



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 20, 1980

80-29

Wood, Rogers Debate
Stance on Prayer

By James Lee Young

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers and James E. Wood Jr., executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C., gave a lesson here on how to agreeably disagree.

Wood and Rogers confronted each other following an address by the SBC president to the denomination's Executive Committee. The two discussed a stance taken recently by Rogers advocating the removal of voluntary prayer in schools from the jurisdiction of the federal courts.

In his address Rogers called on Southern Baptists to "be filled with the Holy Spirit." As the address drew to a close, Rogers made what he termed some "personal comments," which included a statement on his much publicized stance on prayer in schools.

Rogers said that some wrongfully have interpreted his urging of removal of prayer in the schools from the jurisdiction of the federal courts as against the SBC stance on the issue.

The SBC adopted resolutions in 1964 and 1971 in effect supporting the Supreme Court's position against state mandated prayer and Bible reading. The 1971 resolution specifically supported voluntary prayer.

Rogers referred to a comment made by Wood in Baptist Press in which Wood said Rogers should have consulted with the Baptist Joint Committee before joining a group called the Coalition for the First Amendment.

"I wish he (Wood) had talked to me," Rogers said to the audience, "before he talked to the press, and found out my heart and...what I believed about some certain things. He hasn't said a word to me yet." Wood was in the audience.

Rogers said he may be wrong, and if so, needed to be told, but noted that he would never "knowingly go against the will of our great denomination." He earlier told Baptist Press, when asked to react to Wood's comments, that he felt he was not going against previous SBC actions.

Following the address, Wood made his way to the center floor of the auditorium, where the two men shook hands amiably and engaged in dialogue over their differences.

At different times the conversation dealt with the First and Fourteenth Amendments and abortion funding, but mostly on their concerns, from opposite poles, over prayers and religion in the public schools.

Wood argued that the courts had already taken care of the prayer in schools matter and that a "dangerous" effort spearheaded by U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., a Southern Baptist, would remove the issue of prayer in schools out of the jurisdiction of the courts.

Opponents to the Helms effort cite a three-fold danger:

--It would encourage Congress to attempt, in effect, to amend the Constitution by a simple majority, without referring the matter to the states for their approval, they say.

--It would set a precedent--the first time to be done--for the destruction of First Amendment freedoms if there is a majority in Congress who disapprove of a particular Supreme Court interpretation of the Constitution, opponents contend.

--Putting such issues in the hands of localities could create a hodgepodge of approaches to the issue of prayer. The Supreme Court, they point out, only ruled against government proscribed prayer in schools, not against voluntary prayer. School boards should be educated to realize that, Helms' opponents insist.

Rogers later told Baptist Press:

"I think the basic concept of the Helms' amendment is to put the First Amendment back into the original stance in the minds of the framers of that amendment.

"This, indeed, would have state judges ruling on the matter of prayer. Now we have federal judges for the final authority. Federal judges are not always without error. Some of us had rather trust the sensitivity of those judges closer to and more responsible to us.

"The issue that causes fear in the minds of some that a state court may misrule is a vital concern. We also have a vital concern that the Supreme Court may misrule. Again, I want to reiterate that I am diametrically opposed to state dictated or enforced religion," Rogers noted.

In the discussion with Wood, Rogers said, "I think we've gotten some grotesque interpretations of the First Amendment." He said he favored giving the states the right to "bring corrections needed" on the issue.

He does not believe, the SBC president noted, that states would allow forced religion in the schools. Wood said that indeed some would, and gave as an example New York State, which enacted a law struck down by the high court in 1962 that had proscribed prayers for the public school classrooms.

In the conversation Rogers said, "We've come to the place" of an "almost anti-God" and "humanism" control in the schools. "Public schools have become like 'Sunday Schools' for humanism," he added.

Both men agreed they were in favor of public schools and that there were two sides to the issue. They verbally expressed love for each other and respect for the other's opinions. "We have different positions for the same reasons," Rogers added.

Wood asked Rogers for dialogue in the case of future issues concerning the denomination.

The SBC president said the reason he didn't call the Baptist Joint Committee was because he didn't "feel I was contravening the decision of the SBC." If so, he noted, "I would have called."

Russell Dilday Cancels
Conference Co-Sponsorship

By Toby Druin

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Citing "programming conflicts," but apparently upset by an advertisement listing conference speakers he had not approved, Southwestern Seminary President Russell H. Dilday Jr. said the seminary will not co-sponsor a Bible conference with the James Robison-backed Heart of America organization at the seminary, March 10-12.

