



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Former Oklahoma Editor
Files \$400,000 Slander Suit

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--Jack L. Gritz, former editor of the Baptist Messenger, news-magazine for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, has filed a \$400,000 civil suit charging six fellow ministers with slander.

Filed in Oklahoma County District Court, the suit alleges the defendants, acting "in concert," made slanderous statements to obtain his dismissal as editor.

Gritz was terminated by the state convention's board of directors last September, after 30 years as editor.

Named as defendants in the suit are Joe L. Ingram of Oklahoma City, state convention executive director-treasurer; Jerry Don Abernathy, also of Oklahoma City, former convention president who now is evangelism director; Cal Hunter of Mooreland; C.A. Spradlin of Chickasha; Roy Moody of Tulsa, and Finis Steelman of Davis, all board members.

The men all were members of the subcommittee of the board of directors which dealt with Gritz' termination.

Gritz' suit claims the six defendants spoke, published and circulated information alleging him to be "a very sick man."

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Parks Meets, Commends
Zimbabwe Leader Mugabe

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
8/29/80

WASHINGTON (BP)--Among the many tributes paid Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert G. Mugabe during his recent two-day visit to the United States was a word of commendation and thanks from Southern Baptist leader R. Keith Parks for the continued presence of Southern Baptist missionaries in the newly independent African nation.

Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, accepted a White House invitation to appear at a formal ceremony and reception honoring the 56-year-old Mugabe in order to thank him for "the continuing opportunity to serve the people of Zimbabwe."

"I appreciate his emphasis on reconciliation, peace and democracy and the desire of the leaders of Zimbabwe to move ahead in a constructive way," Parks said. Mugabe, whose revolutionary forces ousted the white apartheid government of former Prime Minister Ian Smith earlier this year, has been hailed in the international community for the magnanimity shown to defeated foes in what formerly was Rhodesia.

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Parks also presented Mugabe with a letter welcoming him to the United States, expressing gratitude for the "privilege to serve the people of Zimbabwe," reviewing the kinds of ministries engaged in by Southern Baptists in the nation, and extending the African leader an invitation to board headquarters in Richmond, Va.

"Contacts with world leaders," Parks told Baptist Press, "will enhance the chances of preaching the gospel. In this case, as in all others, we are motivated by spiritual and not political goals."

Southern Baptists currently have 47 missionaries stationed in Zimbabwe.

Parks noted that throughout the Mugabe-led revolution, "our people stayed," although some were forced to leave localized pockets during heavy fighting. That approach of staying even during political and military strife "represents our approach to missions," Parks said. "We have a spiritual mission to serve the people, to meet the needs of the people."

During the half-hour White House ceremony, both President Carter and Mugabe heaped praise on one another. Mugabe made a special point of thanking the president for resisting efforts in Congress last year to suspend economic sanctions imposed earlier against the Smith regime and for persuading many Americans of the justice of the revolution's cause.

Declaring that he had been "conquered" and "overwhelmed" by the spontaneous welcome he received during two days of feverish activities in New York and Washington, Mugabe thanked Carter and the American people for coming to Zimbabwe's aid "in our hour of need."

During his New York stop, Mugabe witnessed his nation's admission as the 153rd member of the United Nations and addressed the international body's General Assembly.

Mugabe characterized his revolution as one taken up reluctantly in seeking the overthrow of an "evil system" he called "racialism." "A society which divides itself...on the basis of race is anathema to humanity," he said.

Taking up arms was a step to achieve the "principle of a democratic society," he went on. "We had to resort to war to bring about peace. You had done it here with pride," he said in a reference to the U.S. Revolutionary War, "and we felt we could do it with pride."

For his part, Carter praised Mugabe's "wisdom and courage," adding the new African leader already is a "notable world leader."

Noting the parallel between black Rhodesians' pursuit of justice and that sought by America's blacks, Carter said, "You are the kind of person who rejects authority when observance of the status quo impedes progress."

