



## 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

October 4, 1973

### Wrapup

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#### Baptist Group Sets Plans To Collect "Oral Memoirs"

By Robert O'Brien

CHAPEL HILL, Tenn. (BP)--Conferees from 26 Southern Baptist state conventions and 14 Southern Baptist Convention organizations laid ground work here for launching an SBC-wide oral history program for historical and contemporary use.

The three-day workshop, sponsored by the SBC Historical Commission, represents the first convention-wide effort to investigate the merits of oral history gathering--a relatively recent technique of filling in gaps in written records.

The oral history movement, which began about 25 years ago, uses a systematic technique of tape recording "oral memoirs" and preserving information which reveals the impact of people on events, explains Lynn May, executive secretary of the Historical Commission.

Discussion leaders and 54 conferees explored all aspects of researching, conducting, taping and transcribing oral history interviews, establishing oral history programs and possibly coordinating such an effort through the Historical Commission.

Oral history experts from Memphis (Tenn.) State University and Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and Historical Commission staffers emphasized the urgency of Southern Baptists moving before it's too late to preserve the wealth of experience and insights of aging Southern Baptists, ranging from the top leaders to the rank and file.

"Through this technique it's possible to get things that would never be written down," said Charles Crawford, who directs Memphis State's oral history program.

"The human mind," he said, "has an infinite capacity to store and use information. Oral history gathering, which can span a half-century or more, is a matter of recovering and recording the contents of the human memory bank."

Thomas L. Charlton, who heads Baylor's three-year-old oral history program, and Historical Commission staffers emphasized that well-planned oral history projects by Southern Baptists will allow preservation of behind the scenes experiences, factors influencing major organizational changes, insights into what various generations of Baptists think about contemporary events and evaluation of the Baptist role and impact in such areas as missions, evangelism, social issues and education.

"Oral history, as important as it is in debriefing aging Baptist leaders, is equally important for collecting the observations and experiences of all generations of Baptists," Charlton says. "The memoirs of a young person ultimately have historical as well as current significance."

"Most Baptist history over the years has been institutional history," said Charlton. "That's good but it's devoid of human quality. Except for what the Historical Commission is trying to do, the SBC has neglected to leave a record of human history. We must add the flesh of human experience to the important but dry bones of skeletal written reports."

"We're not just collecting old records for the sake of having a lot of old information," says Ronald Tonks, assistant executive secretary of the Historical Commission. "We are gathering materials to put our people in the context of their heritage and help them do a better job of present-day missions and evangelism."

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The conferees, working in cooperation with the Historical Commission, will continue to study ways to coordinate convention-wide oral history gathering, both at the point of wide-spread input into the interview questions for multi-faceted convention leaders and utilization of completed interviews for both historical and contemporary purposes.

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Robert O'Brien is news editor of Baptist Press

Baptists Plan Observance  
Of Nation's Bicentennial

WB

10/4/73

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptists of the United States will jointly observe the nation's bicentennial in 1976 by a national conference here, according to recommendations approved by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in its semi-annual meeting.

At the request of the North American Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist Joint Committee in its meeting last March accepted the responsibility for sponsoring an observance of the bicentennial in which all Baptist groups would be invited to participate.

An ad hoc committee was appointed by the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee for consultation to plan for the Baptist observance of the bicentennial.

The three recommendations of the ad hoc committee approved by the Baptist Joint Committee are:

1. That a national conference be held in Washington, D.C., January 12-15, 1976, at the Shoreham Hotel;
2. That several regional conferences, possibly on seminary or college campuses, be planned for 1975 looking toward the national conference in 1976; and
3. That each of the Baptist fellowships in the nation be encouraged to engage in its own participation in the bicentennial in accordance with its own denominational program planning.

Although the national conference in 1976 is sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee, it will be broader in scope and in attendance than the regular religious liberty conferences of the past, according to James E. Wood Jr., the Baptist Joint Committee's executive director.

Wood proposed two guidelines: (1) The Baptist observance of the nation's bicentennial should be independent of the official civil observance, and (2) The Baptist observance should be both appreciative of the nation's history and critical (or prophetic) concerning the nation's life.

The ad hoc committee will continue to work with the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee in developing plans for the national conference and in promoting the regional conferences.

