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**NATIONAL OFFICE**

SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Wilmer C. Fields, Director  
Dan Martin, News Editor  
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201-3355, Telephone (214) 720-0550  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300  
**RICHMOND** (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3805 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

February 20, 1986

86-21

'Don't Be Diverted,'  
Lawyer Tells Baptists

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptists were urged "not to be diverted" from their task of presenting the Good News of Jesus Christ because twin lawsuits have been filed against the Southern Baptist Convention.

James P. Guenther, attorney for the SBC and its Executive Committee, made the remark during the February meeting of the Executive Committee as he reported on lawsuits filed in federal and state courts in Atlanta by nine laypersons concerning events at the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC in Dallas.

"I urge you not to be diverted by this case," Guenther told the 69-member committee. "While I take this case as seriously as any for which I have ever had responsibility and while it represents a case of grave importance in the history of church-state relations in this democracy, this case is, in the context of what Southern Baptists are about, a mere flash in the pan."

Guenther, of the Nashville lawfirm of Guenther and Jordan, along with former U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell of the Atlanta lawfirm of King and Spaulding, is defending the SBC and Executive Committee in the two courts.

"Let the lawyers man the judicial battlements," Guenther told Executive Committee members. Then, he said, "you may continue the focus of your prayers, your wisdom and your efforts on the real needs of our convention, seeking new commitments to old truths, growing tolerant and exhibiting fairness, adding breadth to minds and size to hearts, discovering humility in servanthood and concentrating on becoming radical disciples of a radical Savior in a world in desperate need of his good news."

In contrast to the September meeting of the Executive Committee--when a two-hour executive session was held--Guenther reported on the suits in open session. In September, two of the plaintiffs--Robert S. and Julia Crowder of Birmingham, Ala., and their attorney, Emmet J. Bondurant of Atlanta--appeared at the meeting to discuss their grievances.

On Dec. 5, the Crowders and Henry Cooper of Windsor, Mo., filed suit in federal court in Atlanta. In January, a Vero Beach, Fla., layman, H. Allan McCartney, joined them.

On Jan. 23, a parallel suit was filed in Superior Court of Fulton County, Ga., by five laypersons from five states: Katherine F. White of Atlanta; Lucy Azlin of Alexandria, La.; Betty Ann L. Upshaw of Winston-Salem, N.C.; and brothers Terry Black of Louisville, Ky., and Jim B. Black of Lewisville, Texas.

Both suits seek to have the convention bylaws interpreted, to declare the election of the 1986 Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees declared invalid, to rule that SBC President Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta violated the bylaws with rulings at the 1985 annual meeting and to enjoin the SBC and Executive Committee from "further violations" of the bylaws during the 1986 annual meeting in Atlanta.

Guenther told committee members he and the other five attorneys involved will "defend the convention and this Executive Committee with whatever professional skill we can muster. But, more importantly, we will defend this case as Christ's church ought.

"With all our might," he said, "we will fight any intrusion of government into the ecclesiastical governance of the Southern Baptist Convention."

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES**  
Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Nashville, Tennessee

"As your attorneys, we intend to defend this case with integrity and in keeping with who Southern Baptists are. The church has no role model in civil litigation. We will seek to win this case in the common, ordinary, secular meaning of winning lawsuits. And in the process we will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," he said.

"We will be true to our polity and our self-understanding. We will not in the midst of controversy with a few messengers demean the high office of messenger. In debating over the legal significance of the financial contributions of these plaintiffs, we will not betray the fundamental principles upon which the Cooperative Program (unified giving method) is based."

Guenther told committee members the defense "is simply dictated by the facts" and said the defense will be that the plaintiffs "have not suffered the \$10,000 damages necessary for the controversy to be tried in federal court" and on First Amendment grounds.

He noted the events of the 1985 annual meeting are "on film for anyone to see. Our legal instruments and our history of their interpretation are matters of record."

Ultimately, he said, "either in federal or state court, the fundamental defense...will be that no civil court has the power to decide disputes which are, as the United States Supreme Court has said, 'strictly and purely ecclesiastical in character.' The court's lack of power is an essential attribute of the religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment."

