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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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August 3, 1972

**Missionary Gets Medallion
For Helping Puerto Ricans**

JERUSALEM(BP)--Southern Baptist Missionary Norman F. Lytle has been awarded a medallion by the State Department of Puerto Rico in recognition of his service to a group of Christian pilgrims injured by terrorists' bullets May 30 at Lod Airport, Tel Aviv.

The attack, led by three Japanese hired by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, left 24 dead and 78 wounded. Most of the victims were Puerto Ricans who had just entered the Customs Hall at the airport.

Joseph Abner Munoz, the group's leader, presented the medallion to Lytle when he and four of the five victims who remained in Israel visited the missionary here. Lytle served as their guide around the old city and Bethelhem.

Although two of the victims were in wheel chairs, they visited holy places, did some shopping and stopped for a brief worship service in the garden tomb.

Lytle later took them to Jerusalem House, a Baptist-run student center, for refreshments, and then to his home on the Mount of Olives for a panoramic view of the city.

Elizabeth F. Smith, Missionary press representative in Israel, reported that three of the Puerto Ricans still under the care of a Tel Aviv hospital were to fly home July 28 if their conditions permitted.

A fourth, a young girl who lost both legs following the airport attack, might also have been released. The fifth, critically wounded in the stomach, may require hospitalization for some time yet, his doctors say.

Working with these five prior to their departure for home has been only a fraction of the ministries to the victims of the airport attack, said Mrs. Smith.

Baptists initially aided the group by providing transportation to and from the hospitals in the Tel Aviv area where the wounded were being treated. They coordinated daily visits to patients by Baptists from all over the country.

Lytle had a part in the official ceremony at the airport when the bodies of those killed were returned to Puerto Rico. He represented the Evangelical Protestant community as he spoke, along with government, Catholic and Jewish leaders. Baptists from several churches were present to serve as pallbearers.

Members of the Petah Tiqva Baptist Church visited the wounded and took them flowers, cakes and gifts. A group of Baptist college students working in Israel for the summer gave a surprise birthday party for the young girl who lost both of her legs.

Robert L. Lindsey, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Israel, sent a message of condolence to the Puerto Rican pilgrimage leader and a letter of appreciation to Jerusalem's Mayor, Teddy Kollek, thanking him for his personal attention to the Puerto Rican guests.

Lindsey also brought the main message at a memorial service sponsored by the Evangelical Protestant community.

Baptists also were among participants in an interfaith memorial service for all the victims of the Lod attack. Muslims, Catholics, Jews and Protestants took part in the service. Among

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messages of condolence that were read was one from Carl Bates, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Church-State Issues, Education
Endorsed as Campaign Subjects

8/3/72

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Church-state relations and education should be important campaign issues in the forthcoming presidential race--but probably won't be, a Baptist denominational official observed here during a conference on "Christian Morality and National Politics."

Phil D. Strickland, associate secretary of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission in Dallas, told the 150 participants at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center here that church-state concerns are of vital interest to the American religious community and especially to Baptists.

Strickland, an attorney, identified three basic points he felt should be national campaign issues: church taxation, the so-called prayer amendment, and state aid to parochial and private elementary and secondary schools.

He urged presidential candidates to express their stands on these issues, and to learn the viewpoints of the religious community.

"It is important that both political parties and the presidential candidates understand our (Baptist) opposition to 'parochialism'," Strickland said.

"Generally, Southern Baptists understand that public schools would suffer if public funds were used for private schools," he explained. "The general public has no obligation to support any private schools," he argued.

"Using public funds in this manner would be unconstitutional, in that it would represent a shift in government policy from neutrality to a positive support for religious institutions," said Strickland.

Use of public funds for private education would also move the country toward a dual system of education, encourage private schools to circumvent desegregation, deny full public control of public tax expenditures, and violate every citizen's right to the "free exercise of religion," he further argued.

Strickland advocated a constant tension in favor of separation of church and state, saying: "the most important place to do this is on the issue of public funds for parochial schools."

On the prayer amendment issue, Strickland said he and many Baptists oppose any such amendment, feeling that the First Amendment to the Constitution already guarantees the freedom to pray, privately, and voluntarily, in public schools or anywhere else. Such an amendment, in fact, would be a government regulation of prayer.

But government has no business involving itself in religious practices at any level, he said. The amendment would enable government to impose limits on prayer and to determine the content of prayer, and no government should have that right.

The right to pray is safe now, he said. The best thing government can do for religion is to leave it alone.

On the third issue, church taxation, a city councilman from Dallas, Jerry Gilmore, pointed out that Baptists have at times taken questionable advantage of some of their institutional tax privileges.

Gilmore, a Baptist Layman, said Baptists should be "very careful about being so pious about the church-state issue, when they themselves have not paid ad valorem taxes on some of their profit making enterprises." He cited examples such as floral shops at Baptist hospitals, parking garages, and several other businesses operated by Baptists.

