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October 5, 1972

Wood Declares Church Must Engage in Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (BP)--Separation of church and state does not mean the separation of religion and politics nor the separation of religion and the state, declared a Baptist leader in a major address here.

"Furthermore," he continued, "normative church-state relations must include the right of the church to give expression to its witness and prophetic voice on all matters affecting domestic and foreign policy, war and peace, and the entire legislative and political process because of its concern for the sanctity of the rights of persons."

This broad definition of "public affairs" was spelled out by James E. Wood Jr., new executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, at a dinner meeting of the committee and representatives of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths in the nation's capital.

Wood is the third executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee. He succeeded C. Emanuel Carlson who retired in 1971. J.M. Dawson was the first executive director.

Prior to his coming to the Baptist Joint Committee, Wood was for 17 years on the faculty of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., as professor of history of religions. At Baylor he was also chairman of the J.M. Dawson Studies in Church and State, and since its founding in 1958 he has been editor of the Journal of Church and State.

In his first public statement since assuming the office on September 1, Wood explained his understanding of the mandate of the Baptist Joint Committee which is authorized "to act in the field of public affairs" by its nine sponsoring denominations, including the Southern Baptist Convention.

"To be true to its mission," Wood declared, "the church must be involved in public affairs because it seeks to minister to the whole man in the world, and no aspect of life can be regarded as outside of God's concern, dominion and power."

The new executive director refused to predict the future of the Baptist Joint Committee, but he did envision an expanded role in the life of the nation.

"New challenges will arise which call for different responses than those made in the past," Wood said. "It is likely," he continued, "that the agenda of the Baptist Joint Committee may well include altogether new areas of concern and action."

The direction of the new administration of the Baptist Joint Committee was made clear by repeating part of his letter of acceptance earlier in the year. At that time Wood wrote, "May no one fail to understand that our commitment is first to rights, not interests; and to persons, not to institutions, as applied to all men, and not just a few."

Interpreting the care of the church for religious liberty, Wood declared that this "must necessarily include the concern of the church for all civil liberties as inalienable rights of all men."

In his 55-minute inaugural address, Wood asserted that religious liberty, a free church in a free state, demands a secular state. "No establishment of religion," he said, "means a secular state, a limited state in which the people have excluded the authority and jurisdiction of the state from religious affairs."

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"The secular state, as expressed in the free society," he explained, "is neither Christian, nor Buddhist, nor Muslim, nor religious, nor irreligious. To express it another way, the secular state seeks neither to promote nor to interfere with religion."

American civilization is based on a pluralistic society, the Baptist Joint Committee executive said. He explained:

"A pluralistic society is one in which minority rights are constitutionally guaranteed, and the free exercise of religion--freedom of religion and freedom from religion--is assured."

Wood attacked the "myth" that has evolved in the development of democracy in the modern world that the essence of democracy is simply majority or party rule. "In the free society," he said, "state absolutism is controlled by guarantees of civil liberties, which are, in effect, limitations on government and political authority.

"Civil liberties have no real meaning apart from individual and minority rights, which can be guaranteed only in the free society," he continued. "The totalitarian state allows and demands consent only, while the free society guarantees and requires the right of dissent as well as the voluntary consent of the governed."

"In this regard," Wood said, "it is necessary to realize that minority rights are necessary not only to sustain the principle of religion, but also to maintain a democratic form of government."

Four "fundamental truths" were enunciated as Wood explained the expanding role of the Baptist Joint Committee. They are:

- "1. Involvement of the church in public affairs is an inescapable responsibility of the church..
- "2. The church is not to be bound to the power structures of this world...
- "3. The separation of the gospel from politics needs to be seen as an abdication of the Christian responsibility to advance justice and to serve the larger community...
- "4. The ultimate basis of the free church idea is that which asks only for the right to be free in order to be the church..."

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Southern Seminary Names Two Visiting Professors

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has named two visiting professors, including appointment of an evangelism professor for one year.