Guenther said the election of the 1986 Committee on Boards "was one of a series of votes in the Southern Baptist Convention in recent years which can only be significant to those of us within the four walls of the church. The theological controversy within the convention and the struggle for control of agencies...give the only meaning to those votes. These are religious disputes involving ecclesiastical but not civil rights."

Spelling out that under the SBC system, "the messengers control by majority vote," Guenther said the "duly elected president...interpreted the bylaws, messengers elected the Committee on Boards by a majority vote and then voted to quit talking about it."

He noted the Executive Committee had an action to recommend new wording to Bylaw 16 concerning election of the Committee on Boards on its agenda for the meeting. The new wording would "make perfectly clear that nominations from the floor" may be made.

That action will be presented to messengers at the 1986 annual meeting for their action. "Thus," Guenther said, "the proper forum for this controversy is the Atlanta convention center and not the Atlanta courthouse."

The SBC "acknowledges no government to be superior to the convention. The convention is in no way dependent upon a grant of privilege or authority from any government. The sovereignty of the Southern Baptist Convention over its affairs is the exercise of a right the roots of which long predated the Constitution of the United States and its Bill of Rights," he said.

"The authority for the religious sovereignty which we claim is not given us by the First Amendment....Instead, the pre-existing right is celebrated by the First Amendment...."

Guenther said: "While Southern Baptists of late have talked more about our diversity than we have talked about our cooperation, Southern Baptists are as likely to agree on this one thing as on anything else. Fundamentalists, liberals, moderates, conservatives, whatever their label, Southern Baptists believe their problems must be solved by Southern Baptists within the four walls of the church and not by government intervention."

The plaintiffs "have solicited high and low for Southern Baptists to join their ranks" but "their number is nine. The identifiable leadership of both sides and the middle in the Southern Baptist controversy have rejected out-of-hand the plaintiffs' resort to the courts," he said.

Guenther added: "If reconciliation within our fellowship is to be found, it must be the result of tolerance and forgiveness and love for each other.

"We know it will not come by Caesar's decree."

Controversial Bylaw  
Changes Recommended

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Messengers to the 1986 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention will be asked to make changes in a controversial bylaw when they meet June 10-12 in Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

Bylaw 16, which concerns the election of the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees, and its interpretation by SBC President Charles F. Stanley, is at the center of a continuing controversy which erupted during the 1985 annual meeting in Dallas.

During the Dallas meeting, Stanley, on advice of parliamentarian Wayne Allen of Memphis, Tenn., ruled the report of the Committee on Committees nominating the 52-members of the Committee on Boards could not be amended by nominations from the floor. The ruling set off near-pandemonium at the convention and has resulted in the filing of twin lawsuits in federal and state courts in Atlanta.

During its February meeting, the SBC Executive Committee adopted a recommendation from its bylaws workgroup which would change the wording of the bylaw to allow nominations from the floor, but would prevent the nomination of an alternate slate of candidates.

Under the change, the Committee on Boards will continue to be nominated by the Committee on Committees, but two sentences are added: "Further nominations may be made from the floor. No messenger shall be allowed to nominate more than one person at one time for election to the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees."

During the discussion, Bylaws Workgroup Chairman John Sullivan of Shreveport, La., said the workgroup asked convention attorney James P. Guenther "to come up with language to bring our bylaw into conformity with Robert's Rules of Order. We feel this (the proposal) is the clearest language we could find."

Sullivan said he agrees with the prohibition against the nomination of alternate slates and noted the workgroup "does not see this as impeding the process of democracy, but as involving more people." He added, "I have been quoted as saying I did not want someone from Virginia nominating somebody from Louisiana (to the Committee on Boards). That is right, but I would say the same thing about Texas or Oklahoma or Arkansas and every other state."

The former two-term first vice president of the SBC told committee members the 1986 Committee on Order of Business has agreed to schedule discussion of revisions to Bylaw 16 on the annual meeting program in advance of the report of the Committee on Committees.

