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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
 460 James Robertson Parkway
 Nashville, Tennessee 37219
 (615) 244-2355
 W. C. Fields, Director
 Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
 James Lee Young, Feature Editor

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, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996

MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461

NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461

RICHMOND Richard M. Styles, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151

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

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76-05

TM Has Hindu Basis,
 Christians Advised

By Toby Druin

ATLANTA (BP)-Christians tempted by the "non-religious" label on the promises of Transcendental Meditation (TM) were advised here to be aware of the movement's Hindu origins and philosophy

Glenn Igleheart, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of inter-faith witness, said that no doubt many Baptists and other Christians are attracted to TM through claims it can cure almost everything from high blood pressure to alcoholism and drug abuse.

An advertisement in the Jan. 5 Atlanta newspapers claimed Transcendental Meditation brings "quicker recovery from stress, increased stability, increased productivity, normalized blood pressure and increased orderliness of thinking."

But Igleheart and his associate, Kate Ellen Gruver, whose areas of work include TM, cautioned Baptists both about the claims made by TM and about the basic Hindu philosophy behind the movement.

"The public image of TM has been Americanized," he said, "but the interior teaching is avowedly Hindu.

"The issue for Baptists is that any religious organization in America has the right to promulgate its teaching, but Transcendental Meditation should acknowledge its Hindu origin and philosophy."

TM's claims often are accompanied with the contention that TM is "not a religion" or is not "religious." "TM claims it is non-religious in nature," Igleheart said, but the very ground of its philosophy is basically Hindu monism."

There is evidence that through quiet times or meditation some of the "cures" claimed by TM can be realized, Igleheart and Miss Gruver said. "But studies have shown the same results can be achieved by simply cultivating a quiet time or period of meditation such as practiced by Christians in prayer," he noted.

Persons participating in TM, Miss Gruver said, go through an initiatory rite that is religious in nature, involving bringing an "offering" of fruit and flowers and kneeling before a picture of a Hindu guru.

After four sessions of instruction--one course offered costs \$125 for individuals and lesser rates for children and students--the new meditator is given a "mantra," a secret Sanskrit syllable or syllables, assigned to them to suit the individual's particular "vibratory rate."

Thereafter, TM advocates devote two 20-minute sessions daily to meditation, secluding themselves and repeating the mantra over and over again. Though the mantra supposedly is secret, many have been revealed and are from Hindu religious writings.

Meditators also are told they can achieve various levels of consciousness as they develop their meditative abilities. Igleheart said this also comes from Hinduism, which points a person along a path to an ultimate God-consciousness.

Both Igleheart and Miss Gruver said inquiries to their offices and in conferences they attend are increasing about TM.

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"Many people in our churches are asking their pastors about it," Miss Gruver said. "Teen-agers are hearing about TM in school and adults in many instances are having it pushed on them at work. They are asking their pastors about it and the pastors are asking us how to respond."

TM was introduced in the United States in 1959 by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian Guru who had studied under another Hindu, the Guru Dev.

The Maharishi supposedly developed the TM concept during two years in a Himalayan cave and a season of meditative travels through Indian forests. The movement gained notoriety when the Beatles went to India to study under Maharishi in the mid-1960s. Since then TM's adherents have included movie stars, professional athletes, at least one astronaut and other people in all walks of life.

The Illinois House of Representatives passed a bill in 1972 encouraging public schools of the state to use TM and a similar bill has been introduced in California. A National Institute of Health grant has pumped \$20,000 into a project to educate public school teachers in TM.

A recent TIME magazine article (Oct. 13, 1975) stated there are now 370 TM centers around the nation with 6,000 teachers and 30,000 new adherents signing up every month--three times as many as a year ago.

The Maharishi reportedly said he plans to eventually have 3,500 training centers for 3.5 million teachers to reach the world's 3.5 billion people. Reports said he netted \$20 million in 1975 to push his dream further toward reality.

TM's rapid growth, Igleheart observed, indicates a search for meaning and security by many people to which Christians should respond.

