



BAPTIST PRESS

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76-87

'Bapt. Literature Board' Uses
Non-denominational Materials

By Robert O'Brien

NASHVILLE (BP)--Curriculum materials--advertised as produced by Southern Baptists and for sale to Southern Baptist churches under the name of "Baptist Literature Board" (BLB)--were actually originated by Scripture Press, a non-denominational publishing house, Baptist Press has learned.

BLB, a small group of individual Southern Baptists, was organized in January, 1976, to give "dissatisfied" Southern Baptist churches "an option" to curriculum materials produced by the Sunday School Board, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) publishing house.

The dissenting group's executive director, William A. Powell, also serves as president of "The Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship" (BFMF), an organization formed in 1973 primarily to defend one theory of Scripture inspiration--verbal inspiration--and ferret out "liberals" among Southern Baptists. BFMF was named after the SBC's 1963 doctrinal statement, "The Baptist Faith and Message."

In the February-March, 1976, issue of the Southern Baptist Journal, the BFMF publication, which he edits, Powell, said editorially, in reference to BLB, that his group's publishing venture makes it possible for Southern Baptists to purchase literature "prepared by Southern Baptists who are committed to the fact that the Bible, in its original form, is the infallible and verbally inspired word of God . . .

"This means," he continued, "that churches will not need to purchase literature produced by those outside our denomination . . . So now, once again, our churches can purchase good literature, produced from within our denomination, based upon the fact that God inspired every word of the Bible."

In a telephone interview from his office in Buchanan, Ga., near Atlanta, Powell told Baptist Press that it is valid for BLB to identify Scripture Press material as "produced by Southern Baptists" because Southern Baptist BLB editors have the right, under their contract, to make editorial changes in Scripture Press curriculum materials if they so desire.

He said BLB editor-in-chief, M. O. Owens Jr., pastor from Gastonia, N. C., and a BFMF director, and any other editors "take basic material that Scripture Press has and go through it and make it exactly like what we want and put our inserts in it and our name on it so that we can say we are responsible for producing this material."

The teacher and pupil quarterlies involved carry the Baptist Literature Board imprint, with no reference to Scripture Press, except copyright information, in small type on the inside front cover, which refers to "SP Publications" and "SP Foundation." "SP" is not identified.

Title page copy describes the contents as "produced by Southern Baptists," although a Scripture Press spokesman said its writers come from a number of denominations and it has no Southern Baptists on its editorial staff.

In a line-by-line analysis of one of the quarterlies for June-July-Aug., 1976--"Living Today" for adult pupils--Baptist Press could discover no editorial changes between the BLB-imprinted edition and the edition which circulates under the Scripture Press name.

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Owens was asked by Baptist Press to comment on editing of the quarterly in question and of the other age group quarterlies from Scripture Press with the BLB imprint.

"In the first two quarters," he said, "there has been very little change. We have read it and made suggestions for a change here and there--mostly just a few words" because of lack of time and manpower.

He said that when he gets more editorial help, he hopes to do "more editing though actually we have found very little in the Scripture Press material that has been objectionable, either from the standpoint of doctrine or polity."

The North Carolina pastor said he "regrets that in the publicity that Mr. Powell has put out about it" that he has used the phrase "produced by" Southern Baptists.

"What I have said and what I have really wanted the whole group to say was that the material was 'provided by.'"

For about 10 years, Scripture Press has provided what it calls a "denominational imprint ministry." It goes to a number of denominations and groups, including such organizations as Christian and Missionary Alliance, Salvation Army, a Church of God group, BLB and others, a Scripture Press spokesman said.

"In practice, manuscripts of all teacher and pupil manuals are sent to designated reviewers for page changes that will enhance denominational distinctives," according to an article in the Spring, 1976, issue of Horizons, Scripture Press marketing publication.

"If changes are approved by the Scripture Press editorial staff as not violating our Statement of Faith (which includes belief in verbal inspiration of the Bible), the changes are made for that denomination's editions," Horizon said.

