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February 1, 1996

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SBC Cooperative Program gifts
for January set near record

Baptist Press
2/1/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program gifts for the month of January totaled the second largest in history with \$15,241,892 and almost 10 percent over a year ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The January 1996 total is surpassed only by the January 1988 total of \$15,514,367, the largest in CP history for a month.

"These mission gifts from Southern Baptists are a tremendous testimony to our shared vision of reaching the world for Jesus Christ," Chapman said. "It is very encouraging and, obviously, the Lord is blessing Southern Baptists in this vision."

The January 1996 total is \$1,295,728 above the month in 1995, or a 9.29 percent increase. For the four months of the SBC fiscal year -- October through January -- CP gifts total \$48,216,077 compared to \$48,441,082 during the same period a year ago. The difference is \$225,005 or a decrease of .46 percent.

For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date figures are more than \$1 million above the budget requirement of \$47,209,709, or \$1,006,368, which is a 2.13 percent increase. The monthly budget requirement is \$11,802,427.

Designated gifts dropped 14.06 percent during January 1996 compared to the same month a year ago: \$17,249,997 compared to \$20,071,120. That leaves the four months of designated giving at \$25,593,105 compared to the same period a year ago of \$27,138,827, a 5.70 percent decrease, or \$1,545,722.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions and fellowships for distribution according to the 1995-96 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

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The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

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Orlando's First Baptist
reaches \$1 million CP mark

By Barbara Denman

Baptist Press
2/1/96

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Members of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., gave \$1 million through the Cooperative Program in 1995, becoming the first in Florida Baptist history.

According to Jim Powell of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission, only two churches in the SBC have given \$1 million through the Cooperative Program. In 1989, First Baptist Church, Midland, Texas, and North Phoenix Baptist Church in Arizona each reached the million-dollar mark. The Midland church gave another million in 1990.

But for the past four years, the Orlando church has led all Southern Baptist churches in Cooperative Program giving, sending \$925,000 in 1991, \$931,224 in 1992, \$894,805 in 1993 and \$881,807 in 1994.

"As we began inching toward that mark a few years ago, I began to realize this was a real possibility," said Jim Henry, pastor of the Orlando church and president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

According to Henry, as the congregation planned for the 1995 budget, a "visionary layman" suggested to the church's planning team they give \$1 million to the Cooperative Program. Team members immediately and enthusiastically concurred. "I'm afraid they left their leader following," he said.

John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention, called the giving record "a miracle."

"That a mega-church with growth pressures and building needs still maintains and affirms the value of cooperation through the Cooperative Program to the nearly unprecedented level of \$1 million is nothing short of a miracle," he said.

"This level of giving also speaks volumes about the leadership consistency of Dr. Jim Henry and this wonderful congregation," Sullivan added. "They have planned to reach this level of giving from the beginning."

Bill Coffman, director of the Florida Baptist Convention Cooperative Program department, also applauded the Orlando congregation's efforts, calling them a "pacesetter for Florida."

"This is the epitome of a New Testament church: strong in doctrine, evangelism, mission support and cooperation. They have clearly shown it is not missions or evangelism, but can be mission and evangelism."

"It is a joy that we could strongly affirm what we're doing to reach our state, nation and the world for Christ," Henry said. "I try to visualize it with the faces of all kinds of people, all races, all the world, smiling as they come to know Jesus personally -- churches planted, missionaries encouraged, Bibles given, food and clothing provided, all in name of Jesus."

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**Florida Baptists send
Cooperative Program bonus**

By Barbara Denman

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--A bonus of \$155,000 has been sent by Florida Baptists to the SBC Cooperative Program to compensate for a 1 percent 1996 budget decrease.

The additional funds came after Florida Baptists churches gave a record \$24,958,433 through the Cooperative Program in 1995, totaling \$839,029 over basic budget.

"Florida Baptists do not need to be stingy in a day of God's generosity," said John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the state convention, after the decision to send more than Florida Baptists' 40 percent allocation to the Cooperative Program.

That amount will be sent, he added, to compensate for the decreased percentage earmarked in the 1996 budget for the SBC Cooperative Program.

Approved by messengers at the 1995 Florida Baptist State Convention in Tampa, the percentage allocated for the SBC in 1996 dropped to 40 percent from 41 percent. But even with the decrease, because the basic budget was larger, the SBC would have received \$85,000 more in 1995. That, combined with the \$155,000, will compensate for the 1 percent decrease, officials said.

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**Radio reports falsely accuse
missionary of embezzlement**

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
2/1/96

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)--Radio reports broadcast across Tanzania have falsely accused Southern Baptist missionary doctor Bill Harrington of fleeing Tanzania with money embezzled from a government hospital in Kigoma.

Tanzanian authorities do not appear to take the charges seriously, and Harrington is not worried about arrest or imprisonment. However, he is concerned about possible damage to the Baptist witness in Kigoma and the impact on his family. His wife, Sandra, and 10-year-old daughter, Christine, were kidnapped, robbed, drugged, abandoned -- and miraculously rescued -- in the Tanzanian outback just this past August.