Instead, Dilday said, the seminary will be the sole sponsor of the event and Robison, who was to have been one of the speakers, has been dropped from the program, although he may be invited to the campus at a later date.

The conference originally was to have been jointly sponsored by the seminary and the Heart of America organization and would have been one of a series of several Heart of America conferences initiated last fall by Robison and Pastor W.A. Criswell of First Baptist Church, Dallas, to affirm the authority of the Scriptures.

Previous conferences have been held in St. Louis, at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Charlotte, N.C., and Albuquerque, N.M. The Southern Seminary conference was jointly sponsored.

"The conference will call attention to the importance of the Bible and its message in the critical first days of the new decade," Dilday said in a press release.

Theme of the conference, according to the release, will be "Communicating the Message of the Bible in the '80s," and it will include general sessions, workshops and regular class sessions with emphases on personal soul winning, the Bible, revivals and mass evangelism, proclaiming the Bible through practical Christian faith, preaching and the Bible, Bible study programs and radio and television.

Conference leaders will be Southern Baptist pastors (including several who have spoken at the Heart of America conferences), denominational leaders and seminary professors. Participation will be limited to seminary students, faculty and staff members and their families because of limited seating in the seminary auditorium.

Dilday would not elaborate on the cancellation of the joint sponsorship other than to state the guidelines under which he first agreed to have the conference at the seminary.

However, the cancellation followed an inquiry to Dilday by Presnall H. Wood, editor of the Texas Baptist Standard, about an advertisement submitted to the Standard about the conference by Focus Advertising, the firm which handles Robison's publicity.

The ad, which has now been cancelled by Robison, listed several speakers and a theme, "Affirming the Authority of the Word of God." Speakers listed included Oscar Thompson and J.W. MacGorman of the seminary faculty; William Pinson, president of Golden Gate Seminary; Bailey Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla.; James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas; Jerry Vines, pastor of West Rome Baptist Church in West Rome, Ga.; Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, and Robison.

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Wood called Dilday to check the theme, which differed from the previous news release issued by the seminary, and to ask why a meeting which was closed to the public was being advertised. After learning of the ad contents, Dilday canceled the co-sponsorship.

Dilday, contacted later, said he had initially been asked by Criswell to join him in a series of conferences calling Southern Baptists back to the Bible.

"He said James Robison was working with him in the conferences and they are the two I agreed to work with," Dilday said.

"Since then there has emerged the Heart of America organization which gradually became a James Robison program with Criswell more as an invited guest. The James Robison staff organized the conferences and their material was in all the promotional sections of the conferences."

Robison said in an interview that the ad for the Standard was a mistake and should never have been placed. He acknowledged there was to have been no publicity since the seminary conference was not to have been open to the public.

His staff, he said, had just made a mistake after being told to stay ahead on publicity for his conferences. Everything, he said, had been adjusted to suit the seminary and he thought agreement had been reached on the speakers.

Robison said he felt he was dropped because he has begun to emphasize Christian involvement in politics, which he said he had intended to speak on at the seminary conference, though he would have been flexible on the topic if the seminary desired. His recent Bible conference in Fort Worth featured appearances by Republican presidential candidates. He emphasized the political aspect in the Albuquerque conference, he said.

Robison acknowledged the original intent of the conferences had been to affirm the Bible, and defended his political emphasis as being in keeping with that theme.

"I just want us to be together on these issues that affect all of our society," Robison said. "Our intention was to affirm the Bible and you affirm it by preaching it and letting God bless it, emphasizing evangelism and we will continue that. But I am going to move more and more into the information aspect of what's happening in our country and probably will even change the name of the conferences to 'Wake Up, America,' or something like that."

Dilday said he did not agree to have a conference at the seminary until after the initial Heart of America conference in St. Louis in September and said he had then laid down strict guidelines.

The guidelines included that it be called the Southwestern Seminary/Heart of America Conference, not simply a Heart of America Bible Conference; that it not promote any institution or evangelistic association in any way; that no offering be taken; that it not be a conference on biblical authority or inerrancy but on communicating the Bible in the 1980s; and it would be limited to seminary students, faculty, and their families because of limited seating.

