



**BAPTIST PRESS**

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

January 13, 1976

76-08

**Historian Explains Baptist  
Rise During Revolution**

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--A noted church historian explained to a national gathering here how the obscure Baptists of 1770 became the largest denomination in America by 1800.

Winthrop S. Hudson, a professor at the University of Rochester and Colgate Rochester/Bexley Hall/Crozer Divinity School, addressed the National Baptist Bicentennial Convocation meeting in the nation's capital.

How does one account for the phenomenal growth of the Baptists during the period of the American Revolution, Hudson asked, while other denominations suffered losses, setbacks and decline?

Hudson gave a five-fold summary of the reasons for this phenomenal Baptist growth: (1) They had given support to the Revolution; (2) Competition had been reduced; (3) They had an ample supply of aggressive leadership; (4) They were closely in tune with the popular mood; and (5) They had developed a sense of mission and destiny that was related, not only to the gospel, but also to the emerging nation.

During the 30 years of the revolutionary period, Hudson pointed out, most American churches, including Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians and Quakers, complained grievously about their losses. On the other hand, Baptists during this same period were experiencing "a sweeping surge of growth," and emerged "with twice as many adherents as the next largest denomination."

The Baptist approach to religion, the historian pointed out, their passion for freedom, their emphasis on individual responsibility to God, their insistence on a regenerate church membership, and their form of church government (local church autonomy) put them into a most favorable position at this period in history.

The American Revolution was waged against oppressive political power from abroad. At the same time Baptists were in the midst of protesting oppressive ecclesiastical powers that developed during the Colonial period. Baptists thus combined their drive for religious freedom with the Colonists' battle for political freedom, and they became ardent supporters of the Revolution, Hudson observed.

At the same time, he said, the other major religious bodies sought to hold on to their position of established power and thereby lost their hold on the populace. Combining this stance of the established religious order with the force of the Great Awakening, Hudson pointed out that large numbers of laity and religious leaders from other denominations flocked into the Baptist fold.

This new surge of membership gave the Baptists a new and competent supply of leadership that was dedicated to religious freedom and was in tune with the popular mood to throw off the shackles of oppression, he said.

It was into this historical context that Isaac Backus moved to become one of the most influential persons to formulate Baptist views and influence in the emerging nation. "It was Backus more than anyone else," Hudson said, "who infused the Baptists of New England with a new sense of mission, purpose, and destiny."

"During the decade prior to 1770, Backus was busy fashioning what can only be described as a propagandist coup," he continued. "In doctrine, church government, and especially in their defense of religious liberty, Baptists were the faithful children, the loyal descendents of those who had fled oppression in their native land to establish a haven of liberty in the American wilderness."

The clear inference of the emphasis given by Backus was that Baptists provided the central thread, the continuing witness, the true succession in the story of New England, Hudson concluded.

The Baptists of New England during this revolutionary period combined their evangelistic fervor with a larger sense of mission to influence the political order of the emerging nation, Hudson pointed out. In this way, they emerged from relative obscurity in 1770 to become the largest religious group in America by 1800, he said.

-30-

Stassen Urges Changes In  
Foreign, Domestic Policy

Baptist Press  
1/13/76

By Stan L. Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--A prominent Baptist statesman said here that the United States must change both its foreign and domestic policy as it begins its third century.

Harold E. Stassen, a former president of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. and one of the signers of the United Nations Charter, told 200 persons at the National Baptist Bicentennial Convocation that the nation "has somewhat lost its way, misplaced its compass, confused its course."

Stassen, who keynoted the convocation, accused the U. S. of exercising "self interest" in its current foreign policy, "especially with superpower governments." He urged, in its place, what he termed the "priority principle" of a "manifest concern for all humanity on this earth under God."

Such a policy, he commented, "would change our actions in Angola." He drew applause from the audience when he said, "It is incredible to me that the United States should covertly support white south African troops to enter Angola." He urged, instead, that the United Nations Security Council immediately consider "the threat to world peace" posed by the intervention in that conflict of Cuban troops.

On the volatile domestic question of school busing, Stassen reiterated a long-held view that "compulsory busing is a tragic mistake." He first expressed his opposition to busing in 1964 at the annual meeting of the American Baptist Churches over which he presided.

In its place, he suggested that school districts be required to provide equal funding, quality teachers, and equal facilities for all school children regardless of where they live. He also urged the provision of voluntary transfers for students to improve racial balance in the schools.

On another domestic problem, Stassen said that current American economic policy, characterized by high interest rates and tight money, should be reversed. He attributed inflation and unemployment to those factors.

The former Minnesota governor and university president spoke also to the historic Baptist principle of separation of church and state, saying that it must not mean the "separation of the moral principles of our religion from the conduct of government and education."

On other foreign policy issues, Stassen criticized the government's "maneuvering" with the oil-rich nations and protecting American self-interest in food production.

Stassen paid tribute in his address to a number of prominent figures in Baptist history, including John Leland and Martin Luther King Jr., and told his audience that "there is an urgent need for a distinctive Baptist participation . . . in setting the course for America" at the outset of its third century.

-30-

Hughey Visits Beirut;  
Reports on Missionaries

BEIRUT (BP)--Five Southern Baptist missionaries and two volunteers remaining in Beirut are "well and in good spirits" but "the people in Beirut seem very tense" as heavy fighting continues, a Southern Baptist foreign missions official reported.

In a telephone conversation with Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board headquarters in Richmond, Va., J. D. Hughey reported a "great crescendo of noise and fighting" in the Lebanese capital.

