paper in Virginia.

Austin, former pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Richmond who recently became senior minister at First Baptist Church in Savannah, Ga., said that he sent to each of the 150 dues-paying members of the organization a letter in December saying he had decided to resign his leadership role, and suggesting that the organization be dissolved.

"If I do not hear from you contrary by the 15th of January, 1971," the letter to the membership said, "I will assume your concurrence with my recommendation and my last act as chairman of the continuing committee will be to carry through all the recommendations."

Austin, contacted by Baptist Press, said that the saddest thing about the demise of the Mullins Fellowship was that so few of the members bothered to reply to the letter. He explained that only five or six persons responded, and no one objected to the decision to dissolve the organization.

Citing a lack of interest in the organization, Austin added that there were not even enough members attending the Southern Baptist Convention in Denver for a formal meeting.

At the Denver convention in June, 1970, the causes which the Mullins Fellowship had espoused--primarily openness and freedom in biblical scholarship and the use of the historical critical method of biblical interpretation--took a sound beating with the SBC requesting the recall and rewriting of the Broadman Bible Commentary "with due consideration to the conservative point of view."

Austin said that the convention had come to this point partly because liberals in the SBC have not really cared enough to become involved in the denomination's political structure. He added that although there was a need for an organization like the Mullins Fellowship, he doubted there was enough interest for it to be possible for such a group to succeed in the SBC.

In a letter to the editor of the Religious Herald here, Austin said he felt that the group had been grossly misunderstood from the beginning.

One such misunderstanding was that many Baptists felt the group was proposing a power play to force the SBC to agree with their point of view, and another misunderstanding was that "we were anti-Criswell," said Austin.

The group was also associated in the minds of many with action taken by an entirely different group, the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, which in January of 1969 adopted a resolution critical of W. A. Criswell, then president of the SBC, for his book entitled, Why I Preach That the Bible Is Literally True, and an advertising campaign which they charged implied this was the official position of the SBC.

"It is true that much of our dissent was focused against Criswell's point of view, but we were simply wanting Southern Baptists to recognize that one did not have to toe the denominational line to be a loyal Southern Baptist," Austin said.

"We were nothing more or nothing less than loyal and faithful Southern Baptists who were concerned that our convention not adopt doctrinaire positions..." he added.

Austin said that he knew of only one individual prominent in the fellowship, William C. Smith Jr., former secretary of the organization, who had left the SBC. Smith is now pastor of First United Church of Christ in Durham, N. C.

The Mullins Fellowship was organized in the spring of 1969, with its first full meeting at the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans that June. It was named for the late E. Y. Mullins, former seminary president and denominational leader in the SBC.

At its peak, the Mullins Fellowship had about 375 members, and just before it was dissolved, the membership was about 150, Austin said.

There was about \$200 in the organization's treasury, and only one member requested that his dues be returned, Austin said. In the December letter to members, Austin said dues could be returned, or that funds on hand after mid-January would be contributed to "some worthy cause, perhaps the American Bible Society."

In the letter to the Religious Herald, Austin stated "As far as I am concerned, the E. Y. Mullins Fellowship ceased to exist as of Jan. 15, 1971. And my last act as chairman of the continuing committee would be to dissolve the organization and reimburse the funds."

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Religious Spokesmen Ask  
Military Draft Reforms

2/12/71

WASHINGTON (BP)--Representatives of ten major religious groups in the nation urged reforms in the military draft law in three days of hearings conducted by the Senate Armed Services Committee. Sen. John Stennis (D, Miss.) is chairman of the committee.

The religious leaders pled variously for Congress to end the military draft in favor of a volunteer force, to broaden the definition of conscientious objection and to provide a better system of alternative service for military conscription. A few of the spokesmen urged the committee to consider a law granting amnesty to young men who have fled to other countries to escape the draft.

The committee hearings were on a number of bills, either to end the draft and set up an all-volunteer service, to reform the draft, or to extend it for two years.

The Nixon administration, which has said it favors an all-volunteer armed force, has asked that the present Military Selective Service Act of 1967 be extended for two years.

Of special significance at this series of hearings was the fact that spokesmen from several of the mainline Protestant denominations joined a number of the traditional "peace" churches in their pleas for military service reforms. No Baptist body testified at the hearings.

Most of the religious spokesmen based their pleas for draft reform on freedom of conscience. "In American thought, both religious and political, conscience has been considered the forum within man where God alone speaks authoritatively," said William P. Thompson, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

"Military conscription is an infringement on personal freedom...more drastic than governmental appropriation of property; it appropriates the person, not merely his property," quoted John Kernodle from the official position of the General Synod of the United Church of Christ.

Violence at home, unrest among young people and over-all disenchantment with the unresponsiveness of government were cited also as reasons why the nation should end the draft and move toward a volunteer armed force.

"The issue is freedom and stability at home," a Methodist professor of social ethics said. John M. Swomley Jr., professor at the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo.,

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said that Americans "need to feel that there is a change in policy toward greater personal freedom within our society and away from squandering our men and taxes on an insatiable juggernaut."

The Presbyterian spokesman, who also presented the testimony for the National Council of Churches, said that the question of military conscription "is a question of what kind of people we are."

