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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  
Norman Jameson, 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) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2000

RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, 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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Jewish, Baptist Understanding  
Strengthened in Dallas Meeting

DALLAS (BP)--Baptists and Jews, bound together in history as children of Abraham, strengthened bonds of understanding at a joint national meeting here to deal with political and social issues.

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Jimmy Allen and Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, national director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, challenged the religious groups to make their common biblical heritage and democratic traditions the foundation rock for establishing human rights and religious liberty for all peoples.

Assembled by the American Jewish Committee and the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the meeting was called "Agenda for Tomorrow: Baptists and Jews Face the Future." One discussion session featured U. S. Sen. Mark Hatfield (R.-Ore.), a Baptist, on a forum with Jewish counterpart Rita Hauser, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the American Jewish Committee in New York City.

Hatfield said that Jews and Baptists have the responsibility to "bear a truly prophetic witness to the human rights that emerge from our Biblical tradition." The senator said that suffering of Jews throughout their history and modern day persecution of Christians in Uganda and of Jews and Baptists in the Soviet Union demand that people of God restore the world to the definition of human rights that "every person is a creation of God and has the right to have his life valued."

The three-day meeting at Southern Methodist University was encribed with specific and often emotional references to the death of six million Jews in concentration camps in World War II, and the recent dramatic visit of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat with Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin in Jerusalem. The depth of the bond and feeling between Christians and Jews in the United States and Israel was illustrated in actual tears shed at the Dallas meeting by Allen and by Jim Wright, majority leader of the U. S. House of Representatives.

The suffering of people whose religious liberties are denied has forged a spirit of alliance and an agenda of common concerns between Baptists and Jews, according to Allen and other speakers.

"In a very real way, their tears make us brothers and sisters as we seek religious liberty," said Allen, who came to tears himself at the close of his speech.

Wright, a Presbyterian, was overcome with emotion in giving an eyewitness account of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel. He said he was "deeply impressed with the sincerity of Sadat" and "there is no parallel for what he did."

He quoted Sadat: "If a person has in his power to bring about peace, and doesn't do it, that person will answer to his God."

About 200 Baptist and Jewish laypersons and pastors and rabbis participated in substantive discussions led by religious leaders. Both humor and tears were evident at the emotion-charged meeting.

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Lowenstein suggested making SBC President Jimmy Allen "an honorary Jew...Of course, that qualifies you for 2,000 years of retroactive persecution," he quipped.

The "call to conscience" issued at the close of the meeting by the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission and the American Jewish Committee reflected the commonalities and the distinctions shared by Jews and Baptists: "In a spirit of mutual respect and authentic fellowship, we discerned during these days how great are the bonds we share on the basis of our common biblical inheritance and democratic traditions, even as we acknowledge our distinctive religious differences as believing Christians and Jews."

The statement said that Baptists and Jews, along with other religious groups and peoples of conscience, will cooperate in the months ahead to seek resolution of problems in areas of shared concerns: like the "growing and threatening trends of dehumanization" that are a consequence of terrorism and crime; human rights in the United States and abroad; and to "stand together against" prejudice and hatred, particularly "racism, anti-Semitism and sexism."

The statement and conference speakers heralded the Sadat visit to Israel. Allard Lowenstein, U. S. representative to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, said that "if Sadat can go to Jerusalem, there isn't anyone who can't go anywhere."

Rita Hauser twice asked Christians to account for their relative "silence" or lack of organized vocal protest against the persecution of Christians by Idi Amin, ruler of Uganda. Hatfield agreed with the well-known rabbi, who said that he is "deeply concerned and agitated" about the plight of the Ugandan Christians.

Tanenbaum said that many Ugandan Christians, including the former attorney general of the African nation, are seeking help from the American Jewish Committee. Tanenbaum and Franklin Littell, another speaker at the Jewish-Baptist dialogue, said that Ugandan Christians feel a bond with the Jews as a dispersed and persecuted people whom the world watches like a disinterested spectator.

Littell, a Methodist, said, "Christianity now faces its most serious identity crisis in 2,000 years." He said that Christians today in Africa, Asia and even America, to some extent, "are feeling the pain of the Jews."

Several Christian speakers agreed with Littell that Baptists can learn from Jews, who have preserved their identity and faith because of solidarity forged in order to survive as a minority group. Conference speakers said that religious people in the United States have the responsibility to exercise their religious liberty to nurture human rights everywhere.

One of the special interest sessions was "The Role of Women in Jewish and Baptist Traditions." Speaker John Claypool, pastor of Northminster Baptist Church in Jackson, Miss., said that "the omega point toward which we are striving" for all people is voiced in Galatians 3:28 which says "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Claypool said that "we have to cope with the revolution in human relations that He (Jesus) brought about...in a profound sense, Jesus was a feminist." Claypool explained that in a time when a woman's testimony was not accepted in court, Jesus trusted the important news of his own resurrection first to women.

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Southern Baptist Cooperation  
Ranks High, Cothen Says

By Jim Lowry

Baptist Press  
12/12/77

NASHVILLE (BP)--"Interagency relationships in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) are the best they have been in our lifetimes," SBC Sunday School Board president Grady C. Cothen declared in a message on Bold Mission to state Baptist convention personnel in their annual meetings here.

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Cothen, paying tribute to Baptist agency leaders, said there is a renewed and revitalized cooperation on several new emphases, but particularly in the recruiting and training for the newly formed Mission Service Corps, which seeks to send out 5,000 volunteer missionaries for one to two years of service by 1982.

