



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

October 7, 1976

76-168

**Baptist Agency Opposes
Public Programs for TM**

WASHINGTON (BP)--Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a religion, and, as such, should not receive public funds or be promoted by public programs, according to a policy statement by a Baptist agency here.

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs said that TM embodies both transcendent values and engages in ritual practices which are widely recognized aspects of religion.

Because of the religious nature of TM, the committee pointed out "that advocates and adherents of TM should be afforded all First Amendment guarantees enjoyed by other religions, but should be subject to the same limitations imposed by the 'No Establishment Clause' of the First Amendment."

This action is in harmony with a resolution passed by the 1976 session of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC statement on TM asserted that "the No Establishment Clause of the First Amendment forbids government sponsorship, financial support, or active involvement with religion by whatever name called, by whomever conducted, and by whatever means propagated, and requires government to observe a posture of strict neutrality which neither advances nor inhibits religion."

In other actions the Baptist Joint Committee heard staff reports on "One Nation Under God," trends toward silent prayer and meditation in public schools, Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, and CIA use of missionaries.

"Perhaps no single phrase in our national liturgy is used more often to describe the nature and destiny of America than 'One Nation Under God,' James E. Wood Jr., the joint committee's executive director, declared in his report. "At the same time, no phrase is used more often to mythologize and sanctify this nation before the world--whether right or wrong, good or bad, just or unjust," he said.

Every nation is "Under God," the Baptist executive pointed out. However, he said, "unfortunately, the phrase, 'One Nation Under God,' has also come to be used as a basis of American nationalism. As such, it stands always as a potential threat to the free exercise of religion and the separation of church and state."

"It may well be that the most important problem confronting the church in our public life today lies in the widespread use of religion for political purposes," Wood continued. "God and religion are not national resources which our nation can possess or contain within our national life; nor is God some national resource we can harness or use to serve our 'national interests.'"

The churches must insist on the exercise of "the prophetic role of religion," he said. "The Baptist Joint Committee does not exist to serve the national interests of either the United States or Canada, but rather to give authentic Christian witness to matters affecting public policy, as the exercise of our religious liberty."

In a report on silent prayer and meditation in public schools, W. Barry Garrett, director of information services for the Baptist Joint Committee, reported a slackening effort in Congress for a constitutional prayer amendment but a rise on the state level to provide for periods of silent prayer and meditation in public schools.

Nearly 30 states have undertaken steps or are in the process toward some action that will get religion back into the classroom, according to Garrett's study. It has been reported that 15 states have taken some kind of action, most of which are variations of the silent prayer and meditation periods.

Such laws for silent prayer and meditation are usually pushed and supported by those who want religious exercises back in the schools, even though they deny that they are religious in nature, Garrett observed.

On the other hand, such proposals are usually opposed by civil liberties unions who claim that they are merely ruses to circumvent the Supreme Court decisions of 1962 and '63, he said.

The Baptist Joint Committee has in the past taken strong positions opposing governmentally approved, sponsored or authorized religious exercises in schools. The committee has opposed constitutional prayer amendments on the ground that the First Amendment is adequate to guarantee the free exercise of religion and to prohibit an establishment of religion.

In his report on the Unification Church, Garrett scored the "Moonie" movement as heretical and sub-Christian and urged the churches to educate their members about the true nature of this new religion. However, he insisted that Baptists should be alert to defend the right of free exercise of religion on the part of the followers of Sun Myung Moon.

In spite of the strong reactions against the Unification Church, Garrett pointed out that so far the courts have not ruled that the practices of the Moonies violate the U. S. Constitution and that the Internal Revenue Service has not yet changed its tax status as a religion.

While in Washington, the members of the Baptist Joint Committee met with State Department officials for an "off the record" session on the CIA use of missionaries in American foreign policy. The committee earlier issued a policy statement decrying the mixture of American policy and the missionary enterprises of the churches. The Ford administration has said that CIA use of missionaries will be limited to debriefing sessions occasionally with missionaries on furlough.

-30-

Joint Committee Elects Black
Pastor, Plans Tax Conference

Baptist Press
10/7/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs elected a black pastor as its chairman and voted to sponsor a religious liberty conference on the taxation of churches in its semiannual meeting here.

Charles G. Adams, pastor of the Hartford Avenue Baptist Church of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., Detroit, was elected chairman. He succeeds Arthur B. Rutledge, executive director-treasurer of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Atlanta.

Other officers elected were Elizabeth J. Miller, secretary, division of social ministries, American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., first vice-chairman; Carolyn Weatherford, executive director, SBC Woman's Missionary Union, second vice-chairman; and K. D. Hurley, executive secretary, Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, secretary.

The Baptist Joint Committee last sponsored a religious liberty conference in 1972. Fifteen such conferences have been held.

