



BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Jim Newton, Assistant Director

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041

DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-5461

RICHMOND Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151

WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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**Antimission Stand Denied
By Missionaries in Israel**

PETAH TIQA, Israel (BP)--Baptist leaders in Israel feel that the recent anti-Christian and antimission stance of this country's government has been exaggerated by local journalists, said Southern Baptist missionary Robert L. Lindsey.

Excitement surrounding the subject does not match the reality of Israel's feelings about Christians or Christian missionary activities, Lindsey commented in an interview at Baptist Village here.

"Government officials have recently assured Baptist leaders that no change in official attitude toward established churches is envisioned and that religious freedom will continue," Lindsey said.

"Most Israelis are secular-minded and find the Christian churches more a curiosity than representatives of a dangerous alternative to Judaism," continued Lindsey.

He explained that the average Israeli would probably say he opposes Christian missionary activities. But the word "mission" to him means any attempt to persuade another person to change his religion by monetary inducements.

Articles and an editorial published by the Jerusalem Post, Israel's only English-language newspaper, have suggested that the minister of religious affairs, Zerah Warhaftig, opposes Christian missionary activities in Israel because of material enticements for prospective converts. The articles also warn that their status of freedom in a Jewish state might be endangered by such activities.

Lindsey pointed out that the majority of Israel's citizens are Jews and that the country is prosperous. "Baptists know of no movement toward Christianity by Jews motivated by a desire for material advantage," he added.

Religious sensitivities have been stirred in Israel over the question of Christian missions before, but this is the first time the "Jews for Jesus" movement has been a prominent issue.

Lindsey surmised that reports indicating youthful followers of this movement from the U.S. are either in Israel or en route there, have spawned much of the prevailing religious tension.

"Here again," he said, the average Israeli is only mildly curious about the movement, but the presence of Rabbi Meir Kahane and a few of his local supporters in the Jewish Defense League has increased concern among Arab minorities, including those who are Christian.

"The Jewish Defense League is a radical group which claims adherence to Jewish tradition but which has long since forgotten that the law says, 'thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,'" explained Lindsey.

According to Kahane, the league is anxious to rid Israel of Christians and other non-Jews, even giving financial assistance to Arab families who will move to another country.

Israeli police have been prompted to set up a special squad to investigate antimissionary violence. At least six bomb and arson cases were reported in February, with attacks made on private dwellings, cars and the International Bible Center of the Mount of Olives.

Many attributed the acts to Kahane's group but he denied any involvement in those incidents. However, he added that the league does not rule out such violence if the Knesset (Parliament) fails to legislate missionary activity.

Thus far, violent acts have been perpetrated against some of the better known Christian institutions and individuals (none of them Southern Baptist) which are strongly established in Israel. These are groups who have quietly attended to their own business and have never been particularly offensive to Jews.

One missionary surmised that the violence was really aimed at groups like the Jews for Jesus who had stirred the anger of extremists. But, he added, it draws bigger headlines to attack well-known institutions and individuals than to attempt to strike back at these smaller, less organized groups.

Similar disturbances regarding religion in Israel arose in 1963 and prompted Christian leaders to issue a joint statement. Lindsey, a missionary to Israel since 1944, represented the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries. Other groups participating were the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches, Latin Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Nazarene, Church of Scotland, and British Pentecostal.

The joint statement declared: "We do not exploit the economic situation of an Israeli citizen--his property, unemployment, inadequate housing or desire to emigrate--in order to induce conversion; faith in our eyes is a free gift of God and a disinterested response on the part of man.

"Nor do we take advantage, with a view to conversion, of a negative psychological attitude some Jews may feel towards Israel, whether evidenced by bitterness or a desire to escape their Jewishness; for we are convinced that a Jew who becomes a Christian still remains a member of his people, as he was from birth."

A newly formed group, the Public Committee for Combating Missions, decries the use of violence, but favors antimissionary legislation. Two of its leaders have called upon members of the United Christian Council in Israel to issue a statement similar to the one in 1963. So far no action has been taken on the request.

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Senate Acts on Abortion Bill To Respect Religious Beliefs

3/30/73

WASHINGTON (BP)--The senate approved overwhelmingly a measure forbidding the government to force a hospital or an individual to take part in abortions or sterilizations just because that institution receives federal funds.

The bill also says that hospitals which receive federal funds and prohibit such operations shall not discriminate against doctors or other health care personnel on the basis of their personal beliefs regarding abortion or sterilization or their participation in such procedures when they are performed in other institutions.

The measure, sponsored by Sen. Frank Church (D., Idaho), is designed to protect the "religious beliefs and moral convictions" of hospitals and medical personnel "regarding abortions and sterilization or their participation in such procedures."

The Senate approved the measure by a vote of 92 to 1, and sent it to the house as an amendment to a bill extending several major health care programs.

Among the 45 programs extended would be the Hill-Burton program for hospital construction, the program of federal aid to community mental health centers, public health training, migrant health, and several programs related to health research. The administration is opposed to the extension of these programs.

When Sen. Church called up the amendment for Senate action, he cited a situation in Montana where a federal district court issued a temporary injunction compelling St. Vincent's hospital in Billings to allow its facilities to be used for a sterilization operation.

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Sen. Church said the district court based its jurisdiction upon the fact that the hospital had received Hill-Burton funds.

Given this injunction and the recent Supreme Court decision on abortions, Sen. Church said, "It should be evident that a provision needs to be written into the law to fortify freedom of religion as it relates to the implementation of any and all federal programs affecting medicine and medical care."