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**Nontheistic Religions
Have Equal Standing**

By W. Barry Garrett

WASHINGTON (BP)--Religions which do not believe in a Supreme Being (God or gods) must enjoy the same protections and must abide by the same restrictions of the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution as do religions that believe in God.

This is a conclusion of a staff report on "Nontheistic Religions and the First Amendment," issued by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs here. The report was written by John W. Baker, associate director in charge of research services. James E. Wood Jr. is the executive director.

If the U. S. Supreme Court ever upholds the contention of the staff report--which Baker declares that "there is a high probability it will do when a proper case arises"--it will affect the legal standing of Transcendental Meditation, Ethical Humanism, Hinduism, Taoism and other similar religions which do not believe in a Supreme Being.

This means that no governmental action in relation to nontheistic religions can constitutionally be taken that could be "an establishment of religion" as defined by the Supreme Court. It also means that the constitutional protection for "the free exercise of religion" must also apply in their cases.

Baker points out that "no case has come before the United States Supreme Court which has required it to meet head on the issue of whether nontheistic beliefs constitute religion within the meaning of the religion clauses of the First Amendment."

The First Amendment says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The staff report reviews previous Supreme Court cases as well as "contemporary writing" relating to nontheistic religions. The trend in both instances, Baker concludes, is that they will have equal legal standing with those traditional religions which profess a belief in a Supreme Being.

A three-pronged test has been developed by the Supreme Court to determine whether or not a governmental action constitutes an establishment of religion: (1) What is the primary purpose of the action? (2) What is the primary effect of the action? and (3) Does the action result in excessive entanglement of government with religion?

According to the Baptist Joint Committee staff report, the Supreme Court has applied the three-pronged test in a number of cases and has held that:

1. Tax exemption to property used exclusively for religious purposes is not an establishment of religion;

2. Public school property or employees used directly or indirectly to teach religion violates the establishment clause;

3. Public schools may release students for religious instruction if it takes place outside of school premises and if school employees are not involved;

4. Some forms of public aid to religion related schools are allowed and other forms of aid are prohibited;

5. Public aid for restricted programs in higher education in church-related schools is not prohibited; and

6. The use of public funds, facilities, employees or power to promote or to inhibit religion in public schools is unconstitutional.

All of these holdings of the Supreme Court will apply to nontheistic religions, if a definitive case is ever decided in harmony with the conclusions of the Baptist Joint Committee staff report, Baker said.

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Seminary Sets Fund Goal
For Evangelism Professorship

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WAKE FOREST, N. C. (BP)--Trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary voted here to launch a fund raising drive to secure from \$300,000 to \$500,000 for a professorship in evangelism and adopted a \$2,394,288 budget for 1977-78.

They also voted to be personally responsible for giving or generating at least \$100,000 of the amount for the professorship, which was approved in 1976, when trustees accepted a \$100,000 gift for it.

In other action, the trustees held a joint meeting with the seminary's newly formed Development Council and joined in dedication of the seminary's enlarged and renovated Emery B. Denny Building, which houses the Southeastern library.

The \$2,394,288 budget, the highest in the school's history, includes five additional teaching positions and salary increase for all faculty and staff. Of the seminary's income, 76 percent is received from the Southern Baptist Convention's national Cooperative Program unified budget, four percent from endowment and investments income, 11 percent from auxiliary enterprises, and 8 percent from student fees.

Other than small fees, no tuition is charged by the seminary. The trustees voted an increase in the seminary's matriculation fee from \$100 to \$150 per semester--an increase which will be made jointly with the other five Southern Baptist theological seminaries.

Enlarging and renovating of the Emery B. Denny Building cost more than \$1,200,000. The new facility will increase library study space by more than 60 percent and provide shelf space for more than 200,000 volumes. The majority of construction costs were provided by capital funds from the Cooperative Program.

