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**Missionary speaker dies
in midst of church visit**

By Mary E. Speidel

**Baptist Press
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EASLEY, S.C. (BP)--Irene Lawson, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary to Italy, died Oct. 30 while presenting a program on missions at Rock Springs Baptist Church in Easley, S.C.

Doctors said Lawson, 54, probably died of a cerebral aneurysm, according to her son, Marion Lawson, a member of the church. He was among the 600 to 700 people attending the church's Wednesday night prayer meeting, where his mother and father, Ken Lawson, were featured speakers. The Lawsons, who lead an international Baptist church in Rome, were on furlough in Easley, her hometown.

The Lawsons were showing a video on their ministry when she slumped against her husband, who was sitting beside her. Several medical professionals in the audience tried unsuccessfully to revive her. She later was pronounced dead at Baptist Medical Center-Easley.

At the same time Lawson suffered the apparent aneurysm, the video featured her playing on the piano the hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story," said David Gallamore, the church's pastor.

Just before starting the video, Lawson related her call to foreign missions. "I'd heard her (tell that) many times, but I've never heard her do a more beautiful job than she did that night," said her son. "She was doing exactly what God wanted her to do and was at peace with her work and her life."

Lawson cited Christ's command to love him more than parents and children and noted what obeying that was like for her as a foreign missionary.

"She said when she felt called to foreign missions, she told God that she'd go anywhere and do anything he asked her to do -- if he'd take care of her two sons," Gallamore said. She told how God answered her prayer.

"Her message and the surrounding elements will continue to speak to our (congregation) for a long time," the pastor said. At the family's request, a recording of her Oct. 30 testimony was to be played during her funeral.

Since 1985 the Lawsons had worked with Rome Baptist Church, an English-language congregation where Lawson is pastor. The church's membership includes people from nearly 40 countries. Worshipers range from diplomats to refugees. The church also has started Filipino and Chinese congregations in Rome.

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"(Rome Baptist) is a leading model of international church ministries," said Roger Briggs, the Foreign Mission Board's associate area director for Europe. "The Lawsons were doing a fantastic job." Their work was highlighted in the 1995 emphasis for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

Before the Lawsons were appointed missionaries by the Foreign Mission Board in 1983, Lawson was a teacher in Greenville, S.C., and a kindergarten teacher at Siloam Baptist Church in Easley. She received the bachelor of arts degree from Furman University in Greenville and the master of religious education degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.

Besides her husband, Lawson is survived by her mother, Ruth Sightler of Greenville; two sons, Marion Lawson of Easley and Michael Lawson of Taylors, S.C.; a sister; two brothers; and two grandchildren.

Funeral services were scheduled for Nov. 1 at Rock Springs Baptist Church, Easley. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial contributions to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, c/o Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.

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(BP) photo (mug shot) mailed 10/31/96 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

**Gambling panel picks tardy;
both sides protest selections**

By Tom Strode

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WASHINGTON (BP)--Four weeks past the deadline for appointment of a panel to study gambling's impact on society, only four of nine members have been named, and some of those selections have elicited protests from people on both sides of the issue.

So far, the appointees to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission are the chief executive officer of a casino, two people affiliated with the conservative Focus on the Family organization, and a Mississippi physician.

The contradictory nature of the appointments and the battle over the commission's make-up are illustrated in the selections announced Oct. 28 by Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich, R.-Ga. Gingrich named Terrence Lanni, CEO and chairman of the board of MGM Grand Inc., a gambling, entertainment and hotel company based in Las Vegas, and Kay Coles James, a Focus on the Family board member and dean of the school of government at Regent University, where Pat Robertson is chancellor.

Previously, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R.-Miss., had named James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, and Paul Moore, a radiologist and friend of Lott from Pascagoula, Miss.

While Lanni is a gambling industry official and James and Dobson are considered gambling opponents, Moore reportedly is neutral on the issue.

The legislation establishing the commission calls for a two-year study of the social and economic effects of gambling on government, communities, families, businesses and individuals. The panel is to have three members appointed by the president, three by the Senate majority leader and three by the speaker of the House, all within 60 days after President Clinton signed it into law. The deadline for the appointments was Oct. 3.