Harrington, of Richmond, Va., has faced a constant barrage of difficulties while he has been working to reopen the former government hospital at Kigoma. Most recently, two disgruntled former employees filed labor grievances against him.

"We've been in a situation of spiritual warfare for several months, since the kidnapping in August," said Harrington, who was appointed a missionary to Tanzania in 1988 by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "We've got the intention of opening a hospital that will serve people spiritually and physically, and there are forces working against us at every turn that are preventing it."

Prior to the labor grievances, Harrington had planned to travel to Nairobi, Kenya, for a medical education conference. Although two judges approved his leaving the country, an accuser in the lawsuits apparently called the national radio station with the allegations of embezzlement and flight.

Harrington only learned of the allegations after he and his family completed the 30-hour drive to Nairobi. "Pray especially for my family and myself," he said. "This has been very upsetting to us all.

"We know the allegations on the radio are false. When we prove they are, it actually could help our work."

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**Armenia Baptist numbers
grow despite hard times**

By Mike Creswell

GYUMRI, Armenia (BP)--Baptists in the former Soviet republic of Armenia are sharing the gospel, and their churches are growing -- despite a deepening economic crisis triggered by a border dispute with Azerbaijan.

"After all the adversity in Armenia we thought the membership of the churches would decrease, but for every three members there has been one new believer," said Uri Apatov, a Russian Baptist leader.

About 3.7 million people live in Armenia, bordered by Turkey to the west and Azerbaijan to the east between the Black and Caspian seas. Apatov, president of a federation of Baptists from nations of the former Soviet Union, recently visited two of Armenia's strongest churches.

"The two churches have a desire to spread the gospel. They sing many hymns in the Armenian language, and people are hungry to hear the Word of God," Apatov said.

Although economic turmoil resulting from the past decade's border dispute has driven half a million people out of the country, some churches have doubled their membership during recent years. About 250 of 900 Baptists who worship in Armenia's seven churches were baptized as late as 1994. Others were added in 1995, though statistics are not yet tabulated.

The Baptist church in Gyumri, established in 1914, has grown from about 100 to about 200 members since an earthquake devastated the city in 1988. No church members were among the 10,000 people killed, but many left the city afterward. Another Baptist church, in Yerevan, has grown to about 600 members.

Armenian Baptists were encouraged late last year by ordinations of new leaders. Ordination services are significant to the Baptist community, since such events were banned until recently. Last year's were the first since 1979, when Uri A. Ovanecian, now Armenian Baptists' president, was ordained as pastor.

At the Gyumri church, a pastor and two deacons were ordained. "During the past 30 years, people in the church do not remember such an encouraging occasion as this," Apatov said. Among those attending were the city mayor, a priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church, several Roman Catholic nuns and several journalists.

At the Yerevan church, a pastor and five deacons were ordained.

Armenians traditionally believed the first apostles came to their people to share the gospel. Although non-Christian practices and celebrations survive, the nation has considered itself officially Christian since the fourth century. The Armenian Apostolic Church, the leading group in Armenia, claims 1.6 million members. The church follows a doctrine called "monophysitism," which holds that Christ has a single human and divine nature.

Since the Soviet Union fell and Armenia obtained independence, interest in religion has increased. Baptist numbers have grown, but the era also has given birth to cults and non-Christian religious movements.

For most Armenians, life is hard. Electricity and water are available only a short time each day. The centralized heating systems used throughout the region no longer function. For heat, Armenians burn wood and paper in indoor stoves, the majority of which use inadequate exhaust pipes, thus filling their apartments with black smoke.

Gyumri, the nation's second-largest city, is beautiful -- full of old buildings made of pink stone. But the trees that once accented it have been burned for firewood.

"The Bible reveals to us that a new Jerusalem will have glory and honor of all people," Apatov said. "We pray the Armenian people who have been suffering greatly will come to know God's love and rejoice with all people in this new Jerusalem."

Tom Elliff urges students
not to harden their hearts

By Tammi Ledbetter

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Christians cannot decide to do something for God when they get good and ready, said Tom Elliff.

"You only do it if God is good and ready, and the way you know he is good and ready is for him to ask."

Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., addressing the Jan. 30 chapel service at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, asked students, faculty and staff if they were conscious of a specific area in their lives "where God is speaking to your heart about making an adjustment and you have not yet accommodated him."

The area might involve personal devotion, prayer life, the disciplines of a student, a deep secret sin, a moral issue, a marriage relationship or a hidden fear, Elliff said.

He then pled with those acknowledging a hesitation in following God's leadership to "harden not your heart."

Citing the account of God telling Moses to send out one spy from each of the tribes to report on the impending move into Canaan, Elliff noted God had already referred to the "promised land" as an area he had given to the Israelites. Yet the spies returned with a divided report, with 10 of the 12 convinced they could not enter the land.

