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November 6, 1972

**Baptist, Jewish Scholars Ask:
Is God as American as Apple Pie?**

By Mike Creswell

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Is belief in God really as American as apple pie?

Is the predominant religion in America really the American way of life?

A group of 29 Jewish and Christian theologians and sociologists discussed such questions as these in a three-day conference at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here sponsored jointly by the seminary and the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee

The topic was civil religion, defined as aspects of religion that become intermingled with civil life in America--the idea that Christianity is equated with Americanism.

A Jewish rabbi who helped organize and sponsor the conference, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee, told the participants that both the political elections and a 1973 interdenominational evangelistic effort called Key 73 would have an effect on further entrenching evangelical Christianity as a religious establishment.

Tanenbaum told the conference, held only one week before the national election, that the anticipated Republican victory in the presidential election "will quite possibly have the effect of establishing evangelical Christianity as the defacto religious establishment of America.

Tanenbaum, national director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, expressed concern about Key 73, the interdenominational evangelistic effort involving about 130 Christian bodies and denominations, including Southern Baptists.

Tanenbaum said the evangelistic effort is based on a conception of America as "an evangelistic empire.

"This notion of American and evangelical Christianity being one and the same is a regression from the democratic view which is grounded on the pluralistic idea that Jews, Catholics, and others are full partners in American society," Tanenbaum added.

Politics was also the concern of two other major speakers at the conference dealing with civil religion.

Elwin A. Smith, provost of Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Fla., charged that religion in the United States "has lost prophetic moral concern and degenerated into piety and moralism."

He added he was appalled by the "insensitivity of the public to ample evidence of grossly immoral behavior in government and the public's apparent eagerness to take the moralistic reassurances Mr. Nixon hands it."

Smith said piety is "in" and morality is "out" for Protestant America. He contrasted "piety," which he said consists of acts and attributions of a religious type that enjoy wide public acceptance, to "morality," which he defined as an understanding of right and wrong to which all persons, irrespective of wealth, learning or public position are subject."

In the closing address, Charles P. Henderson Jr., assistant dean of the chapel at Princeton University and author of a controversial book entitled *The Nixon Theology*, observed that both McGovern and Nixon have acknowledged using religious phrases to arouse feelings for social causes.

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"American civil religion is sustained by individuals with unusual charismatic power, and by a series of broadly-based social movements," Henderson said.

He said that such leaders as President Nixon, Billy Graham, the Kennedys, McGovern, George Wallace and others are examples of such charismatic individuals.

In another major address, Union Theological Seminary sociology and religion professor Eric Lincoln said that "Americanism" has become a third force in American pluralism alongside Christianity and Judaism.

Lincoln defined his term "Americanism" as "the vigorous offspring of a marriage of faiths.

"It is the religion of the American culture, the religion of the republic, the national religious self-understanding that embodies and cherishes the ideal, the aspirations, the hopes that have traditionally been associated with America. It is," he continued, "the semi-secular, unofficial, characteristic religion...most Americans feel when they feel anything at all."

Lincoln, a noted black scholar, suggested that black religion may become a fourth power, "a saving force in the United States," since it has been separated from American culture while other religions have become intermingled with the culture.

The role of white ethnic groups and immigrants who in time "melted into assimilation" was discussed by Andrew M. Greeley, a leading Catholic sociologist who challenged the concept that white, ethnic Americans are superpatriots.

Such immigrants have not been in America long enough or achieved that level of security where it becomes easy to hate and despise the United States, acknowledged Greeley, director of the Center for the Study of American Pluralism at the University of Chicago.

"An appeal to the conscience of the ethnic against the war and against injustice that is based on American patriotism has a much better chance of being effective than one based on denunciation of America as a sick society, burning American flags, and ridiculing American institutions," he added.

Another University of Chicago professor, Arthur Mann, summarized the history of civil religion in America this way:

"America's civil religion has been America's way of saying what it means to be an American. It defines our nationality by expressing our better selves."

The conference was organized by B. Elmo Scoggin, Southeastern Seminary professor of Hebrew and Old Testament and Rabbi Tanenbaum, national director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, and jointly sponsored by the two institutions.

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Ohio Convention Tables Motion
Opposing Sale of SBC Commentary

11/6/72

CINCINNATI, Ohio (BP)--With almost no debate and discussion, the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio tabled a motion opposing the sale and distribution of the Broadman Bible Commentary.

Later during the convention, however, the convention adopted on second reading a constitutional change approving the 1963 Statement of Baptist Faith and Message as the doctrinal stance of the convention, and approved a resolution reaffirming "our continuing faith in the infallibility of the Bible as the work of God."

Convention officials pointed out, however, that there was no relationship between the two actions, and there was no doctrinal controversy among the messengers.

Ernest Perkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Miamisburg, Ohio, made the motion from the floor asking that the convention oppose the sale and distribution of the Broadman Bible Commentary published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Perkins said he was disturbed because

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three churches in the Dayton area were "about to leave" the SBC "over the commentary."

One unidentified messenger responded by saying, "I don't believe that we are competent to vote on this." He noted that he had not read the commentary, and did not believe most of the messengers to the state convention had done so.

Almost immediately, there was a motion to table. It was approved overwhelmingly, convention observers reported.

With almost no debate and discussion, the messengers elected a new president, adopted a \$1.4 million budget, honored their executive secretary, adopted several resolutions, and gave second approval to several constitution changes.

Most of the constitution amendments were routine word changes recommended by a seven-member committee and adopted last year on first reading. One amendment approved the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement as the doctrinal stance of the convention.

A resolution later approved by the convention called attention to the constitution revision "reaffirming our continuing faith in the infallibility of the Bible as the word of God as outlined in the Baptist Faith and Message."

Another resolution noted recent negotiations for a settlement of the Vietnam conflict, urged Baptists to pray for the cause of peace. Still another resolution urged Baptists to vote for the candidate of their choice in the national election scheduled less than a week later.

Elected president of the convention was Joseph J. Crumpler, pastor of the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church here where the convention held its sessions.

The \$1.4 million budget approved was approximately the same as last year's budget with 35 per cent allocated to support Southern Baptist Convention world mission causes.

The messengers also honored Ray E. Roberts, executive secretary of the convention, for his 20 years' service in Ohio, adopting a resolution expressing appreciation for his work, presenting a portrait of Roberts to hang in the state offices, presenting him a check of one month's salary and authorizing a three-month leave.

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New Mexico Baptist
Pioneer Dies at 94

11/6/72

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--C.W. Stumph, pioneer Baptist leader in New Mexico and executive secretary of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico from 1922-30, died here at the age of 94.

Stumph also had been superintendent of all Southern Baptist Home Mission Board work with Indians and Spanish-speaking people in New Mexico before his retirement in 1951.

He had been pastor of churches in Casa Grande and Tucson, Ariz.; Henderson, Tex.; Clovis, N.M.; and five churches in the Louisiana cities of Bastrop, Corinth, Charleston, Bloomfield, and Bunkie, La.

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