Committee member Dewey Presley of Dallas proposed a substitute to the workgroup's recommendation, noting he sees "potential problems... (because) different criteria have been set up for the two nominating committees" of the convention (the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Boards).

He said efforts have been made "to get uniformity in our bylaws. Lack of uniformity... creates great problems in an institution."

Presley's amendment used identical wording to that currently in the rules concerning the report of the Committee on Boards. It says, in part: The report (of the Committee on Committees) may be amended on the floor of the convention by a majority vote of those voting...."

During discussion on Presley's suggestion, Paul Pressler of Houston opposed the substitute, noting the bylaws workgroup "considered all alternatives and worked quite at length" to come up with the workgroup suggestion.

Dotson Nelson from Birmingham, Ala., noting he favored Presley's suggestion, said: "I feel strongly that in our setup as a convention we have to depend on the president to make the ruling. I happen to think he made a ruling that was obviously wrong. I don't think we are going to correct it, but I do think we ought to try."

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Ed Drake of Dallas praised the work "and long hours" of the workgroup and opposed Presley's amendment, saying "slates are not desirable. There is a tremendous danger in slates."

Sullivan said he "does not see any other way" except the workgroup recommendation "to guarantee there will not be (alternate) slates. Some have objected because one-by-one nominations will take too much time. We were not asked to (consider time and) be the Committee on Order of Business. We were asked to clarify a bylaw."

Presley's amendment was voted down 34 to 23, with five abstentions, according to secretary Lois Wenger of Orlando, Fla.

The workgroup recommendation was amended by member Wallace E. Jones of Bridgeton, Mo., to add the words "at one time" to the second sentence, making it read: "No messenger shall be allowed to nominate more than one person at one time for election to the Committee on Boards...."

Jones explained the intent of the motion was to allow a messenger to make a nomination "and then be able to go to the back of the line" to wait a turn to make another nomination.

Jones' amendment passed 28 to 24 for 10 abstentions, Wenger said.

After the discussion, Drake moved to table the recommendation "because of the close division" on the two amendments. Although it was seconded, the motion received only one vote.

The recommendation passed with only two negative votes.

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L.L. Collins, Arkansas  
Associate Executive Director, Dies

Baptist Press  
2/20/86

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--L.L. Collins, associate executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, died Feb. 18 in St. Joseph's Hospital, in Fort Worth, Texas, of complications after a stroke.

Collins, who joined the state convention staff in 1981, was attending Scholars' Week at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth when he was hospitalized with a bladder infection Saturday, Feb. 15. He had the stroke Monday, Feb. 17, while still in the hospital.

Collins, a Texas native, was a graduate of Jacksonville (Texas) Baptist College; Baylor University in Waco, Texas; and Southwestern seminary, where he earned the master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees.

He was as pastor of churches in Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma prior to joining the faculty of Southwestern seminary in 1973. He was director of admissions and registrar at the seminary 1974-1981. After the death of Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Secretary Huber L. Drumright in 1981, Collins was interim executive secretary for one year.

Surviving Collins are his wife, Cleo, of Little Rock; two daughters, Debra Lee Parker of Marietta, Ga., and Sharon Kay Fox of Port Arthur, Texas; one son, Leo Bryan Collins of Houston; and two grandchildren.

Funeral services were held at South Hills Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and a memorial service will be held at Calvary Baptist Church, Little Rock. The family has requested memorials be made to the Scholarship Fund at Southwestern seminary or a memorial fund established by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

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Frank Hart Smith:  
Life Is What Counts

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
2/20/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--You might expect someone with a nickname like Pogo to come jumping out at you with a fire-and-brimstone handshake.

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But not Frank Hart Smith.

Smith skips the handshake and demurely ushers visitors into his office, offering a choice of two antiquated rockers, both with obvious sentimental value.

A 24-year veteran of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church recreation department, Smith relaxes, leans back and props his feet on his memorabilia-filled desk. At 5 feet 4 inches, that is no easy task.

Smith's dimly-lit office literally is a montage of old photographs, drawings, cartoons and slogans.