Other action by the trustees included:

--Granting of academic tenure to George W. Braswell, associate professor of church history and missions, and Richard A. Spencer, assistant professor of New Testament interpretation;

--Accepting the resignation of J. Colin Harris, assistant professor of religious education, to become professor of religion at Mercer University-Atlanta in August 1977;

--Adoption of the "plan of action" proposal from the two-year long range planning effort by trustees, faculty, administration, alumni and students;

--Voting to retain the Charlotte, N. C., architectural firm of Snoddy and McCulloch Associates to develop a comprehensive master campus plan;

--Establishing a "Citation for Excellence in Christian Ministry" to give recognition from time to time to persons who personify the values which the seminary seeks to uphold.

A joint dinner meeting with Development Council was held before the council's inaugural meeting. Comprised of 30 business leaders, the council will assist Southeastern Seminary in strengthening its financial support. C. C. Hope, executive vice president, First Union National Bank, Charlotte, N. C., was elected council president.

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Texas Pastor
Faces Theft Charges

BIG SANDY, Tex. (BP)--Craig Dwaine Lacy, pastor of First Baptist Church, Big Sandy, for the last year, has resigned after being charged with the theft of thousands of dollars worth of antiques, rare books and valuable paintings.

The church voted to accept the resignation.

Lacy, 31, was charged with stealing items valued at more than \$75,000 from more than 100 libraries, museums and shops across the Southwest. He was released on \$10,000 bond.

Many of the stolen articles were recovered and reportedly included books and historical documents from the libraries of Baylor University, Waco, Tex., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Lacy is a native of Mineola, Tex., and is a graduate of East Texas Baptist College, Marshall, and Southwestern Seminary. He received a master of divinity degree from the seminary in 1975.

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'Role of Churches Critical
For Future,' Toffler Says

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3/25/77

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Modern society is experiencing the initial stages of a "revolution" that will soon turn civilization--as the world's industrial societies now know it--into a thing of the past, according to Alvin Toffler, author of "Future Shock" and a renowned spokesman on futurism.

"The civilization which the industrial system has produced in the last 100 years is in its twilight," Toffler said during a conference on the future sponsored at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

"We are living through a revolution of transformation of the planet. We'd better understand this revolution if we are to survive in the next few decades," Toffler declared.

"Churches have an absolutely critical role to play in the future," Toffler, who describes himself as a humanist, told some 250 leaders from Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) agencies, commissions, and state conventions.

"We live in a society," Toffler said, "in which people are confronted by more and more complex decisions. If we're not clear about values, we cannot make good decisions. Churches today have a tremendous opportunity to help people understand their own internal value systems."

The church, however, must break away from "the traditional role of telling people what their values should be" and instead center its efforts on "helping them clarify their internal values--to help them cope with change and complexity," said Toffler, a former news reporter and associate editor of "Fortune" magazine who has also written other books on the future.

Toffler called for an "anticipatory democracy"--a type of long-range planning using the democratic process and including the citizenry from all levels--as a necessary means of finding some sense of direction in the midst of catastrophic social and technological change.

"Unless we anticipate the future," he said, "we will continue to be overwhelmed by it." He emphasized a need for "future consciousness" in government planning, along with an increase in citizens' involvement in government decision making.

Increasing pressures will mount, Toffler continued, for destandardization of government, factories, schools, churches, and others. They were originally standardized, he added, to "destandardize the work force."

Those institutions--including the church--will survive with "the fewest restrictions on diversity," which also is increasing at an accelerated rate, Toffler noted.

Society is beginning to realize, he said, that it is all right to be different--regardless of ethnic and other differences--and "still draw your pay," and have full rights as a citizen.

Rapid technological and social change, Toffler said, are some obvious characteristics of the revolutionary process America is undergoing.

"Change is occurring so fast that we can scarcely remember yesterday's crisis long enough to learn from it before a new crisis comes," he pointed out.

The church, as well as the government, needs to be asking responsible questions about the future, Toffler said.

"You need to ask your people what kind of America they envision for the next 50 years," he told the SBC leaders.

"Ask them, 'What kind of America do you want?'"

"Americans are starving for positive images of the future," he added. "We need a vision for America."

