



## - - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 9, 1986

86-86

### Candidates Visit Atlanta Churches

ATLANTA (BP)--Adrian Rogers and Winfred Moore appeared in two Atlanta churches--both packed with visitors in town for the Southern Baptist Convention--on the final Sunday morning before one of them would be elected president of the nation's largest non-Catholic denomination.

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., got a boost in his presidential bid from Charles Stanley, the current president, when he led the invocation at First Baptist Church of Atlanta.

Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church, introduced Rogers to his congregation during the 11 am worship service June 8. Stanley described Rogers as one he "unashamedly and enthusiastically" trusts will be the next SBC president after the election Tuesday afternoon June 10.

More than 2,500 people packed the church's auditorium for the late morning service. Two other services were held, and a church hostess estimated 9,000 people attended all three sessions.

Later in the day, Rogers told the 16,000 persons at the opening session of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference the house of Christianity stands firmly on the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

Rogers, pastor of the 16,000-member Bellevue church, said the house of Christianity would collapse like a house of cards without the virgin birth.

Pastors' Conference President Morris Chapman of Wichita Falls, Texas, introduced Rogers as a prophet of God and peerless preacher among Southern Baptists. The crowd responded with a standing ovation which they repeated when he began his address and again at the conclusion of his remarks.

Quoting from several avowed disbelievers in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, including a Redbook survey of students at Protestant seminaries 10 years ago, Rogers said these beliefs were "the legacy of modern liberalism."

"If you do not accept the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, you have some real problems. If you don't believe in the virgin birth, then you will have difficulty with Mary, Jesus Christ, the Word of God and your own character. I wouldn't give you half a hallelujah for your chances in heaven if you don't believe in the virgin birth.

Rogers closed by telling the pastors to "Let congress run the country, let Wall Street handle the finances and let Hollywood have the fame. Let me be a winner of souls."

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Across town at First Baptist Church of Chamblee, Ga., Moore delivered the morning message. He told a packed house God has given Southern Baptists everything they need to accomplish the goals of the convention's Bold Mission Thrust.

Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, preached a sermon on mission and commitment during a televised morning worship service at the northeastern Atlanta church. He said: "God has called each one of us to ministry, to service in his glory. But he has not only called us, he has given us the gifts, talents and everything we need to perform that service."

In introducing Moore, Chamblee Pastor W. David Sapp described the Texan as a gracious, modest gentleman who preached with great power and has made a consistent stand for righteousness. About 900 people heard Moore's sermon, some 250 of whom were visitors in town for the SBC annual meeting.

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Youth Vigor Fuel  
SBC Rightward Move

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press  
6/9/86

ATLANTA (BP)--Although Southern Baptist moderate-conservatives have an advantage of larger churches, stronger denominational ties and a higher education level, fundamental conservatives can expect to continue to make inroads into control of their convention due to a more cohesive platform of grievances, a study of messengers to last year's convention has revealed.

Nancy Ammerman, director of the center for religious research for the Candler School of Theology at Atlanta's Emory University, reported the findings June 7 to a meeting of the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship in Atlanta.

"So long as fundamentalists maintain this advantage, they can be expected to continue to succeed" in their push for a more conservative stance, Ammerman said.

The study also revealed a sizeable contingent of younger, better educated clergymen among fundamental-conservatives than had been previously observed, she said.

"A core of young, fairly well educated clergymen have become committed to fundamentalist doctrine. With very attractive role models and a new set of heroes, they are developing a career system that is likely to bring more like-minded individuals into their ranks," she noted.

The independent study, which was designed to determine what motivated 45,000 Southern Baptists to attend the Dallas annual meeting in 1985, revealed political activism was the greatest reason for lay involvement.

"Among laity in our sample, eight percent went to Dallas, but 31 percent of those who had been very active in political meetings before the convention also found a way to get to Dallas," said Ammerman, a long time Southern Baptist.

Among moderate-conservatives, support for Winfred Moore of Amarillo, Texas, as president was not nearly as strong as among fundamental-conservatives who supported the re-election of Charles Stanley of Atlanta.

While fundamental-conservative discontent resulted in political activism, going to Dallas to support Stanley, and less involvement with the denomination, moderate-conservative discontent resulted in political activism and more denominational activity. But discontented moderate-conservatives did not turn out in appreciably greater numbers in Dallas, and their reasons for going were more to conduct convention business than just to elect a president.