But the character which stands out most is Smith's nick-namesake, Pogo, a cartoon personality Smith admires because of his philosophies like, "That's enough to drive a man to think," or "We have met our enemy, and he is us."

"Pogo has a pretty good philosophy of life," Smith acknowledges.

But Pogo, the cartoon character, is not the only one with an admirable philosophy on life. Pogo, the man, also views the world with a rare maturity.

"I don't take anything for granted. Every experience is precious," Smith says. "Just the idea of getting up in the morning is exciting to me."

If Smith sounds like a man who has tasted death, that's because he has.

Eleven years ago, Smith had a newly-discovered intestinal bypass operation, designed to help trim off some of his excess weight. Smith weighed 280 pounds, and although his doctors told him he wasn't in bad health, they feared he was approaching that state.

The operation achieved its purpose, and Smith is now a slender 150 pounds. But six years after the operation, he experienced kidney failure. Beginning last August he started dialysis treatment three hours a day, three days a week.

Doctors are unsure if the operation caused his kidneys to fail, Smith says. But several patients who had the intestinal bypass operation later developed kidney failure.

But Smith spends no time lamenting over his predicament. "The operation was new, and doctors didn't know about the side effects," he says. "I'm just happy I can go through dialysis and be good as new.

"Twenty years ago we didn't even have dialysis machines. Where would I be now?" he shrugs.

Smith, a sponsor of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Vanderbilt University, says he considers the nine hours a week he spends on dialysis "a gift of time."

On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons while on dialysis, he spends his time working for the board "because they've been so good to me." On Saturday mornings, he studies his Sunday school lesson.

"I teach college freshmen at my church (Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville), so the first thing I do on Saturdays is my Sunday school lesson.

"I know I wait kind of late, but..." his voice trails.

When Smith isn't writing speeches, working for the board or studying his Sunday morning lesson, he sneaks in a mystery novel or two.

Because Smith took his kidney failure so matter-of-factly, his doctors have asked him several times to go to the hospital and talk to new patients with the same problem.

"One man was just so active, and he knew his life was over. He was so discouraged. But I told him how I travel all the time, and all of the sudden, he changed," Smith relates.

He explains he can hook up to a dialysis machine wherever he travels just by making advance appointments with the local center.

Smith says he believes one should learn from a crippling illness.

"Material things are just not important. Life and living is all that counts."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by BSSB bureau of Baptist Press

Southern Baptists Make Progress  
During Past Year, Patterson Says

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
2/20/86

DALLAS (BP)—By acknowledging theological differences between opposing factions in their convention, Southern Baptists have made substantial progress in the last year toward solving their problems, said fundamental-conservative leader Paige Patterson said.

Patterson offered that evaluation during a question-and-answer session on convention issues that opened the 1986 "School of the Prophets" Feb. 17 at First Baptist Church of Dallas.

"I am tremendously encouraged by the progress made by the (Southern Baptist Convention) Peace Committee," said Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies. The undergraduate arm of the center, Criswell Bible College, co-sponsors, along with First Baptist of Dallas, the annual "School of the Prophets" seminar in church dynamics.

Characterizing as "forthright" and "frank" the Peace Committee's discussions, Patterson said, "Though the consequences are not altogether apparent, the committee seems to have reached agreement that there are substantive theological problems."

Differences center on the "Baptist Faith and Message" Article One, dealing with the Scriptures, he said. He encouraged seminary professors, in particular, to avoid semantic games and forthrightly accept or deny biblical inerrancy.

"Everybody ought to declare himself," he said. "Southern Baptists ought to be able to know where every professor stands on the factual accuracy of Scripture."

Patterson dealt primarily with the six seminaries directly operated by the Southern Baptist Convention. However, in answer to a question about colleges and universities controlled by state conventions, Patterson said that Southern Baptists should be alert to any attempts to surrender control and ownership of Baptist schools.

"There is no governance relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention and these schools, but many do receive Cooperative Program funds that come from Southern Baptist churches through the state offices and to the schools. There is a pipeline relationship," he said.

