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85-20

Reagan Defends Citing Bible
To Justify Arms Increases

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Reagan has defended his use of a passage in Luke's gospel to justify the nation's arms build-up and denied he uses the Bible for political ends.

Asked during the first news conference of his new term about some theologians' criticism of his use of Luke 14:31-32 as scriptural sanction for U.S. military budget increases in a Feb. 4 appearance before the National Religious Broadcasters convention here, Reagan replied: "Well...I checked that with a few theologians...and they seemed to think that it was perfectly fitting, yes."

He added his use of the Luke passage "was a caution to those people in our own country who would, if given the opportunity, unilaterally disarm us."

When asked if he had "any problem with using the Bible in a political context," Reagan answered: "Well, I don't think I've ever used the Bible to further political ends...but I've found that the Bible contains an answer to just about everything and every problem that confronts us, and I wonder sometimes why we don't recognize that one book could solve a lot of problems for us."

Some Baptist leaders were among those criticizing Reagan's use of the Luke passage, including Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs Executive Director James M. Dunn and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary ethics professor Glen H. Stassen.

"It is always dangerous to take scripture out of context," Dunn told Baptist Press. "Mr. Reagan is following bad advice. The same chapter he cited also says, 'When thou makest a feast, call the poor.'"

Dunn added Billy Graham "deals with scriptural judgments more competently" when the noted evangelist said: "To tie the Gospel to any political system, secular program, or society is wrong and will only serve to divert the Gospel. The Gospel transcends the goals and methods of any political system or any society, however good it may be."

Stassen, a leading Southern Baptist specialist on war and peace issues, urged Baptists to read the Luke passage for themselves. The text quoted by the President reads: "Or what king, going to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace."

That passage, Stassen said, "says a sensible ruler who sees that a war will lead to the destruction of his people will negotiate in a realistic way that leads to peace."

"We, the American and Russian people, are in precisely the situation Jesus is speaking of," Stassen continued. "In an age of nuclear overkill and nuclear winter, a war will lead to our destruction. Jesus is saying we should negotiate in a realistic way that leads to peace."

Stassen further asserted "to use this passage to justify a political position that we should escalate a very costly and dangerous nuclear buildup that has caused the Soviet Union to reject U.S. negotiating positions is to do the opposite of what Jesus is teaching."

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"I think Jesus is telling President Reagan he and we need to be willing to give up some things if we are going to be his disciples," he added. "That may include giving up a determination not to cut a single nuclear weapon from the budget. It may also include giving up characterizing the alternative to his position as unilateral, when the alternative most advocated is a bilateral freeze."

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Editorial Guidelines

Balanced, Biblical, Elder Says

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press

2/25/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Editorial guidelines on ordination of women recently adopted by the trustees of the Baptist Sunday School Board will result in a balanced, biblical treatment of ordination, along with continued affirmation of the contributions of women to the cause of Christ, according to board president Lloyd Elder.

"We're going to stay in the mainstream of Southern Baptists. We're going to stay with Scripture as our authority," said Elder.

The guidelines adopted by the trustees early in February emphasize "ordination of deacons and ministers is a matter completely under the authority of the local congregation" and the board will "continue to affirm and encourage the biblical and historic contribution of women to the cause of Christ."

The guidelines state that in church literature and Convention Press products, "the issue will be dealt with factually and fairly with neither point being ignored or disparaged."

Elder emphasized ordination of women will not be dealt with on a frequent basis because it is not dealt with often in the Scriptures.

Acknowledging ordination of women as ministers or deacons is a subject about which Southern Baptists disagree, Elder said the largest number of Baptists have no church experience with ordained women.

"While there are differences of opinion about ordination of women, I maintain there is little difference in the mainstream of Southern Baptists about the role of women in service to Christ." Elder hopes the current discussion concerning ordination of women will lead to a larger look at the whole issue of ordination in the denomination.

"I am only one of many who believe we need to look at the total view of ordination of ministers and deacons, men and women, and do so in light of Scripture and history," he said.

In applying the guidelines, Elder said he expects occasional disagreement with articles, but the overall goal will always be a balanced, fair treatment of the subject.