While Lott and Gingrich made two appointments each, they also gave one apiece to the minority leaders, Sen. Tom Daschle, D.-S.D., and Rep. Richard Gephardt, D.-Mo. Such action is a congressional tradition, Capitol Hill staff members said. Daschle and Gephardt have not announced their choices.

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Clinton also has not named his selections. The president plans, however, to appoint Bill Bible, chairman of the Nevada Gaming Control Board, to the panel, the Las Vegas Sun has reported. Bible has been chairman of the state's gambling regulatory agency for eight years.

The appointment of a casino CEO has outraged gambling opponents, who also have expressed disappointment at Gingrich allowing, in essence, an appointment to be made by Rep. John Ensign, R.-Nev., a former casino general manager. Ensign recommended Lanni.

"I think it is a mistake of colossal proportions to name someone who receives his livelihood from gambling to a commission to study the impact of gambling upon society," said Will Dodson, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's director of government relations.

"I am disappointed that out of 435 members of the House the speaker of the House would give one of his selections away to a representative from Las Vegas, Nev., who is a former casino manager. It demonstrates again that when it comes down to a choice between the special interests of the well-funded and well-connected few and what is obviously in the best interests of the American public that the American public often loses. We should expect, no, demand better."

Before Gingrich's choices were announced, Rep. Frank Wolf, R.-Va., chief House sponsor of the legislation establishing the commission, expressed incredulity at reports the speaker had given a choice to Ensign, who would in turn pick a casino operator.

"Why would Congressman Ensign from Nevada be making a choice?" Wolf said in an Oct. 10 news conference. "He represents his district, which is understandably biased in favor of the gambling industry.

"I don't think I should have a choice, because I too am admittedly biased on the issue. I shouldn't get a choice. I don't want a choice. And the other side shouldn't either."

Gambling industry officials and members of Congress from Nevada criticized Lott's selection of Dobson. Lott allowed Sen. Dan Coats, R.-Ind., to make one of his selections. Coats recommended Dobson, who has been outspoken about moral decline in recent years and who served on the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography in President Reagan's second term.

He would pick a gambling advocate to offset Dobson's selection, Ensign said before Lanni's appointment was announced.

"They put people on the other side. We're trying to balance them out," Ensign said, the Las Vegas Sun reported. "We have to make sure Nevada's interests are protected."

Such an argument is flawed, the CLC's Dodson said.

"The problem with that analysis is that the individuals who have reputations of being against gambling as the vice that it is are not on the payrolls of an anti-gambling industry," Dodson said. "Their livelihoods do not depend upon gambling, one way or the other. Their prejudices, if they exist, are a matter of principle. This cannot be said about someone who is appointed who is on the payroll of the gambling industry. His judgment will always be in question, not because of his principles but because of the principal source of his income."

Wolf remains hopeful his legislation will achieve its intent.

"It was his hope from the beginning that the commission would be able to produce an objective evaluation of the effects of gambling," said David Whitestone, Wolf's press secretary, "and it's still his hope."

The law requires the commission to make its report no more than two years after its first meeting. The cost of the commission will be about \$5 million, according to a Congressional Budget Office estimate.

The last national study of gambling came in 1976, when few states had legalized gambling. Twenty years later, only Utah and Hawaii have no form of legal gambling.

The House of Representatives passed the bill July 22 by voice vote, following by only five days Senate approval. Sen. Paul Simon, D.-Ill., was the chief Senate sponsor.

The CLC was among the many supporters of the legislation. Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in June approved a resolution endorsing a gambling commission.

The developments concerning the make-up of the commission caused the CLC's Dobson to add, "Frankly, as concerned as I am about the negative impact of gambling upon our culture, I'm even more concerned about the lack of moral, principled leadership in this country. I know I sound somewhat harsh in my assessment, but I really do think we need to pray for leadership which sees itself as accountable first and foremost to God."

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**Kelley recounts pilgrimage
to New Orleans' presidency**

By Debbie Moore

**Baptist Press
11/1/96**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--You know deep within your heart God wants you to do something, yet you see no possible way it can become a reality.