Patterson added he could not accept entirely the argument that colleges and universities are strictly investigative institutions, not tools of indoctrination. "As Baptists, we don't have any business doing anything in which we don't indoctrinate, whether it's our schools or our Baptist hospitals or whatever," he said.

In response to a question concerning reporting of the convention controversy by the denominational press, Patterson replied that, with a few exceptions, articles had been slanted and biased against the fundamental-conservatives.

"I would say that press coverage has been nearly four times more fair in the secular press than in the denominational press," he answered. "Too often the denominational writer has a position to defend."

When asked who the candidates for Southern Baptist Convention president would be in 1986, Patterson said that no one formally had agreed to be nominated.

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However, he noted it appeared Winfred Moore, first vice president of the convention and pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, would be the moderate-conservatives' candidate, and Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., had been mentioned as the fundamental-conservatives' candidate.

"Many of us would like to see him (Rogers) go again; there's no secret about that," said Patterson, although he noted Rogers had not yet agreed to allow his name to be presented as a candidate.

Terming the 1986 Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta "the most important ever," Patterson encouraged the pastors in attendance to send to the next convention every messenger to which their churches are entitled.

Patterson he had not been surprised by the moderate-conservatives' strength at the Dallas convention, but he suggested that one reason was the large concentration of messengers "drawing denominational paychecks." He claimed that at the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City, 17 percent of persons present were denominational employees, many of whom "were there on Cooperative Program expense accounts."

He was asked to comment on recent remarks by two fundamental-conservative pastors in Florida who indicated their churches would send as messengers only those persons who would vote as the pastor would. He replies he did not believe pastors should instruct messengers how to vote.

However, he said that type of instruction is usually unnecessary, because most churches with which he is acquainted follow their pastoral leadership.

"If the pastor is preaching right in the pulpit week after week, he won't have to instruct the messengers," he said.

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Taiwan Mayor Honors  
Missionary Angie Golmon

By Burton Cook

Baptist Press  
2/20/86

TAIPEI, Taiwan (BP)--The mayor of Taipei has honored Southern Baptist missionary Angie Golmon for her ministry to teen-aged prostitutes, orphans and the elderly.

Golmon, a Jackson, Tenn., native, received the Golden Camel Award from Taipei Mayor Hsu Shwei-De in recent ceremonies in Taipei, the nation's capital. Some 3,000 guests assembled at the Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall to honor her and 19 other men and women involved in government and private social service. Golmon and a Spanish Catholic nurse were the only non-Chinese honorees in the group.

The awards were presented for only the second time, Hsu said.

"Camels are of nondescript outward appearance but are known for their inner strength, perseverance and ability to suffer under the burdens of others," the mayor observed, holding up one of the camel trophies. "They seek not praise but are faithful in rendering service to others. These are apt descriptions of the actions and motives of those we honor with the Golden Camel Awards today."

The awards, sponsored by the city government and the organization of volunteer social workers in the city, honor individuals nominated by social agencies and encourage public participation in social service. The mayor noted government alone cannot meet all the needs of more than four million people living in the Taipei area, noting all citizens must join in the effort.

The honorees included workers with the mentally ill, the elderly, orphans, prisoners, juvenile delinquents, prostitutes and the poor.

Golmon, the mother of three children, has worked in Taiwan with her husband, music missionary Bob Golmon of Moss Point, Miss., since 1981. For more than three years, she has joined Chinese Baptist women who visit retirement homes and orphanages.

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More recently she began work at a detention home for young girls arrested for prostitution. Beginning with English conversation classes, she has developed relationships with several teen-aged girls, talking and listening. She gives additional time helping those released make a new start in life.

The director and other counselors at the detention center sometimes ask Golmon's help in advising girls with special needs. The missionary also has enlisted the aid of Mrs. Wang, a Chinese Christian psychologist. Wang has become a supporter of the girls and has invited some to live temporarily in her home.

Golmon said she thinks the key to rescuing some of these girls is having a place—a halfway house—where girls released from detention can go. If they go back home or return to the hotels where they worked before, there may be no escape from the same trap, she worried.