He raised several other church taxation questions which Baptist should squarely face,

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He raised several other church taxation questions which Baptist should squarely face,

including: Should church groups pay taxes on profits made from the sale of property? Should church groups pay taxes on income made in investments? Should ministers be given a tax advantage through housing allowances?

Earlier, in another address to the conference, Strickland charged that the church frequently uses its power, not for the good of mankind, but rather to protect its own favored position and to further its own institutions and welfare. The issue of church taxation is a prime example, he said.

"There is little question whether the church in the U. S. has power," he observed. "It has it (power) whether or not it chooses to use it."

"What the church needs," he said, "is a theology of power."

"The church is not to run from this world, it is to penetrate and infiltrate the world with the message of justice, equality, and concern," he declared.

Too often, however, the church has chosen to bury its power, refusing to use it for good, and has chosen comfort instead of confrontation, peace instead of prophecy, he said.

In a final address, Strickland spoke on "Political Involvement: Try It, You'll Like It," urging more Christian people to consider running for public office.

In summation, he told the conference, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission: "Ultimately, the question is: 'Is Christian interest as strong as secular interest; is Christian compassion as strong as secular desires; is Christian commitment as strong as secular commitment.'"

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Astronaut James Irwin Plans
Religious Broadcasting Effort

8/3/72

HOUSTON(BP)--Former Apollo 15 astronaut James B. Irwin announced plans here to participate in radio and television programs through the Southern Baptist Radio-Television Commission in addition to his worldwide religious activities through his new independent organization, High Flight, Inc.

At a news conference here, Irwin, accompanied by Paul Stevens, executive director of the SBC Radio-TV Commission, said he would begin orientation Sept. 1 at the commission's Fort Worth office in religious broadcasting.

Irwin was also flanked in the news conference by William Rittenhouse, who is resigning as pastor of Nassau Bay Baptist Church here to serve as High Flight's vice president. Irwin is the organization's president.

The first Southern Baptist to walk on the moon said High Flight's itinerary includes a four-week Asian trip for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in October.

He said he will be used by many organizations, such as the Wycliffe Bible Translators, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Campus Crusade for Christ, to spread his Christian witness.

Irwin said High Flight will eventually incorporate other personalities who have a Christian message to share and will develop a conference center at its headquarters in Colorado Springs for deeper examination of how the Christian faith applies to daily life.

He said he has given himself "a year to two" to determine whether he will continue fulltime with High Flight.

The 42-year-old "moon missionary" said he will also become a part-time trainee of the Denver-based Johns Manville Corp., and will represent the manufacturer around the world as his High Flight commitments permit.

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Asked by reporters about his role in the controversial sale of moon envelopes, Irwin reiterated statements to Baptist Press carried in late July by the national wire services.

Irwin told Baptist Press that he and astronauts David Scott and Al Worden "were wrong" to carry souvenir stamped envelopes to the moon for sale later to establish a trust fund for their children.

"A spiritual encounter with God on the moon played a major part in my individual decision to refuse my share" of the proceeds, he said.

He noted that all three astronauts had decided late in the fall of 1971 that it would be wrong to profit from the envelopes, and backed out of the arrangement.

Stevens said in an interview that the envelope deal will have no affect on Irwin's relationship with the SBC Radio and Television Commission.

"I 've interviewed him and gotten to know him well," Stevens said. "The man is human, subject to human mistakes and knows the experience of God's forgiveness.

"I feel that Jim Irwin's kind of ministry can be shared redemptively with the sinful world around us," Stevens said.

Earlier, Irwin told Baptist Press, he doesn't feel his mistake will hinder his ministry through High Flight. "I hope it will open up opportunities for me to relate meaningfully to others who have also made human mistakes and need God's love and forgiveness," he said.

Irwin said the High Flight logo will be a globe with vertical and horizontal orbits joined by the cross of Jesus. The vertical orbit represents, he said, the mutual search between God and man and the horizontal orbit represents man's outreach to other men.

The name High Flight, he said, was inspired by a poem of the same name by John Gillespie Magee, Jr., A pilot in World War II.

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BP PHOTOS mailed to state Baptist papers.

Philippine Flood Victims
Housed in Baptist Church

8/3/72

BAGUIO, Philippines (BP)--As houses are wiped out by avalanches and mud slides in this mile-high city, a Baptist church has become an emergency relief center for the homeless.

The disaster is attributed to the 188 inches of rain that drenched the city during July.

Sixteen persons are known to be dead and eight missing, but all members of the Aurora Hill Baptist Church are accounted for, reports T. C. Hamilton, Southern Baptist missionary associate here.

After 10 houses tumbled from an eroded hilltop into a rain-swollen ravine near the church, Pastor Samuel Comising and Missionary Richard C. Henderson began taking in the homeless and feeding rescue teams around the clock.

Much of central Luzon Island, where Baguio is located, is under water. Hamilton said this is the worst flooding there since 1936. He added that in the midst of widespread misery and destruction, the isolated mountain city has braced itself for two approaching typhoons.

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