The board's secretary for Europe and the Middle East visited with missionary David W. King and spent the night with missionary James K. Ragland. Ragland returned to Beirut in early January after a two-week trip to the United States to visit his father, who is ill, and his wife and children, who earlier evacuated Lebanon.

Arriving in Beirut, Hughey was advised not to go to the Baptist Seminary, where the other missionaries live, due to heavy fighting in nearby areas.

Although he couldn't visit all the missionaries, he talked with each of them on the telephone, reminding them that the Foreign Mission Board would "back them fully if they reach a decision to leave."

Hughey said if his arrival had been one day earlier, he might not have been able to leave the airport located outside the city. Reports that day indicated the airport was being shelled. When he arrived, however, he was met by King and they were not stopped on their trip into Beirut.

Ragland reported some difficulty getting from the airport into the city. The cable he sent to fellow missionaries, telling of his projected arrival, was never delivered. When he arrived, nobody was there to meet him.

Because of reports of terrorists who have hijacked taxis on the road from the airport and kidnapped passengers, he decided against traveling alone by taxi. He eventually teamed up with another traveler and together they journeyed into the city without incident by taxi.

The seminary is still operating, and Ragland still hopes to reopen the Beirut Baptist School, which he directs.

Southern Baptist missionaries remaining in Beirut are the Finlay Grahams, the Kings and Ragland, plus two volunteers, Miss Isabelle McLelland and Mrs. Ann Pfaender.

Hughey also visited with 12 other missionaries assigned to Lebanon who earlier evacuated to Jordan. Ten other missionaries assigned to Lebanon are currently in the United States.

-30-

Blacks' Growth As Baptists  
Cited By American Historian

Baptist Press  
1/13/76

By James Lee Young

WASHINGTON (BP)--An uncompromising search for truth and religious liberty and the rapid entry of blacks into the Baptist denomination were among major factors affecting Baptist contributions and influence in United States' culture and history, an American historian said here.

Pointing to some 28 million Baptists in this country, Edwin S. Gaustad, professor of history at the University of California, Riverside, commended the stances of early Baptists Roger Williams and John Clarke in Rhode Island as "preeminently pursuers of truth."

Gaustad was a major speaker during a National Baptist Bicentennial Convocation here, sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, at the request of the North American Baptist Fellowship.

-more-

Williams and Clarke "provided a breaking ground . . . for Baptists (and other Christians) that made them "champions of religious liberty," Gaustad said.

He discussed several factors affecting Baptists and their impact, in turn, on the formation of the United States.

"The rapid entry of blacks into the Baptist fold enhanced, though it did not perfect, the active partnership between this still-being-freed people and this still-being-molded nation.

"Despite all the drama and sacrifice of the (Baptist) foreign mission effort, no story can match the Baptist progress among America's population," Gaustad continued.

He noted factors in the making of the nation and Baptists' role:

"The first was in the category of unfinished business--a Federal Constitution adopted in 1787, a Bill of Rights in 1791, and disestablishment state-by-state either shortly before or shortly after those dates."

Yet, in Connecticut and Massachusetts, the church-state alliance, which Baptists fought vigorously, seemed to go on and on, he said. He noted that a petition technique used successfully in Virginia was applied in New England, finally with success.

Secondly, Gaustad cited the grouping and solidifying of Baptist forces to meet threats of imported French radicalism and home-grown rationalism, as well as challenges of world-wide evangelism.

"In 1814, the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions--the Triennial Convention--was formed in Philadelphia. This new convention, so named since it was to meet every three years, responded to the unplanned presence of Baptist missionaries--the Adoniram Judsons--in Burma."

But, Gaustad continued, the sudden responsibilities abroad did not distract Baptists from the evangelical opportunities and obligations at home. "If anything, the missionary impulse, once stimulated, seemed to recognize no bounds of race or of nation."

Some of the progress of black Baptists was "through conscious missionary effort, some through gradual extension of southern 'culture religion' from whites to blacks, and some through clear choice of a church free from white bishops, white superintendents and white ruling elders, he said.

"But from whatever stimulus and motivation," Gaustad continued, "American Negroes through the 19th Century and well into the 20th responded to the Baptist call in a proportion vastly greater than their white counterparts. New organizations developed--missionary conventions, educational associations, publishing agencies--to meet and minister to the burgeoning number of black Baptists," in all parts of the country.

"For a time, these agencies cooperated with the corresponding societies of the white Baptists. But, by 1895, it became necessary to create a convention that was safe from a condescension and a bias too readily seen in the white-dominated conventions," Gaustad said.

The Rev. E. K. Love of Savannah, Ga., said of the newly organized National Baptist Convention (NBC), Gaustad noted: "I'm a loyal Baptist and a loyal Negro . . . there is not as bright and glorious a future before a Negro in a white institution as there is for him in his own . . . !"

In these ways, Gaustad said, Baptists contributed a "social and cultural dynamic to the 19th Century national scene. "For most American denominations, the 20th Century has been a time of merger and reunion," but not with Baptists, Gaustad said. "The great schism of 1845, North and South, and the rise of the NBC a half century later, only initiated the process of separation and fission that has gone on unabated."

In 1915, another National Baptist Convention, this one unincorporated, came into being. In succeeding decades, came the American Baptist Association, the Conservative Baptist Association, the National Primitive Baptist Convention, the General Association of Regular Baptists, the North American Baptist Association, and the Progressive National Baptists.

"These aren't tiny splinter groups or lingering survivals of an earlier age; together they total more than 6 million members" out of 28 million Baptists, Gaustad said.