Golmon told the story of two Chinese prostitutes named Karen and Cathy, ages 14 and 15, whom she befriended in the detention center. After their release, the girls had no place to go but back to the hotel where they worked before.

One Saturday afternoon the girls called Golmon and asked her to come and see them. Golmon and missionary Nannette Lites located the girls and talked with them. Asked if they would turn their back on prostitution if they could, both girls replied, "Yes, but we have no other place to go." Early Sunday morning Karen called Golmon again, this time in tears.

By Wednesday, Golmon had helped arrange for Karen and Cathy to move into Wang's house. But after three days the girls were gone again. They left most of their things at Wang's, however, and the Christian women hope they will come back.

Perhaps Karen and Cathy chose to be prostitutes, but Sandy's story is different. She was sold by her parents into prostitution. Although she said she wants to leave the hotels, she has to stay. Others like her are there because of family debts. Some girls are actually members of families who operate the hotels. For them it is a business, the only life they have ever known.

In consultation with the Chinese Baptist women and several Baptist pastors, Golmon has developed the idea of a halfway house to help the girls make a transition back into society.

Several Baptist groups are considering this project. So is Taipei's Social Welfare Department. Planners hope the city can provide a facility while Baptists supply the volunteer staff for the halfway house.

The Golmons were appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1971. They studied Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan from 1972 to 1974, then worked in Malaysia and the Philippines before returning to Taiwan in 1981.

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(Burton Cook is a Southern Baptist missionary in Taiwan.)

(BP) photo mailed to Baptist state newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

BJCPA Files Statement  
On Tax Reform Legislation

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press  
2/20/86

WASHINGTON (BP)—In an effort to protect the tax-exempt status of church pension and welfare benefits boards, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has filed a written statement with the U.S. Senate Finance Committee.

Filed in conjunction with five days of hearings held by the Finance Committee on the Tax Reform Act of 1985 (H.R. 3838), the statement proposes deletion or amendment of Section 1012 of the bill. That section calls for stripping the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and other such church boards of their federal tax exemption.

Before taxing of those church boards could begin, however, the bill would have to be passed by the Senate and signed by President Reagan in the same form as it was passed by the House of Representatives in mid-December. Action by the full Senate is not expected until mid-1986.

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In its written statement, the Baptist Joint Committee described church pension and welfare benefits boards as "an integral part of the mission and ministry" of churches since those boards carry out the "churches' spiritual task of providing for their needy and retired ministers and denominational employees." The statement explained that while the boards are incorporated separately to protect employee assets from creditors of other church organizations, that incorporation has little to do with the actual polity or composition of the church.

"Taxation of these church boards is tantamount to taxation of the churches themselves and as such constitutes a radical departure from the traditional interpretation of church-state separation," the statement maintained.

The statement, which also was signed by the Church of the Brethren, outlined prior Supreme Court and congressional positions that supported tax-exempt status for churches and advocated defining the term "church" broadly enough to encompass pension and welfare benefits boards.

In the statement, the Baptist Joint Committee also warned taxation of church boards would require "continual surveillance, monitoring, periodic investigations and audits resulting in an 'impermissible degree' of entanglement" of the federal government in church affairs.

"Perhaps the most compelling reason for exempting church boards from taxation lies in the potential for state regulation or control of religion," the Baptist Joint Committee stated. Apart from its unconstitutionality, the proposed tax reform bill would "undoubtedly engender conflict and confrontation with the churches" and at the very least would "lead to a quagmire of litigation," the statement continued.

The statement urged the Senate Finance Committee to reject Section 1012 or to add an exception for "church plans" as defined in the Internal Revenue Code.

"History demonstrates that both church and state are healthiest when the two are allowed to function apart from each other," the statement concluded. "Although there can never be absolute or total separation, there should be an attitude of neutrality on the part of the state with regard to religion. Tax exemption of churches serves to maintain this neutrality."

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Chick-fil-A Owner  
Practices His Faith

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
2/20/86

HAPEVILLE, Ga. (BP)--A small grin splashes Truett Cathy's face when his notoriety is mentioned, but it disappears quickly with a wave of his hand.

