



# BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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December 3, 1974

## Baptist Pastor Under Investigation in Romania

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LONDON (BP)--Joseph Ton, a Romanian Baptist pastor, is under police investigation in Bucharest, but has not been imprisoned, according to a report released here.

Previous reports reaching the West had said that Ton and 10 other pastors were in prison.

C. Ronald Goulding, associate secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, flew from London to Bucharest after hearing the report, and "had fellowship and conversation" with Ton. He said that Ton continues to be "free and active in the life and work of his church at Ploesti."

Ton is under police investigation because of the "illegal distribution" of a document he published earlier in the year calling for more freedom for churches. Government authorities told Goulding that the outcome of this charge is uncertain, but that meanwhile Ton can continue his work as pastor at Ploesti.

Reportedly, Ton's offense was in violation of a Romanian law which restricts the publication and distribution, without consent, of any publication which can be considered contrary to the policies of the state. This applies to all publications and not only to those of a religious nature.

"The authorities with whom I talked," Goulding said, "emphasized that Joseph Ton's offense is not concerned with his religious belief but with disregard of the civil law."

Goulding said that official government attitude toward Baptist church activity has been relaxed in recent months. Restrictions against baptism and church membership have been lifted, and it is also possible for churches to hold mid-week services as well as morning and afternoon worship on Sundays. Some chapels which had been closed are being reopened "to the joy of the leaders and members of the Baptist Union of Romania."

He said 103 persons applied for admission to this year's session of the Baptist Theological Seminary there in competition for the 20 available places.

The Baptist World Alliance reports "between 150,000 and 200,000" Baptists in Romania.

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## English-Language Group Joins European Baptist Federation

December 3, 1974

BRUSSELS, Belgium (BP)-- The European Baptist Convention (EBC), made up of 37 English-language churches in eight European countries, voted at its annual meeting here to join the European Baptist Federation.

The action came in response to a unanimous vote last August in Stabekk, Norway, by the European Baptist Federation to invite the 4,500-member EBC into membership.

Most EBC members reportedly come from a Southern Baptist background in the United States, although Baptists from other groups are represented. The EBC has cooperated for several years with European Baptist Federation work.

Twenty-six Baptist bodies in Eastern and Western Europe make up the European Baptist Federation.

Irish Baptist Official  
Announces Retirement

BELFAST, Ireland (BP)--Joshua Thompson will retire as general secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland at the end of August, 1975, to return to pastoral work and pursue advanced studies

Thompson, 51, has been in union administration for 25 years, and his leadership in denominational affairs has won widespread support in Irish churches, north and south.

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Liberian President Visits  
Romanian Baptist Church

12/3 74

CONSTANTA, Romania (BP)---William R. Tolbert, president of Liberia and former president of the Baptist World Alliance, became the first head of state to visit a Baptist church in Romania when he appeared as a guest preacher here during an official visit to the country.

Tolbert, a Baptist pastor and denominational leader in his country, made special arrangements for attending the church service, accompanied by 13 Liberian officials--including three Baptist deacons--and representatives of the Romanian government.

Many in the service "were obviously moved," according to European Baptist Press Service, when Tolbert laid his presidential staff on the altar and knelt in prayer. He preached on redemption and grace through Jesus Christ.

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SBC Seminary Extension  
Reports Enrollment Increases

12/3/74

NASHVILLE (BP) -Statistics released here show that the Southern Baptist Seminary Extension Department has experienced a 23.8 percent increase in course enrollments in its continuing education program over the past five years.

Course enrollments increased from 6,308 in the 1969-70 year to 7,814 at the end of 1973-74, according to Raymond Rigdon, who directs the department operated by six seminaries affiliated with the 12.3-million-member Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Rigdon noted also that individual students have increased 16.8 percent during the same period, rising from 4,420 to 5,163, and that regionally located extension centers have increased 14.5 percent, rising from 192 to 220.

"Several developments in denominational life have caused these results," Rigdon said. "One of the most important of the developments is an increasing awareness that any minister who serves effectively in contemporary society, regardless of how much formal training he may have received, must make continuing education a career-long process."

Other factors, he added, include a growing acceptance by colleges and universities of Seminary Extension courses for credit by transcript and newly improved graded levels of courses adaptable to persons at varying levels of education from grammar school through graduate school.

Five states appear in the top five rankings of Seminary Extension statistics--Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Mississippi and Illinois. Texas leads in course enrollments, with 1,715, closely followed by North Carolina's 1,130, and in the number of extension centers, with 39, followed by North Carolina's 37. In individual students, North Carolina leads with 981 and Texas is second with 916.

Five states--Florida, New Mexico, New York, Michigan and Maryland--showed more than 100 percent increases in individual student enrollment, two states--Mississippi and Georgia--went up 75 percent in the same category, and Illinois increased 50 percent.

The Seminary Extension Department was accredited in 1972 by the Accrediting Commission of the National Home Study Council and was given full membership in the National University Extension Association in 1973.

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Besides course offerings, Rigdon said the department provides consultation to pastors and denominational workers on availability of other educational programs at all levels of academic advancement. This includes information on how to locate adult basic education programs anywhere in the U.S., how to earn high school equivalency through G. E. D. tests, how to earn college credits through Seminary Extension or College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests and what continuing education projects will be offered by the six SBC seminaries.

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Cooperative Program Up 9.24  
Percent Over Last Year

12/3/74

NASHVILLE (BP)--Two months into the 1974-75 fiscal year, the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program unified budget is showing a 9.24 percent increase over the same period last year with contributions of \$6,345,236.