"There arose a brouhaha and they had this business meeting," Elliff recounted, with the Israelites concluding they could not enter Canaan safely. Then, after receiving God's words of judgment through Moses and being told the disobedient generation would never enter the promised land, Elliff said the tribesmen wanted to reconsider the proposal. "They thought about wandering in the wilderness for 40 years and dying and said it was not as appealing as going in there" to Canaan.

Elliff said the Israelites made a remarkable discovery when they learned, "You don't have God in your box. You don't decide to do something when you get good and ready. You only do it if God is good and ready. And the way you know he is good and ready is for him to ask."

Just as the disobedient children of Israel thought they had "forever to decide to comply," Elliff said, "You and I may think we've got forever to get rid of this habit, or forever to get rid of this sin, or forever to deal with that relationship, or forever to straighten that out."

Instead, God gives a window of opportunity which Elliff said is the privilege of obedience. "Once it was closed it was never going to be open again."

From the description of the Israelites in Psalm 95, Elliff drew three issues that surface to encourage Christians not to harden their hearts. He observed from the psalmist it is the Master who is calling, the mind-set of the recipient is contrary to that of the Master and a moment arises which is critical in settling the test of obedience.

Elliff spoke of the profound significance of receiving a call from God. "This is not just anyone. He is the shepherd, creator and owner, the one who has charged himself with responsibility of our welfare." The text also identifies the call as being "crystal clear" and unmistakable, Elliff said, comparing it to the sound of a trumpet.

In describing the mind-set which is contrary to God's direction, Elliff said, "Hardening your heart requires a conscious effort." He spoke of individuals who make excuses for their bitterness and indifference by telling how their circumstances affected them. "You're the way you are because you chose to be that way and you might as well own up to that," he insisted. "You are the one who has made the decision not to do what God has said."

Elliff also shared his concern over the cumulative effect of repeated hardening of the heart. He defined the word for hardening as a reference to callous skin, which is "that remarkable capacity the skin has to resist irritations by building up successive layers of skin." Elliff noted "there is irritation, but the irritation is not as irritating anymore."

Elliff added, "Every day you wait leaves one more day to repent of and one less day to repent in. You're banking on the fact that God is going to speak to you again. He doesn't owe you that," Elliff said. "You ought to thank God that he's speaking to you this moment and thank him that you even care. That's his grace."

Hardening of the heart also results in the common expression of disobedience. "It just gets easier to say no," Elliff said.

He referred to a critical moment that occurs during a call from God that is an obvious, opportune time for the decision to be made. "You can't do it yesterday and there's no guarantee of tomorrow. Now is the only time you can comply with God's call on your life."

Elliff spoke of the "absolute obedience and availability to God" illustrated in the life of the Scot revivalist Duncan Campbell. But in his early days of ministerial training, Campbell began to question the authority of God, specifically the first 11 chapters of Genesis, Elliff recounted. He quoted Campbell as saying, "The moment that happened there began to creep into my heart a deadness." Although his sermons continued to draw crowds throughout the country, Campbell said he had become "nothing more than a spiritual technician."

After years of straying from God, Campbell was asked by his daughter, "Why is it not with you and God as it used to be?"

The question pierced Campbell's heart and moved him to seek God's face again, Elliff said. "He stepped out of that room and revival broke out again in the Hebrides."

As Midwestern Seminary President Mark Coppenger closed the chapel service, he encouraged students to avoid becoming spiritual technicians. During a time of invitation, students and faculty responded to his appeal to "settle something that will free up your ministry."

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**Shun racism, seek revival,
Texas pastor Avant declares**

By Shari Schubert

**Baptist Press
2/1/96**

ST. LOUIS (BP)--During a time of repentance, commitment and prayer in the closing moments of the Missouri Baptist Evangelism Conference, Texas pastor John Avant said he felt the leading of the Holy Spirit to address the subject of racism and to give conference participants an opportunity to deal with that particular sin.

The Southern Baptist Convention resolution on repentance for racism needs to filter down to the churches, Avant said of the action by messengers to last June's SBC annual meeting in Atlanta.

"Racism is blasphemy," Avant declared during the Jan. 15-16 conference at Fee Baptist Church, St. Louis. Racism is saying to God, "You didn't make 'em right."

Avant, pastor of Coggin Avenue Baptist Church, Brownwood, Texas, had shared earlier in the service about the revival that broke out last year in Brownwood, spreading from Coggin Avenue and other local churches to Howard Payne University in Brownwood, and then to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He told how one student at Southwestern had gone to a microphone and confessed, "I'm a racist." In answer to the young man's plea for forgiveness, two black students pulled him down from the stage, saying, "We love you," Avant recounted.

Missouri evangelism conference participants heard testimonies from two individuals in response to Avant's invitation to deal with racism. One man came to the front of the auditorium to express regret for having taken a negative view toward the naming of a highway for an African American highway patrol officer, as well as toward the setting aside of a national holiday to celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King.

Tony Thompson, an African American student who sings with Missouri Baptist College's SpiritWing ensemble, also spoke, acknowledging both races have been guilty of judging each other unfairly.