The 1977 conference, Oct. 3-5 in Washington, D. C., will deal with "Taxation and the Free Exercise of Religion." In 1960, the subject of the conference was "Churches and American Tax Policy." Government policy on taxation of churches is again a rising problem and a new study of the issue is needed, in the opinion of the committee.

James E. Wood Jr., executive director, announced the publication of "Baptists and the American Experience," a compilation of essays presented to the National Bicentennial Convocation sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee in January of this year.

The book, edited by Wood and published by Judson Press, examines the role of Baptists in the making of the nation and in the struggle for human rights and religious liberty. It is the first commercial publication of the Baptist Joint Committee.

-30-

The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is sponsored by nine denominations in North America. It is authorized "to act in the field of public affairs" on behalf of the concerns of the denominations it represents. In addition to the Southern Baptist Convention, the other sponsoring denominations are: American Baptist Churches, U S A , Baptist Federation of Canada, Baptist General Conference, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., North American Baptist General Conference, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. and Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

-30-

Hastey Given Executive
Status by Baptist Agency

Baptist Press
10/7/76

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs elected Stan L. Hastey as associate director in charge of denominational relations at its semi-annual meeting here, according to James E. Wood Jr., executive director.

Hastey, who has served in the post in an interim capacity for about a year, fills a position previously held by James M. Sapp, now director of the division of communications of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The new director of denominational relations came to the Baptist Joint Committee in 1974 as assistant to W. Barry Garrett, director of information services. Garrett's new assistant is Carol B. Franklin, a recent graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

In announcing Hastey's new position, Wood said that during his time with the committee, he has "served with considerable distinction."

He will continue as news reporter and analyst of the U. S. Supreme Court for the Baptist Joint Committee, in addition to his new duties.

The son of Southern Baptist missionaries, Hastey grew up in Mexico, was graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and earned his doctor of philosophy degree at Southern Baptist Seminary in 1973.

-30-

Texas Court Tax Ruling
Threatens Church Camps

Baptist Press
10/7/76

AUSTIN, Tex.(BP)--A Texas Supreme Court ruling here denying tax exemptions to an Episcopal Church camp was greeted with surprise and concern by Texas Baptists.

But the concensus was it is too early to tell how the ruling might affect Texas camp-grounds, the Baptist Standard reported.

The court ruled that the constitutional tax exemption for an "actual place of religious worship" does not include the entire 155 acres of an Episcopal Church camp in Hood County.

The ruling upheld a lower court ruling that the Episcopal Diocese of North Texas can get property tax exemption only for the camp's open-air chapel and one acre surrounding it and for the minister's residence with one acre surrounding it.

The remaining 153 acres of Camp Crucis in Hood County are taxable, the high court ruled.

A crucial factor, according to news reports, was the fact that the church failed to establish proof that the entire tract was an actual place of religious worship, even though it is used for a summer program of religious services, religious education, crafts, recreation, retreats, conferences and church picnics.

-more-

"There is a difference between a place which is used for religious purposes and a place of actual worship," the court ruled, citing a 1908 opinion.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas owns no campgrounds but 23 scattered across the state are owned and operated by Baptist associations. Texas Baptist State Missions Commission Director Charles P. McLaughlin said they have an estimated value of \$11 million.

State Convention Executive Director James H. Landes said he was surprised and saddened at the news of the decision but said that neither he nor the convention attorney had had opportunity to examine the ruling and didn't know how the Baptist encampments might be affected.

"Our total encampment grounds are used for religious purposes," Landes emphasized.

Robert W. McGinnis, director of Dallas Baptist Association, which owns 521-acre Mount Lebanon encampment in southwest Dallas County, said he interpreted the decision as further evidence of "gradual encroachment on religious freedom."

McGinnis said all of the encampment is used for religious programming and exclusively religious activities, but said the association already had received tax notices from Dallas County.

Robert H. Power, Dallas attorney who represents the association, said he could understand the ruling in the Episcopal case, but added, "It is my opinion that if it can be shown affirmatively that all of the land regarding which a tax exemption is claimed is in fact used--and I mean actively used--for religious purposes, then a trial court could under existing law find that such land is entitled to an exempt status."

-30-

Missionaries Relieved
After Military Takeover

Baptist Press
10/7/76

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)--Word received from Southern Baptist missionaries in Thailand early on Oct. 7 indicated a feeling of relief that the Oct. 6 military takeover of the Thai government has ended a recent period of turmoil.

Missionary Hubert A. Fox reported to William R. Wakefield, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's secretary for Southeast Asia, that the military coup had occurred as a result of disturbances and fighting at Thammasat University here.

Wakefield said Fox confirmed a good deal of fighting and bloodshed had occurred but said the missionaries were not involved in any way in the fighting or disturbances.