That figure--the portion which comes from churches through 33 state conventions covering 50 states--represents about one-third of the overall Cooperative Program amount collected during the first two months. The remainder is used for state missions work.

Meanwhile, designated giving outside the Cooperative Program showed a 31.24 percent increase over last year, rising from \$602,499 to \$790,719.

That represents combined receipts on the national SBC level of more than \$7.13 million, an 11.31 over more than \$6.4 million collected the previous year.

For the month of November, national Cooperative Program receipts amounted to more than \$3.2 million, or a 3.62 percent increase over the more than \$3.1 million collected in November, 1973.

Designated giving for the month increased 7 percent over last November, rising from \$360,780 to \$386,035.

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West Germans Honor Baptist  
For Aiding German Refugees

12/3/74

BALTIMORE, Md. (BP)--F. Bredahl Petersen, a Baptist minister and educator, now of Baltimore, has been awarded the Meritorious Service Cross, First Class, of the Federal Republic of Germany for his service to scores of German refugees in Denmark in the 1940s.

The award was presented at convocation ceremonies at Morgan State College here, where Petersen is a professor of philosophy and religious studies.

At the same time, the college's Distinguished Service Award was given to him for contributions to the college and for lectures over the past 10 years on contemporary issues.

Presenting the German award on behalf of President Heinemann was Jorgen Kalkbrenner, cultural counselor of the West Germany Embassy in Washington.

In 1945, Petersen said, the Danish government called on him to help organize camps and support for 320,000 German refugees pouring into Denmark. At that time, he was the pastor of Kobner Baptist Church in Copenhagen.

As director of a program for the Danish government ministry for social work, Petersen toured the United States and Europe enlisting support and aid for the refugees.

Under his direction, worship services and counseling were conducted in refugee camps throughout Denmark. Clothing, medicine and food, donated by U.S. and European Baptist Groups were distributed to camps in Germany and elsewhere through the "Relief to Europe via Denmark" program.

Petersen noted also that he helped to organize Baptist relief to Poland, Holland and Germany in the late 1940's and early 1950's.

In 1946, he administered a program in which thousands of Dutch war-stricken children were

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given shelter free of charge in Danish homes. He was knighted for this service by Queen Juliana of Holland in 1949.

Years later, he received another award when the deaconal division of the Evangelical Church in Germany gave him their highest humanitarian award, the Wichern Medal, in 1971, for service to German refugees.

The first president of the European Baptist Federation, Petersen is a former member of the Baptist World Alliance executive committee and was the first general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of All Protestant Denominations in Europe (1949-57).

He joined the Morgan State faculty in 1965 and previously was the pastor of Seventh Baptist Church in Baltimore. Petersen said he plans to retire by July 1, 1975 and will continue lecturing in the U.S. and abroad, as well as writing.

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Two Days of Surprises Cap  
Wilson Honors in West Texas

12/3/74

BLACKWELL, Tex. (BP)--Some 2,000 persons from over the United States gathered under a "big-top" tent on a remote and windswept hill at "West Texas Ranch for Christ" near here for the final day of a program honoring Evangelist Grady Wilson.

Wilson, a Southern Baptist and vice president of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, thought he had come to West Texas to hunt deer.

Instead, he was surprised by a Texas-size "Grady Wilson Day." Evangelist Billy Graham and several members of Graham's evangelistic team participated, on a Saturday, at a private gathering attended by 250 of Wilson's family and close friends.

Graham, whose visit was as much a surprise to his lifelong friend as the occasion itself, related humorous and serious events of Wilson's life and 25-year association with the Graham team.

The 2,000 persons came on Sunday, after Graham's departure, for the tent meeting featuring Wilson; Graham team singers Ethel Waters and Steve and Barbara Musto; Texas Secretary of State Mark White, who brought an honorary Texas citizenship for Wilson from Governor Dolph Briscoe; 200 voices of Hardin-Simmons University's Celebration Singers; and Evangelist Billie Hanks Jr., organizer of the event.

Hanks, a Southern Baptist, is president of International Evangelism Association, based in Fort Worth, which operates West Texas Ranch for Christ as a Christian "discipleship training center."

Noting that Wilson, his boyhood friend in Charlotte, N. C., had gone into the ministry two years before he did, Graham said, "I used to sit in wonderment, listening to Grady's sermons, that a kid I had known in high school could know that much."

Graham, also a Southern Baptist, praised the good humor, wise advice and close friendship which he said characterized Wilson's association with his ministry around the world.

Probably the most moving aspect of the program, observers noted, was the appearance of the 78-year-old Miss Waters on several parts of the two-day program. Although in seriously failing health and nearly blind, she traveled alone on a plane from Los Angeles to honor Wilson, her longtime friend and associate.

Graham noted that Wilson "adopted" Hanks in a "teacher-pupil" relationship which moved all over the world as Hanks, while a teenager, followed Graham crusades to learn evangelism.

"During a crusade, everytime I'd look out there, there would be Billie Hanks, taking notes and learning," Graham said.

"Now he's developed a world-wide ministry that has gone far beyond what we have dreamed. Billie Hanks is doing something of historical proportion that could be used of God throughout the world," Graham said. The 30-year-old Hanks has traveled in 64 countries.

Wilson, at first speechless, asked those present "not to honor Grady Wilson on this day but to honor Jesus Christ." Launching into a sermon characteristic of his 25 years on the evangelistic campaign trail, Wilson exhorted all among his 2000 listeners to accept Christ while they still had time. His invitation to accept Christ drew 50 responses from person, including a mix of weathered West Texas ranchers and young people.

Wilson, a member of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, said the occasion brought a new meaning to his lifelong motto, "Count it all joy!"

(BP) Photo mailed to State Baptist editors.