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Black slaves who escaped to free states during the pre-emancipation era were able to do so because they were helped by white people, Thompson pointed out. Helping a slave escape was against the law. "It was civil disobedience on their part." That part isn't always remembered, Thompson said.

Anglo Americans, meanwhile, often form opinions about blacks based on the negative images they see portrayed in the media. "We judge the whole white race on a slave master. We judge the whole black race on a thug."

Thompson called for mutual forgiveness and an effort on the part of both races to know each other better as individuals.

Public confessions and requests for prayer during the Tuesday evening session of the evangelism conference concerned not only racism, but matters ranging from prayerlessness to broken relationships. One man stood in the pew where he had been sitting and confessed, "I'm pastor of a church. I've taken it over and I want to give it back to God."

While affirming public confession as good and biblical, Avant called for discretion, noting that some things may not be right or appropriate to confess in public.

Avant shared several stories about the Brownwood revival, which is now the subject of a new book, "Revival."

He noted Coggin Avenue broadcasts its services live and was on the air when worshipers began streaming to the altar to confess and pray. A local rancher and his ranch hand, who was not a Christian, were working outside at the time but were forced back to their pickup truck by high wind. They heard the service on the radio and in a short time the rancher, who was a Christian, led the ranch hand to accept Christ.

In recounting the Brownwood revival, Avant shared his conviction God is ready to bring revival in America and around the world.

"The Spirit of God is moving across this land," he said. "He's not just teasing us with Promise Keepers."

In April, Avant noted, Billy Graham will preach to 2.5 billion people via satellite broadcast -- more people than have ever heard the gospel in a single day.

God wants to bring revival, Avant reiterated, but if Baptists are not willing for God to use anyone besides Baptists, they might as well forget it. God has never brought a great spiritual awakening to just one denomination.

He recalled in the months prior to the Brownwood revival, Coggin Avenue had entered into a joint mission project with a charismatic congregation, supporting a ministry to Hispanic youth, many of whom were involved in gangs. Forty gang members have been baptized, he noted.

Pastors of the two churches, along with other pastors in the community who used to compete with each other, began to pray together. On the same Sunday that Coggin Avenue was surprised by the unexpected outbreak of revival, at least four other Brownwood-area churches also experienced a strong and unusual moving of the Holy Spirit.

Avant emphasized the role of prayer and preparation for revival. One man in the Coggin Avenue congregation had been praying for revival for 40 years. The "Experiencing God" discipleship course had been offered, with 300 people participating. The church already had begun to see individuals getting their lives together, family situations being healed and people beginning to do ministry in the community, prior to the dramatic moving of the Spirit on that Sunday last January.

Avant himself had gone through "Experiencing God" before accepting the Coggin Avenue pastorate. "It changed my life," he testified. "It opened the Book to me in a new way."

**Ala. Baptist Olympics ministry
derailed at highway rest areas** **By David E. Reid**

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--An Alabama Baptist request to provide hospitality to travelers at highway rest areas has prompted officials at the Alabama Department of Transportation to propose a written policy prohibiting the practice.

Baptists had hoped to erect portable booths on rest area grounds and offer cold water, directions and literature to people en route to the 1996 Summer Olympics. Atlanta is host city for the games, Birmingham will be a site for early round soccer matches, and Columbus, Ga., will host the softball competition.

Tammy Davis, coordinator of Alabama Baptist ministries to visitors and athletes, said she was "greatly disappointed" to hear of the state's decision. "It was a very discouraging day for me but God has taught me through this that he is still in ultimate control," she said.

Since the rebuff, Davis has regrouped and is seeking alternate locations, such as service stations at interstate highway exits, where she can set up the booths, which consist of a canopy tent, table and chairs. She also is recruiting volunteers to work the booths.

"At least 15 associations are planning hospitality stations at interstate exits, so the door for ministry is still open," Davis said.

Why, though, is the Department of Transportation proposing to prohibit Baptists and other nonprofit groups from using state-owned rest areas?

Mitchell Kilpatrick, maintenance engineer for the Alabama Department of Transportation, said he was sympathetic with Baptists' desire to minister to travelers, but to allow them on rest area property would be inconsistent with the purpose for which the facilities were built.

"The mission of the rest areas is to allow motorists to stop, take a rest and move on," said Kilpatrick, who represented the DOT in its talks with Davis.

The presence of hospitality booths could create a number of potential problems, he added. Because rest areas have limited parking and rest room facilities, increased use and longer stays by motorists could create difficulties which might defeat their purpose.

Davis said she understands the department's position but doesn't agree with their decision. She said she finds it particularly bothersome other states are allowing Baptists access to their rest areas or welcome centers, but Alabama isn't. "I don't think it's right," she said. "When other states are doing things, why isn't it right for Alabama?"

According to convention personnel in other states, South Carolina Baptists have received verbal permission to use their state's welcome centers and hope to receive written permission soon and Georgia Baptists have received written permission to use its state's welcome centers. And although Florida Baptists aren't planning a rest stop ministry during the Olympics, they have done it numerous times in the past. (The Florida Department of Transportation has a written policy regulating -- but allowing -- use by nonprofit groups.)

