



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
400 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Telephone (615) 244-2000
W. C. Finkle, Director
Jim Newlin, 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) 333-0151

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

July 10, 1973

J. M. Dawson, Baptist Statesman, Dies at 94

CORSICANA, Tex. (BP)--J. M. Dawson, who gained a national reputation as a Baptist spokesman for religious liberty, died here at the age of 94. He had been hospitalized for 10 days after a fall.

In 1946 at age 67, he became the first executive director of what is now known as the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D. C. and served for seven years.

"Dr. Dawson was a pioneer in the development in Washington of a joint witness to Baptist concerns for separation of church and state," said John W. Baker, associate director in charge of research services for the Baptist Joint Committee.

"His voice and wisdom will be sorely missed by all of those who attempt to follow in his footsteps," said Baker.

For more than 31 years previously Dawson was pastor of First Baptist Church, Waco, Tex.

During that period he served as publicity director for the "75 Million Campaign," an effort to raise \$75 million dollars for Southern Baptist Convention causes, 1919-24.

He was also chairman of the SBC Executive Committee in 1945.

A major impetus to his interest in religious liberty came in 1944-45, when he was chosen to represent U. S. Baptists at the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco.

In 1945, he carried petitions with more than 100,000 signatures calling for a declaration of religious liberty to be incorporated in the U. N. charter.

He was a founder of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the J. M. Dawson chair of religious liberty and studies at his alma mater, Baylor University, Waco.

Dawson wrote thousands of articles and book reviews. He completed the last of his 12 books at age 89. It was his best known volume, *America's Way in Church, State and Society*, published by The McMillan Co.

He began his writing career in the late 1890's as a prize-winning country correspondent for the Dallas Morning News.

He turned down a staff position with that paper to study for the ministry at Baylor University, from which he graduated in 1904. Later he was religious book editor for the Dallas News, southwestern correspondent for The Christian Century, and book editor of the Homiletics Review.

Dawson was editor of the Baptist Standard for one year, 1907-08, taking the helm of the Texas Baptist publication when he merged his Western Evangel, published in Abilene, Tex., with the Dallas-based Standard.

While an undergraduate at Baylor, Dawson founded the campus newspaper, the Baylor Lariat, and the school's yearbook, the Roundup.

During his tenure as pastor of First Baptist Church, Waco, he was a founder of the Hillcrest Baptist Hospital there.

Dawson, who was to have been honored as an outstanding Baylor alumnus during 1973 homecoming activities, was born June 21, 1879, in Maypearl, Tex., the oldest of 13 children of a tenant farmer. He received his early education from his mother.

Funeral services were conducted in Waco, by Peter McLeod, pastor of First Baptist Church there. Burial was in Oakwood Cemetery, Waco.

Dawson is survived by two daughters, three sons, four sisters, two brothers, 17 grandchildren and 27 great grandchildren.

His wife, the former Willie Turner of Dallas, was a widely known church leader and speaker. Mrs. Dawson died in 1963.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Baptist Press mailings for July 12-20 will be handled by Robert O'Brien, Texas Baptist Building, 703 North Ervay, Dallas, Texas 75201. His telephone is (214) 741-1991.