In response to questions following his address, Toffler said that although he could not "characterize the real attitude of the Carter administration yet," it seems to be taking a step "in the right direction" in long-range, futurism planning and then allowing for more citizenry input into government decisions.

He cited a bill (S270) being sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D.-Mass.) that would provide limited funds for public participation in governmental decision-making as another positive step.

On Carter's "open-style foreign policy," Toffler said that the President is making it difficult for everyone involved in foreign policy, that "he is shaking the whole system up, but it's time the system got shook up."

"What we will see is an increasing consciousness that Americans don't control their lives, especially if someone else is controlling foreign policy. I think Carter seems to be moving toward involving people (the citizenry) in foreign policy decisions," Toffler noted.

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Carter Urged to Call Conference on Future

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--President Jimmy Carter was urged here to call a White House Conference on the Future as a "symbol of the nation's determination to prepare for the future."

Citing the urgency of futuristic concern for the church and secular society, Harry Hollis, director of family and special moral concerns for the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Christian Life Commission, said he was "encouraged by the President's determination to relate morality to every level of government.

"I believe this is authentic and that it will have a significant impact on domestic and foreign policies in the future," Hollis noted.

Addressing some 250 SBC leaders at a conference on the future, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, Hollis said the "Christian ethic is under attack by some futurists and others who say it is an anachronism in a future-oriented world.

"They're wrong; Christian ethics is contemporary and timeless," Hollis stressed.

He then warned against what he described as a "movement in our denomination and elsewhere to try to undo the growing focus on ethics that has characterized the recent past."

The movement, he said, "is fanned by a narcissistic theological exhibitionism, a narrow gauge reading of the Bible, and a pietism that proves itself to be pseudo by the fact that it fails to send people from the worship of God to work with God in the world."

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Wrapup

Futurists Speculate on
Baptists of Tomorrow

By James Lee Young

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Some 250 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leaders here wrote their predictions for the denomination in the next decade and placed them in an envelope to be sealed and re-opened in 10 years.

The act was symbolic of a denomination planning its work into the next century. It was equally significant that it happened during a conference on the future at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center.

Renowned futurists Alvin Toffler, author of "Future Shock," and Edward Lindaman, president of Whitworth College, a United Presbyterian, USA, school in Spokane, Wash., and a former leader in the Apollo space project, were among headliners for the event sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The futurists shared "mind boggling" dreams of future floating space colonies and more readily identifiable issues such as increasing and extreme world population growth and famine; the decline of industrial civilization as we know it, and a revolutionary transformation of the planet as a result.

They stressed repeatedly that planning and projecting for the future must be accompanied by joint decision making processes, including all the citizenry or group members at all levels of government, industry and the church. And each predicted this would more and more come to be the practice of society.

Sunday School Board President Grady C. Cothen set the tone of the meeting by pinpointing several major issues and needs facing Southern Baptists, including a warning to Baptist leaders:

"The future for Southern Baptists is built on very flimsy grounds, unless denominational leaders identify and cope with the confusing and often conflicting issues of modern society... The issue in my judgement needs to be, 'Do we understand at least a smattering of the problems with which our age is confronted?'"

Speakers throughout the four-day event stressed possibilities for Southern Baptists in the next decade, and on into the year 2000.

A leading Southern Baptist planner of almost 20 years, Albert McClellan, predicted that a rethinking and new understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the next decade could result in an unparalleled worldwide evangelistic thrust by the denomination.

"We will come to a new understanding of the gospel," but, "we will not reform it; that would be sacrilege," said McClellan, program planning director and associate executive secretary of the SBC Executive Committee.

Projects and questions raised by Lindaman, Toffler, McClellan, Cothen and Orrin Morris, a demographic expert who is a regional coordinator in the SBC Home Mission Board's planning section, were used as bases for small group "think tank" discussions concerning Baptists' future and their role in the society of the future.

