



March 26, 1980

80-51

Empty Tomb
Christian Hope

By Wilmer C. Fields
Director, Baptist Press

JERUSALEM (BP)--The Garden Tomb in Jerusalem is a symbol of the hope which stirs Jesus' disciples to this very day.

It is empty.

The miracle of miracles, the surpassing wonder of all the ages, occurred when the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth came to life in the darkened tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

The hope which died on the hill of the Skull, which was buried with Jesus in a borrowed grave, sprang to new imperishable life on the Sunday morning he arose from the dead.

This sacred site outside the Damascus Gate, just off the Nablus Road, is a deeply moving reminder of that event.

"He is not here; for he is risen, as he said."

In a city crammed with history, with the fascinating memorabilia of ages past, where holy shrines are on almost every corner, this quiet place of flowers and sighing pines summons up intimations of personal immortality.

The faith which is rekindled at the empty tomb of Jesus is an aspiring faith, "the great world's altar stairs, that slope through darkness up to God." It is an intimate re-living of the astonishment that must have swept over his followers on the morning of his resurrection.

If Jesus can lay aside his shroud and walk out alive forevermore then through him there is hope of a resurrection for us.

"Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead."

Every human being must hear that news!

At every believer's grave there blooms an Easter lily. Beside every disciple's tomb there sits an angel!

After a profoundly moving visit to the Garden Tomb area with a group of Baptists, I walked out of the enclosure and out to the busy street. There a bright-eyed boy bounded up and called out enthusiastically, "Big news, sir. Good news!"

It was immediately apparent, however, in spite of my reverie and preoccupation, that this was no small-size prophet uttering theological declarations. He was selling newspapers, the English-language Jerusalem Post. But his timing could not have been better. And I bought one. Who could resist a salesman like that? Like most people, I want to know any good news.

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And thus earth and heaven interface in this extraordinary place, Jerusalem the Golden. But that is what Incarnation is all about.

It's a shock to many Christian pilgrims to discover that the area of the Garden Tomb, sometimes called Gordon's Calvary, is next door to a busy, noisy bus station.

But here, too, this juxtaposition is appropriate symbolism. The Easter message is relevant to everyday life. Jesus' life, death and resurrection are the culmination of God's new outreach to secular man.

The Holy City, venerated and fought over for centuries by Jews, Christians, Moslems and a variety of infidels, is a classic example of the tendency of religion to petrify the sacred rather than to redeem and sanctify the secular.

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, inside the present walls of the Old City, is the site accepted and extolled by Catholics, Orthodox, Armenians, Coptics and others as the place of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and renewal to life. Each group has a jealously guarded corner for an altar or chapel. Some of their ancestors were present and sorrowing at the crucifixion.

The fact of the matter is that, as with many historic places in the Holy Land, there is some uncertainty about exact locations.

Whether or not the Garden Tomb is the actual burial place of Jesus, it is certainly the kind of tomb described briefly in the Gospels and therefore has at least that kind of claim to authenticity.

Baptist churches are among the Protestant groups which also meet each week in both East and West Jerusalem.

In the great springtime festival among Christians, Easter rites all over the world in their diversity emphasize the importance of the fact of Jesus' resurrection more than the place in which it occurred.

Eastertime, however, does call the faithful to remembrance of pivotal events. Our faith is grounded in history. Our sacred books, the writings of the New Testament as well as the Old, arise out of specific times and places, to speak of God's persistent message of love and redemption for mankind.

Like the earliest disciples, we too are drawn by that invitation given by the angel so many mornings ago, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Th tomb is empty. He has risen!



BAPTIST PRESS

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Mississippi Board Assures
Clarke College Operation

NEWTON, Miss. (BP)--Declining enrollment has drained the financial reserve at Clarke College and forced the executive board of the Mississippi Baptist Convention to assure the school's operation through the spring of 1981.

Enrollment at Clarke, one of seven Southern Baptist junior colleges, dropped from 209 students last year to 162 this school year. Peak enrollment was 445 during the 1965-66 school year.

Clarke, at the invitation of the trustees, is currently under study by the Southern Baptist Education Commission, which, among other things, provides studies and services to member colleges. It was the Education Commission that recommended the Mississippi executive board's action to assure operation until its study was completed and a report made in June.

A.C. Johnson, who became president of Clarke College in July 1979, said the present financial situation occurred because of a policy established with this budget year that no funds would be transferred from one account to another. Johnson had been acting president since January 1979.

Previously several years of deficit financing had taken place as funds were transferred out of a reserve fund. That fund is nearing depletion. An exception to the deficit financing was last year, when the school wound up \$118,000 in the black. This was due to several sizable gifts to the college. School officials say that gifts dropped sharply when it was announced that a study by the Education Commission was being considered.

Action taken by the executive board provides that any deficit spending must be approved by the Mississippi Baptist Education Commission and the Executive Committee of the convention board before it can be committed. It also proposes the sale of certain assets now held by Clarke College in order to gain more operating funds.

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Myths Prevent Hunger
Solutions, Lappe Says

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press
3/26/80

NEW YORK (BP)--The world will solve the "outrage of needless hunger" only when individuals assume their responsibility to cut through the myths and take effective action, hunger expert Frances More Lappe said in New York.