"We were also to mutually agree on the program personalities--some from our campus and some from Heart of America conferences up to that point," Dilday said.

Dilday said he had notified Criswell of the cancellation of joint sponsorship and hoped the Dallas pastor still would participate in the conference. Criswell is recuperating from a heart attack, but Dilday, who preached at First Baptist Church, Dallas, Feb. 10, said he was told Criswell wanted to be a part of the conference.

The roster of speakers and leaders for the conference will be announced soon, Dilday said. Among those already confirmed are MacGorman and Thompson of the seminary faculty, Hal and Paula Brooks of North Richland Hills Baptist Church, Fort Worth; and Draper, Smith, Pinson, SBC President Adrian Rogers and others, he said.

Dilday would not comment on the other speakers listed in the ad but some apparently will not participate.

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High Court To Decide
Fate of Hyde Amendment

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
2/20/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--Acting with unusual swiftness, the U.S. Supreme Court announced here it will confront head-on the controversy over federal Medicaid funding of abortions.

The high court will review a January ruling by federal district court judge John F. Dooling Jr., of Brooklyn, N.Y., which struck down the Hyde amendment forbidding the use of Medicaid money for poor women's abortions.

The court declined to delay implementation of Dooling's decision, a move which had been sought by anti-abortion forces. Three members of the court, Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and associate justices Lewis F. Powell and William H. Rehnquist, dissented from the denial.

Named after anti-abortion crusader U.S. Rep. Henry J. Hyde, R-Ill., the Hyde amendment, as passed by Congress last fall, forbids Medicaid funding for abortions except in cases where the life of the mother is at stake or in instances involving proven rape or incest.

At the same time, Congress rejected a third exception involving cases where long and severe physical damage to the mother would likely result if the abortion were not performed. This third exception had been adopted for three prior consecutive years.

Hyde and many other anti-abortion leaders would prefer no exceptions save that of an imminent threat to the mother's life.

Judge Dooling's opinion, running to several hundred pages in length, invalidated the Hyde amendment, based in part on the view that to deny funds to poor women may deprive them of the free exercise of religion.

Dooling disagreed, however, on another religion issue often raised by pro-abortion forces, that the denial of funds amounts to an unconstitutional establishment of religion.

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Evangelism Teams
Minister At Olympics

By Marv Knox

LAKE PLACID, N.Y. (BP)--Southern Baptists at the 13th Winter Olympics have caused an old man to cry, a Russian athlete to smile, and a local resident to brave sub-zero temperatures.

The old man, in town to watch speed skating contests, cried when Sherry Woods, a volunteer from Leawood, Kansas, offered him a Bible. She previously spent more than 30 minutes talking with him, sharing his excitement and frustration.

"I am so glad somebody really cares about the people here," he told her. In the midst of emotional fervor and blatant commercialism, he had begun to wonder if people had been reduced to pawns, he confided.

When the Russian athlete saw a cross in a patch on Tommy Neal's parka, he pointed and asked "Jesus?"

Neal, a student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., nodded in affirmation and briefly told the Russian he was a Christian. The athlete gave Neal a souvenir lapel pin and Neal gave his new friend a Bible.

Later, the two met on the street, and the Russian stopped to pose before Neal's camera, even though he lagged behind his teammates. Turning to catch up, he patted the patch with the cross, and smiled and moved down the street.

A couple of days later, a local man left his warm home to attend Sunday worship services at Saranac Lake Baptist Chapel, down the road from Lake Placid.

This was not his custom, he explained. But he had been led to Christ by a Baptist the night before and felt a new Christian's place was in church.

The three men were among thousands of athletes, officials, spectators and local residents who were encountered by members of two evangelism teams which walked the streets of Lake Placid and Saranac Lake during the Olympics.

The eight-member team, headed by Southern Baptist Home Mission Board consultant David Bennett, sought to meet the needs of people they contacted, focusing on local residents who might be otherwise overlooked in the hustle and bustle.

"We talked to anybody the Lord gave us," Bennett said. "But since we have chapels in Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, we felt our most long-lasting ministry was to the local residents."

Conversely, the 12-member team headed by John Tresch, associate professor of evangelism at Southeastern Seminary, concentrated on out-of-towners; athletes, support personnel and spectators.

The two approaches were compatible and gave the overall street ministry a broad base since a priority was placed on all types of people.

And despite the differences in focus, both groups operated with the same perspective.

