

**--- FEATURES**

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NASA's Lucas: Scientist
 And Baptist Lay Leader

By Bob Ward

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (BP)--Southern Baptist layman William R. Lucas reached the pinnacle of a brilliant career in rocketry when he became the director of NASA's George C. Marshall Space Flight Center here last summer.

In this capacity--the same key post long held by space pioneer Wernher von Braun, Lucas, 52, directs a work force of 4,500, largest in America's biggest space agency.

During his 22-year career in rocketry, Lucas led a scientific breakthrough that produced the all-important nose cone for America's first long-range missile. He held leadership roles in projects such as Explorer I, the nation's first satellite; Mercury, which put the first U.S. astronauts in space; the Saturn rockets that powered the Apollo moon landing and more recently, the Skylab space station.

Now his center's main effort involves the revolutionary Space Shuttle project.

All the while, Lucas has exerted the same energy and devotion as a Baptist lay leader that has characterized his work as a scientist and administrator.

The church he has served more than two decades is Huntsville's 2,800-member First Baptist, where he is a deacon and chairman of its finance committee.

He has been active also in local and state Baptist activities, including membership on the education advisory committee of the Alabama Baptist Convention and addresses at various Baptist assemblies around the country, among others.

As a scientist and Christian, Lucas finds "absolutely no conflict whatever" between science and religion. "In fact, I believe there is a destiny that man has to learn more about creation and to appropriate more of its advantages for the good of his fellowman.

While his field directly involves mankind's seeking a wider understanding of God's universe, Lucas says "religious considerations" do not personally motivate him as a space scientist--not consciously anyway.

"I just have always been motivated by the desire to know a little more about the things that surround us," he says.

"On the other hand, I see nothing in my religious beliefs or in my understanding of the Bible that contradicts in any way my pursuits.

"And I agree most heartily with the thought that the more one delves into the mysteries of the universe, the greater must become his respect for that universe--and its Creator."

Lucas' reputation as a working churchman is well known among his space agency colleagues. One notes, "Bill Lucas does not consider church attendance optional--and the same goes for tithing (giving of a percentage of a person's income to God)."

Lucas acknowledges the accuracy of that statement:

"I've often said--somewhat jokingly but with more truth to it than not--that I didn't know church attendance was optional until I got away to college."

In the small West Tennessee town of Newbern where he was born and raised, Lucas "happened to come up in a church-going family, and as a kid I always went to church," he recalls. "I grew up with the thought that this was the pattern of life."

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"And I still feel that way." It is a pattern of life largely shared by his whole family--his wife Polly (who, as it happened, preceded him as student body president at Memphis State University before they were married) and their three children who are in high school and college. He is also a graduate of Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

At his pressure-packed job in ninth-floor offices atop Marshall Center's handsome headquarters building--to which he drives each morning at 7 in the same Volkswagen he's had for almost 15 years--Lucas finds his Christian faith a constant source of guidance and reassurance in the often lonely process of decision making.

"I think that one of the elements that comes from a strong faith in God, from a Christian background, is the desire to be fair," he explains.

"You recognize in positions of management that you're going to have to make decisions that will affect the lives of many others, some adversely.

"The important thing is to make them in a sufficiently open and obviously fair way that even those people disadvantaged by your decisions will have to recognize that you did your best.

"A faith in God which is allowed to permeate one's life gives a certain sense of satisfaction in making a decision, because you believe that you will be guided always by those principles of fairness. And if you really try, you can be fair."

Lucas is an ex-missileman who maintains his belief in a strong national defense. He recalls there was a bit of soul-searching to reconcile his religious principles with his work in weapons development.

"It did take some reconciliation, but I rationalized--and I'm sure others do also--that based upon the philosophy and history of this country, defense work is a fairly straightforward thing to do . . .

"If you look back, the freedoms we enjoy here today were bought at a great price by our forefathers. For us not to protect and secure this for succeeding generations would be irresponsible. On that basis, I think that whatever technology needs to be developed to provide this security is warranted.

"On the other hand," he continued, "if we all of a sudden became an aggressor and had a complete departure from all our history, then I don't think I could go back to weapons development."