He noted articles will be released in the next year which were developed before the guidelines were adopted. He cited the February 1985 issue of The Student magazine with articles on the theme, "The Bible and Women," for which planning was begun in September 1983.

"There are several articles within the issue presenting biblical, historical and personal insights with which most Southern Baptists would agree," said Elder. However, he added, "By the very selection of articles and viewpoints presented, the issue as a whole does not reflect a balanced and fair treatment of related, diverse viewpoints within the denomination nor seem to be sensitive to the divisiveness of these matters."

Overall, Elder said the goal in implementing the guidelines is to consistently interpret and apply the Scriptures in a way which is helpful to the largest number of Southern Baptists. When questions arise, he said, Southern Baptists should express their concerns to us and continue to trust their Sunday School Board.

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Report Says Church
Extension Successful

By Michael Tuttor

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptists have shown responsible stewardship in starting new missions, but unless the denomination supports missions to full maturity, new church starts "may be destined to failure," warned a researcher at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Rudee Devon Boan, associate director of the planning and services research department for the board, studied the board's church extension budgets from 1974 through 1983 and gathered a census of church extension missionaries for the same period.

Boan noted during the study period new mission starts grew at almost the same pace as did the number of missionaries and money allocated to church extension.

The number of missionaries grew from 521 to 1,475 while the number of mission starts grew from 487 in 1974 to 1,334 in 1983.

Boan noted figures for missions and mission starts represented the "total effort of Southern Baptists and not merely the figures reported by the board's church extension division." The figures included work from language missions, state conventions and individual churches which started missions, he explained.

The study was designed to evaluate church extension efforts in light of denominational missions strategy, Boan said. The Southern Baptist Convention has set a goal to have 50,000 churches by the turn of the century. Currently there are 36,740 SBC churches with 14.3-million members.

The increase in the number of missions between 1974-83 at least partially can be traced to a redefinition of "church-type mission" on the denomination's 1982 Uniform Church Letter in which SBC churches reported their statistics, Boan observed.

Boan said the change made the figures on the church letter reports inconsistent for 1982 and 1983. A more accurate percentage increase would be about 86.1 percent, rather than the unadjusted rate of 173.9 percent, he said.

In contrast, the level of growth in the board's church extension budget, when adjusted for inflation, grew at only 32.1 percent from 1974 to 1983, the report noted.

Boan added the figures show church extension efforts appear more effective than in 1974, with three times the number of missionaries starting three times the number of missions with only one and one-third the buying power.

"The very close similarity between increases in actual dollars spent, missionaries and mission starts indicates that mission monies continue to be spent as prudently today as in 1974," Boan said. "If the report suggests anything, it is that shortcomings cannot be attributed to lack of effort or stewardship. Dollar for dollar, mission money is buying as much today as it did in 1974."

Boan also noted the close relationship between the number of missionaries, mission starts and actual dollars spent suggests "the number of missions Southern Baptists can birth is related to the number of missionaries and dollars allocated to it."

The fact missions also grow only in relationship to the amount of financial support suggests without adequate funds, missions may have difficulty maturing, said Boan. He also noted new churches and missions increased only as fast as funds enabled them to grow. He suggested inadequate funding would stunt growth of existing missions and new churches.

Boan said while the number of church extension missionaries has grown since 1974, support in adjusted dollars increased by only one-third. In other words, the amount of money in 1974 dollars currently being spent per missionary is barely \$2,000, or less than half the \$4,336 per missionary spent in 1974.

"This figure does not necessarily mean each missionary today has only one-half the purchasing power as a 1974 missionary," said Boan, "but it does portray the fact that our 1983 mission force is given only one-half the support of the 1974 mission force. Without an increase in local or outside financial support, the constant increase in missionary personnel without an accompanying increase in real dollars for support (purchasing power) hangs a Damoclean sword over the home mission effort of Southern Baptists."

He added when dollars spent are adjusted for inflation, financial support for operating missions "is revealed to have declined by 30 percent" since 1974. "Clearly, support for church extension, when adjusted for inflation, has lagged behind the commitment of men and women to missions and the growth of church-type missions.