Davis initially asked for access to Alabama's rest areas in May 1995 but was refused. She said a DOT staff member told her the request was contrary to normal department practice and that providing hospitality was outside the purpose of the rest areas. However, Davis learned the state had no written policy regarding rest area use by nonprofit groups and enlisted the help of an attorney who specializes in religious liberty and free speech issues, as well as attorneys on the legal staff of Gov. Fob James.

Together, they approached the DOT again. This time, Davis' request was tentatively approved, but with certain modifications. According to a DOT memo to the governor's legal staff, Baptists would be granted access, but could neither erect a sign stating who they were nor could they share their faith.

"We couldn't agree with that," Davis said. "We wanted people to know who was helping them and if someone asked why we were there, we wanted to be able to share our faith."

So Davis resubmitted a reworked proposal, emphasizing hospitality volunteers would remain behind tables at the booth but could display a sign which identified who they were. Furthermore, the proposal agreed the volunteers would not engage in unsolicited proselytizing, but could share their faith if they were asked. Then Davis and the attorneys met a second time with DOT officials.

"Our understanding going into that second meeting was that we'd received approval and all we needed to do was clarify those issues," she said. "Then the department began to raise other concerns which we didn't know were going to be issues."

Among those issues were the following: Before they approved the request, the DOT would have to develop a written policy regulating use of rest areas by nonprofit groups, then they would "advertise" the availability of the rest areas across the state. That would open the door for other groups also to request space and might result in Baptists receiving access for only a limited time rather than be present from dawn until dusk for the duration of the Olympics.

"They didn't refuse our request, but they made it so difficult that it no longer was worth our while to pursue it," Davis said. "It could have been months before they approved a policy. That would have made it too late for us to recruit and train volunteers to man the booths. Then we might have had access for only a couple of hours on a Saturday."

Faced with that scenario, Davis decided to drop the request. She did, however, ask the DOT to develop a written policy regarding use of the rest areas. That policy, which has been proposed and awaits the signature of the department's director and chief engineer, would officially prevent nonprofit groups from establishing a presence at the rest areas and also would prohibit their commercial use.

Although Baptists won't be providing hospitality on the premises, Davis said the DOT has indicated they will allow Baptist-produced pocket guides -- which include information on the Olympics and a presentation of the gospel -- to be placed in rest areas and welcome centers alongside promotional material for hotels, restaurants and attractions.

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'What do Calvinists believe?'
is complex question, prof says

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
2/1/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--If the recent "Baptists and Calvinism: Facing the Issues" conference proved anything, it's that people with differing theological views can sit down together, air their differences and learn from each other.

The academic conference, sponsored by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's office of continuing education, was open to people interested in historical information about Calvinism, from its origin to its present manifestations among Baptists.

The sessions highlighted John Calvin's thought as set forth in his "Institutes of the Christian Religion," the rise of Calvinism as shaped by his followers, the influences of Calvinism on Baptists in England and North America and current expressions of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention. Nearly 60 participants came from across the southeast for the Jan. 22 workshop on the seminary campus.

Debates concerning Calvinism have occurred in various forms -- from benign to bloody -- over the past 450 years, said Daniel Holcomb, conference leader and chairman of the division of theological and historical studies at New Orleans Seminary.

Even John Calvin, the 16th-century creator of the theological movement which now bears his name, was implicated in the death of a theological opponent, Michael Servetus, who was burned at the stake for heresy by Genevan authorities. In the following century, opponents of strict Calvinism in Holland were liquidated by the pro-Calvinist government.

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While disagreements today may be resolved more congenially, debates about Calvinism still divide churches and denominations, said Holcomb, professor of church history at New Orleans Seminary since 1979.

Tracing Calvinism back to its source in Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, Holcomb said Calvin's thought was more biblical, historical and pastoral than that of his later interpreters who transformed his teachings into a scholastic system both speculative and rationalistic, which virtually eliminated history, experience and ethics as shapers of theological method.

Historical Calvinism, he said, has manifested itself in hyper, strict and moderate modes. Core doctrines are the following:

- the sovereignty of God.
- the total depravity of unregenerated humans.
- unconditional predestination.
- limited or particular atonement.
- irresistible grace.
- perseverance of the saints.

The debate about Calvinism has veered considerably from its roots, Holcomb said, to the extent that today "Arminianism has come to be synonymous with anti-Calvinism." Jacob Arminius, a 17th-century professor of theology at the University of Leyden, was in fact "a convinced Calvinist," Holcomb said, explaining Arminius attempted to rescue Calvinism from certain extreme notions about election and grace that dominated the Dutch Reformed Church. What began as a family argument, Holcomb said, became a theological war that permanently divided the two groups.

The opposite of Calvinism is not Arminianism, Holcomb said. "It is Pelagianism," the teachings of the fifth-century British monk Pelagius, disseminated by his disciple Celestius.

