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October 7, 1971

**Baptists Sound Alarm
At Prayer Amendment**

WASHINGTON (BP)--A Baptist agency here defended religious freedom as it is now protected by the First Amendment and sounded alarm at the attacks on separation of Church and State under the cloak of a proposed prayer amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, in semi-annual session, charged that a prayer amendment now before the House of Representatives "by authorizing participation in nondenominational prayer opens the door for government to determine what is acceptable prayer."

The Baptist agency further said, "We are vitally concerned to maintain religious liberty, without any infringement by governmental regulation of any form, as now provided without qualification by the First Amendment to the Constitution."

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is sponsored by eight major Baptist bodies in the United States, including the Southern Baptist Convention.

The sponsoring conventions have empowered the committee "to enunciate, commend, and defend the historic principle of religious freedom with particular application to the separation of Church and State as embodied in the Constitution of the United States."

The proposed prayer amendment will probably be acted on by the House of Representatives on November 8.

"It is our opinion," the Baptist Joint Committee resolution continued, "that the proposed amendment is offered in view of a misinterpretation of the so-called 'prayer and Bible reading' decisions of the Supreme Court in 1962 and 1963, which properly prohibited government intrusion into the religious activity of school children.

"At no time has the Supreme Court prohibited voluntary prayer but has only ruled against governmentally prescribed prayer and governmentally sponsored religious exercises," the committee further asserted.

Among the other reasons given by the Baptist Joint Committee for opposition to the prayer amendment are the following:

1. Supporting the right of all persons to engage in genuine prayer without governmental determination of either the place or the contents of such prayer;
2. Opposing any amendment that would "make of government a judge of theology and an administrator of religious practice";
3. Protesting that under the proposed amendment "a new religion of 'nondenominationalism' would in a measure become established which could threaten the integrity of both Church and State";
4. Charging that by imposing the limits of nondenominationalism on prayer in public buildings the amendment would nullify the Constitutional right of the free exercise of religion; and
5. Affirming the right of school children or any other segment of the population to engage voluntarily in their own prayers without government authorization or supervision, a right that is already adequately protected by the First Amendment.

The Baptist Joint Committee's resolution against the prayer amendment was in harmony with actions by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1964 at Atlantic City and in 1971 at St. Louis. At both times the convention voted overwhelmingly against proposed prayer amendments and in support of the First Amendment as it now stands.

Much of the Baptist Joint Committee session was spent discussing how best to persuade the House of Representatives to vote against the prayer amendment.

A major conclusion of the committee was that perhaps the most effective means would be for persons in every congressman's district to write, phone or telegraph him before November 8 asking him to vote against House Joint Resolution 191, which is the prayer amendment.

The Baptist Joint Committee re-elected its present officers to serve another year. They are: chairman, Warren R. Magnuson, Baptist General Conference; first vice chairman, Alma Hunt, Southern Baptist Convention; second vice chairman, S. S. Hodges, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; recording secretary, Elizabeth J. Miller, American Baptist Convention; and treasurer, John W. Baker, acting executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee.

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**Congressman Calls for Action
Against Prayer Amendment**

10/7/71

WASHINGTON (BP)--Cong. Fred Schwengel (R., Iowa) told members of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs that he believes "prayer will be diminished and religion will be hurt" if the proposed nondenominational prayer amendment becomes a part of the U. S. Constitution.

Schwengel, a layman in the North American Baptist General Conference and an active member of Calvary Baptist Church in the nation's capital, addressed the committee during its three-day semi-annual session here.

Discussion on the prayer amendment was primary on the committee's agenda, because a vote on this amendment is expected in the House of Representatives on November 8.

"You ought to lay aside everything except missions and let this be your primary challenge . . . until we have our people thinking right on this thing," Schwengel challenged the leaders from eight Baptist denominations in North America.

His voice intermittently choked with emotion, Schwengel told the committee that "it is no compliment to the churches" that a proposed prayer amendment is before Congress for vote.

"We have not understood and shared intelligently enough the great blessings we have in religious freedom," Schwengel declared.

Earlier in his message he recounted his Baptist heritage as a "first generation American." Born to German immigrants who came to America seeking religious freedom, Schwengel is a descendant of Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss leader in the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.

Observing that he was speaking both as a congressman and as a Baptist, the Iowa Republican advised the committee members to organize small groups of Baptists "to call on every congressman between now and November 8, to make their views known" concerning the proposed amendment's threat to religious liberty.