Powell also told Baptist Press that BLB has made no attempt to hide the Scripture Press connection and has mentioned it.

In 220 column inches of display advertising in its January, February-March, and April issues this year, the Southern Baptist Journal has advertised BLB's literature as "produced by Southern Baptist individuals . . ."

The ads failed to mention Scripture Press. So did 89 column inches of articles on BLB in the same issues. So did the BLB's initial news release in January, which described its formation.

Asked why the Journal's advertising, which included two full page ads, omitted the Scripture Press connection, Powell said, "No reason other than space. We only have a certain amount of space. We felt we had more important things to say."

But later he commented, "It's altogether possible that I should have played that up more than I did. It was a matter of judgment on my part. I've never been involved in introducing of materials before."

As to why the BLB's initial news release omitted the Scripture Press information, Powell said, "I do not know of any reason why it was left out or why it should have been in. As you know, when you write a news release you don't tell everything."

Powell said the July-August, 1975, issue of the Southern Baptist Journal did mention Scripture Press in a reprinted article (which predated BLB's formation and therefore he made no mention of BLB in relation to Scripture Press).

The Journal reprinted the article from the July 4, 1975, issue of Christianity Today, a non-denominational evangelical publication. The long reprint was set in small type (about six-point). In the article, which discussed Powell and the dissenting BFMF, author James Hefley said, in paragraph 11:

"He (Powell) envisions its (the curriculum Powell hoped eventually to provide) being published under a non-profit board friendly to BFMF. Scripture Press materials, published by an independent firm in Wheaton, Ill., would be used after being 'baptized, edited, and imprinted.'"

Powell also said BLB explains the Scripture Press connection in a BLB-produced brochure, "Literature and other Materials Available From the Baptist Literature Board," which he said BLB sends to churches. He said he doesn't know how many brochures have been distributed and that not all received it in advance of ordering.

He quoted the brochure as saying, in part, "Some of the quarterlies, books, materials and supplies will be written, edited and produced under the direct supervision of the BLB. And the amount of materials written and produced by the BLB will continue to increase in the months ahead."

In actuality, Powell told Baptist Press, "very few" materials have been produced solely by BLB as yet--and none of the curriculum materials which BLB makes available, with its imprint, for pre-school age through adults, from Scripture Press, beginning in the June-July-August quarter.

"Some of the materials available from BLB," he quoted the brochure as saying, "will be produced by various other publishers and suppliers of good, doctrinally-sound and true-to-the-Bible materials."

The brochure, he said, mentions adaptation of Scripture Press materials, indicates BLB will also use other material outlets and comments that content is more important than who produces it.

He said the brochure says, "The BLB name and logo will appear on the materials that have been written or edited or produced by BLB. Of course, the names of other producers will be on the materials they have produced" (such as companion pieces to curriculum, some of which reveal Scripture Press as the source).

He conceded that some churches may have ordered material without access to or knowledge of the reprint or the brochure but noted that Southern Baptist Journal readers make up "the only list we've used in advertising."

Owens, questioned about the visibility of the Scripture Press connection, said, "It is very possible" that the advance publicity did not magnify the relationship properly. "I would have done a little more to be sure it did, but I did not have anything to do with that part of it."



FEATURES
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Lubbock's Mayor--Rendering
Service for \$75-a-month

By Larry Jerden

LUBBOCK, Tex. (BP)--Why would one of the leading attorneys in a western city decrease his effectiveness with his firm for a \$75-a-month political job?

"It sounds kind of hokey and self-righteous," declared Lubbock Mayor Roy Bass, "but I get a sense of rendering a service. Some people might have a problem with that reason, but it's the truth."

He finds the mayoral duties "rewarding," and thinks "Christians have a responsibility in politics. They should be more consistent in it than non-Christians, but they aren't. Christians should at least vote in every election and should run for office, if they have the aptitude."