"Pelagius opposed the idea of original sin," Holcomb said, "holding instead that man was created incontrovertibly good." The Pelagian doctrine of grace "is diffuse and general," he said, "not focused centrally on the person and mission of Jesus. The system bears resemblance to classical Stoicism and may be characterized by the maxim, 'God helps those who help themselves.'"

"Calvinism has provided theological orientation for a broad range of communions and denominations throughout the world," Holcomb said, including among Baptists in America, major groups such as the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, the Conservative Baptist Association, the Southern Baptist Convention and stricter Calvinist bodies such as the National Primitive Baptist Convention of the U.S.A. and the Reformed Baptists.

Holcomb delineated several moderating influences on Calvinism in Baptist history:

- Andrew Fuller, an 18th-century English Particular Baptist pastor, wrote "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation," which set forth what may be described as an evangelical Calvinism. "Fuller held a strict doctrine of election in tension with a strong appeal to preach the gospel and call the lost to faith in Christ," Holcomb said.
- "Separate Baptists in America had a Calvinist theology warmed by the fires of the Great Awakening," he said, "and became aggressive evangelists and missionaries."
- American democracy, individualism and pragmatism also have impacted the Calvinist tenets of Baptists.

Holcomb noted most Southern Baptist churches may be described as moderately Calvinistic, "seeking to balance the initiatives of God's grace with an emphasis on human freedom and responsibility."

"A small but growing cadre of scholars and pastors, most affiliated with the Southern Baptist Founders Conference which publishes The Founders Journal, seek to return the Southern Baptist Convention to a stricter Calvinist theology as modeled by Andrew Fuller, Charles Haddon Spurgeon and James Petigru Boyce, founding president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and the author of 'Abstract of Systematic Theology.'"

Holcomb said he anticipates increased discussion of Calvinism and related issues across the SBC, along with a greater interest in the Reformation roots of Baptist faith and a more consistent attempt of Southern Baptist scholars to contextualize the ongoing discussions of religious authority and freedom within the Reformation heritage.

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Holcomb assesses Calvinism
in strengths, weaknesses

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
2/1/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Debates on the merits of Calvinism seem to diminish and increase according to societal and ecclesiastical conditions, said Daniel Holcomb during the "Baptists and Calvinism: Facing the Issues" conference at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

As people see both their society deteriorating around them and their churches needing spiritual reinforcement, "many are drawn to a system like Calvinism because it provides theological certitude and strong moral foundations," said Holcomb, chairman of the division of theological and historical studies at New Orleans Seminary.

Other strengths of Calvinism, Holcomb said, include:

- "a sturdy, objective theology grounded not in human emotions, religious experience or perceived needs, but in the Living God, someone outside and other than the human being."
- a quintessential theology. "Calvinism is first, foremost, finally a theological reflection on God."
- a strong doctrine of creation and providence.
- a high view of Scripture and of scriptural authority.
- a high view of the church as "an elect and covenant community, called to faithful worship and witness in the world."
- a respect for the ministry of teaching and "the role of the pastor as faithful expositor of Scripture."
- an affirmation of the life of the mind, "cultivating the mind for the glory of God, faithful theological reflection."

Some weaknesses of Calvinism, Holcomb said, especially in its high scholastic expressions, include the following:

- "Calvinist argument supporting, for example, the sovereignty of God, is too dependent on relentless logic and a paradigm of power."
- "The system does not seriously wrestle with the antinomies of biblical faith, the concept of God 'repenting,' or contingent and secondary causes."
- "Calvinism's linear view of Scripture constricts discussion of Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament, in effect making the new dispensation only an appendage to the old."
- "The system nurtures authoritarianism, creedalism, fatalism."
- "It is inherently cerebral and its more precisionist arguments are inaccessible to the average layperson."
- "The rationalism of the system tempts its expositors to speculate overmuch about the secret work of God, the mystery of election."

Holcomb warned speculation about the secret work of God "should not supersede or obscure the clear teachings of Scripture, including the mandates to hear, believe, receive, and proclaim the gospel."

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**Druin says as editor he will
'trust the Lord, tell the people'** By Dena Dyer

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--"Informed Baptists are better Baptists," stated Toby Druin, editor of the Texas Baptist Standard, during Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's chapel service Jan. 30.

Druin, who was elected editor of the Texas state Baptist paper when Presnall Wood retired last year, defended a recent editorial in which he criticized the process by which Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., was announced as a nominee for the Southern Baptist Convention presidency.

"I did not question his credentials nor his abilities as a pastor," Druin said. "I'm sure he is a fine man with unquestionable qualifications."

But Druin noted in his Baptist news reporting experience, which began 13 years before the controversy erupted in 1979, there was a time when the presidency was open to all Southern Baptists.

"Now, if you don't agree with the direction of the SBC over the last 16 years, you are judged to be ineligible before the nominations begin."

Druin said his goal as editor was to work within the denomination but not be dominated by it.