"We outlawed buttonholing as a method of contacting people," Tresch explained. "We prayed that God would make us sensitive to the people around us and aware of the points of need."

That philosophy led to a "laid back" approach, Bennett added. "We tried to be relaxed and worked to win the right to be heard. We did this by helping with language problems, providing coffee, doing what was needed to help them have a nice day."

This formula allowed team members to operate in the methods most suitable to them, but all took low key approaches.

Instead of passing out tracts, or "pushing Bibles," they invited their new friends to the Exchange House--a Christian coffee house and base of Baptist work in Lake Placid--for friendly conversation, coffee, and a chance to warm up.

"The teams worked under the theory that people are more responsive when they come to us on their own terms," said Ken Prickett, field representative with the Home Mission Board's special mission ministries department.

"By inviting them to our turf, our people didn't put pressure on anyone," he said. "And when they did come to the Exchange House, we knew they were interested."

That approach, showing genuine concern, paid off, Bennett added.

"The entire project went even better than we planned," he said. "The Exchange House was packed at night, and a lot of local people and national media people have told us, 'We sure appreciate what you're doing.'"

Such success in Lake Placid means continued success in the future, according to Chuck Clayton, resort consultant for the special mission ministries department.

"We're impressed with the work of our street evangelism teams," he said. "This is our first outing in a major international sporting event, and we'll improve in the future."

"Like athletes who compete in their first Olympics consider it training for future Olympics, this has been a successful proving ground for us," he said. "We'll be even better prepared for the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles."

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Allen Rejects Proposed
Loan for House Purchase

Baptist Press
2/20/80

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Jimmy Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, declared here that he will not accept a loan authorized by commission trustees for the purchase of a house.

"Brethren, there is no proposed loan or house worth the price of creating controversy and undercutting credibility," Allen told the February meeting of the SBC Executive Committee after rising to a point of personal privilege.

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Allen referred to a report in the Feb. 20 issue of the Baptist Standard, weekly newspaper of Texas Baptists, that the commission's trustees authorized, at the time of his election as president, a 10-year, interest-free loan of up to \$125,000 for the purchase of a house.

The Standard reported that the information on the proposed loan was not given at the news conference after his election on Dec. 11, even though a direct question was asked about whether Allen would live in a commission-owned house. The response, the Standard said, involved only salary, pension provisions and housing allowance.

Addressing the Executive Committee, Allen said the trustees felt, "in the rush of events on the day of my election that they should wait until an actual appropriation of funds or firm procedures for those funds was worked out before a public announcement."

"I assented to that point of view," he said, "with their strong commitment and my clear understanding, that nothing would be done which was in secret or in any possible way questionable to the fellowship of Southern Baptists."

"Subsequent events, including the tone and implications of this article, reveal a different perspective by the Baptist Standard," Allen said. "Our trustees' judgment may have been flawed, but it was an honest judgment. We can all trust these trustees to correct any course of action which may be mistaken."

In an earlier interview with Baptist Press, Allen said the loan was not discussed at the time of his election because its details were in "an embryonic stage." But he added that he now believes it would have been better to discuss the principle of internal financing at the time and point out that details would be forthcoming.

Allen said the Standard reported correctly that "the proposed loan was not envisioned as coming from the Cooperative Program funds and has neither been appropriated or accepted."

"I do not know how the Father will work out meeting those needs, but I am notifying the trustees that their proposed method of doing so is being respectfully declined," Allen said.

Allen, whose previous residence was owned by the church he served as pastor for 12 years in San Antonio, Texas, has limited resources for a residence. His family has experienced heavy medical expenses in recent years. His predecessor, Paul M. Stevens, lives in a commission-owned home as part of his retirement package.

Allen said his basic concern is not "the legitimacy of an effort to internally finance an interest-free loan" nor "the difference of perspective of what constitutes open disclosure." He said his deepest concern "is that this incident and this interpretation may alter the Southern Baptist agenda of conversation and attention at this crucial time of our agency's rebuilding and launching of momentum toward the sharing of the gospel through mass media in an unprecedented way."

Speaking of the commission trustees, Allen said, "No group, in my judgment, has worked harder at the task of clearing up difficulties in an agency's operation and in reporting facts to the constituency as has this current group of trustees."

Allen apparently was referring indirectly to a move by the commission's trustees to force Stevens into early retirement, citing disillusionment with his management procedures.