Despite the shortage of funds, said Boan, Southern Baptists can expect to see the number of new churches constituted in a ten-year period to equal only about one-half the number of new missions started during the same period. The other half, he lamented, eventually will be lost.

"While this, too, is preliminary, it should raise red flags to the idea of unrestrained mission starts," warned Boan. "New churches and mature missions can only grow as fast as real (adjusted for inflation) financial support grows."

While the data shows Southern Baptists to be responsible stewards of church extension monies, said Boan, the denomination faces the challenge of channeling more funds into church extension efforts in order to insure successful growth for future church starts.

"If inflation weathers the foundation of our desire for missions, our lighthouse may not long survive," Boan predicted. "If Southern Baptists' efforts rise to match their vision—with both money and personnel—then church starting will lead the denomination to fulfill its challenge of Bold Mission Thrust," he concluded.

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BJCPA Affirmed; New SBC
Washington Office Nixed

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
2/25/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The establishment of a Southern Baptist Convention Public Affairs Office in Washington "does not appear practicable," according to a study conducted by the SBC Executive Committee.

During its February meeting, the Executive Committee adopted a recommendation affirming the SBC's "historic relationship to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs" and report to the SBC annual meeting in June that establishment of an office "exclusively related to the SBC does not appear practicable."

The study was sparked by a motion presented at the 1984 annual meeting in Kansas City, Mo., to "move to establish a Southern Baptist presence in Washington to address public and governmental affairs...." The motion was referred to the Executive Committee, which is required to study the matter and report to the 1985 annual meeting.

In presenting the recommendation to affirm the continuation of SBC involvement with the BJCPA, Malcolm Jones of Baltimore, said establishment of a SBC office in Washington "would be very costly, both in startup and operation."

Jones, chairman of the commissions workgroup of the Executive Committee, said the SBC was instrumental in founding BJCPA, adding the "combined efforts of the SBC and the BJCPA has been very effective in matters of separation of church and state and religious liberty."

The action to affirm BJCPA and to report establishment of an SBC office was "not practicable," was opposed by Ed Drake, an attorney from Dallas. Drake, although a member of the Executive Committee, proposed defunding BJCPA during the 1984 annual meeting.

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While affirming BJCPA in its First Amendment efforts, Drake said there are a "great host" of other issues "such as homosexuality and abortion" not covered by the BJCPA purpose. He said the SBC is the only major religious group not to have its own presence in the nation's capitol.

Drake complained "most" of the other eight Baptist groups affiliated with the joint committee "are members of the National Council of Churches...which marches to a different beat from Southern Baptists." Representatives of BJCPA, however, report only two of the eight member bodies--the American Baptist Churches and the Progressive National Baptist Convention--are NCC members. The other six are not.

Drake also criticized James M. Dunn, executive director of BJCPA, claiming Dunn "is no longer effective" in representing Southern Baptists.

After Drake's opposition, the Executive Committee adopted the recommendation on a voice vote. Some observers said it carried by at least a 3-to-1 margin.

During its February meeting, the Executive Committee:

--Declined to recommend a change in the number of trustees serving on the 20 national agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention:

--Reported a study has determined trustees of the six SBC seminaries are elected by the SBC exclusively;

--Accepted Atlanta as the site for the 1991 annual meeting, even though the dates of June 4-6 are earlier than usual;

--Determined two former SBC-operated hospitals--Baptist Medical Center in Jacksonville, Fla., and Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans--are "continuing to operate as Baptist oriented...institutions consistent with the divestiture action" in 1970.

--Elected Mrs. O.D. Lambirth, a member of First Baptist Church, Elida, N.M., to the 1985 SBC committee on boards, replacing Rebecca Jean Wolfe, who became ineligible after accepting church-related employment.

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Mrs. J.D. Grey, 79,
Dies In New Orleans

Baptist Press
2/25/85

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Mrs. J.D. (Lillian) Grey, 79, wife of a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, died Feb. 23 in New Orleans after a lengthy illness.

She had been married to Grey, president of the SBC in 1951-52, for 57 years. They had twin daughters, Mary Beth and Martha Ann, and three grandsons. Grey is pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church of New Orleans.

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