Citing the Quakers as an example of how to approach legislators, Schwengel said to "go on the basis of common sense and good judgment." He praised the Quaker lobbyists for their efforts to present arguments "based on facts and convictions."

In his message to the committee, Schwengel told of a conversation with former Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, who was on the court when the "prayer and bible reading" decisions were handed down in 1962 and 1963. The proposal now before Congress to authorize "nondenominational prayer" in public buildings would reverse those decisions.

"We ought to be applauding the Supreme Court in these cases," Schwengel declared. "We ought to hang our heads in shame that an agnostic (Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hare) took this thing to the Supreme Court when we Baptists should have."

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In the dialogue following Schwengel's appeal to the committee, G. K. Zimmerman, whose family also came from Germany to America seeking religious freedom, pointed out that over half the population in the United States does not belong to any church.

"We must stand up for their rights, too," declared Zimmerman, who is the top executive for the North American Baptist General Conference.

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Louisiana Board Recommends
Budget, Opposes Prayer Change

10/7/71

PINEVILLE, La. (BP)--The Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention voted here to recommend a record \$4.2 million budget for 1972, and adopted a Southern Baptist Convention-approved resolution cautioning Congress against adopting a so-called "prayer amendment" to the U. S. Constitution.

Board members unanimously adopted the resolution which was approved both in 1964 and 1971 by the Southern Baptist Convention which states: "We appeal to the Congress . . . to allow the First Amendment of the Constitution . . . to stand as our guarantee of religious liberty, and we oppose the adoption of any further amendment to that Constitution respecting establishment of religion or free exercise thereof."

In miscellaneous business, the board discussed the possibility of adopting a resolution approved earlier this year by the New Orleans Baptist Association asking for a public apology from Mid-City Baptist Church in New Orleans for alleged fraudulent bond sales.

The board requested the resolutions committee of the convention to investigate the advisability of a similar resolution to that of the New Orleans Baptist Association in order to give strength to the association's request for an apology from the church.

The proposed budget, which must be approved by the Louisiana Baptist Convention when it meets in Pineville, La., Nov. 15-17, would provide \$1.2 million for Southern Baptist Convention causes, and \$2.7 million for state Baptist programs.

The board also agreed to take the lead in efforts to raise an additional \$336,000 for Louisiana College, a Baptist school in Pineville, La., in a special fund campaign.

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New Mexico Church Revival
Breaks Two State Records

10/7/71

HOBBS, N. M. (BP)--An evangelistic crusade at First Baptist Church here has resulted in the church's breaking two records in the state--the largest number of baptisms in a single year, and the largest Sunday School attendance.

During the week-long crusade, led by evangelist Freddie Gage of Houston, the church baptized its 307th convert for the year, breaking previous records for number of baptisms during a single year by a Southern Baptist church in New Mexico.

Sunday School attendance records were also broken, with 1,577 persons attending Sunday School on the final day of the crusade. It broke a previous record of 1,400 held for many years by First Baptist Church, Albuquerque, N. M.

According to the pastor, Bailey E. Smith, the revival ended with 130 professions of faith for the week.

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Cooperative Program Gifts
Pass \$45 Million for 1971

NASHVILLE (BP)--A 12 per cent increase in missions giving through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program unified budget during the month of September helped boost missions contributions to more than \$45.3 million for the first three quarters of 1971.

The \$45.3 million in total mission contributions for the year is an increase of \$2.8 million, or 6.58 per cent, for the same period in 1970, according to the financial report issued by the denomination's Executive Committee here.

The total amount includes \$22.3 million through the denomination's Cooperative Program unified budget which benefits 19 agencies of the convention, plus \$23 million in designated contributions to specific Southern Baptist mission causes.

For the first three quarters of the year, Cooperative Program gifts increased \$1.2 million, or 6.12 per cent. Designated contributions increased \$1.5 million, or 7.04 per cent.

Southern Baptist officials here credited a 12.4 per cent increase in Cooperative Program giving and a 12.2 per cent increase in designations for the month of September with helping to boost the financial report for the first three quarters of the year.

During September, Cooperative Program gifts reached \$2.2 million, an increase of more than \$250,000 over September, 1970, gifts. Designated contributions for September totalled \$352,969, an increase of more than \$38,000.

Of the \$45.3 million total, more than \$28.8 million has been distributed to aid SBC foreign mission efforts, and more than \$9.6 million has gone to nation-wide home mission efforts. Seventeen other SBC agencies, including six seminaries, receive funds through the denomination's Cooperative Program budget.

The financial report includes only funds contributed to nation-wide SBC mission efforts, and does not reflect financial support of state and local Baptist mission programs.