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March 31, 1987

87-48

Smith Named
To PTL Board

N-60
By Bob Terry (Mo)

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Former Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith has accepted a position on the board of directors of the PTL television ministry following the resignation of evangelist Jim Bakker.

Smith, a full-time evangelist, said he was offered the post after Charles Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, and immediate past president of the SBC, declined appointment to the board.

A statement released by the Atlanta church said Stanley determined that in light of his "previous and prolonged involvement in Southern Baptist Convention activities and the growth and demands of his present ministry," it was best not to accept the PTL appointment.

Smith told Word and Way, newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, he understood Stanley refused to serve primarily because of the demands of his television ministry. "If I had been Charles, I would have turned it down too," Smith said of the appointment.

Smith explained he accepted the position, in part, because he did not want to see the "PTL giant fall into the wrong hands." He said this was an opportunity for Southern Baptists to influence the future direction of the PTL television ministry.

"We should be grateful to Jerry Falwell for giving Southern Baptists this opportunity," he said. Falwell is chairman of the PTL board after being given the ministry in a private meeting by PTL founder and former President Bakker.

A change in PTL programming is in the works if Smith has his way. "I don't want to say too much," he said, "but I agree with Jerry Falwell that anything takes on the stance of its leaders." After noting it will take time to make the changes, Smith added, "If Baptists have questions about this, I hope they will just be patient."

He said that he and Falwell "have the same things in mind" for the future of PTL. "If they don't work out, I'll be gone," he added.

Smith noted the new PTL board represents a wide range of evangelical leaders including Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians. Only one new board member, former Secretary of the Interior James Watt, comes from the Assemblies of God, the denomination of the former PTL leader.

Each director was hand picked by Falwell, Smith said, adding "Now it is his (Falwell's) ministry. He is in total charge."

This change marks a "historical step in ecumenical relations," Smith pointed out, because it is "the first time in history that a Pentecostal ministry has been put in the hands of Baptists."

Smith compared his service on the new board to local community service where Southern Baptist pastors serve alongside pastors of other religious denominations: "The only negative thing about serving on this board would be if there were a change in me and that is not possible. I have strong doctrinal differences with charismatics, and I'm not going to back off of that.

"If I thought for one second I would have to compromise traditional Baptist values, I would resign immediately."

All of the reactions he has received about his appointment have been positive, he said, adding he does not expect to lose any preaching invitations because of the appointment to the PTL board.

Smith said he was glad he had not been placed on the board's executive committee or audit committee because his preaching schedule would not permit him to attend all the meetings that would necessitate.

One PTL board meeting has been held since Smith's appointment. He said he was impressed by the property operated by PTL and the financial condition of the ministry. Contributions to PTL have increased 17 percent since Bakker's resignation, he said.

In another matter related to PTL, Jimmy Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, said he finds "no reason to rejoice because of what has happened" with the PTL ministry. Bakker admitted to a sexual encounter seven years ago with a former church secretary and resigned from PTL in mid-March.

"It is unfortunate that this tragic episode will cause many people to be suspicious of all Christian broadcasters. This should not be so," said Allen, also president of the ACTS network, operated by the commission.

"All of us involved in proclaiming the gospel on radio and television must now work harder to make certain that the message is not discredited," he added. "The answer, I think, lies in doing the Lord's business in public."

He noted the ACTS network is owned by 37,000 Southern Baptist churches cooperating as a convention. The network reports annual to the convention, and the commission's audit "is published for all Southern Baptists to study," he said, adding commission trustees are elected by the convention.

Such "accountability and public disclosure" makes a network such as ACTS trustworthy, Allen said, and "would help restore credibility to every broadcaster who follows a similar pattern."

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Court Rejects Challenge
To Religious Dress Law

By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
3/31/87

WASHINGTON (BP)—The Supreme Court has refused to hear a challenge to an Oregon law that prohibits public schoolteachers from wearing religious dress in the classroom.

By a 6-3 vote, the justices dismissed the appeal of a Eugene, Ore., teacher who was fired for wearing traditional Sikh garb -- white clothing and a white turban -- on the job.

Janet Cooper, who also lost her Oregon teaching certificate, challenged the state statute, contending it violated her First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion.

Cooper first took her case to the state appeals court, which upheld the law's provision for suspension from teaching duties. But the court ruled revocation of a teaching certificate was a greater sanction than needed to maintain a school district's religious neutrality.

The Eugene School District appealed to the Oregon Supreme Court, which reversed the lower court's decision holding the statute "when correctly interpreted and applied" was a valid penalty. The state's high court said the law was needed "to avoid giving children or their parents the impression that the school (approves) the religious commitment of one group and perhaps finds that of others less worthy."

The court said a teacher could wear a simple religious symbol, such as a crucifix or Star of David, and on an occasional basis could even wear more elaborate religious dress.

Justices William J. Brennan Jr., Thurgood Marshall and Sandra Day O'Connor voted to hear arguments in the case. Supreme Court rules require the vote of at least four justices to grant review. (86-701, Cooper v. Eugene School District)

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Work In Israel Overshadows
Trustee's Attendance Record

By Art Toalston

F-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—No one is complaining that Dick Thomassian missed a few meetings last fall as a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. No one will complain if he misses a couple more this spring.