Bass, a deacon in the Texas city's Second Baptist Church and active in denominational roles, was elected to his second two-year term as mayor in April. And while he is able to continue his law practice, he admits that taking time to be mayor of this 175,000 population city on the Texas plains lessens his productivity as an attorney.

"I underestimated the time it would require to be mayor," he admits. "I thought it would take about 20 to 25 hours a week, but it's closer to 35."

"The only problem with it is that you can't pace yourself," he explained. "The time comes when things need to be done. Some of that time is vocational time--time I would spend at my law practice--but some of it is social time, hobby time, or time I would be spending on civic service anyway."

Part of the reason for those extra hours is Bass' determination to make city government personal and responsible to the people.

"As I understand our relationship to God, communication with him is important," the mayor said. "And as I understand government today, communication is important there, too. As a result of Watergate and other things, people think of government as a faceless entity. I've tried to put a face on city hall."

One of Bass' innovations to "put a face" on city hall is called "Mayor's Night in." Through the news media, the mayor let the people know he would be in his office Monday nights from 7-9:30 p.m. Anyone was free to come in and see him in private about anything that was on their mind.

"Sometimes the response is good, sometimes not so good," he said. "My wife, my secretary and an aide are here and visit with them until they can see me. We have refreshments, they visit. The only limitation is a 10-minute time limit if there are others waiting. If response is good, I might try a 'day in' from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m."

Bass said he felt the program had somewhat improved the people's view of its city government and said he has had some interesting conversations with citizens.

"One man wanted to sell the city a sculpture," he remembered. "A lady came to complain about the postage rate increase. She complained that I hadn't fought the price increase. I had a hard time convincing her there was not a lot the mayor could do about the price of stamps."

Bass came to Lubbock in 1940--then 31,000 population--after graduation from Baylor law school in his native Waco, and, except for World War II, has been here ever since.

He built his law practice as the city grew, and today the mayor officiates over a city with an expanding, 20,000-student university, a new medical school, a new teaching hospital, a large electronics firm and numerous smaller industries.

"Lubbock is still an eager, young town," the mayor said. "The economy is largely agriculture, with some ranching, the university, Reese Air Force Base, and a telephone company regional center.

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"Both the university and the town are somewhat conservative in their outlooks."

"Somewhat conservative" apparently does not mean unprogressive, however. The economy itself is doing well, with unemployment only about a third of national figures and about half that of the Texas average. And building on the wreckage of a 1970 tornado, the city's people are renewing their downtown area.

"One of the biggest challenges for city government today is to help prevent the decay of downtown areas any more than they already have," Bass stated. "In Lubbock, the banks and county government have done their part to help.

"After the tornado I was on a city advisory committee that promoted three bond issues for rebuilding. Part of the result of those bonds issues is the new civic center, which will be ready by the end of the year."

The spacious auditorium/convention complex will be finished ahead of schedule--"almost sooner than we'll be ready to use it."

The mayor has found other challenges--and some hazards--in holding elective office.

"One of the things I've worked for is a management survey of our police programs," he said. "We got a federal grant of \$30,000 and are using \$4,500 of city funds."

He explained that the police chief requests about 40 to 45 new policemen every year. The city manager does not think there is that great a need.

"Both are fine men," the mayor explained, "and the people have faith in both of them. But they disagree. I think this survey will give us some hard data to help make a decision."

Other challenges are not so easy to deal with.

"I've been sued now and then in my role as mayor," Bass said, "but that's just one of the hazards of the job. While not every Christian has the aptitude, I think if he does have it he should run--but there are hazards. A lot of people will form opinions.

"For instance, if you are sued for diverting funds, a lot of people will decide you have done it because there was a suit filed charging that.

"Not too many politicians can avoid that sort of thing over the long haul, but that's just part of it."

Other parts are more rewarding.

"Besides the sense of service, I have had the privilege of contacts with stimulating people," Bass reflected. "I guess that's one of the real rewards."

"Here," the mayor said with a smile, thrusting out his hand, "Shake the hand that shook Bob Hope's hand."

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers

Adapted from the July 1976 issue of World Mission Journal