



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**Church-State Stand
Needs Review: Maston**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists should form a committee to study the taxation aspects of their long revered position on separation of church and state says T. B. Maston, retired professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Maston, one of the Southern Baptist Convention's most respected Christian ethicists, said in an article distributed to Baptist newspapers that a growing "taxpayers' revolt" in the U. S. may cause the government to look to now tax exempt properties as a possible additional source of income.

He told Baptist Press that taxation of church property not directly used for worship or education is possible in the future, but not "probable."

Still, he said, Southern Baptists should "take the initiative," and he urged the SBC Executive Committee to name a study group by the time of the SBC annual meeting in June, 1979, to review the entire theory of separation of church and state.

"If we don't do it," Maston said, "governments on the state, local and possibly national levels, may take a good hard look at tax exempt property, and rightly so."

The Southern Baptist Convention owns six theological seminaries and 12 other national agencies but it does not own or operate numerous other Southern Baptist educational and benevolent institutions. Most are run by state Baptist conventions. Southern Baptist churches are autonomous. Such a committee, if appointed, could make recommendations to the Executive Committee and then the SBC. Any recommendations implemented by the SBC would directly affect only SBC-owned entities.

Tax free holdings of churches, hospitals, universities and other benevolent institutions have contributed to fiscal disasters, Maston said, like that in New York City, where 41 percent of the real property is exempt.

He feels that all income producing auxiliaries of the church should be taxed. Even, local churches, whose only property is a building for worship and education should voluntarily pay something to local and county governments for police and fire protection, he said.

"Without it, citizens who aren't Christians, who aren't members of our churches, are carrying the load," he said, "and that's not right."

The church-state taxation issue is two-pronged, Maston said, in that not only do religious bodies enjoy tax exemptions, but some of their institutions are supported directly by grants and indirectly by student aid and other forms of help.

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Summer Mission Volunteers
Reach Record Numbers

By Erin Wait

Baptist Press
7/19/78

ATLANTA (BP)--A record number of volunteers--over 18,000--have been sent or assigned to mission fields this summer by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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Don Hammonds, director of the Department of Special Mission Ministries for the board, said volunteer programs have been growing the past four or five years because "the subject of volunteers is prominent." He said the growth has been encouraged by, but is not solely a result of President Jimmy Carter's mission challenge to Southern Baptists.

Through Hammond's department, 1,446 summer missionaries were appointed and are serving across the United States and Puerto Rico. Many of them received support money from state Baptist conventions and college Baptist Student Unions.

The summer missionaries, college students giving 10 weeks to mission work, serve in a number of areas. Ten evangelism teams lead revivals in Alaska, New York, Colorado and Nevada. In California, a group works with backpackers in Yosemite National Park. In Maryland another group travels with a puppet ministry in the Good Times Wagon. Other students serve in inner-city areas, help with language churches and work on construction crews.

Bold Mission Thrust, the SBC goal to evangelize the world by the year 2000, has resulted in a summer mission team in Kansas and Nebraska preparing the area for new churches. Plans for the 1980 Winter Olympics led another team to Lake Placid, N. Y., to survey and prepare to establish a Baptist church and other ministries.

Sixty-seven high school student volunteers were sent out as Sojourners, students who serve at their own expense for 10 weeks to one year, performing the same types of service as summer missionaries.

Some 450 youth groups and 74 adult groups, averaging 35 to 40 persons each, provide the bulk of volunteers. They lead Backyard Bible Clubs, apartment ministries and Vacation Bible Schools, usually under the supervision of area missionaries.

The Christian Service Corps accounted for another 326 volunteers. Through the program, adults pay their own travel expenses to the field and serve two to ten weeks, often utilizing personal vacation time.

"The Christian Service Corps carries a little more maturity and experience in church work, as well as leadership training," Hammonds explained. "We can get some professional or pari-professionals who can help others learn how to do things better."

Five college professors also serve in various areas. David Book, assistant state student director in Kentucky, led four Kentucky students in the Lake Placid, N. Y., ministry. Another professor helps with Christian High Adventure in the east, a ministry revolving around wilderness trips in the Appalachian area.

Barry Clark, a Baptist Student Union director in Jonesboro, Ark., took a year's leave of absence to serve as pastor of a small Baptist church in Kearns, Utah. Within six to eight weeks, the small congregation increased to 50 or 60. Clark's work is financed jointly by the Arkansas Baptist Convention and the Home Mission Board.

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Southern Baptist Laity
Urged To Lead Leaders

By Roy Jennings

Baptist Press
7/19/78

GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--More than 2,000 Southern Baptists at a Bold Mission Leadership Conference were encouraged to lead their pastors and other church leaders into Bold Mission Thrust if that leadership balks.

At a closing commitment session, Cal Guy, professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, urged the leaders of Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union units to demonstrate boldness in faith, conviction, leadership, expression, and surrender.

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"Don't be captive to your leadership," Guy said. "You may have to lead them into Bold Missions. I am a preacher. I've taught preachers for 32 years. But sometimes their jobs capture them."

As the service ended, scores made commitments to missions, many asking to serve in the Mission Service Corps and in other short term mission projects of the Southern Baptist Convention. MSC is part of Bold Mission Thrust, the SBC plan to reach the world for Christ in this century.