He and his wife, Lois, have been undergirding Baptist work in Israel.

Thomassian is associate pastor for music and missions at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala.

As a trustee, Thomassian had "studied ... kept up with things ... tried to contribute" during board meetings. Still, "I will be 10 times the board member I could have been if I had missed this opportunity. I learned more in five months living in Israel than I ever could have learned coming to Richmond (Va., for trustee meetings)."

From August through December, Thomassian taught Bible, music and conversational English, led chapel services at Nazareth Baptist School and organized a choir at Nazareth Baptist Church. He devoted each Friday to Muslim evangelism with Baptist representative Ray Register. He also conducted a music seminar each Monday evening, preached during worship services for various Baptist congregations, started a Friday night fellowship for college students and took a couple of lessons in Arabic each week.

Mrs. Thomassian spent much of her time developing close relationships with Baptist women, particularly through sewing she did for them. She also taught a series on Proverbs for an English-language Bible class.

How did they survive such a schedule? "We felt energy that came from the Lord," Thomassian said. Also, Israel is a country where there's a siesta-style period of rest each afternoon. "I wish we would do that in America," he quipped.

The Thomassians were back in the United States early this year. They returned to Israel in mid-February and plan to stay through May.

"I would encourage other board members to go out as a volunteer for two, three, four months, if you can get a leave of absence from your church or your work, because you will never be the same, he said. "You will have a much fuller understanding of our missionaries, of missions, the difficulties, the blessings.

"I never have appreciated our missionaries more than I do now." It's so easy to stay stateside and pick at little things and be a little critical, but, boy, you have to walk in their shoes. We have a whole lot of them who really love the Lord and are real soldiers of the cross. We don't even realize it."

For people who can't get away, Thomassian says they should seek as much information as possible about missions, such as articles in The Commission magazine published by the Foreign Mission Board. People should write to the missionaries "to get the real heartbeat of what Southern Baptist foreign missions is all about. Don't be ashamed to ask any questions of the missionaries and let them write back."

Thomassian's chance to work in Israel came when Whitesburg Baptist Church gave him a fully paid sabbatical year for his 20th anniversary with the congregation.

As a Foreign Mission Board trustee, Thomassian had been on the committee responsible for Baptist work in the Middle East. It was an appropriate assignment: His parents, now in their 80s, are from the Middle East. John and Rose Thomassian met in Turkey and, as young adults, immigrated to New York City.

When committee members initiated a special effort to each pray for and develop close contact with Southern Baptist workers in two countries, Thomassian's focus became Israel and Gaza.

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Devoting his sabbatical year to volunteer work also was a natural outgrowth of Thomassian's energies. During his 20 years at Whitesburg, he had organized 50 mission projects, encompassing 1,200 volunteers of all ages, in Huntsville, other parts of Alabama and the United States, and several countries in the Caribbean. The volunteers have worked in evangelistic services, door-to-door witnessing, vacation Bible schools, construction projects and musical programs.

Thomassian's time in Israel has yielded a wealth of memorable experiences. He recalled one young Arab whose temper flared over the creation of the state of Israel nearly 40 years ago. Thomassian quoted the man as saying: "Our land was stolen. Our jobs were taken. What do you know? You haven't experienced that."

"I reminded him," Thomassian said, "that my father saw his parents killed, and my father's land was taken" during a time of persecution by the Turks early this century. Thomassian's mother and her family faced similar trials.

"I said, 'I don't hate the Turks. I love the Turks. I pray for the Turks. I have peace in my heart through Jesus Christ. I don't hate anybody. The only way you can get rid of hate is to know Christ. He will give the love and peace and forgiveness in your heart.'

"That man calmed down and listened to everything I had to say from there on out," Thomassian said.

Muslims like to talk to visitors about the Koran's teachings. "If you are very gentle and listen to what they are saying," Thomassian learned, "then they give you the opportunity to open up the Bible and talk to them about what Jesus had to say."

Another memorable experience involved the big Roman Catholic Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. The church's music director invited Thomassian to lead the choir rehearsal there and give some instruction to the singers. From that contact evolved a Christmas program involving choirs from the Church of the Annunciation and Nazareth Baptist Church and two other ensembles, each presenting a 15-minute program.

Also, Thomassian was asked to meet with a nun and two priests of the Catholic church. They had heard that 120 to 150 Whitesburg singers and instrumentalists will be touring Israel in December 1987, and were asking about scheduling a concert.

"I said, 'I think so. Let me explain to you. We will be doing sacred music in Hebrew, Arabic and English, Christ-honoring music. We usually complete the concert with a 10-minute presentation of the gospel with an invitation to those who want to trust Christ.'" Thomassian heard no objection, only a hearty affirmation of their invitation.