Lewis A. Drummond, professor of evangelism and practical theology at Spurgeon's College in London, England, since 1968, will assume the position of Billy Graham visiting professor of evangelism for the 1972-73 academic year.

Jonathan A Lindsey, since 1967 a teacher of religion at Judson College in Marion, Ala., will serve as visiting professor of church history for the fall semester.

Drummond is returning to Louisville, where he was pastor of the Ninth and O Baptist Church for four years. In addition, he has been pastor of churches in Alabama and Texas.

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Public Affairs Agency Names 7th Day Baptist as Chairman

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in semi-annual session here elected a new chairman, re-arranged staff titles, and discussed current issues on church-state relations.

This was also the first regular meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee with its new executive director, James E. Wood Jr., formerly on the faculty of Baylor University, Waco, Tex.

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Alton L. Wheeler, general secretary of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, Plainfield, N.J., was named the chairman of the Baptist Joint Committee. He succeeds Warren R. Magnuson, general secretary of the Baptist General Conference, who has served as chairman the past two years.

Two of the executive staff members of the Baptist Joint Committee were given new titles and equal status.

John W. Baker was named associate director in charge of research services, and W. Barry Garrett was named associate director in charge of information services.

Baker, since the retirement of C. Emanuel Carlson, served as acting executive director until Wood assumed his new duties on September 1.

Among the items discussed by the Baptist Joint Committee was the question of tax credit for parents paying tuition in private schools. The House Ways and Means Committee was scheduled to consider this question on Tuesday morning while the Baptist Joint Committee was in session.

On Monday evening, the Baptist Joint Committee passed a special resolution opposing tax credit legislation that would give aid to church-related or other non-public schools. The next morning, members of the committee personally delivered the resolution to the offices of the 24 members of the House Ways and Means Committee.

During the same time parochial school interests had besieged the Ways and Means Committee with telegrams urging approval of a tax credit plan. Earlier both major presidential candidates had pledged support of a tax credit plan to help parochial schools.

The result was that the Ways and Means Committee voted to instruct its staff to draw up a tax credit bill for final approval one week later.

Among other items discussed by the Baptist Joint Committee were the following:

--Compulsory chapel: The U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that compulsory attendance at religious services at the nation's military academies is unconstitutional. The U.S. government is now preparing to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. The government has until the end of October to file with the high court a petition for a writ of certiorari. If the court agrees to hear the case the Baptist Joint Committee will file a friend-of-the-court brief as it did when the case was before the U.S. Court of Appeals, according to action by the committee.

--Tax reforms: Tax reforms will be a priority item of House Ways and Means Committee early in 1973. Many of the proposed reforms affect churches and their agencies. The Baptist Joint Committee staff was instructed to give major consideration to this problem with the possibility of calling a special consultation of Baptist Leaders early in 1973.

--Religion and education: The Baptist Joint Committee voted to join the National Council on Religion and Public Education and to continue to work toward informing the general public about the proper relationship between education and religion in the public schools.

--Church schools and public aid: The committee engaged in a discussion of the pros and cons of public aid to church schools. The committee and its staff continue to make this a priority item on its agenda, Wood noted.

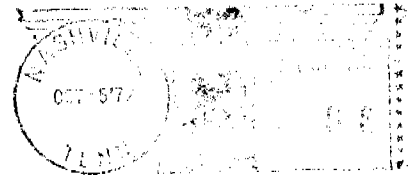
--Pending and anticipated legislation: The Baptist Joint Committee was briefed on legislation in Congress concerning busing, child development legislation, civil rights, gun control, health programs, housing, military aid, mind control, minimum wage, minister's social security, obscenity prayer amendment, presidential war powers, programs for older Americans, revenue sharing and welfare reform.

--Pending Supreme Court cases: cases of church interest before the court include, among others, questions on obscenity, abortion, narcotics, conservation and pollution, fairness in broadcasting, aid to families with dependent children, property tax as support for public schools, state aid to nonpublic school and the free exercise of religion.



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