"That I am even listed among the editors of the Standard still shocks me," Druin noted. "Even though I worked closely with the editor for 20 years, I didn't realize the impact of the editorial page until I began to write it."

Druin assured Southwesterners he prays about everything he puts in the paper. "I believe you can trust the Lord and tell the people. My staff and I will try to give guidance to Texas Baptists as they confront the issues of the day."

Druin, born in Amarillo, Texas, in 1944, worked for the Amarillo Globe-News before receiving his degree in journalism from Baylor University. He later worked in North Carolina and for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Druin became the 12th editor of the Baptist Standard Jan. 21, succeeding Wood, who had served as editor 18 years.

"I am editor because I believe it is God's plan for my life," Druin said. "I am not perfect, but I and my wife and God are still working on it."

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**He says believers deny Christ
by their 'sin of silence'**

By Shari Schubert

Baptist Press
2/1/96

ST. LOUIS (BP)--Bill Fay has taught thousands of people his plan for sharing the gospel without an argument, but he claimed, "I have never led one person to Jesus Christ.

"I have seen God do it," he quickly added.

Success, Fay told Missourians attending the Jan. 15-16 state evangelism conference in St. Louis, is "sharing your faith, living your life out for Jesus. It has nothing whatsoever to do with bringing anyone to Christ.

"If you cause the conversion, they are not saved."

Fay, an evangelist based in Englewood, Colo., shared his own testimony to make his point. Raised by a godly mother who prayed for him continually until she died from cancer, Fay rejected her faith and sought what the world had to offer. He became president and CEO of a multi-million-dollar corporation. He was the owner of a large house of prostitution. He was involved in racketeering, bookmaking and gambling. He had it all in a worldly sense, "but I sure wasn't OK," he recalled.

To get away from the stress, he would go to a ranch in Colorado. "Every time I got up there, I just felt super." In fact, it was painfully hard to leave. Eventually he figured out why. "The place was loaded with Christians."

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In a meadow one day, he encountered a young man who talked to him about the difference between happiness -- which always comes to an end -- and inner peace. "He said inner peace was being OK regardless of the circumstances in your life He said you only find inner peace with a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I cursed him and I walked out of that meadow," Fay recounted.

Other Christians shared their witness as well. "If you were one of those servants that in obedience to Christ dared enter my life, you would have been guaranteed insult, persecution and antagonism," Fay said. "But if you walked away from me believing you had failed, you believed a lie, because I never forgot the name, the face, the person or the words of Christ that came into my life."

Preaching from 2 Kings 4:29-37, Fay compared Elijah's task of raising the Shunamite woman's son from the dead to the task Christians have in the world today.

"You and I are commanded to deal with the dead," Fay said. "Who are they? They are everywhere -- in neighborhoods, churches, schools and homes. We are talking about people who are spiritually dead.

"How in the world," Fay asked, "can we remain active in the sin of silence?"

Out of every 100 conversions, he noted, only 15 percent take place at an event such as an evangelistic service or a crusade. The other 85 percent are people who have heard the gospel in a one-on-one setting. Fay added that the average person has to hear the gospel 7.6 times before he will accept Christ.

"Do you have only Christian friends?" he asked the pastors, directors of missions, associational directors of evangelism and others attending the evangelism conference. He warned them against becoming critics of the saved instead of fishers of the lost.

"Ninety percent of us who claim the name of Christ have become clearly ashamed of the gospel," Fay declared. No one in our churches would deny Christ like Simon Peter did, Fay asserted, "but they have found a modern way to deny the Savior. They have learned to deny him by their silence."

Too many people are satisfied with offering little tidbits of the gospel, Fay said. They tell somebody God loves him, tell him they go to church, tell him they'll pray for him. They put a bumper sticker on their car, or if they're really brave, they hold up one of those John 3:16 signs at a football game.

The problem with a tidbit -- as anyone knows who has been really hungry and tried to make a meal out of a spread of hors d'oeuvres and "microscopic sandwiches" -- is that they don't fill you up, Fay said. "Nobody becomes filled 'til they hear, understand and receive the gospel -- not the tidbit -- of Jesus Christ," he insisted.

In what he described as a participatory session, Fay gave an overview of the seminar he teaches on "How to Share the Gospel Without an Argument."

The approach begins with a series of opening questions:

- Do you have any kind of spiritual belief?
- To you, who is Jesus?
- Do you think there is a heaven or hell?
- If you fell over and died, where would you go? If the answer is heaven: Why would God let you in?

Whatever the person's answer, the person sharing listens without argument. Then he asks: If what you believed was not true, would you want to know? If the person responds yes, Fay said, "I have permission to go on."

The next step is to have the person read aloud Bible verses such as Romans 3:23 and 6:23, John 3:3, John 14:6, Romans 10:9-11, 1 John 5:11-12 and Revelation 3:20. With each Scripture, the person is asked: What does this say to you?

Fay paused in his presentation to urge pastors not to carry a "boomer" -- at this point he held up a large, brown leather pulpit Bible -- when they go out to witness. "That's a very intimidating book to a pagan." He suggested a pocket-size Bible with only the verses marked that will be used in the gospel presentation.