"Grievances of the fundamentalists coupled with their youthful fervor, are sufficient to mobilize some messengers even without any prior activism."

The study also revealed older adults, both clergy and laity, "are less likely to feel strong fundamentalist discontent. By virtue of their lower levels of discontent, older people are less active in political activities, and that, too, lessened the likelihood that they would go to Dallas.

"Among other things, the youth of the fundamentalists indicates a clear future for their cause," Ammerman said.

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Mabry Elected  
Research Head

Baptist Press  
6/9/86

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Research Fellowship elected a new slate of officers for two-year terms June 7 in Atlanta.

Donald F. Mabry, Louisiana Baptist Convention missions director, Alexandria, was elected president. Lewis Wingo, research analyst for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn., was named program vice-president and president-elect.

Re-elected as membership chairman was James A. Lowry, denominational statistics specialist with the Sunday School Board. Carol Childress, planning and research consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, was named to a second term as awards chairperson.

Chester Davidson, research and planning consultant with the Baptist Association Coorelating Committee for the Houston Region, was re-elected secretary-treasurer. Rudy Devon Boan, associate director of the planning and services research department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, was named newsletter editor.

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'Religious Awakening' Overlooked  
By Secular Press, Robertson Says By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press  
6/9/86

ATLANTA (BP)--Pat Robertson, a nationally-known religious broadcaster, cited the "religious awakening" of evangelicals--including their increasing involvement in political life--as a major story often overlooked in the secular press.

Identifying himself as a Southern Baptist, Robertson spoke June 7 to the Religion Newswriters Association, meeting in Atlanta on the eve of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The head of Christian Broadcasting Network said the current spiritual awakening has led evangelicals to be more vocal in their faith and more involved in their communities. While explaining evangelicals are not a "monolithic whole," Robertson said many of them are concerned the federal government has become too powerful and American society has become too secularized.

"There's nothing in the Constitution and nothing that I see in our history that would prevent religious people from being involved in public life or having moral values interjected into a political debate," he said of Christians' fight against secularism.

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Robertson argued stripping all religious values from public life is contrary to the nation's history. He said laws are either upheld by morality or by tyranny.

"The evangelicals in the country are seeing an erosion of the moral fiber which would ultimately break down the law and order," he said, adding such a breakdown could eventually lead to a dictatorship.

Although Robertson said he does not advocate a civil religion, he said U.S. government institutions presuppose the existence of a supreme being. He added there is no question that being is the "Judeo-Christian concept of God."

"I don't think there's any doubt that our country was founded by people who acknowledged in some fashion biblical reality."

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WMU Executive Board  
Adopts 1986-87 Budget

Baptist Press  
6/9/86

ATLANTA (BP)--The executive board of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union adopted a record \$10.3 million budget for 1986-87 June 7 during its annual two-day meeting in Atlanta.

The budget is \$1.5 million more than the 1985-86 budget, representing a 17.3 percent increase.

The board also heard a report on the indebtedness of WMU following relocation of national headquarters two years ago from downtown Birmingham, Ala., to a new \$5.5 million facility atop New Hope Mountain southeast of the city.

Executive board members previously decided to forego a fund-raising campaign to pay for the building. However, "WMU will be out of debt--unthinkably--during our centennial year," said Carolyn Weatherford, WMU executive director, even without a fund-raising campaign and without Cooperative Program money. WMU does not receive Cooperative Program funds.

About \$2 million is needed to pay off the debt. WMU will celebrate its centennial year in 1988. Dorothy Sample, outgoing WMU president, was named chairman of the committee organizing the May 14, 1988 centennial extravaganza.

Board members also heard a report from the Centennial Committee which gave an update of plans for the centennial observance. The official launch of the celebration will be in 1987 during the WMU annual meeting in St. Louis, Mo., in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting.

The summer WMU conferences in 1987 will continue with the centennial emphasis, leading to the centennial extravaganza in 1988. A "Second Century Fund" endowment campaign will be launched during the final event, scheduled for May 13-14 in Richmond, Va., where WMU was organized.

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Former, CBS Head Suggests  
Anti-Obscenity Tactics

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)--The former president of CBS told a group in the nation's capital the answer to combating obscenity is replacing it with "equally intoxicating material that is not pornographic."

Rather than telling 65 million women "we're going to take away your soap opera," Arthur Taylor said, participants in the anti-obscenity battle should tell them "we're going to give you something you'll like better."