"Stability and calm now reign over the city and country as far as we can determine," reported Fox, who expressed the missionaries' relief that the turmoil of the days preceding the takeover had ceased.

Fox also indicated that news from the missionaries may be scarce for a short period as there is likely to be a news blackout.

"However, we expect telephone communications to continue between the board headquarters and the mission in Thailand should any danger be posed to our missionaries," Wakefield added.

Wakefield does not expect any changes in mission work in Thailand. "Although we do not have any information about this government's attitude toward missions, we have operated under a military government in Thailand for the major part of the time we have been there," Wakefield commented. "I would not assume this would necessarily signal any change in our opportunity to do mission work," he added.

Sixty Southern Baptist missionaries are assigned to Thailand.

-30-

World Relief Gifts Top
\$1 Million Mark in 1976

RICHMOND (BP)--Gifts for world relief and disaster response through the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board have topped the \$1 million mark in 1976.

The \$1,384,838 received from January through September is \$33,987 more than the amount received in the same period during 1975. Total relief gifts last year reached a record \$1.67 million.

The board has appropriated \$836,173 from relief funds through September. In addition, relief gifts designated for specific purposes, which can be sent to the field without being appropriated, totaled \$58,107. This makes a grand total of \$894,280 made available for use by missionaries in areas of need.

"It is a great blessing to have relief funds in hand so that response can be made instantly to critical situations," said Baker J. Cauthen, executive director of the board. "Because of having funds on hand to meet disasters, it was possible to authorize \$50,000 for relief in the Philippines as soon as word came of the disaster in that land."

More recently, \$25,000 was made available for relief efforts in Mexico, immediately following Hurricane Liza.

In recent years, relief funds have been appropriated for many parts of the world, including Bangladesh, the Philippines, Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon and many other countries. Plans for the use of relief funds are made by Southern Baptist missionaries and national Baptist leaders. Southern Baptist missionaries also administer relief with the knowledge and cooperation of the individual governments of the countries in which they serve.

"Missionaries are giving careful attention to the administration of relief, and we can rest assured that the love they express to the people is a vital part of the tangible expressions made in relief of suffering," Cauthen said. "Many remarkable doors for evangelism are opened as funds are used to provide food, emergency shelter, medicines, aid in rebuilding homes, and many other forms of assistance to our fellowman.

"Southern Baptists can rightly feel great joy in the ministry of relief that is being extended in our Lord's name," Cauthen said.

-30-

Baptists Advance
Despite Diversity

By Charles D. Whitson

Baptist Press
10/7/76

WINDHOEK, South West Africa (BP)--Despite political tension, church work has continued to grow in South West Africa.

The church in Windhoek is entering a building program, while in Walvis Bay, the church continues to grow and has started a mission in Swakopmund. A new church building, parsonage and guest house have been completed in Oshiktati, Owamboland, a new area of Baptist work.

The winds of political change are blowing in South West Africa and no one knows what the situation will eventually be. Some seek radical and immediate change, while others seek gradual and moderate change. All agree change must come.

Amidst this confusion it is easy for the church to major on circumstances rather than Christ. It is easy to make self-preservation rather than proclamation of the gospel the major concern.

Baptists of South West Africa have a multi-racial, multi-lingual program. Southern Baptist missionaries and South African Baptists, working together, desire to minister to all humanity in the name of Christ, and God has blessed the efforts.

-more-

At the moment, we enjoy a great measure of peace with many opportunities for Christian service.

We do not know what the future holds, but we pray that regardless of the outcome we will be permitted to continue serving the people of this land in the name and power of Christ.

-30-

Charles D. Whitson is a Southern Baptist missionary in South West Africa.

#

Baptist College Gets
\$30,000 Estate

Baptist Press
10/7/76

CAMPBELLSVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A new scholarship fund amounting to \$30,352 has been established at Campbellsville College here from the proceeds of the estate of E. C. Pelley of Columbia, Ky.

Although the Baptist college may select how it will invest the money, J. Alvin Hardy, advancement vice president, said it will be put into a trust, as requested, and that the interest will be given each year to deserving students in the name of Pelley's wife, Mrs. Sylpha B. Pelley.

-30-

CORRECTION

The lead paragraph of the BP story mailed 10/5/76, entitled "Church Closes in Laos; Warns Thai Christians," should be changed as follows:

Delete the word "here" after Baptist church and add at the end ". . . according to reports received in Thailand." (The original lead, which had a Chacheungsao, Thailand, dateline, inadvertently made it appear that the Laotian government closed a church in Thailand, rather than making it clear that the information about Laotian government action on a Laotian church was received in Thailand.)

Also, in Baptist Press story, mailed 10/6/76, entitled "Hollis Johnson Elected Foundation Head," change the name D. Frank Cole in second graph to G. Frank Cole Jr.

Thanks, Baptist Press