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

CORRECTION: In Baptist Press story, "National Fellowship Of Baptist Men Adopts Measures Of Effectiveness," mailed 3/30/87, please substitute the following for the third graf:

"One of the yardsticks to measure the effectiveness of this organization has got to be how many people come to know Christ because of us," said Gurley. "I hope this organization has witnessing as its utmost priority."

Thanks,
Baptist Press

Hispanic Church Sets Growth Goal
In Corpus Christi Metro Clinic

By Frank Wm. White

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas (BP)—Leaders of one of the oldest Hispanic churches in the Southern Baptist Convention have set a goal to more than double the church's current Sunday school enrollment after an enrollment-training clinic for Hispanic churches in Corpus Christi, Texas.

The 90-year-old Segunda Iglesia Bautista Corpus Christi set an enrollment goal of 810, an increase of 460 over its present enrollment of 350.

The clinic, conducted by the special ministries department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, was designed for Hispanic churches and patterned after metro enrollment-training clinics conducted by the board's Sunday school department.

"We realized a clinic specifically for Hispanic churches would help them get more out of the training," said Chuck Padilla, Hispanic consultant in the special ministries department.

The six churches in the clinic with current enrollments totaling 1,202 set goals to reach a combined total enrollment of 2,248.

Isaac Rodriguez, pastor of Segunda Iglesia Bautista, said Sunday school leaders in his church established the goal and are committed to reaching it. In the first two Sundays following the clinic, the church enrolled 28 new members. Rodriguez said plans are being developed to hold two Sunday schools to accommodate the anticipated increase in attendance.

Workers in the church started two new adult classes and rearranged the preschool department on the final day of the clinic, Padilla said.

El Mesias Baptist Church found another benefit of the clinic when, on the final day, the church's offering doubled its normal amount. Also, 20 prospects who had been contacted in a people search a week earlier attended church, Padilla said.

Clinic directors and age-group specialists who trained leaders in the six churches represented Hispanic churches in Texas, California and Florida. Although no other Hispanic clinics are scheduled, Padilla said he hopes the directors will return to their churches and associations and conduct similar state or association-sponsored clinics.

The largest numbers of Hispanic Southern Baptist congregations are in Texas, California and Florida, with more than 2,000 congregations throughout the convention, Padilla said.

However, he said, more than 23 million Spanish-speaking people live in the United States. Southern Baptists have a goal of 10,000 language churches, missions and Bible study units -- including Spanish-speaking -- by the year 2000.

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Zambia's Rhodes Scholar
Baptist Student Worker

By Craig Bird

Baptist Press
3/31/87

LUSAKA, Zambia (BP)—Zambia's lone Rhodes scholar for 1987-88 is an integral part of Baptist student ministries at the University of Zambia.

Monde Muyangwa, 23, will enter Oxford University in London in October to pursue a master's degree in international relations. She was selected from among hundreds of applicants for the prestigious scholarship.

She was graduated from the University of Zambia (UNZA) in July 1986 and began working with Southern Baptist missionaries Lonnie and Fran Turner later that summer.

"We hired Monde because of her Christian commitment, her personality and her high moral standards," Turner says. Much of her time is spent counseling female students dealing with moral pressures on the 4,000-student campus.

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Freshmen girls are a special interest group for Muyangwa. "During your first year at UNZA it's easy to fall into the way things are done," she explains. "The urban setting puts a lot of pressure on, but that's part of life and you have to deal with it as best you can. Zambians watch 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty' (on television) and think that is the way to live.

"People ask me why I don't get a 'real' job, but I enjoy helping people develop — and I hate working in an office all the time," she says. "School years determine a lot of a person's character. I believe this is a 'real' job."

Turner says Muyangwa is very effective: "The female students relate to her because she's been where they are. She knows the pressure on girls to drink and be sexually immoral. She understands the cultural adjustment of moving from a rural-oriented, close, extended family to a campus environment where all the old rules are challenged but new rules aren't firmly in place."

Muyangwa saw newspaper advertisements about the Rhodes scholarship and applied, "even though I didn't expect to hear back." In January she was notified she had made the "short list" of six candidates and was told to write two papers and submit them to the committee.

"The committee spent about 30 minutes interviewing the other candidates, and when I was finished in 10 minutes I knew I had blown it," she remembers. "We were told we'd be notified within a week and I prayed and asked God to hurry. I told my niece that if the letter came when I wasn't home, not to open it if it was a big one (a rejection) but if it was a small one to open it and then come find me and tell me."

Instead, the very next day, a medium-sized envelope arrived. Her niece didn't know what to do, and Muyangwa did not learn she had won until she got home from work at 10 p.m.

Her only previous trips out of Zambia have been into the neighboring countries of Zimbabwe and Malawi and her only airplane ride "was when I was a little girl — I really can't remember it."

Although Turner regrets losing Muyangwa from the student center staff, he is thrilled by her stay at Oxford. He expects it to allow her to make an even greater impact as a Christian in Zambia in future years.

"You know, Zambia is not going to be won to Christ by missionaries," he points out. "Zambians are going to have to win Zambia."

Zambians like Monde Muyangwa, Rhodes scholar.

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