

October 7, 1974

Georgia's Gov. Carter

Politician Applies Christian
Principles to State Affairs

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By Jack U. Harwell
for Baptist Press

Can a governor of a major state go into office as a deeply-committed Christian and maintain that commitment through four years of rough-and-tumble politics?

Jimmy Carter, Baptist deacon, Sunday School teacher and soul-winner who terminates four years as governor of Georgia in December, has proved it is, indeed, possible.

Few American politicians in recent years have attracted as much attention for their Christian testimony as has Gov. Carter. None of it was sought. In fact, Gov. Carter is a quiet, self-effacing, low-key politician who has made a consistent effort not to flout his Christian faith.

When called upon, however, to address a religious gathering or express to the press his religious convictions, Gov. Carter has always responded forthrightly and articulately his beliefs, an observer noted.

Gov. Carter has often testified--such as at the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas in June of 1974--that one of the greatest thrills of his life came in witnessing to Spanish-speaking people in Massachusetts about Jesus Christ.

"That week I spent much time on my knees, and I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in my heart," he said. "I was moved and exhilarated beyond anything that I had experienced before."

He told the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in his testimony as a part of the Brotherhood Commission report that he is a "politician, and a Christian; a peanut farmer, and a Christian; a nuclear physicist, and a Christian; a father, and a Christian."

"But I must admit in all honesty that I am a better politician, farmer, nuclear physicist, and father than I am a Christian, because we tend to measure achievements in those areas of life by the very low standards of men, and to measure the Christian life against the very high standards of God in Jesus Christ," Gov. Carter told the SBC.

He said recently that "I have spent more time on my knees as governor in the past four years than the rest of my life put together. I've made my share of mistakes. But I try to base my difficult decisions on the proper understanding of God's will."

He has a small prayer room just off the governor's office. He goes there without fail when facing an agonizing political or private decision.

Jimmy Carter became governor of Georgia with a solid record of Baptist upbringing and church and denominational involvement behind him.

He had been a church, associational and state leader in Baptist Brotherhood work. He went on many evangelistic missions for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission and SBC Home Mission Board. He was a long-time deacon and Sunday School teacher in his home town of Plains, Ga., where he was a prosperous peanut farmer.

He has continued that involvement as a hard-working Georgia member of the SBC Brotherhood Commission. He is also a consistent Sunday School teacher and participant in prayer meeting at Northside Drive Baptist Church in Atlanta, near the governor's mansion.

Glendon McCullough, executive director of the Brotherhood Commission is an intimate friend of Gov. Carter and makes the mansion his "second home" in Atlanta. In fact, Dr. and Mrs. McCullough, the former Miss Marjorie Jones, were married there early this year.

Some Georgians have said they don't think Gov. Carter has been a consistent Christian witness, especially in the area of alcoholic beverages.

They point to his support of a bill to grant all adult privileges, including the right to drink, to 18-year-olds, and to statements about consistency in law enforcement which were interpreted to be endorsements of statewide legal liquor sales.

Such opposition characterizes what has been Gov. Carter's major image problem as leader of Georgia. He has been a moderate in a day which demanded extremists. He has been willing to say there are some gray areas on many issues which politicians and preachers have always screamed were clear black and white issues.

But the one area which has never been "gray" to Gov. Carter is the area of full rights and services for what he calls "underprivileged citizens" of his state. By "underprivileged" he means those in prison, those on welfare, the mentally retarded, the poor elderly and the average consumer.

Prison reform has been a major thrust of Gov. Carter's administration. So has mental health.

"I see every legitimate concern of government as a legitimate concern of Christians," he said. "I have considered myself in 'full-time Christian service' every day I have been gov rnor."

Gov. Carter has some stern words for churchmen who don't involve themselves and their religious institutions in issues other than liquor and gambling.

He recently wrote: "A governor's responsibilities are oriented toward helping people who are poor or hungry or imprisoned or illiterate, or who have been deprived of some innate human right.

"I am much more deeply concerned about these things than I am about things like closing times of retail liquor establishments..."

Gov. Carter added another observation about his Christian faith in politics:

"Four years as governor have greatly broadened my concept of the need for tolerance of other points of view. Ours is a complex society and its problems often have more than one possible solution. Offering simplistic solutions for complicated problems is simply no longer tenable for men."

"This broadening concept strengthens my religious faith. It makes me know a little m re about priesthood of believers and about the Lordship of Christ."

He added: "I am also a far more philosophical person now than I was four years ago. I think my vision has been lifted and my horizons broadened."

Gov. Carter's pastor in Atlanta added a post-script to the thoughts of his most famous parishioner.

"I guess the thing that has impressed me the most about Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter is the deepening spiritual quality of their home life during his term as governor. They have made the governor's mansion more than a mansion. It is a home in the finest spiritual and Biblical sense."