Lucas currently finds it personally more exciting to be working in the peaceful field of space exploration and applications. He anticipates dividends of great practical benefit coming from his center's current and future projects.

And he fully believes that someday all this delving into the heavens will inevitably uncover extraterrestrial life.

"I believe man is inherently an inquisitive creature, as even animals are inquisitive. He wants to know the answers to the eternal questions: Where did I come from? What am I doing here? Where am I going?

"My own drive is closer and tighter. I want to see what's over the next hill or two--in technology as well as in space.

Bob Ward is associate editor of the Huntsville, (Ala.) Times. Adapted from the January 1975 issue of World Mission Journal.

(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state editors.

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Baptist Churches Damaged in Australia; BWA Urges Aid

DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY, Australia (BP)--Baptist churches and institutions suffered damages estimated at \$500,000 to \$625,000 in the hurricane which practically destroyed this city on Christmas day, according to Alan C. Prior, chairman of the World Aid and Relief Committee of the Baptist Union of Australia.

One of two Baptist churches in Darwin was completely destroyed; the other lost its roof but held services in the shell of the building on Sunday, Dec. 28. One of two parsonages belonging to the respective churches was completely destroyed, and the other suffered extensive damage.

A Baptist hospital for aborigine children was not damaged significantly and is serving as a reception and evacuation center for victims of the storm. A Baptist home for the aged, of relatively recent construction, also withstood the hurricane force and continues in normal operation.

While more than 75 percent of the people of Darwin have been evacuated to other places, Baptist pastors and lay leaders are remaining in the ruined city and have been providing whatever material and spiritual aid they can, Prior reported.

The government of Australia has taken over relief operation, and necessities, such as food, clothing, blankets, medicine and temporary shelter, are being provided from public funds, Prior said. With limited exceptions the plan seems to be to bulldoze and rebuild the city.

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) stands ready to receive donations to assist the Baptists of Darwin in the reconstruction of churches and parsonages and with other needs, Carl Tiller, BWA relief coordinator, said in Washington.

The relief committee of Australian Baptists is limited by its charter to the raising of funds for relief outside of Australia and is currently unable to perform a fund raising task. Its services, however, will be used for the administration funds coming through the BWA from other countries.

The BWA consists of 98 Baptist conventions and unions in 75 countries. Membership is more than 33,000,000.

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Baptists and Reformed Church Representatives Begin Talks

Baptist Press

RUSCHLIKON-ZURICH, Switzerland (BP)--Representatives of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) (Presbyterian and Congregational) met here in mid-December in the first of a series of bilateral theological conversations.

A statement prepared by the group of four WARC and five BWA representatives at the end of four days of talks at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ruschlikon, noted that "both Baptist and Reformed traditions recognize a common root in their history, which runs back through the Reformation period and the early Fathers of the Church to the New Testament."

It noted, "Our discussions have been most stimulating and illuminating when we have seen these traditional 'loci' of theological reflection in the context of wider questions about the world and God's purpose in it through our Lord Jesus Christ that confront all the churches in our time."

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C. Ronald Goulding, associate secretary for the BWA with offices in London, said the talks have been approved by the executive committees of both bodies and that preparatory discussions were held as early as 1969.

After noting various factors of kinship in the history of the two groups, the statement said: "In the light of this common affirmation, the group adopted a plan of work for the next three years with the aim: a) to provide our member churches with information on our present theological positions, b) to do this in a way which helps to overcome the differences which still exist with so much that we have in common, and c) to treat our particular convictions about baptism in a way which illuminates their relation to, and consequential nature within, a total understanding of theology and of the church's task today."

In reflection on common historical ties, the statement said that "historically the theology of Calvin and Zwingli has had a very great influence on the development of Baptist thinking since the Reformation. It can also be noted that both traditions share a common emphasis on the normative source of Holy Scripture, the central place of the Word of God, the witness to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, the sovereignty of grace. Further both traditions have a common concern to live out today a witness and service in the obedience of faith.

"At the same time," the statement continued, "obvious theological and historical differences come to mind. Because of the deepgoing divergence in theology and practice between Baptist and Reformed traditions and because of our close kinship, it would seem very important that we explore together the nature of our disagreement and how best we can overcome our differences.