Besides Wood, other members of the Baptist Joint Committee staff are John W. Baker, associate director in charge of research services, and W. Barry Garrett, associate director in charge of information services.

Members of the ad hoc committee are: Frank Woyke, retired executive secretary of the North American Baptist General Conference; Lynn E. May Jr., executive secretary of the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; C.C. Goen, professor of church history, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.; Lorraine Williams, chairman of the department of history, Howard University, Washington, D.C., representing the National Baptist Convention.

Also, Morgan Patterson, professor of church history, Southern Baptist Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; Winthrop Hudson, from the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A., and professor of church history at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in New York; and E.C. Smith, pastor of the Metropolitan Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., representing the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Baptist Agency Opposes  
Abortion Amendments

WB

By Beth Hayworth

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, in semi-annual session, voted opposition to proposed constitutional amendments that would prohibit abortion. The committee made it clear, however, that it was taking no stand for or against abortion.

The action of the Baptist Joint Committee was aimed at proposed amendments now in Congress to guarantee that protection of the right to life granted "persons" by the Constitution would be extended to include "unborn offspring at every stage of their biological development. . ."

In the Senate such an amendment has been introduced by Sens. James L. Buckley (R.-N.Y.) and Mark O. Hatfield (R.-Ore.). In the House of Representatives, a similar proposal is being pushed by Rep. Lawrence J. Hogan (R.-Md.). Some other members of Congress are listed as cosponsors of these two measures or have introduced proposed constitutional amendments which would have the same intent.

The Baptist action was based solely on the principles of civil liberties and religious freedom, according to James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee. The committee has not taken a stand either for or against abortion although some member bodies have resolutions concerning abortion rights.

The discussion during the three-day meeting indicated Baptists have no consensus on the question of abortion.

In voting opposition to the Buckley-Hatfield and similar amendments, the Baptist agency asked its Washington-based staff to "take all available action to oppose" such efforts to amend the Constitution.

The Buckley-Hatfield amendment (S.J. Res. 119) says:

Section 1. With respect to the right to life, the word 'person', as used in this article and in the fifth and fourteenth articles of Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, applies to all human beings, including their unborn offspring at every stage of their biological development, irrespective of age, health, function, or condition of dependency.

Section 2. This article shall not apply in an emergency when a reasonable medical certainty exists that continuation of the pregnancy will cause the death of the mother."

Most of the proposed constitutional amendments would reverse the Supreme Court's decision of last January which said the state could not deny medical services relating to abortion to a woman during the first 12 weeks of her pregnancy. The high court did not endorse or recommend abortion for anyone.

In 1971 the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution calling "upon Southern Baptists to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother."

The American Baptist Convention, in 1967 and 1968, approved resolutions concerning abortion. The first one was similar to that approved by Southern Baptists in 1971.

Later the American Baptist Convention enlarged its position to include the recognition "that abortion should be a matter of responsible personal decision." The resolution called for legislation that would include strict limitations on when and under what conditions a pregnancy could be terminated and the medical safeguards that should prevail for such procedures.

The member bodies of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, besides the Southern Baptist Conventions are American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., Baptist Federation of Canada, Baptist General Conference, National Baptist Convention,

National Baptist Convention, Inc., North American Baptist General Conference, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., and the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

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Texas Church Disbands,  
Continues Mission Support

DB

10/4/73

FLOYDADA, Tex. (BP)--Sandhill Baptist Church in west Texas disbanded last year but continues to support mission work in Southern Baptist pioneer mission areas through revenue from the sale of church property.

The disbanding church elected two trustees, now members of First Baptist Church in Floydada, to sponsor projects chosen by the two men.

For the first six months of 1973, \$50 a month, garnered from the sale of the church and parsonage, aided a needy Colorado girl attending Wayland Baptist College, Plainview, Tex.

First Baptist Church in Wolf Point, Mont., was then chosen to receive \$300 to purchase a church bus. Now the church also receives \$50 monthly for Indian mission work.

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#### CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story mailed 10/3/73, headlined SBC Cooperative Program Gifts Rise to Record Total, change graph 13 to read "Total gifts for September were \$3,379,058, a \$677,451--or 25.08 per cent increase over September of last year."

--Baptist Press