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80-125

Area Director Claims

Baptists Lack Boldness

By Anita Bowden

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--In the midst of stirring reports of response to the gospel overseas, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board area director voiced doubt that Southern Baptists are demonstrating the kind of commitment to Bold Mission Thrust necessary to reach the world for Christ by the end of this century.

John E. Mills, director for west Africa, told participants in the Foreign Missions conference at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center that he had "haunting, gnawing fears and doubts" about Southern Baptists' commitment and willingness to pay the price of Bold Mission Thrust.

"I am not sure we've really counted the costs of what we've said we would do," he said. "Every year our budget buys a little less missions, but we call what we buy bold."

Mills told of an incident in Upper Volta where he and a missionary spent more than an hour digging out the vehicle they were riding in after it became mired hubcap-deep in sand. During that time he noticed three groups of nomads and their sheep pass them. Only a few people live in that area, he said, but "nobody has a plan for telling them about Jesus."

Thousands of villages in west Africa are miles from the main roads—so far you have to ride a bicycle or walk to get there, he said. Life hasn't changed there in more than a thousand years. They don't have transistor radios so that you can preach to them.

"If they're ever going to hear the gospel, someone is going to have to walk to tell them," Mills said. "And we don't have many walking preachers anymore. We don't have a strategy for winning people like that."

Mills said on a recent plane ride he sat beside the governmental minister from the Islamic Republic of Mauritania who talked about how much aid Christians had given to other lands with drought and famine and he wondered why the Muslim countries with all their OPEC wealth had done so little to help Mauritania.

Mills told him that Christians would be glad to help the people of Mauritania, but the governmental minister replied that Christian assistance was forbidden in his country. He said that anyone who gave out Christian literature or witnessed in Mauritania would be imprisoned for a first offense and probably receive life imprisonment for a second. How do you make a plan to preach the gospel to the Mauritians? Mills asked.

He voiced concern that "Bold Mission" has become just a slogan to Southern Baptists—"something to talk about and not an adequate program to win our world."

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"We've almost come to the place as Southern Baptists that we call everything we do 'Bold Missions,'" he said. He indicated Baptists are really calling "business as usual" bold missions and thinking that will win the world.

In June and July, Mills said, he learned of at least 20 churches in the convention that either sharply cut back or cut out the Cooperative Program for the summer while weekly receipts were below budget needs. "They say they'll catch up in the fall," he said. "But what they've said to their people is 'missions is optional.'"

Mills said career missionaries are the heart of missions. But he acknowledged that not everyone should go overseas as a missionary. "We're a going generation," he said, "but some people ought to settle down and stay and make money and give it to God and send. That, too, is a calling."

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New Mexico Retires
Three Staff In Month

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (BP)--The Baptist Convention of New Mexico will lose three of its 10 professional staff members in its headquarters to retirement in a five-week period.

Edward E. Storm Jr., 62, education division director, will retire Dec. 31; C. Eugene Whitlow, 68, communication division director, will retire on his 69th birthday Feb. 6, 1981; and Charles F. Polston, 62, associate director of the education division, will retire Jan. 31, 1981. The three have 73 year's staff experience in New Mexico.

"These men had an intimate knowledge of the small churches, the mission work and the large churches in New Mexico," said Chester O'Brien, executive director of the state Baptist convention. "They knew the state like the back of their hand."

O'Brien pointed out that New Mexico Baptist Convention staff members have a history of longevity. His secretary retired last year after 42 years on the job and an executive director before him was in the position for 30 years.

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Senate Panel Considers
Marriage Tax Penalty

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
8/6/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--Members of a Senate finance subcommittee have been urged by a colleague and other witnesses to consider steps to correct the so-called "marriage tax penalty."

Sen. Charles McC. Mathias, R-Md., told the Subcommittee on Taxation and Debt Management that the marriage tax penalty generally "taxes wage-earners more if they are married than if they are not, because when two incomes are combined and filed jointly, both incomes are thrown into a higher tax bracket."

The subcommittee, chaired by Harry F. Byrd Jr., I-Va., is considering various proposals to remedy the situation, including a bill introduced by Mathias (S. 336) which permits married persons to file single returns and pay tax at the same rate as single persons. Other proposals would permit married couples a deduction of a percentage of the earned income of the spouse earning the lesser income or a credit against tax liability.

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Without favoring a specific remedy, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution in June calling on individual Baptists to encourage President Carter and Congress "to take appropriate action which will correct this inequity and promote the sacredness of marriage as a God-given institution."

One of the complaints against the marriage tax penalty expressed in the SBC resolution is that it "encourages people to cohabit rather than marry based on economic considerations rather than morality."

In his testimony, Mathias told the subcommittee, "Clearly, this quirk in our tax code encourages people to save money by divorcing and simply living together or to never marry at all."

Among the witnesses was a Maryland couple, Angela M. and H. David Boyter, who divorced at the end of each year beginning in 1975 and remarried at the beginning of the following year in order to file as single taxpayers. When the Internal Revenue Service termed their divorces a "sham," in the spring of 1977, the couple divorced again and have been living together since then.