Carter observed also that although Zimbabwe has seen "too much bloodshed, too much deprivation," the first months of Mugabe's rule "inspire confidence, unity and hope."

'Church Plan' Amendment
Will Likely Pass Congress

WASHINGTON (BP)--Pension legislation containing a "church plan" amendment which allows denominational workers and missionaries to participate in denominational retirement plans will go to a conference committee when Congress reconvenes after its Labor Day recess.

H.R. 3904, which amends the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), has gained overwhelming approval in both houses since a "church plan" amendment pushed by Sen. Herman E. Talmadge, D-Ga., was added in the Senate Finance Committee.

After the House agreed Aug. 25 to the Senate version of the bill without three anti-labor Senate amendments, the Senate agreed on the following day to drop the three amendments but added two others with which the House disagreed and requested a conference to resolve the differences.

The Talmadge amendment is not part of the disagreement to be resolved.

Chances for final passage of the bill with the "church plan" amendment appear to be good, according to a spokeswoman for the House Task Force on Welfare and Pension Plans.

"The problems are going to be resolved," she said. "We'll have a bill. It's a question of when."

Without the "church plan" amendment, ERISA would have excluded virtually all denominational workers outside local church ministries from denominational retirement programs by Jan. 1, 1983.

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Korea Crusade Compared
To 'Great Awakenings'

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
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SEOUL, Korea (BP)--"I have never seen anything quite like it," G. William Schweer said after participating in an evangelism crusade here Aug. 12-15.

"I came away convinced God is doing something unusual in Korea," said Schweer, professor of evangelism at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. "It seemed like the Great Awakenings of 1740 and 1800. What is happening in Korea is what many of us have been praying will happen in our own country; a great turning toward God."

Schweer, a former Southern Baptist missionary to Indonesia, was one of 11 Southern Baptists who participated in the crusade, partially sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ, International.

"The crusade was the culmination of a joint venture of more than 90 percent of the Protestant churches of South Korea," said John Jones, director of communication for the San Bernardino, Calif.-based Campus Crusade.

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Organizers estimated 19,000 of the nation's evangelical churches joined to sponsor the event, billed as the 1980 World Evangelization Crusade/Here's Life Korea.

"The crusades were only one part of the overall effort," said Jones, an on-the-spot observer. "The whole effort covered three years. This summer, Korean Christians were trained to share their faith, and a series of Here's Life city campaigns were held."

Southern Baptists were invited to participate by Joon Gon Kim, who headed both the crusade and the Campus Crusade effort. He made the request through Dan Moon, language missions consultant with the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

The invitation reportedly was issued after a Presbyterian missionary told crusade organizers Southern Baptist theology more nearly represents the Korean position than that of any other denominational group.

Among the Southern Baptists who participated were James H. Smith, of Memphis, Tenn., executive director of the Brotherhood Commission; James Irwin of Colorado Springs, Colo., a former Apollo astronaut; John Wright, pastor of First Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark.;

Charles Chaney, of Springfield, director of extension for Illinois Southern Baptists; James Hylton, pastor of Lake Country Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas; Leonard Sanderson, Alexandria, director of evangelism for the Louisiana Baptist Convention; missionary Don Cleo Jones of Seoul, a member of the Korea Baptist Mission;

G. William Schweer, professor of evangelism, and Samuel Tong, professor of Old Testament, both of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., and Ralph Neighbour, pastor of West Memorial Baptist Church, Houston, Texas.

According to officials of the crusade, an aggregate of seven million persons participated in the four-day crusade, including a high attendance night of 2.7 million.

"Crowd estimates are always tricky," said the crusade's Jones. "I do not know if they are entirely accurate, but there were more people there than I have ever seen before in my life."

Jones, a former Tennessee newspaperman serving as a volunteer for the crusade, said a special committee was charged with estimating the size of the crowds.

The committee used two methods for estimating the number of people attending the rally at Yolda Plaza, a former airfield, which is 9/10 of a mile long and 4/10 of a mile wide. The first was a system of grid lines, and the second "judgment and experience" on how many people had attended previous meetings at the site.