The leadership conference, the second sponsored in recent years by the Brotherhood Commission and WMU, attracted 2,039, about 400 more than a year ago. The final service opened with a parade of flags and a candlelighting ceremony, accenting the work of 5,500 Southern Baptist missionaries serving in the United States and 91 foreign countries or territories.

In a call for bold faith, Guy sharply criticized Southern Baptists "luxurious lifestyle," asking, "How long can Southern Baptists continue to build a lifestyle based on luxury and try to justify heavy expense on themselves and their sanctuaries? How long will God let us go on until there comes into our lifestyle a note of sacrifice?"

Guy said God is calling Southern Baptists to have bold conviction. "The laity needs to have convictions so bold that you won't be cowed when your pastor and other church leaders don't hear what you're saying."

The seminary professor praised Bold Mission Thrust. "It's my deep conviction that this is the greatest day potentially for missions, church growth and evangelism since Pentecost."

Earlier in the week, the conferees heard Glendon McCullough, executive director of the Brotherhood Commission, call for Southern Baptists to give greater attention to molding their youth into mature Christians with a concern for missions.

Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of WMU, told the conferees about the new commitment to Christ she found among Russian Baptists during a trip to the Soviet Union in June.

More than 100 leadership training opportunities were offered for the WMU and Brotherhood leaders, along with conferences with 14 home and foreign missionaries.

Conferees flooded mission points in the Santa Fe Baptist Association during one afternoon set aside for self-guided family mission tours in north central New Mexico. Both Russell Begaye, missionary at the Baptist Indian Center in Santa Fe, and Ben Yelvington, missionary to the Indians at Espanola, reported turnaway crowds.

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Ruth Stapleton Denies She
Said Jesus 'Only A Man'

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
7/19/78

DENVER (BP)--Despite Ruth Carter Stapleton's protest that a recent "Newsweek" cover story misquoted her 21 times, the article's author maintained the accuracy of his reporting and said, "She'll just have to live with that one."

President Carter's evangelist sister said in Denver one alleged misstatement, claiming she thought Jesus was just a man, was "The most devastating experience of my life."

Mrs. Stapleton, a Southern Baptist and "orthodox Christian" in her words, claimed that particular misquote was lifted from the speech she made proclaiming Jesus as the divine Son of God. She said the other 20 misstatements were either misinterpretations of what she had said or statements by acquaintances attributed to her.

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"I'd like to know what the 21 misstatements were," responded Kenneth L. Woodward, writer of the "Newsweek" article. "We have it all on tape. It's all accurate. It's tape recorded as well as in my notes."

Mrs. Stapleton said she had sent a telegram of protest to "Newsweek." Woodward reported the telegram only mentioned the alleged misstatement relating to the humanity of Jesus.

To personally "set the record straight," Mrs. Stapleton issued a nine-point statement of faith to reporters in Denver. The statement said she believed Christ to be the "living, bodily-resurrected, Son of God, who died for my sins upon the cross."

Another of the alleged errors in the story involved her relationship with Larry Flynt, paralyzed publisher of "Hustler" magazine. She said she calls him at his hospital room in Columbus, Ohio, where he has been confined since he was shot last March, about once every two weeks, not daily, as was reported.

Asked if she had encouraged Flynt to sell the magazine, Mrs. Stapleton responded affirmatively. "He told me, 'Ruth I can't even roll over...or read "Hustler," let alone sell it,'" she reported.

Mrs. Stapleton said her most famous convert had just begun to study the Bible when he was shot and had not progressed beyond the "baby Christian" stage. She said he is currently studying the Bible while confined to the hospital bed.

The first sister conceded her prominence, which has prompted such wide publicity as the "Newsweek" story, might be a fad. She denied that the same is true of her ministry.

"When Jimmy has served his two terms," she claimed, "I'll still be the same person."

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Marv Knox is a student summer missionary serving as a staff writer intern on the "Rocky Mountain Baptist," Denver. He is editor of "The Brand," campus newspaper at Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas.

Popovici Named 'Language
Missions Pastor of Year'

Baptist Press
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GLORIETA, N. M. (BP)--Alexa Popovici, pastor of the Roumanian Baptist Church of Chicago, has been named Language Missions Pastor of the Year by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of language missions.

"The award is made recognition of the unparalleled growth of his church and the mission-minded maturity of his people," said Oscar Romo, director of the language missions department.

Popovici was selected from about 3,000 pastors of language/culture congregations across the nation. The language missions department serves more than 40 language/culture groups, 95 Indian tribes and the deaf.

Romo said the selection was made after candidates were nominated by state Baptist directors of missions and language program leaders. Final selection was made during the annual meeting of the directors of missions.

Popovici, born in Pennsylvania in 1915, grew up in Romania after his parents returned to Eastern Europe when he was seven years old. He graduated from high school, the Baptist Theological Seminary in Bucharest, the Greek Orthodox Theological Seminary and the Lutheran Theological University before becoming a Baptist pastor. He served 18 years as professor and president of the Baptist Theological Seminary before "coming into conflict" with Communist leaders in Romania.

"They dismissed me, ... threw me down," he said. "I was forbidden to preach or to teach. I couldn't even pray because they said I preached in my prayers."

Popovici came to the United States in August, 1967, and three years later started the church. From a beginning with 22 persons, the church has grown to 200 members and more than 250 in average attendance. Popovici and the church have a Romanian refugee resettlement program, a worldwide radio ministry, and a printing operation, as well as regular church activities.

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