"Is the American people a warrior race, mustered for perpetual warfare?" Thompson asked, appearing on behalf of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church.

Thompson said Presbyterians, who support the right of the state to call citizens to military duty in times of national emergency, did not agree with the government's present policy for peace-time conscription.

"The American male is not born to man the armies of a warrior people, but to fulfill the will of a God who is not a God of war but a God of peace," Thompson concluded, urging the abandonment of conscription.

Representatives of three traditional "peace" groups, the Mennonites, the Quakers and the Church of the Brethren, all asked that young men in other denominations be given the same treatment as those who grew up in the tradition of pacifism. Each of them cited testimony concerning preferential status by draft boards to young men from the "peace" churches and discrimination against those from other religious backgrounds who seek conscientious objector status.

Another issue running through the various testimonies of the denominational executives concerned the plight of young men who have fled to other countries to evade the draft. The United Church of Christ leader, John Kernodle, told the committee that "it is a strange paradox of history that our nation which was once a haven from conscription now generates exiles because of its own policies of conscription."

The general secretary of the Lutheran Council in the USA, C. Thomas Spitz Jr., said that "no nation can be considered 'secure' in the fullest sense if it persists in alienating men of conscience."

Spitz continued that the United States "can ill afford to perpetuate a policy toward conscientious objectors that send thousands of men 'underground,' into exile, or to prison."

Thompson, in his long testimony concerning conscientious objection on behalf of the National Council of Churches, said: "A young man who is willing to go to prison rather than to violate his conscience should not have to go to prison to demonstrate his sincerity or the involuntariness of his repugnance to taking life."

The General Board of the National Council of Churches also asked for a provision in the law for armed forces personnel "who cannot in conscience take part in the use of certain weapons or forms of warfare, or who cannot in conscience obey what is for him an unlawful or morally unacceptable order."

"I would want American soldiers to be able under law to do what we punish Japanese and German soldiers for failing to do (after World War II)," Thompson declared.

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Foreign Missions Income Up,  
Special Assignments Noted

2/12/71

RICHMOND (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's income for 1970 was a record \$34,664,147, but even so, monetary requests from the overseas missions (organizations of missionaries) last year exceeded the board's resources by more than \$4 million, the Foreign Mission Board was told here.

Baker J. Cauthen, executive secretary of the board, said the record income for 1970 was an increase of \$912,540 over 1969 income.

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Receipts for the 1970 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions amounted to \$5,739,629 through Feb. 10, Cauthen said. This is \$1,474,164 more than at the same date last year.

The offering receipts are coming in faster than in previous years, which partly accounts for the comparatively larger amount received so far this year, he told the board.

It is too early to project the total amount of the 1970 offering, Cauthen said. The total will be known around May 1, when the books close.

"We are greatly encouraged that the amount received from the Cooperative Program by the Southern Baptist Convention in January showed an increase of 13 per cent over the corresponding month a year ago," he said. "It is most important that the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering grow in parallel lines."

The board appropriated funds for sending several persons overseas to carry out special assignments in behalf of missionaries. W.L. Howse, director of the Education Division of the SBC Sunday School Board, will consult with missionaries in Korea and Taiwan on their strategy and long-range planning.

Leo T. Crismon, librarian at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., will assist librarians in Baptist seminaries in East and Southeast Asia. Mrs. Crismon will accompany him.

Harold C. Overton, who has been associated with the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, is teaching in the missionary language school in Limuru, Kenya, during the first five months of this year.

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Two Baptist Churches Condemned,  
Five Damaged In L. A. Earthquake

2/12/71

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Two Southern Baptist churches have been condemned and five others have sustained considerable structural damage due to the earthquake which hit the San Fernando and Los Angeles areas.

Condemned for use were the First Baptist Church of Sylmar, Calif., and Grandview Baptist Church of Los Angeles.

The homes of both pastors were also damaged by the earthquake. Damage to the home of Floyd B. Caldwell, pastor of Grandview church in Los Angeles was described as "severe," but the extent of damage to the home of Clayborn Deering, pastor of the Sylmar church, was unknown.

Larry Fisher, pastor of First Baptist Church, Newhall, Calif., near the center of the earthquake, said that his church's library was destroyed, most of the windows broken, and the furnaces ruined. Walls were cracked, and a large church sign crumbled to the ground.

The church operates a school with 180 pupils enrolled, and although classes were being held, there was no heat in the building within four days after the earthquake.

At First Baptist Church, Saugus, Calif., several beams and movable units shifted and a gas main near the church broke.

At Mountainview Baptist Church, Sunland, Calif., the light fixtures and all of the plumbing, including the main gas line into the church, were destroyed. All windows and glassware were also lost.

First Baptist Church of San Fernando Valley reported considerable breakage at the home of pastor H. E. Fisher, but the church building was not damaged.

Pastor Glen Wood and members of the Granada Hills Baptist Church were in the area evacuated because of danger from the Van Norman Dam, but there was no report indicating whether or not the building sustained damage.

Preliminary reports to the California Southern Baptist, state weekly Baptist newspaper published in Fresno, indicated that many members of churches in the area had lost their homes, but it was too early to tell the extent of the losses.

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