"The leaders took the most conservative of the official estimates. There is no way for a mass crowd of this size to be precisely estimated, but I know there were people from horizon to horizon, more people than I've ever seen," Jones added.

Schweer noted he "tends to be skeptical" of the estimates but added he had never seen such crowds of similar size before.

Officials also estimated one million persons made spiritual decisions of some kind during the crusade. Since persons indicating a wish to make decisions were asked to stand, the exact breakdown of what the decisions were was not known, but leaders said they probably were a combination of first-time professions of faith, responses by persons who were not sure of their salvation, decisions to live better lives, surrender to missions and desire to support the ongoing work of the church.

Hylton also questioned the accuracy of the estimates and added: "Decisions might have been 700,000 to a million. I tend to discount numbers estimates. But, even if it was half the estimate, it is still an incredible response to the preaching of the gospel."

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More Volunteers Needed
For Repairs on Barbados

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8/29/80

FORTESCUE, Barbados (BP)--More volunteers than originally estimated will be needed to repair hurricane damage to the Baptist college on Barbados, according to James W. Cecil, volunteer service overseas consultant for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

When Hurricane Allen struck the Caribbean resort island Aug. 3, the only major damage was believed to be the roof of the Baptist Theological College for the Caribbean in St. Phillip.

However, later inspections revealed the building's contents and interior also were heavily damaged.

Cecil said volunteer teams of six members each, working one- to two-week periods, will be needed at the school for the next five to eight weeks. Volunteers with carpentry and general masonry skills are especially needed.

Anyone interested in participating in the Southern Baptist Disaster Response Ministry on Barbados should contact Cecil at the Foreign Mission Board, Box 6597, Richmond, Va., 23230.

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New Albany Revival
Continues to Astound

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
8/29/80

NEW ALBANY, Ind. (BP)—On Aug. 27 Graceland Avenue Baptist Church started week 15 of a four-day revival meeting. No end is in sight.

When revivalist Jim Hylton, pastor of Lake Country Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, approached the end of a revival week that began May 18, Graceland asked him to continue another week because the response had been so good.

There was no overflowing attendance. There were no great numbers making professions of faith or other public decisions, although 259 such decisions did occur in the first 14 weeks.

But there was an outpouring of the spirit of God that defied explanation, say church staff members and others involved with the meeting. They speak of deliverance and healing, salvation and a spirit unprecedented in their experience.

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"It's a once in a lifetime experience for me," said Hylton who has become something of a revivalist since 1966 when his church in West Plains, Mo., had a dramatic revival. His wife's astigmatism was healed then, he said, adding he has never publicly invited people to seek healing until the Graceland meeting.

People have come to the meeting from all over the country, as far as California and South Carolina. Many have claimed healing. Fred Hubbs, pastor of Arlington Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Fla., came and says he was healed of constant, excruciating pain that had haunted him for two years.

Hubbs, who suffers from neuropathy and cardiovascular disease affecting the joints and their connecting tissues, says he could hardly walk. He took 100 pain pills a week and wore an electric probe on his back to divert the pain signals from his legs before his brain could register them.

In the pastor's study following services June 19, Hylton and Graceland pastor Elvis Marcum, both friends of Hubbs, and others, laid hands on Hubbs, and prayed for his healing. Since that time he says he has had no pain. He has resumed normal activities and golfed 18 holes on July 4.

"I can't explain it. God just took it (the pain) away," said Hubbs, a former executive director of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Aware that such testimonies of healing are rare in Southern Baptist experience and are often met with skepticism, Hubbs said, "For us to think that God doesn't do it, I don't know, we're strange."

Hubbs and others who have attended the meetings, including Gene Medaris, editor of the Indiana Baptist newspaper, have been impressed at the low-key approach of the principals. There is no "fanfare or hocus pocus" as Hubbs said.

Hylton said he is just "ministering the Word" and preaching Jesus and that this is an example of real revival which is "the Lord himself simply being himself."