It is no wonder that there are many in Georgia and across the nation who feel strongly that governm nt needs more Christian laymen like Jimmy Carter. (BP)



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Christians Attacked In Northeast India

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has reported "highly destructive vigilante attacks" by bands of high school students on the growing Christian movement in Arunachal Pradesh, India.

The attacks, the BWA reports, include widespread looting, burning of homes and churches, and physical assault.

The information came to the BWA in a request for relief assistance for Baptist churches and church members in the area of India's most northeasterly projection between the borders of Burma and China.

Carl W. Tiller, relief coordinator for BWA, said that the alliance has sent \$2,000 from its emergency relief funds and is seeking another \$40,000 in contributions which will feed 350 people for four months.

"Rapid growth of Christian churches in the last 10 years has alarmed anti-Christian forces of the area," a BWA spokesman said. "The people were formerly animists. During the last decade the number of churches in one tribe has grown to more than 50 with 4,000 baptized believers. Its leaders say that another 1,000 new believers are awaiting baptism."

Two district associations of churches have been formed, under auspices of the Baptists of Assam, a neighboring state in Northeast India, the BWA reports. The sponsoring group in Assam was once a mission of the Baptist General Conference (USA and Canada), but the expatriate missionary force is now down to two nurses.

Reports reaching the BWA say the high school students go from village to village in Arunachal Pradesh directing the attacks only toward Christians.

The list of damages includes: 37 churches burned down; 25 dwellings burned and 74 other dwellings damaged, affecting 343 families; 53 persons physically assaulted; 16 granaries burned down and 162 granaries destroyed or looted; 463 head of livestock and 1,273 fowl stolen.

About 50 Christian leaders and their families are reported to have taken refuge on the compound of the John Firth School in North Lakhimpur, an institution managed by the North Bank Baptist Christian Association. Emergency relief measures were necessary to supply them with food.

Other families have remained in the hills, and, not daring to return to their destroyed homes, have been eking out a subsistence in the jungles on edible roots and leaves. The food shortage is particularly acute until harvest time.

Christian leaders in the area have advised against retaliation. They have told their members that rather than fight back they should "take joyfully the spoiling of your goods" as God gives them grace to do so.

Official appeals for political intervention have been made in two directions. The North East India Christian Council has sent a delegation to New Delhi, seeking an audience with the Prime Minister. Also, a formal petition has been made to the Supreme Court of India for enforcement of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom in Arunachal Pradesh and for the protection of lives and properties of Christians there.

**BWA Seeks to Implement
Bible Importation to Romania**

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Romanian government has approved a request of the Romanian Baptist Union to allow Bibles to be imported into the country, the Baptist World Alliance reported here.

Carl W. Tiller, BWA relief coordinator, said the alliance needs between \$6,000 and \$7,000 to import 2,500 Bibles into Romania. He said the British and Foreign Bible Society has Romanian-language Bibles in stock in Zurich, Switzerland, and that the shipment can be made as funds are raised.

"Christians in Romania have urgently needed Bibles for sometime," a BWA spokesman said. "Several years ago, the Romanian government granted permission to import 5,000 Bibles, but the grant expired before the action was accomplished. This is the first time since the prior approval that necessary government approval has been obtained."

The Romanian Baptist Union is an affiliate of the BWA.

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Georgia Baptist Study
Urges Metro Missions Growth

10/7/74

ATLANTA (BP)--An in-depth church growth study by Georgia Baptists' evangelism and missions division concludes that new churches and new ministries are needed in the state's metropolitan areas.

Purpose of the study is to provide guidelines for long-range plans for church growth.

The partial report, which used seven Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, shows that one Baptist church exists for every 3,186 persons in metro areas, as opposed to one for every 1,567 in the state as a whole.

The survey further revealed that in 1973 there were 781 churches (26.7 per cent) in 23 metro counties.

Those churches represent 44.5 per cent of the resident members of Georgia Baptist churches. Metro area churches produce 52 per cent of the Georgia Baptist Convention's financial receipts and 48 per cent of its churches' baptisms.

Population in the state went up 16 per cent overall between 1960 and 1970, the survey shows, while metro populations gained 26.5 per cent for the same period.

Further statistics show that metro counties have 54.2 per cent of the total Georgia population on 12 per cent of the land area and that metro areas accounted for 80.7 per cent of the population increase in Georgia during the 1960s.

The report indicates that the seven metro areas (three of which cross state lines) represent a "strategic challenge to Georgia and Southern Baptists."

Commenting on the survey, Ernest J. Kelley, director of the state convention's evangelism and missions division, said:

"In the last 10 years we have seen Georgia become a metropolitan state. The in-migration into the cities makes it mandatory that new churches and new ministries be started."

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