"It's obvious there is a definite need here," he said, explaining the movement's attraction. "But Christians know their faith and prayer and personal devotion offer everything found in Transcendental Meditation, plus fellowship and communion with the living God."

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Charismatic Baptist Church
Saved From Bankruptcy

Baptist Press
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By Ben L. Kaufman

CINCINNATI (BP)--Friends within the Southern Baptist pentecostal movement have saved Oak Hills Baptist Church near here from "near the brink of bankruptcy."

"There's no way that we could have had an every member canvas or in any fashion raise the \$12,000 to save the church," Allen M. Falls, Oak Hills pastor, said.

The money came mostly from another congregation which follows similar pentecostal worship practices, Trinity Baptist Church of Louisville.

As it entered the 1970's Oak Hills, in suburban Cincinnati, was a typical growing Ohio Southern Baptist congregation. Its modern building was new, its pastor apparently settled into his position and the membership edging towards 400.

Then some members of the church and Falls felt "the call of the Holy Spirit" and became members of the charismatic movement, which is bringing pentecostal practices into churches which never before knew them.

The changes troubled many members who felt pentecostalism was a "departure from tradition," Falls said. They left, taking their tithes and offerings with them.

Falls and a remnant of about 100 stayed and paid the bills, while puzzling about how to meet the mortgage.

Last Autumn the Cincinnati Baptist Association of Southern Baptist churches expelled Oak Hills from its fellowship, along with another small suburban congregation, accusing both of unacceptable pentecostal worship practices and doctrine.

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A subsequent meeting of the Ohio Southern Baptist Convention, however, took no action to expell Oak Hills, which still continues as a Southern Baptist church, the pastor said. Oak Hills reportedly sent no elected messengers to the Ohio convention meeting.

Unable to generate support at home, Falls and his remaining members sought help. When Falls attended a charismatic conference for Southern Baptists at Trinity Baptist Church in Louisville, Trinity Church, "learning of the Oak Hills congregation's problem, unanimously voted to pay off the mortgage," Falls said.

Oak Hills members "sought the help of the Lord by praying and fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays", Falls said, and six months later the \$12,000 gift was pledged.

The final payment came through, and at 11 a.m., Sunday, January 11, Roy Lamberth, Trinity's pastor, was to preach the celebration sermon at the note-burning service, while his 35-member "spirit-filled" youth choir joined the host singers at Oak Hills.

In addition, Falls said, "Contributions came through the mail that often were larger than the amounts received for the Sunday offerings."

The pastor said many persons who helped "the church in those dark hours" have been "blessed by God in special ways."

He cited the case of a young person, who emptied his savings account of \$1,300, and the case of Dallas business man who made a sacrificial gift.

Recounting the case of the business man, Falls said he "heard of the church's desperate situation in a prayer meeting of the Beverly Hills Baptist Church (a charismatic-oriented Southern Baptist congregation in Dallas expelled by the Dallas Association) and sent a generous contribution."

He made the contribution, Falls said, "even though he felt the crunch of the recession by the loss of his executive position and even though he was in ill health and \$50,000 in debt."

Falls said the man has since written to him, crediting God with "renewing his health and prospering him by allowing him to become the vice president of a large Dallas firm, with a larger income than he previously earned."

Looking back on the sequence of events, Falls believes the mortgage burning did not result from "the efforts of man," but, he said, "is rather the blessing of God upon a people who believe in prayer and fasting and have faith in a God who gives gifts through his Holy Spirit unto the church today just like in the New Testament times."

"The church holds to a God that is the same yesterday, today and forever, a God that heals, delivers and prospers and saves to the uttermost a people open and receptive to the moving of his spirit," the pastor declared.

Falls acknowledges that he resisted "the spirit in his life" at one point, fearful that giving himself to it would cost in his job and security. It nearly did.

But once the financial crisis had passed, he could muster a sense of humor: "I've never burned a mortgage before," Falls said, with a laugh. He had to ask another preacher "to find out how it's done."