The former head of CBS's record, tape and television production warned participants at the National Decency Forum their efforts and arguments should be against obscenity, not against sexuality.

"If in fact we're against sexuality, we're in for a long, long battle," said Taylor, now dean of Fordham University's School of Business Administration.

He cautioned opponents of obscenity to use precise language and avoid rhetoric that shows insensitivity to the First Amendment or advocates repression of individuals' sexuality. As an example, he protested using such words as "provoking" in anti-obscenity arguments.

He said anyone who in arguing against obscenity demonstrates he has problems with accepting the reality of sexuality will "lose the great uncommitted center" of the nation population.

Taylor, who in the 1970s led a campaign to secure a family viewing hour on prime-time television, advocated material that portrays healthy relationships. He said such material would require human resources and experimentation, adding production and acceptance of such materials also would require time, since "the country has spent the past 25 years celebrating relationships" initially characterized by Hugh Hefner and "Peyton Place."

The National Decency Forum was a joint effort by local and national decency organizations to encourage federal passage and enforcement of obscenity laws.

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Dunn Supports Move to Save  
Non-Itemizers' Tax Deduction

By Stan Hasteley

WASHINGTON (BP)--The head of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has endorsed a bipartisan effort in the U.S. Senate to amend the tax reform bill currently being debated to preserve charitable deductions for taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Washington-based Baptist agency, wrote the proposed amendment's sponsors, Sen. Robert W. Kasten Jr., R-Wis., and Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, D-Hawaii, June 6 that "Baptists as a whole see great danger in the repeal of the law granting income tax deductions for charitable contributions for non-itemizers."

Dunn also reiterated his view that removing the tax break for non-itemizers--expected to amount to 80 percent of taxpayers if tax reform legislation becomes law--would be counterproductive. "A certain callousness and apathy mark the zeal of tax reformers who do not take into account the impact on the churches and other charities," he said. "Those who give generously to bear much of the human needs burden of our country are entitled to deductions for charitable contributions."

That view was emphasized in Kasten's announcement of his intention to introduce the amendment in floor debate on the measure. Noting estimates that charitable gifts could decline by as much as \$6 billion annually if non-itemizers no longer are allowed to deduct their gifts, he said, "We cannot allow this to happen at a time when we are calling on non-profit organizations to play a more important role in our communities."

Baptist Brief Supports  
Fired Adventist Worker

By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has joined the Supreme Court challenge of a Seventh-day Adventist worker who was denied unemployment compensation benefits after being fired for refusing to work on the Sabbath.

Paula A. Hobbie, who converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church after working for a Florida jeweler for 2 1/2 years and then asked for Saturdays off to practice her new faith, has claimed she was denied free exercise of religion when the state Department of Labor and Employment Security refused her request for unemployment benefits.

Hobbie's case was accepted for review by the nation's high court in April. It is to be argued and decided during the court's 1986-87 term that begins next October.

The Baptist Joint Committee brief--joined by the American Jewish Committee and the Christian Legal Society--sets forth the view that Hobbie was deprived of her First Amendment right of free exercise in that she was "forced to choose between following the dictates of her conscience and forfeiting benefits. . .or abandoning her religious convictions and maintaining her employment."

Baptist Joint Committee general counsel Oliver S. Thomas, who wrote the brief, told Baptist Press the importance of the case rests on the proposition that "religious freedom is a shallow freedom indeed if it doesn't include the right to be converted." Hobbie, he added, was "forced to give up an important governmental benefit merely because she followed her religious convictions."

Thomas urged the court to reject the state's contention that Hobbie was not entitled to unemployment benefits because she, not her employer, changed the terms of employment by converting to a new faith. The burden on Hobbie's free exercise of religion "can be justified only if it is necessary to achieving a compelling state interest," he added. Beyond establishing such an interest, Thomas wrote, the state is obligated to achieve it "by the least restrictive means available."

In Hobbie's case, the state failed on both counts, he insisted.

In addition, Thomas repeatedly cited two earlier Supreme Court decisions upholding the employment rights of Sabbatarian workers. In one of them, the 1963 case of Sherbert v. Verner, the high court upheld the unemployment benefits claim of another Seventh-day Adventist who turned down a job when told she would not be given time off each week to observe the Sabbath. The second ruling came in the 1981 case of Thomas v. Review Board, when the court held that a Jehovah's Witness was unconstitutionally denied unemployment compensation after quitting his job at an armaments factory on religious grounds.