"There is a unanimity in the denomination," Cothen said, "and we must seize this hour. Nobody in the history of Christendom has had the organization, facilities, resources and the volunteers that we have," he said, "to sow the world with the gospel."

"We must be willing to think new thoughts and do new things to become the spearhead of God's thrust," Cothen continued. "If we do business as usual, God will have to pass us by," he said.

"The Bold Mission Thrust emphasis (to proclaim the gospel to the entire world in this century) will be no good if it just stays in Nashville, Richmond, Atlanta, and in the state headquarters," Cothen said.

He challenged Southern Baptists to get organized at all levels, involving as many people as possible to work toward the goals set by Southern Baptists to evangelize the world.

"It's up to you and me to get past the excuses and cut the red tape," he said, "to take advantage of this opportunity and responsibility of telling people about Christ."

In concluding, he called on the state leaders and all Southern Baptists to "dedicate ourselves to the propagation of the name of Jesus Christ, regardless..."

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Wake Forest Refuses  
N. C. Convention Mandate

Baptist Press  
12/12/77

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP)--North Carolina Baptist general secretary-treasurer Cecil A. Ray has expressed "surprise and disappointment" at the refusal of trustees of Wake Forest University here to follow a state convention mandate that it not accept federal funds for construction.

Thirty-five Wake Forest trustees, by what was called "a substantial majority," decided by voice vote on Dec. 9 to accept the full amount of a controversial \$299,600 National Science Foundation research grant to the school's biology department. The grant included \$85,000 for construction of a greenhouse.

In November, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina approved a recommendation from its Services Rendered Committee that Wake Forest be allowed to accept all of the grant but not use any of it for construction. The university had felt the greenhouse was necessary for the research, but North Carolina Baptists said use of federal money for that purpose violates separation of church and state.

"I had expected a more responsive handling of the matter by the trustees in light of the convention's clear cut decision...", Ray said. "The Wake Forest University trustees are elected by the convention and ultimately responsible to it. This is clear in the convention's constitution...How the state convention will deal with the matter is up to its General (executive) Board (which)...next meets in Raleigh, Jan. 23-25," Ray said.

The trustee resolution, which noted that faculty, alumni and numerous campus organizations had gone on record asking that the grant be used as originally stipulated, said the school "desires no conflict with our convention." It said Wake Forest is "unashamedly a Christian institution" and will "continue to consult with the leadership of the Baptist state convention and the Convention/University Relations Committee..."

The resolution said the Services Rendered Committee had verified that Wake Forest's original acceptance of the funds "was done in good faith and with full public acknowledgment." It declared that "for the trustees not to honor this good faith agreement (with the National Science Foundation) would have adverse implications for the entire university."

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The statement further called it a "contradiction" that the university's Bowman Gray School of Medicine is allowed to accept funds "for bricks and mortar" but that the biology department is not.

It also invoked "the spirit of Article 3 of the convention's constitution, which says: 'While independent and sovereign in its own sphere, the convention does not claim and will not attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organization, association or convention.' "

A convention spokesman said, however, that Article 3 does not apply to institutions and agencies run by trustees elected by the convention, which owns the institutions.

But he said the North Carolina Convention can only elect or dismiss the trustees or withhold funds from the state's Cooperative Program unified budget--not assume the trust e function of running the internal affairs of an institution.

Withholding of Cooperative Program funds, if the convention would elect that route, would have serious implications since the convention approved a contract, probably unique in Baptist higher education, with the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in 1946 which binds the convention in perpetuity to provide at least 7.5 percent of its distributable income each year to Wake Forest, with Reynolds providing not less than \$350,000 a year.

That agreement currently results in about \$1.2 million a year for Wake Forest.

A convention spokesman said the same issue was raised several years ago when Campbell College, Buies Creek, N. C., was told by the convention not to accept a similar grant and chose to obey the will of the convention.

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Prominent Christians  
Support Graham's Integrity

Baptist Press  
12/12/77

NEW YORK (BP)--"The financial integrity and accountability" of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has been affirmed by seven prominent Christians, some of whom have been critics of Graham in the past.

David Poling, United Presbyterian minister, drafted the statement and contacted the other signers--William Sloane Coffin Jr., pastor of The Riverside Church, New York; attorney and lay theologian William Stringfellow; Union Theological Seminary professor Robert McAfee Brown; former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver; Father Theodore M. Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University; and David Hyatt, president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

"Misleading and often false interpretations have been circulated concerning the finances of the Billy Graham organization," the statement said. "These published insinuations of wrong-doing or implied malfeasance cannot go unchallenged. We are familiar with the ministry of Billy Graham and join together to publicly affirm the financial integrity and accountability of Mr. Graham's enterprise."

Poling, author of a new book on the evangelist entitled, "Why Billy Graham?," also released some additional comments made by signers.

Coffin said he still is a critic of Graham for his "Vietnam confusion and his tardiness in seeing the disaster of Richard Nixon and Watergate."

But, he said, "the personal integrity of Mr. Graham has never been questioned by those who know the operations and management of the Association's fund-raising--it is honest and responsible. Apparently some headline hunters have turned head hunters, with Billy now their prime target, he said, referring to recent charges Graham covered-up a fund.

"Christian people know that while I have seriously challenged his (Graham's) social application of the Gospels--or non-application--I have never doubted the veracity of his organization or the exemplary style of his personal life."

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