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In the Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2356
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
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WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

February 23, 1971

California Youth March, Urge
"Spiritual Revolution Now"

by James Lee Young

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP)--More than 7,000 Christian youth, singing "Amazing Grace" and carrying placards urging "Spiritual Revolution Now," marched on the California capitol during a "Spiritual Revolution Day" observance here in mid-February.

Many of the young people came from California Southern Baptist churches, although there was no way to accurately estimate the number of participants.

Significance of the march was summed up by Richard Weaver, 25, who headed up the rally as president of an organization called Students for Spiritual Revolution.

"What we're seeing today is happening all over America," Weaver told the crowd. There is a revolution for Jesus Christ on now, Weaver said.

He added that a similar march and rally was being planned for July 3, 1971, in Washington, D.C.

Youth from as far away as Colorado, Texas, San Diego, Calif., and Seattle, Wash., journeyed to march in the half-way rally and parade, according to the rally's sponsors.

Christians of several races, and of different styles of dress and appearance--the hip and the straight, the young and the old--took part. The majority were high school and college age youths.

Last August, the California State Senate passed a resolution declaring Feb. 13 as Spiritual Revolution Day. The measure, presented by State Sen. Albert Rodda of Sacramento called on California citizens to join in the observance through appropriate ceremonies and programs.

Typical of the responses among youth who were asked why they came was that of Vicki Allman, 13, of Balboa Park Baptist Church, Richmond, Calif.

"I love Jesus--I came," she said. Her reason was echoed throughout the afternoon by others who attended the march and rally on the steps and mall of the Capitol Building.

Among the numerous Christian groups represented was a delegation from the "Christian House" in Vacaville, Calif. Twenty walkers left the house for a two-day trudge carrying a 150-pound cross for 28 miles.

Along the way, they stopped in nearly every town to witness, according to Robert Trusty, a bearded young man who is house elder for the group.

The march differed in many ways from other revolutionary or protest marches. Signs and cameras were part of the usual equipment, but something new was added--the Bible.

The signs were different, too. One read, "Uncle Sam, Jesus Wants You." Most frequently, they said, "Spiritual Revolution Now."

The parade formed at noon when the "Jesus people" were organized into platoons. Instructions were given the marchers to keep order, to set a good example, to stay in the streets in ordered ranks, and to pray for success of the observance.

As they walked for 15 blocks to the Capitol Building, they sang, "Amazing Grace," the chorus, "Amen," and "Oh, How I Love Jesus."

Sacramento police kept automobile traffic out of the line of the marchers. "How can you oppose something like this," one police lieutenant asked. "It would be like saying you hate your mother," he added.

A state policeman said he was amazed at the rally. "I thought all young people thought about was destruction and hate."

During the rally, five major speakers addressed the crowd, including Weaver, the editor of the Hollywood Free Paper, Dwayne Peterson; State Assemblyman Newton Russell of Burbank, Calif.; Black Evangelist, Al Hopson; and Arthur Blessitt, Southern Baptist evangelist who directs a street ministry on Sunset Strip in Hollywood, Calif.

Blessitt made headlines last year with a march from California to Washington, D.C., pulling a cross and leading a rally at the nation's capital.

Blessitt lashed out at what he called the inconsistencies of the nation's leaders who hold a cocktail glass in one hand and try to tell young people not to "blow grass." He urged President Nixon to hold a news conference calling the nation back to God.

Blessitt said he was sick of government studies which identify problems. "We know the problems--now we need the solution," which, he added, is Jesus Christ.

Hopson, the black evangelist, urged the youth to look at the churches of today as "a mission field"--needing help.

Saying that color doesn't make any difference, Hopson added that "Black Panthers are being saved and are preaching the gospel."

Russell, the state assemblyman, cited the problems of governmental budgeting, welfare administration, moral problems, ecology and pollution of the environment. As he discussed each problem, he would call out, "What is the answer?"

"Jesus," the youthful crowd repeatedly replied.

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Monroe Calls For Urgency In Communicating SBC Needs

2/23/71

NASHVILLE (BP)--Citing overwhelming needs and lack of financial resources to meet those needs, the chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee outlined reasons "why we are where we are" in a financial crunch facing the Baptist denomination.

James Monroe, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Ft. Walton Beach, Fla., issued a challenge to Southern Baptist leadership to come to a "new sense of urgency and commitment" in communicating Baptist efforts of taking the gospel to a world in need.

Monroe's address came during the opening session of the SBC Executive Committee just prior to two days of budget requests from SBC agencies in preparation for drafting a proposed SBC budget for 1972.

The agencies presented requests totalling \$34.2 million for 1972. The 1971 budget requirements had previously been reported as \$31.1 million. In comparison, actual 1970 Cooperative Program receipts totalled \$27.9 million, or \$932,926 short of the 1970 goal.

Monroe added that the problem in the SBC is not as intense as it is in some Protestant denominations, but there is "a growing uneasy feeling among Southern Baptists that one day we might find ourselves in similar circumstances."

Citing the problem of leadership, Monroe said that "we are living in times when we've been more interested in building 'a' kingdom than in 'the' kingdom.

"For some years, we've had a sanctuary complex"--building more and bigger buildings until SBC churches reported a total indebtedness of \$879.3 million in 1970--an amount that is \$22 million more than total gifts for all causes through the churches, Monroe observed.

"Kingdom building exists in the institutions, not just in the churches," he added.

"We have erected a denominational structure that is almost too big and inflexible to act and react quickly in changing times," he observed.

Commenting on the current "Jesus Movement" Monroe said that as an example of this inflexibility, many Baptist churches are "still wondering what to do about these kids who've turned on to Jesus. We must not," he said, "mark it off as a fad or reject it because we didn't start it.

Calling for a new effort at communicating a concern for people as individuals, Monroe also urged a new sense of fellowship--New Testament "Koinonia"--among Baptists. "We must affirm that the Cooperative Program depends on a cooperative spirit."

He urged the Executive Committee, the denomination's central coordinating body, to accept its role in the challenge, observing that "this committee has been afraid of its own power, and has been reluctant to use it for fear of misusing it. Thus, we fail to expose and debate and resolve the issues placed before us."

Commenting on the pressures state conventions face to keep more and more funds on the state level, Monroe stated that "unless our state conventions can learn how to handle the college (financial) situation, we're going to see more and more money drained away from world mission causes."

He concluded with a plea for a new sense of urgency and commitment among Baptist leaders to communicate the needs of people around the world.

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HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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