"The problem will never be solved by some government expert," Lappe told over 400 participants in a national seminar on "Ethical Issues for the '80s," sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

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Several "basic myths" paralyze effective action against hunger, she said, debunking commonly held beliefs that scarcity causes hunger and that increased production will solve problems. "The illusion of scarcity is created by economic and political systems," Lappe declared. Globally, she said, "Three thousand calories are produced for every person every day in grain alone."

The problem, she said, is that of increasing concentration of control over food into the hands of fewer and fewer people from the village level to international trade.

In Bangladesh, for example, one of the countries "seen by Americans as hopeless" from the standpoint of food production, everyone could be fed if grain were distributed equitably, she said.

Neither will new technology solve the hunger problem, Lappe said. It produces more food which is utilized by the controllers and still doesn't feed the hungry. "It just causes more unequal distribution and will often end up feeding cattle rather than people." She said half the food in Brazil is fed to livestock.

"Inefficiency in the current anti-democratic food system results in half the land being used to grow five export commodities" in the United States, she said. "We must re-define efficiency in terms of human need. We must study current use of land."

Lappe also debunked a "myth" that shift in control will cut down production, pointing out that surveys in country after country show that small producers produce more value per acre.

"U.S. farmers," she added, "are victimized by being forced to compete with each other for survival." They are victims of "monopoly control" of equipment involving overcharges and the system forces them to abuse soil conservation just to make it through another year. "I talked to farmers who know that planting a crop year after year will ruin the soil," she said, "but they can't slow down because of the system. Some areas have a level of soil erosion approaching the dustbowl era."

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Blacks Support Carter
Over Reagan: Hooks

By Rex Hammock

Baptist Press
3/26/80

NEW YORK (BP)--If the race for the White House narrows to Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, Carter "will probably receive 92 to 95 percent of the black vote," according to Benjamin Hooks, NAACP executive director.

Speaking to over 400 participants in a national conference on "Ethical Issues for the '80s" in New York, Hooks warned, however, that Carter might not receive as large a quantity of black votes as he did in 1976.

In response to a question after his address on race relations in the 1980s, Hooks credited Carter's black support, especially in the south, with putting him in the White House in 1976. "If blacks had not voted for Carter, he would not be president today," Hooks told the conference, sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Hooks predicted, however, that while the same percentage of black voters will support Carter in 1980, fewer will vote because they believe "Carter's performance has not matched his promises."

In his speech, Hooks said, "Blacks have come a long way (in achieving liberty) but we still have a long way to go."

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Hooks, an ordained Baptist minister and former federal judge, compared the blacks' struggle for liberty in America with the character in Ernest Hemingway's novel, "The Old Man and the Sea."

"In 1863, we thought we had caught the big fish of freedom, but the sharks started circling," Hooks said. Jim crow laws, the Ku Klux Klan and other oppression made blacks realize by 1898 that "we couldn't take home anything but the bones."

"In 1954, we thought we had landed the big fish of equality in education," said Hooks. He lamented the fact, however, that more than 50 percent of black children still attend schools that are as segregated as those in 1954.

"Sadly," he added, "churches have joined in the movement (to keep schools segregated), not for religious reasons, but because they don't believe in integration."

Hooks expressed hope for blacks in America, however. "Like 'The Old Man and the Sea,' we still have faith...we use our harpoons to fight off the sharks and will pull ourselves up by our bootstraps--even if we have few boots and don't have any straps."

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Tucker Defends White House
Conference on Families

By David R. Wilkinson

Baptist Press
3/26/80

NEW YORK (BP)--The chairman of the national advisory committee to the White House Conference on Families has defended the purpose and direction of the conference and called for support from the American religious community.

Jim Guy Tucker told over 400 participants in a national Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission seminar in New York on "Ethical Issues for the '80s" that much of the criticism leveled at the conference planners is unfounded.

The conference, he stressed, will not be a springboard for government intrusion into family life as some contend. "The purpose is not to have more government intrusion, but more sensitivity in policy matters that affect families," he said. "Our task is to ensure that when government touches our families it helps instead of hurts--that it supports instead of undermines."

Tucker said the conference will not be successful without the support of churches and synagogues, which he described as "the best friends families have in this country."

He urged church leaders to "take a hard look" at their programs' impact on family life and to find ways to be "more responsive to the strengths, problems and diversity of families."

"The fact is," he said, "there's no better foundation for a new policy of sensitivity toward families than the values of love, fidelity, charity and justice which flow directly from our Judeo-Christian traditions and the ethical and religious commitments of the American people. If we would only practice what we preach, families would have a far better opportunity to cope with the difficult challenges of the 1980s."

Tucker defended the White House conference process which consists of numerous hearings followed by three national conferences. He called it "a unique attempt to listen and to involve American families themselves" and a "sharp departure from the normal way of doing things in Washington."

President Carter, he said, could have established a task force of government officials, scholars and professionals who would "develop a thorough, rather competent report which would probably end up gathering dust on a shelf in the Library of Congress."

The process the president chose, he said, involves risk and controversy, but, he claimed, the hearing concept is "more reflective of the American people and holds out far more promise of leading to real action to strengthen and support families."

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Wilkinson is associate editor of the World Mission Journal.