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December 8, 1971

Christian Life Commission
Honors Prof. Henlee Barnette

NASHVILLE (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission presented its distinguished service award to Henlee H. Barnette, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, during a dinner in his honor at the commission's annual meeting here.

Barnette was presented a plaque citing him for outstanding service to the denomination as "an inspiring teacher, a gifted and competent theologian, a compassionate gadfly, a distinguished writer, and a courageous prophet of God."

A native of North Carolina, Barnette has taught at Southern Seminary for the past 20 years. He also has taught at Stetson University, DeLand, Fla., and Samford University, Birmingham; and served as pastor of churches in North Carolina and Kentucky.

He is the fourth person to receive the Christian Life Commission's distinguished service award. Previous awards went to former Arkansas Congressman Brooks Hays, Southwestern Seminary Ethics Professor T. B. Maston, and former commission executive secretary A. C. Miller.

In presenting the award, Foy D. Valentine, executive secretary of the Christian Life Commission, praised Barnette's contributions to the denomination, using the descriptive phrases on the plaque to describe the professor.

In accepting the award, Barnette paid tribute to the role of the Christian Life Commission in the life of the denomination, saying its contribution to the social awakening of Southern Baptists "is inestimable."

The commission, he said, "has dealt forthrightly with every major issue of our time. No agency of the Southern Baptist Convention has done so much in so little time with so little resources to bring our people face to face with moral issues as has the commission."

Barnette cited two reasons for the commission's contribution to the denomination: (1) wise leadership, and (2) relative freedom from bureaucratic control.

He described the staff of the commission as "men of real insight, integrity and courage" who "are on the moral and social frontiers of our society."

Compared to other agencies of the denomination, the Christian Life Commission has maintained a measure of autonomy partly because, he said, "none of the other agencies have had any hankering to be associated with it and its radical stand on social issues."

He predicted that if the commission were ever merged with another agency, its "prophetic voice could be muffled underneath layers of bureaucratic expediency. Its function would," he continued, "simmer down to merely promoting consensus theology and ethics; that is, what the so-called masses of Southern Baptists believe about the Bible and ethical responsibility."

Barnette said that "never before in the history of our nation has corruption in government, in politics, in the military, in business, in religion, in family life and in personal relations been so pervasive. Now more than ever the work of the commission is needed to identify these problems and to provide intelligent guidelines to help the churches cope with them," he concluded.

During his 20 years at Southern Seminary, Barnette was acting dean of the School of Theology for several years in addition to teaching Christian ethics. He earned the master and doctor of theology degrees from Southern Seminary, and is also a graduate of Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, N.C., which has honored him as a "distinguished alumnus."

13th Check Means Double
Blessing to SBC Retirees

DALLAS (BP)--This Christmas, the number 13 will mean double blessing to 6,363 people who depend on the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board for their retirement income.

The Annuity Board is sending them a 13th check, an amount equal to twice their monthly benefit, according to R. Alton Reed, board president. Amount disbursed in extra payments totals \$915,137.

The extra sum is paid over and above the 12 regular monthly checks, thus earning the title six years ago as "the 13th check." The five previous annual bonus checks were paid in February rather than just before Christmas, and equaled only one month's benefit.

Reed explained that a change in the fiscal year caused the switch in dates for sending out the "13th check." When the fiscal year and calendar year coincided, the extra dividend to annuitants went out in February. Now that the board is changing with other Southern Baptist agencies to a fiscal year ending September 30, the checks from this year on will be dated in December.

The board does not guarantee a "13th check," made possible year by year by good experience with investments, Reed said. The first extra check went out in February, 1967, after the Annuity Board had eliminated the liability against its retirement plans.

A "13th check" has gone out every year since, including one in February, 1971. During the calendar year, 1971, annuitants thus will have received three extra months of income--25 per cent more than their contract calls for them to be paid, Reed explained.

He reminded annuitants that no check will be sent next February, since the board has switched to pre-Christmas delivery.

The size of monthly checks and the "13th check" vary from one annuitant to another, Reed said, since the type of retirement program and the amount contributed into the program prior to retirement determine the size of the benefits.

Annuitants include retired pastors, church workers and denominational workers who served in the Southern Baptist Convention. Nearly 1,400 annuitants are widows of pastors and other religious workers.

The Annuity Board also had its usual Christmas bonus for 410 persons who receive relief checks.

Extra retirement and relief dividends do not deprive the non-retired of any future benefits, Reed continued. The board's good experience on investments, which has made possible extra dividends, has also enriched funds held for those who are now building benefits toward future retirement, he said.

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Houston Baptist Church
Sets New Baptism Record

12/8/71

HOUSTON (BP)--The First Baptist Church of Houston baptized 1,669 persons last year, apparently a new all-time record for a Southern Baptist church during a single year (October-September).