"Our churches are in such a state spiritually that the Lord has to purge and cleanse and clarify and that's what he's doing here," Hylton said. Though the public decisions made at the church have not been massive, he said that for weeks, 20 to 50 people each day were accepting Jesus as savior in their homes during visits from church members. Another 300 to 400 young people became Christians during the church's summer camp program.

The meetings are conducted Wednesday through Sunday. Hylton returns to Lake Country for Sunday service and pastor Marcum preaches at Graceland. Hylton said it doesn't matter who the preacher is because the revival is not centered on any personality. The revival continued during a two-week absence when Hylton went to Korea to help conduct a crusade.

Marcum himself testifies to an incident of divine healing. In March 1979 he nearly died from a massive coronary. In August, doctors told him he could qualify for 100 percent disability because three-fourths of his heart was damaged. During a personal retreat, Marcum felt the Lord telling him he could be healed. In December, Marcum's doctor said he could no longer clinically prove that Marcum had even had a heart attack.

Dean Scott, an associate pastor at Graceland, said the revival is "just like what you read about in the book of Acts and in the life of Jesus."

The meeting is scheduled to go through 18 weeks but may continue. "This type of thing may be the beginning of a revival that will spread through Indiana and the midwest," said Hubbs. "I hope so, it's needed."

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Bangladesh Missionaries
Wait, Hope for Registration

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8/29/80

DACCA, Bangladesh (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries in Bangladesh are waiting to see if the government will register them as a foreign group allowed to remain in the country.

"We are fairly confident we will be approved to continue work there," said William R. Wakefield, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for south and southeast Asia. "But some of the groups already approved have been told to reduce their administrative costs. Others have been told to reduce the number of missionary personnel. The possibility of reducing our missionary force poses a serious problem to Southern Baptists' continued effectiveness in the country."

The problem began in 1979 when the Bangladesh government passed an ordinance to regulate the use of foreign money in the country. All "voluntary" organizations were required to submit papers for registration. Although the mission organizations in Bangladesh have banded together to fight their inclusion in the voluntary category, it has been an uphill battle.

Last fall the government interviewed 71 organizations for registration. Most have been informed of their status but some are still pending, according to Jim McKinley, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Bangladesh. "It now appears six foreign missionary organizations of the seven interviewed are being refused registration," he said.

Southern Baptist missionaries had their interview with the government in late June and McKinley said he feels "everything went very well for us." But he also said that even registration apparently does not insure missionaries of longevity in the country. A 31-year veteran Churches of God missionary received a letter in July giving him 24 hours to leave the country. His was the one mission group registered.

McKinley praised the U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh for their help and said officials there have promised to stand with Southern Baptists in appeals for reconsideration of registration or time extensions, should they be necessary.

He also requested that Southern Baptists write to the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, D.C., asking if the mandatory registration is simply a ploy to remove Christians from the country and if Bangladesh is moving in the same direction as Iran and in line with the Khomeini government.

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Wake Up! America Meet
Draws Capacity Crowds

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TULSA, Okla. (BP)— The "Wake Up! America" conference, co-sponsored by the Tulsa Baptist Association and the James Robison Evangelistic Association, drew capacity crowds for its two-night run in Tulsa's Eastwood Baptist Church.

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The meeting apparently is an outgrowth of the Heart of America Bible Conferences, which had biblical inerrancy as their purpose. The "Wake Up! America" conference included emphases on evangelism and political activism.

The promotional piece for the meeting said it was "affirming the authority of the word of God to strengthen the laymen and churches through evangelism...and preaching the Bible to reach America and save the world."

James T. Draper, immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, and pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, told the 2,000 participants Christians are in a constant struggle.

"The struggle," he said, "is not to let that which we hold in our hands worm its way into our hearts." He characterized first century church members as being devoted to one another. He said, "God never intended that holiness would thrive in isolation. We need each other."