The 64-year-old owner and founder of the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain is not one to dwell on his fame and fortune. He would rather talk about his two sons, his daughter, his wife, his mother, his father, the Sunday school class of 13- and 14-year-old boys he teaches at First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Ga.,...anybody but himself.

Cathy is no newcomer to publicity. His face has embellished the covers of "Business Atlanta," Atlanta's monthly business magazine, and "Sky," a Delta airlines in-flight magazine. His success story has hit the pages of magazines such as "Forbes" and "Restaurant News" and has received attention in newspapers throughout the nation.

But it is Cathy's personal Christian testimony--his compassion and generosity, rather than his business acumen or financial wizardry--that has captured the hearts of his friends, acquaintances and especially the boys in his Sunday school class.

Cathy represents Christian laypersons highlighted through Southern Baptists' 1986 Baptist Doctrine Study on the doctrine of the laity. Baptist Doctrine Study, scheduled April 21-25, is sponsored by the church training department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Cathy says he derives a special pleasure from teaching a Sunday school class of 13- and 14-year-old boys, a task he has undertaken for more than 30 years.

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"I'm hooked on that age, and I intend to stay with it," Cathy says of the class. "That's a critical age, and it's the last opportunity to establish values.

"At that age, the kids will give you all the time you want, but at 15, 16 or 17, well, you might as well forget it. They're more interested in girls, cars and going out with their friends," he explains.

For Cathy, ministering to the young boys does not begin and end on Sunday mornings.

It is not unusual to find him driving a Chick-fil-A van or station wagon to the front doors of the boys' homes on Friday afternoon and shuttling them off for the weekend to his 260-acre farm outside of Atlanta.

"I'm out of town quite a bit, and I feel that if I miss a Sunday or two, I owe them something. So I take them to the farm," he notes.

Here he becomes one of the gang, speeding over hills and valleys on motorcycles or galloping through pastures on horses, Cathy says.

His more-than-just-a-passing interest in the boys of his Sunday school class is evident not only through counseling and concern, but through concrete financial assistance. He sometimes helps the boys' families with medical bills, clothing costs, college expenses and jobs.

Cathy recalls a phone call near Christmas several years ago from a boy who needed transportation to get to and from work. "I didn't know the boy at all, but he had courage enough to call, so I told him whatever money he earned he could save, I would match it, and he could buy a bicycle. I would get calls from him often, telling me how much he had saved," Cathy says. He invited the boy to spend Christmas with him and his family.

"Needless to say, there was a bright, shiny bicycle under the tree," Cathy remembers. The young man, now in college, still is a frequent visitor to the Cathy household, "and is just like one of the family."

Stepping into the Chick-fil-A headquarters and talking with Cathy, it is hard to imagine that this pioneer of express-service chicken sandwiches sprang from such humble beginnings.

"My mother ran a boarding house, and my father sold insurance," Cathy says of his childhood days in Eatonton, Ga. "My dad never really recuperated from the experience of the Depression."

In 1946 Cathy and his brother pooled their resources, borrowed money and purchased a tiny, 24-hour restaurant just outside Atlanta, called The Dwarf House.

Because the restaurant was located on a heavily-traveled highway to Florida, Cathy learned that customers wanted food, and they wanted it fast. The Dwarf House, in 1963, is where Cathy perfected the four-minute chicken sandwich. By 1985, it had paved the way to 315 Chick-fil-A stores in 31 states, one of the nation's largest privately-held restaurant chains.

Cathy's faith is evident in his operation of the chain whose stores are closed on Sundays.

Although Cathy's has received numerous religious and civic awards and recognition, he says he is most proud of the opportunities he offers to "ambitious" young people.

One of those is Camp WinShape, a foundation located in North Georgia and established in 1984 to promote the religious growth and education of boys, ages seven through 16.

Another is WinShape Center, where Chick-fil-A employees "who establish good work habits and attitudes" are given an opportunity to qualify for college scholarships.

"I'm motivated," he says, "by young people who are out there working hard," he said.

**(BP)**

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901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY                      HO  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
901 COMMERCE  
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

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