Allen closed his address to the Executive Committee, urging Southern Baptists to get on "to the business of Bold Mission Thrust," the SBC's plan to communicate the message of Christ to the entire world by the year 2000.

Executive Committee Votes To Tighten SBC Bylaws

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention voted to recommend changes to tighten SBC bylaws on voting and registration at annual meetings and recommended a 1980-81 national Cooperative Program budget of \$90 million in the committee's February meeting.

In other action, the Executive Committee passed resolutions which expressed support of the SBC Annuity Board in a disagreement with the Internal Revenue Service over its rulings regarding the board and which urged Southern Baptists to continue efforts to deal with world hunger and refugee relief.

Changes in the bylaws, which must be approved by the SBC in St. Louis in June, grew out of a motion by the SBC asking Lee Porter, SBC registration secretary, to investigate alleged irregularities in registration of messengers at the 1979 SBC in Houston.

In his report to the Executive Committee in September, Porter said his investigation revealed no massive wrongdoing in registration or in voting in the balloting for SBC president. But he did say "sloppy" procedures needed correcting.

A proposed change in Bylaw 8 would stipulate that "each messenger shall register in person by presenting a completed and signed Southern Baptist Convention messenger registration card." That would eliminate registration for a group of persons by one person.

Stipulations in a suggested new bylaw, to be called Bylaw 35, include this statement: "In order to cast a vote, a messenger must be present at the time the vote is taken. Voting by proxy is not permitted."

After lengthy debate, the Executive Committee defeated, by two to one margin, a proposed change in the SBC Constitution which would have heavily linked qualifications for sending SBC messengers to the amount a church gives to the SBC Cooperative Program.

The Cooperative Program budget of \$90 million, which must be approved in June by the SBC, includes \$74.5 million in basic operating budget, \$2.5 million in capital needs, and \$13 million in Bold Mission Thrust challenge funds.

The SBC Foreign Mission Board, which had earlier expressed public dismay over what it feels is an inadequate 8.11 percent increase in its proposed share of the Cooperative Program, did not contest the percentage on the floor of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee also endorsed the 1980-81 SBC Operating Budget of \$1,335,000, which includes \$875,000 from the Cooperative Program, \$20,000 from dividends and interest and \$440,000 from contributions from the Sunday School Board.

The operating budget includes the annual budget of the Executive Committee (\$736,775), expenses for the annual convention (\$274,000), contribution to the Baptist World Alliance (\$242,775), and other items.

The resolution on the IRS problem opposed IRS efforts to establish and limit the term "Churches, their integrated auxiliaries and conventions or associations of churches," under IRS Code Section 6033. It also opposed IRS rulings to deny that the Annuity Board is a "functional arm and component part of the Southern Baptist Convention" and expressed support of the Annuity Board in its decision to challenge the IRS rulings.

In a series of other actions, the Executive Committee:

--Upgraded retirement benefits for Executive Committee employees. The upgraded plan includes contribution of 10 percent of salary for each eligible employee into the Annuity Board's model plan for churches and agencies, and the matching of contributions by employees, from one percent to five percent, depending on years of denominational service,

--Received reports of studies underway of the program statements and relationship of the Public Affairs Committee and the Christian Life Commission of the SBC; on a deferred compensation retirement plan for administrative level staff of the Executive Committee; on immediate and long range use of the SBC Building in Nashville; on a proposal to fund SBC-related travel for SBC first and second vice presidents; and on lay involvement in Bold Mission Thrust.

--Approved, subject to SBC approval, a request allowing the Home Mission Board's division of church loans to double its borrowing power to meet needs of churches and possibly triple it after further review. The proposal would also allow the board to activate the H.M.B. Service Corporation as a registered broker/dealer to assist churches, associations, and state conventions in handling church bonds.

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Foundation Provides
Security Lighting

Baptist Press
2/20/80

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Due to a \$25,000 commitment by the John and Mary Franklin Foundation of Atlanta, the main campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary will soon receive new security lighting.

The lighting system will provide for pedestrian and automobile safety on about 75 acres of the campus. With the increasing use of facilities in the evening hours, both to accommodate larger enrollment and to achieve energy efficiency, adequate lighting became essential.

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EDITORS NOTE: BP Photo mailed 2-20-80 from Nashville to accompany lead story in this mailing on James Wood's and Adrian Rogers' disagreement on the proper stance on prayer in public schools.