In a second message on political involvement by Christians, Draper said: "For the first time there is a clear, moral distinction between what the people (candidates) are saying." Urging pastors and church members to get involved in the political process, he said: "God can be satisfied with nothing less than the Christian reformation of society as a whole."

Jack Stanton, a professor at Southwest Baptist College in Bolivar, Mo., spoke on the importance of evangelism in the life of the church. He said, "Preaching of the Word is the key to evangelism." He said Christians and churches tend to get involved in many other issues and call it the gospel, but, "to preach the gospel is to preach Jesus Christ." He challenged the audience, "If you say you believe the Bible, do what the Bible says."

Robison, from Hurst, Texas, said, "We need to get people in office who believe in biblical principles and have the competency to lead. I don't believe you are a real American if you have sold your soul to either party. We're trying to get information into the people's hands to tell them what to do."

The bulk of the second afternoon session was devoted to a film on military preparedness and questions and answers with Robison and two Tulsa area political candidates.

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Reagan Pledges Christian
Appointments, Smith Says

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DALLAS (BP)—Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan will name Christians to key positions in his administration if he is elected, a group of Southern Baptist leaders says.

The group, which included Bailey Smith, current president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and immediate past president Adrian Rogers, met privately with Reagan for an half-hour before the candidate addressed the National Affairs Briefing, a conservative religious-political meeting in Dallas.

The private meeting was arranged by Ed McAteer, president of The Roundtable, and sponsor of the public meeting. The Roundtable espouses conservative religious and political causes.

"We had the meeting because I wanted to make sure we touched base on what we were doing and what our purpose was," said McAteer, a member of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., of which Rogers is pastor.

"We also wanted to express to him our concern about the people in public office understanding our positions. We wanted our views represented properly," he added, noting the private meeting did not deal with specific issues, but dealt with matters that were pro-family, moral and "concern the moral and spiritual condition of the country."

The meeting, according to both Smith and McAteer, included the two SBC leaders; McAteer; television evangelist Pat Robertson; Texas evangelist James Robison; Presbyterian pastor James Kennedy of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Houston businessman Bob Perry; former Texas governor John Connally; Ed Rowe, an executive with The Roundtable; Ed Meese, a top Reagan aide; and Bob Billings, an independent Baptist pastor working with the Reagan campaign.

Smith said as Reagan entered the room, Robison met the candidate. Smith quoted the evangelist as saying: "'If we help you get elected, we expect you to appoint qualified Christians to serve in your administration.'"

Both Smith and McAteer said Reagan agreed to consider such individuals for appointment.

Smith added Reagan was asked if he would consider McAteer to serve on the transition committee should he be elected. "Sure," the candidate replied, Smith recalled.

McAteer confirmed the conversation by saying Robison recommended the Memphis conservative for the transition committee, which works to help a president-elect set up his administration.

"Mr. Reagan agreed I would be acceptable," McAteer said. "I took it as a promise he would appoint me. I can't say I'm appointed, but I feel comfortable the communication was clear. He (Reagan) is a man of his word."

The former marketing expert with Colgate added: "I think at least I will be considered."

McAteer emphasized repeatedly the National Affairs Briefing was not a religious pep rally for Reagan. "We are staying with principles and issues, not with personalities. We are not endorsing nor opposing candidates for political office," he said.

He did say of Reagan: "My feeling is that he is in sympathy with what we are in sympathy with."

McAteer underlined the purpose of the briefing: "I am classified by others as conservative. I unequivocally believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, the sovereignty of God, the divinity of Jesus Christ. I believe in limited constitutional government, in the principles on which our nation was founded.

"The biggest problem we face (as a nation) is not primarily political, economic or military. Those things are results of the problem. Our problem is a moral and spiritual problem. I came to that conclusion not by reading the newspapers and news magazines; I came to it by reading the Bible."

He added he believes the United States "has lost its character. We must restore its character. The only thing that will do that is a spiritual awakening, not a political awakening."

"This is not a political movement. This is a spiritual movement," he said.