Six possible future themes or trends generally expected by participants were among those emerging most often as the groups reflected on the speakers' concepts and expectations, and added their own perspectives. None of the possible trends were adopted or even voted but express what group members felt was apparently coming in Baptists' future:

1--Greater worldwide cooperation among Christian groups;

2--Emphasis in practical, Christian stewardship--of time, energy, resources and other areas of life. Many changes are expected to be forced on society by increased scarcities in the future;

3--A significant increase in the number of women and ethnic minority persons is expected in the "higher levels" of SBC life, with ordained women pastors and women deacons to become more widespread in the churches;

4--Increased use of modern communications, including use of telecommunications for mass media Bible study, two-way television, cable TV, and satellite possibilities for regional or worldwide evangelism via broadcasting;

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5--A need for greater emphasis on a biblical basis for future planning;

6--Calling for a sophisticated means of gleaning input from Southern Baptists at the "grass roots" and all levels of denominational life, to include larger numbers of Baptists in the decision making processes.

Morris cited issues that are not exclusive to Southern Baptists but are some he believes the denomination will have to contend with in the next 25 years. These include population growth worldwide, influx of immigrants to the United States, population shift in this country, a global-system perspective and changing family styles, among others.

Toward the conference's close, Harry Hollis, director of family and special moral concerns for the denomination's Christian Life Commission, agreed in part with a statement made earlier by Toffler that the church has a role to play in clarifying values.

Toffler, a humanist, had told participants that people are being confronted by more and more complex decisions and that he believes "the churches have an absolutely critical role to play in the future" in helping people clarify internal values. "If we're not clear about values, we can't make good decisions," he said.

Hollis told the Baptists, however, that the church must do more than help people clarify values: "We must also be concerned about the nature of these values," which means, he said, commitment to certain values such as love, justice and truth.

William M. Pinson Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Tex., cited theological trends on the decline--liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, secular Christianity and social gospelism. Those on the rise and to be major in the next 25 years include conservative or evangelical theology, dispensationalism, and "theology of hope," said the former professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Pinson said he believes there will be increased evangelism and church growth, greater emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and renewed emphasis on apologetics (defense of the Christian rationale) in Baptists' future.

In his closing remarks to participants, James W. Clark, executive vice president of the Sunday School Board, said that among the various denominational agencies and the Baptist state conventions, the future will have to be one of greater cooperation, less competing, and greater interdependence. An increased sharing of research results by the board and other agencies concerning needs of the churches and of Christians and non-Christians will be vital, he said.

In the final analysis, the contemporary church--Baptists included--must be responsible for its own future, "through its individual members called of God in Koinonia," Lindaman said.

"The church must plan for its own future," he admonished.

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W.R. White
Dies in Waco

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3/25/77

WACO, Tex. (BP)--W.R. White, Baylor University president emeritus and Southern Baptist statesman, died here Thursday, March 24, at the age of 84. The funeral was to be Saturday, March 26, at First Baptist Church in Waco, with burial in Oakwood Cemetery.

White provided landmark leadership for the Baptist General Convention of Texas as executive secretary during the depression years of 1929-31 and for Baylor University as president during postwar transition years of 1948-61.

White served as pastor of First Baptist Churches of Greenville, Tex., Lubbock, Tex., Oklahoma City, and Austin, Tex., and of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth during his multi-faceted career of Christian service. First Baptist Church of Waco honored him last November with an appreciation day for his 29 years of membership there.

A graduate of Howard Payne College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, White received honorary degrees from Howard Payne, Baylor, Hardin-Simmons University, University of Alabama, and Bishop College of Dallas.

White's beloved Baylor, which presented him with its elite Founders Medal in 1972, was the major arena for his educational leadership. He was chancellor there for two years before being named president emeritus in 1963.

Other leadership posts held by White included serving as president of Hardin-Simmons University, 1940-43, editorial secretary, SBC Sunday School Board, 1943-45, chairman of the board of trustees for Bishop College in Dallas, 1942-65, president of Texas Baptists, and president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board.

His service to Bishop College was part of the reason he received the Baptist General Convention of Texas "Distinguished Service Award" in 1976. The award noted his contributions to the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission and to race relations and education. Texas Baptist also named White as Texas' Baptist Elder Statesman in 1968. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Odera White of Waco. The family asks memorial gifts to Baylor in lieu of flowers.

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