Pastor John Bisagno, who came to the downtown church here in 1970 from First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., said that 950 of the baptisms resulted through a SPIRENO (Spiritual Revolution Now) campaign conducted by the church last spring.

The three-month-long campaign was led by evangelist Richard Hogue, who spoke in Houston high schools and junior high schools, inviting young people to evangelistic meetings at the church. Total professions of faith during the revival exceeded 4,000, Bisagno said.

Besides those baptized by First Baptist, other churches reported baptizing at least 600 who came to Christ during the SPIRENO rally, the pastor reported.

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Bisagno also attributed the continuing revival in the church with spurring members to raise the church's annual budget from \$290,000 last year to \$656,000 this year.

He said the previous recorded high mark for baptisms by a Southern Baptist church in a year was about 1,100 by Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tenn., a congregation no longer affiliated with the SBC.

Officials in the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board Division of Evangelism in Atlanta said they knew of no other Southern Baptist church which had baptized as many persons in one year. Last year, First Baptist Church, Merritt Island, Fla., led the SBC in baptisms, with 395 reported.

Bisagno attributed the record number of baptisms to the church's efforts at honoring Jesus, saying the congregation is "deeply committed to old fashioned worship. The atmosphere is evangelistic," he said. "The atmosphere is bright, and the people say 'amen.' There is an overwhelming optimism--a commitment that we're going to reach our town for Jesus Christ," Bisagno said.

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Amish Religious Liberty Case Argued Before Supreme Court

12/8/71

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--A three-way issue involving educational rights and religious liberty will be decided by the U. S. Supreme Court early in 1972.

At stake are the questions:

1. Do Amish parents have a right based on the free exercise of religion to withdraw their children from public school education after the eighth grade in conflict with the compulsory school attendance laws?
2. Does the state have such a compelling interest in the education of children that this overrides the free exercise of religion by Amish parents who take their children out of school beyond the eighth grade?
3. Do Amish children have educational rights for a full education through high school in spite of the religious views of their parents?

Such a case was argued before the U. S. Supreme Court on December 8.

On Oct. 23, 1968, the school district administrator of New Glarus District No. 1, Green County, Wisc., filed criminal complaints against the parents of Freda Yoder, Barbara Miller and Vernon Yutzzy, two of whom are members of the Old Order Amish and the other a member of the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church.

The charges were that the parents had failed to cause their children to attend school (public or private) contrary to the requirements of the Wisconsin compulsory school attendance law.

The lower courts in Wisconsin convicted the parents, but the state Supreme Court reversed the decision on Jan. 8, 1971. The state high court ruled that Wisconsin had not shown such compelling interest in the education of the Amish as to deny the religious liberty of the parents. The State of Wisconsin appealed the case to the U. S. Supreme Court.

In the meantime the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom was organized. William B. Ball, noted church-state attorney and a long-time advocate of state aid to parochial schools in Pennsylvania, was employed to defend the Amish parents.

The State of Wisconsin was represented before the Supreme Court by Assistant Attorney General John W. Calhoun.

Before the case was heard, five national religious organizations filed amicus briefs with the Supreme Court in behalf of the Amish. They were the General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, Synagogue Council of America and the American Jewish Congress, National Jewish Commission of Law and Public Affairs, the National Council of Churches and the Mennonite Central Committee.

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The State of Wisconsin argued that the nation has a compelling interest in the education of its youth and that this justifies the compulsory school attendance laws, attendance to be either in public schools or in private or parochial schools.

Attorney Calhoun further argued that the decision of the Wisconsin Supreme Court ignored the substantive right of children to an education which was denied by upholding the Amish parents.

On the other hand, Attorney Ball argued that the Amish people do provide an education for their youth after the eighth grade, even though it is not in formal schools. The Amish teach their children to adhere to agriculture as a way of life. They reject the advances of modern civilization.

Ball pointed out that the Amish people teach their children so well that there is no juvenile delinquency, that they never have problems with civil disturbance and that they are law abiding citizens.

Furthermore, he said the Amish take care of their own people, that none of them are on public welfare, that they care for the aging as well as for the young.

Ball challenged the Supreme Court that if they ruled against the Amish parents it would virtually spell the end of the Amish society in the United States. He did not specify whether this meant a destruction of the Amish as a religion, or that the Amish would migrate to another country where their religious beliefs would be respected.

Ball further charged before the court that the reason for the prosecution of the Amish parents was not primarily to demonstrate the State of Wisconsin's compelling interest in education but to make possible the collection of state aid for the public schools in the county where the Amish live. This, of course, was denied by Calhoun for the State of Wisconsin.

Calhoun argued that if the Supreme Court upheld the Wisconsin decision it would establish a new national precedent for "conscientious objection" to education by a broad spectrum of persons who object for various reasons to the public schools.



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