During a questioning period following their testimony, Angela Boyter told Sen. Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., "We plan to be remarried as soon as you change the law."

Emil M. Sunley, deputy assistant secretary of the treasury, refused to recommend any of the various proposals over the others but did say "the administration will give serious consideration to the marriage penalty issue" in the process of developing a tax cut proposal.

It is uncertain whether Congress will pass a tax cut measure during the remaining days of this session so the status of the marriage tax penalty is equally uncertain. However, two subcommittee members, Sen. Bill Bradley, D-N.J., and Sen. John H. Chafee, R-R.I., expressed hope that the committee would handle the issue in a tax bill this year.

In the House of Representatives, the Ways and Means Committee held hearings in April on the marriage tax penalty but a committee representative said it remains uncertain whether a tax cut bill will be sent to the floor of the House this session.

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Cothen Reiterates Opposition
To Helms Prayer Amendment

Baptist Press
8/6/80

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President Grady Cothen reiterated to board trustees his opposition to legislation pending in Congress which would strip federal courts of jurisdiction in school prayer cases while emphasizing that "I believe in prayer in the public schools."

Cothen recently represented the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs before a House subcommittee following passage in June of a Southern Baptist Convention resolution supporting prayer in public schools but opposing the so-called Helms amendment.

The SBC resolution also instructed the Baptist Joint Committee to deliver the resolution to the president and Congress.

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On the day following Cothen's appearance before the House Subcommittee on Courts, Civil Liberties and the Administration of Justice, Texas evangelist James Robison appeared uninvited before the group to say testimony by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs did not represent Southern Baptists.

During his address to the semi-annual meeting of the trustees of the Sunday School Board, Cothen expressed concern that "Not in my lifetime has there been so much confusion about any issue as about this issue of prayer in public schools."

"I believe in prayer in the public schools, but I do not believe in requiring a Jewish child to sit through a Baptist prayer," Cothen said. "Whatever Southern Baptists have stood for, freedom of conscience has been at the head of the list or close to it."

Cothen noted that, contrary to information being disseminated by some, the Supreme Court does not prohibit prayer and Bible reading in public schools. "It prohibits state-written, state-supervised, state-time-framed prayer in public schools," he said.

Cothen said some school districts have over-reacted to the Supreme Court ruling. "They have taken advantage of it. They didn't want prayer, so they used that to say we're not going to have prayer," he said.

Because the Supreme Court does not prohibit prayer in public schools, Cothen emphasized that the Helms amendment therefore does not restore prayer to public schools.

"The Helms amendment removes the subject of prayer in public schools from federal court jurisdiction and it removes the right of the Supreme Court to review any matter related to prayer in public schools," said Cothen.

With prayer removed from federal court jurisdiction, Cothen said prayer in public schools "would become a matter for local authorities or at least the state to settle."

"That sounds good if you believe in states rights as many of us do," Cothen said, "but there are certain inherent problems in this."

If the issue of prayer in public schools became a matter of "local power structures to control," Cothen predicted that the dominant religious faith in an area would determine the prayer experience in public schools there.

He cited Texas and Mississippi as areas where public school prayer might be a Southern Baptist experience and noted that Mormons might influence public school prayer in Utah, Catholics in New Orleans and perhaps Muslims in New York.

If the Helms amendment were to become law, Cothen said, "it appears inevitable that every school district in the country would be subject to massive political manipulation."

"Take away the purview of the Supreme Court of the United States and government will be in religion up to its eyeballs in every school district," said Cothen.

He praised resolutions on public school prayer passed during annual sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1978, 1979 and 1980 which, he said, say "keep the government out of religion."

"Government has no competency in religion and in my judgment we ought not to let government get involved in religion," Cothen said.

Smith's 'Starlite Crusade'
Success in Del City Field

Aug. 6, 1980

DEL CITY, Okla. (BP)--A three-week "Starlite Crusade" conducted outdoors by First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., resulted in 1,353 professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

Bailey Smith, pastor of the church and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said more than 200 more professions of faith were made in other churches as a result of the 14th annual crusade.

The meeting, extended an extra week because of the response, was conducted in the Del City High School stadium. There were crowds of 4,000 to 6,000 every night and Smith said "it literally seemed like the Holy Spirit was hovering over the area."

"God was just trying to tell us the days of revival are not over, that the best days are still ahead," said Smith, who baptized 881 people into membership in his church during the crusade.

First Southern Del City, which has led the Southern Baptist Convention in baptisms five of the past six years, has baptized 1,658 persons through the first 10 months of the year. The single year high for baptisms in the convention is the 1,669 baptized at Second Baptist in Houston.

Smith, who said he preached 33 times in 30 days the month of the crusade, said the coolest temperature at the beginning of any crusade session was 102 degrees. Of the unexpectedly large response to what he called his "typical revival messages," Smith said, "I guess the people didn't want to go to anyplace hotter."

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CORRECTION: To (BP) story mailed August 5 entitled "Kentucky To Propose CP Giving as Test," please add following as graph three:

The proposed change would allow one additional messenger "for each \$250 contributed to the Cooperative Program during the fiscal year preceding the annual meeting."

Thanks, Baptist Press