"Further relevant aspects may be noted as the widespread concern in many Reformed churches about the doctrine and practice of baptism (infant baptism, believer baptism); the emergence of church union consultations and indeed one union now consummated in North India in which Baptist churches are fully involved; and further to all this there is the basic importance of investigating a theological problem which is central to the ecclesiological question, confronting the whole ecumenical movement on the nature and understanding of the Church," the statement said.

"Both traditions are fully aware that this bilateral conversation should be properly carried out in the awareness of our responsibility within the one Family of the People of God."

Four papers were presented at the December meeting, Ernest Payne of England, a Baptist leader not on the discussion committee, and Sandor Czegledy of Hungary wrote respectively on "The Distinctive Elements of the Baptist and Reformed Heritages Today," and Gunter Wagner of Ruschlikon and Karel Blei of Holland wrote on "The Baptist and Reformed Perspectives in Understanding the Gospel."

Goulding noted that the BWA and WARC executive boards set up the present conversations within the European context "without prejudice to other areas of the world."

The next session of the dialogue will be held in Cartigny, Geneva, Sept. 7-11, 1975, Goulding said.

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Missing Children's Home Exec.
Will Respond to Grand Jury

Baptist Press

CARMI, Ill. (BP)--An attorney for James E. Paynter, former business and development director of the Baptist Children's Home here, reportedly has notified authorities that Paynter will be available if a grand jury returns an indictment involving alleged misappropriation of more than \$100,000 from the home.

The Illinois Baptist, statewide newspaper of Southern Baptists in Illinois, said Paynter, who has been missing since Aug. 31, 1974, apparently returned to Carmi for one day, Friday, Dec. 20, before leaving for an undisclosed place where he is said to have employment.

White County States Attorney Albert W. McCallister, the Illinois Baptist said, has called a grand jury session for January 6, in the courthouse in Carmi, to hear evidence and consider an indictment.

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Three Illinois Baptist leaders have been subpoenaed to appear at the hearing--James H. Smith, executive secretary for Illinois Baptists; Arthur E. Farmer, special ministries director; and Gordon Lantrip, resident director of the children's home.

Current reports of auditors, retained by Illinois Baptists to probe children's home records, show \$103,752.78 in funds missing from the home between January 1, 1972, and August 31, 1974, Smith told Baptist Press. He said the Illinois Baptist State Association has filed a claim for that amount with the U. S. Fidelity and Guarantee Company of Evansville, Ind., to recover the loss.

Auditors described the audit as "tentative" and as yet have not formally charged a specific person with the responsibility for the shortages.

Earlier, Smith, in an open letter to Illinois Baptists, said, "Following legal counsel, we have brought no formal charges against Mr. Paynter at this time. This letter is not to be construed as an indictment of Mr. Paynter in any sense but is an informal sharing of information with our Baptist people . . ."

In November, registered "messengers" to the annual meeting of the Illinois convention urged that the convention's auditing practices be reviewed but that everything possible be done for the "redemption" of Paynter.

"We had to decide," Smith explained, "whether we are in the business of being redemptive or whether we want a pound of flesh."

"This is the first word we have heard from Mr. Paynter since he disappeared," Farmer said of Paynter's reported visit to Carmi, "and we are relieved to know that he is alive and well. Also, we are gratified that he is willing to accept the responsibility for any part that he may have played in the misappropriation of funds."

Smith said Paynter, a seven-year employee of the home, left Carmi after it was revealed that Paynter had opened a checking account under the name of the Baptist Children's Home Association and deposited two checks from an estate totaling \$4,000 and \$32,721.

Later, Paynter wrote a \$32,000 check on the account, according to Smith, and deposited it in another account which had opened in his own name.

In another development, Smith said, "Mr. Paynter wrote a check on his account for \$25,468.85 as a downpayment on a home in Springfield. At present . . . (that check) is being held by the Springfield Marine Bank pending a suit in Sangamon County Circuit Court to determine the legal owner of the funds."

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NOTE TO EDITORS: (BP) Photos mailed today (12-31-74) for (BP) stories of 12-30-74, headlined: "Baptists Urged to Lead in Combatting Liberalism" and "Weber Says SBC Has Elasticity to Deal With Charismatics".

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