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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
480 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2356W. 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** Richard T. McCartney, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2481**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) _____, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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79-202

Khomeini Religious,
Political Leader

By Steven L. Higdon

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--It's essential that western nations understand Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini is both a religious and a political leader says Bryant Hicks, a teacher of world religions.

"An ayatollah, in a sense, has more power than a Roman Catholic pope does," says Hicks, associate professor of Christian missions and world religions at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"A Roman Catholic pope has to work through his college of cardinals. The ayatollah doesn't consult anybody. Whatever God (Allah) tells him, he tells the people and that's it. The ayatollah is looked upon as one who has all the answers of life."

Hicks, who was a foreign missionary in the Philippines, where there is a strong Muslim influence, told Towers, Southern's campus newspaper, that "It doesn't even occur to him (Khomeini) to ask whether it's legitimate to force his will on someone else. If it's of Allah, then it's legitimate."

The aggressive acts perpetrated by Khomeini's supporters, including the holding of 50 American hostages at the embassy in Tehran and storming of embassies in Pakistan and Libya, are not typical of Muslims, Hicks said.

"It is not typical for the group to be this belligerent and this unreasonable," he said. "Islam basically means 'submission.' It comes from the Hebrew shalom, which means of course, 'peace.'"

"In the beginning, because it had to assert itself, there was warfare. But in this century, Islam simply up to this point has not been belligerent and aggressive.

"They do not try to attack people who disagree with them. Their basic teaching is that everyone has a right to his own religion."

"Religious fanaticism blinds people, causes them to be irrational, causes them to be unreasonable in their demands and expectations," Hicks said about the ayatollah's targeting of America for his wrath.

"At the same time I think there's no question but that the United States is deeply involved in the shah's coming to power and staying in power. The shah stood for everything that countered what the Ayatollah Khomeini is pushing for. Since the United States was the perpetrator of this as far as he's concerned, that is why so much of his venom is directed to the United States.

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"You would say in Christian terms that the shah is antichrist. He is what represents everything contrary to what the idea of the Ayatollah Khomeini is. When the ayatollah was looking for a focus for his religious fanaticism, the shah was already there and we were behind him, and all that hatred comes from the feeling that we messed up their country through the shah."

Hicks clarified that an ayatollah was supposedly the successor of Mohammed himself, but that there are many ayatollahs. And, he adds, "If (this one) feels that Allah is leading him to do this, that legitimizes it irrespective of anybody's rights."

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Higdon is editor of Towers, Southern's campus newspaper.

Stewart Joins WMU, Barone
Named by Texas Baptists

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--Debbie Stewart, information consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, since July 1977, has been named public information director for Woman's Missionary Union, auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Miss Stewart, who will marry Mark Wattier, a political science faculty member at Samford University, Birmingham, Dec. 15, will take office at WMU Feb. 15.

Terry Barone, 24, director of public relations at Hillcrest Baptist Hospital, Waco, Texas, succeeded Miss Stewart, 28, on Dec. 1 in Dallas.

Miss Stewart will direct WMU's public relations publications and news and communications releases and coordinate release of all WMU information to external communications media, according to Catherine Allen, assistant to the executive director and director of public relations at WMU.

A native of Fort Worth, Texas, Miss Stewart served previously as news coordinator at Baylor University, Waco, 1976-77; editorial assistant at the Baptist World Alliance, Washington, D.C., 1974-76; and as a news intern at the SBC Foreign Mission Board and Fort Worth Star-Telegram while in college.

She holds a bachelor of science degree in journalism from Baylor University and a master of science degree in journalism from Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

Barone, a native of Andrews, Texas, is a graduate of Baylor. He is a former reporter for the Waco Tribune-Herald and public relations associate in the office of public affairs at Baylor.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Dallas bureau of Baptist Press.

Cooperative Program
Sees Big Increase

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--November gifts to the national Southern Baptist Cooperative Program increased a dramatic 27.37 percent over the same month last year, to \$5,981,606.

Designated gifts, boosted by contributions to world hunger, increased 58.6 percent over November 1978, to \$730,700.

The increase in undesignated contributions is the largest since April 1976 when gifts of \$4,270,687 were 29.64 percent ahead of April 1975.

Ada Ruth Kelly, bookkeeper for the Executive Committee, which distributes the receipts to the 19 boards and agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention, said the large November increase can be attributed heavily to the end-of-year overage given by the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Alabama Baptists increased their Cooperative Program contributions 85.1 percent over the previous November, to \$718,380.

The designated and undesignated receipts brings November's total to \$6,712,306, an increase of 30.16 percent over 1978.

After a meager 3.25 percent increase in October, the first month of the fiscal year, November's increases bring Cooperative Program giving to \$10,953,897, up 15.16 percent over the first two months of 1978. Total gifts, including designated and undesignated contributions, were up 16.67 percent, to \$12,441,526.

The 1979-80 goal is \$83 million, which includes a \$12 million Bold Mission Thrust challenge fund.

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Christians, Not State,
Key to Problem Help

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
12/3/79

RALEIGH, N. C. (BP)--North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt believes the problems in society will never be solved without the help of dedicated, Christian people.

"People all over our state are hurting, and we need to respond to their hurts," he says. "But the government can't solve their problems, because they are human problems."

"What we've got to do is to challenge the Christian people of North Carolina to get out there and help people in need," he continues, gesturing like an evangelist.

Gov. Hunt, an active Presbyterian layman, feels the churches of North Carolina--some 10,000 strong, are the best organized and best equipped organizations in the state to help accomplish this goal.

That's one of the reasons he recruited two Baptist ministers and former denominational workers to head up his administration's effort to involve citizens in a massive, statewide program of volunteerism. (The fact that 1.1 million of the estimated 2 million church members in North Carolina are Baptists also may have influenced that decision.)

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Charles Petty, executive director of the governor's office of citizen affairs, was director of the Christian Life Council for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina before joining the Hunt administration. The office's deputy director and "citizens' advocate," Floyd Craig, was director of public relations for almost 12 years for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission in Nashville.

Although some friends in the denomination have chided him for "leaving the ministry," Petty is convinced that he is "still doing ministry" in his state government job. "I felt I could have enormous influence in the world," he says, pointing out that North Carolina's \$5.5 billion budget is two and a half times the total income of all Southern Baptist churches in the nation.

"We never quite get around to realizing the enormous potential government has to do the work of God," said Petty. He pointed out that if the governor could be influenced to direct just .04 percent of his budget to world hunger relief in one form or another, he will, in effect, have contributed more to world hunger than the approximately \$2.2 million that 13 million Southern Baptists did last year.

Nevertheless, Petty believes the task is too large for the church or the government to shoulder alone. "We just can't begin to meet every human need in the state without everyone working together," he emphasizes.

Gov. Hunt echoes that theme, stressing that "every Christian ought to be a volunteer in his own community."

He believes if Christians really responded to the challenge to help others, it would result in significant tax cuts and radical changes in society.

Christians, he says, ought to be involved as volunteers in at least three specific areas:

1. As tutors in public schools to help every child learn to read.
2. As volunteers in the prison, law enforcement and judicial systems to help every person in trouble with the law.
3. As volunteers helping the elderly.

"What it takes," he observes, "is not money, but some of our time."

Adapted from January 1980 Issue of World Mission Journal.

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BAPTIST PRESS

460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

Jm
CT
AS

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 9TH AVE NO
NASHVILLE TN 37203