If the person's response to a Scripture verse shows he has not understood, the response from the person sharing is simply, "Read it again."

Stay out of God's work, Fay advised. "I am the presenter of the Bread of Life. I can't make them eat it."

In the final step of the presentation, five questions are asked:

- Are you a sinner?
- Do you want forgiveness of sins?
- Do you believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for you and rose again?
- Are you willing to surrender your life to Jesus Christ?
- Are you ready to invite Jesus Christ into your life and into your heart?

Printed materials detailing Fay's plan for gospel sharing and information about his ministry are available through Hope Ministries, 5789 South Geneva, Englewood, CO 80111.

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Rebuke the 'bubba spirit'
Ratliff urges churches

By Shari Schubert

Baptist Press
2/1/96

ST. LOUIS (BP)--On the day Americans celebrated the birthday of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., African American pastor Joe Ratliff told a predominantly white Missouri audience, "This classism stuff is worse than racism."

Ratliff introduced the term "buppies" to describe the black, upwardly mobile professionals he preaches to at Brentwood Baptist Church in Houston. In one of two messages to the Jan. 15-16 Missouri Baptist Evangelism Conference, Ratliff issued a call for yuppies and buppies to rebuke the "bubba spirit" in their churches that keeps them from welcoming people Christ died to redeem.

That spirit, Ratliff said, is seen in the attitude of the jealous older brother in the story of the prodigal son. Ratliff summarized the first part of the story in a sentence, saying the younger brother "runs off, cuts up, wastes it and comes home." Rather than rejoicing with his father over the prodigal's return, the older brother responded in anger.

Ratliff told about a tall, attractive woman who came to his church one Sunday and asked permission to speak. She told the congregation, "I've been in prison for the last seven years. My mama said that your church has been giving Christmas to my children. While I was in jail I met Christ, and when I got out I said I wanted to come to the church that ministered to my family."

After the service, Ratliff recalled, "one of my good men stopped me and said, 'Now, pastor.' I said, 'Yes.' 'Walk with me.' We walked to my office. He says, 'Did she tell you what she was in jail for?'"

"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," Ratliff reminded the evangelism conference audience. "God is able to reverse whatever! ... If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature."

Ratliff then shared his own story. "My mother was a 14-year-old teen-age mother. I was born out of wedlock. I didn't know who my father was 'til I was a senior in high school.

"I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore," Ratliff continued, quoting the words of the hymn "Love Lifted Me."

"Very deeply stained with schizophrenia and paranoia, pretending and hoping and anxious and angry and fed up -- sinking to rise no more," he recounted. "But that night the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry, and from those waters he lifted me. Hallelujah! ... I'm safe! I'm saved!"

"He picked me up and turned me around," Ratliff said, "and made something out of me."

The Missouri evangelism conference was held at Fee Fee Baptist Church, St. Louis.

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**Johnsonius to direct program
for SWBTS' internationals**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Jan Johnsonius, public relations director at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary since February 1995, has been named director of international student services at the Fort Worth, Texas, school, effective Feb. 1.

She fills the position formerly held by Jeanne Burns, who resigned Dec. 20 to accept the position of director of childhood ministry at Southcliff Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

Brian M. Smith, public relations office managing editor since August 1995, will be interim public relations director.

"God's call on my life continues to be missions and ministry on an international level," Johnsonius said. "This position provides me the opportunity to fulfill that call while continuing to work on my master of divinity degree. I look forward to getting to know our international students, ministering to them and helping them get better equipped for their ministry in their homeland."

Southwestern is "more and more an international seminary, and the possibilities of partnering in theological education with Baptists from around the world are limitless," she said.

"She is so gifted and has such a love for international work," said Lawrence Klempnauer, vice president for student services. "We look forward to her service in this area. It's an ideal opportunity for our international community and for her missions ministry."

"We regret that Jan left the PR office," said Jack W. Terry Jr., vice president for institutional advancement, "but our remorse is tempered by the fact that she'll have the opportunity to get back on the mission field as quickly as possible."

A native of Springfield, Ohio, Johnsonius is a graduate of Murray State University in Murray, Ky.

She and her husband, Jim, were appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board as missionaries to Argentina in June 1991. On Aug. 1, 1993, they were involved in an auto accident outside Buenos Aires in which he was killed and she was seriously injured. After several months of recuperation, she returned to the United States where she worked as a special assignment writer for the FMB in Richmond, Va., prior to coming to Southwestern.

She is a member of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth.

Smith, a graduate of Sante Fe Community College in Gainesville, Fla., and Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., formerly was a newswriter for Word & Way, the weekly newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention. He was a newswriter for Southwestern Seminary from 1993-94, and covered the Crossover India and William Carey Bicentennial Celebrations in Calcutta, India, for the Foreign Mission Board in November 1993.

Smith also was production manager for Dynamic Media, Inc., a audio\visual production agency in Nashville, Tenn.

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