Chuck Kelley lived with that knowledge and its associated frustrations for nearly two years. But until that point in his life, "everything I've ever done in my life has been a surprise," said Kelley during his inaugural sermon Sunday morning, Oct. 27, at First Baptist Church of New Orleans. Kelley was officially installed as eighth president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on Tuesday morning, Oct. 29, in a service on the seminary campus.

A star athlete and leader during his high school years in Beaumont, Texas, he suddenly and surprisingly felt called of God not only to preach, but also to be an evangelist. The next year as a college student at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, he fulfilled that calling immediately as he became the pastor of Ireland Baptist Church in Ireland, Texas, and through responsibilities as assistant director of the campus Baptist Student Union. After he completed the bachelor of arts degree in philosophy in 1974, he knew God would want him more fully prepared, so he went to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where he completed the master of divinity degree with a specialization in biblical studies in 1978.

And he thought that was it -- time to hit the road and preach.

But God surprised him again, he said, making it plain through several circumstances that he was to sign up for the doctoral program.

"I didn't understand why an itinerant evangelist would need to go on for the doctor of theology degree," Kelley said, "but I knew beyond the shadow of a doubt after I completed my master of divinity at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary that that was exactly what God wanted me to do." During his years of post-graduate study he practiced evangelism techniques in "the city that care forgot," in the section of town known for its "laissez-faire" ("leave it alone") attitude: New Orleans' infamous French Quarter.

In 1983 he completed the doctor of theology degree at NOBTS specializing in preaching.

And, again, he thought that was it -- time to pack the suitcases and preach in the four corners of the earth. Now it's time to be that itinerant evangelist, he thought.

But God surprised him again, he said. He hardly had time to put up his graduation regalia before he had a call from the seminary president, Landrum Leavell, who wanted him to join the faculty as an evangelism professor in the fall.

"I did not want to teach," Kelley said. He wanted to preach, conduct revivals, do soul-winning out in the milieu, get the gospel out to the masses who had not heard about God's salvation. It bothered him that so many people were unchurched and that so many churches were plateaued or declining. He wanted to do something about it. But he knew in his heart that the professorship was the right thing to do, and he enjoyed his assignment completely.

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But then after teaching for 11 years, something strange and very out of the ordinary occurred during the summer of 1994, Kelley said. Even though Leavell had not said a word about retiring yet, "I knew God was impressing on my heart that he wanted me to be the next president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary," Kelley said.

"This was so out of character for me. Nothing had ever been revealed to me ahead of time. Besides that, I already had the dream life. I was not only a professor of evangelism, I was director of the seminary's Center for Evangelism and Church Growth. I was doing everything I loved.

"How could anyone think that someone as ordinary as me could be the president of one of the largest seminaries in the world?" The only one he could confide in was his wife of 20 years, Rhonda.

When the day came in December 1994 when Leavell announced his retirement, "Rhonda and I went home that night and prayed together and said simultaneously, 'Well, we'll just have to wait and see what happens.'"

What happened was total silence, Kelley said.

"The search committee had no interest in me, to my knowledge," he said. Eleven months passed and no one ever said a word to him about the possibility of his being considered even as a possibility.

"I thought I was totally misunderstanding God when I heard him telling me in my heart that he wanted me to be the next president," Kelley said.

But at the same time, he was also besieged by offers from others to leave the seminary, a place he and his wife had planted their lives. Three different times they gave serious consideration to giving up the dream they believed God had given them, but each time the Lord intervened and said, "Wait."

Then one afternoon a year ago, October 1995, Kelley read in a Baptist Press release that the seminary's search committee had made their choice. They had found someone, "and it wasn't me."

"You can't imagine how I felt," Kelley said. "Here I was with the conviction that God wanted me to do something, but I saw no possible way for it to come about."

He seriously considered another opportunity to leave the seminary, but he heard God say to him, "Would you rather have what you can get, or what I can provide for you?"

Kelley drafted a letter to urge the NOBTS faculty to support the search committee's candidate, but he ended up not mailing the letter because a few days after the announcement the candidate withdrew his name from further consideration.

Two more months went by. Another semester was completed at seminary. It was time for Christmas vacations. "Fifteen minutes before we were to drive off, I had a call from someone on the search committee," asking if he could arrange a time for an interview after the holidays. Two months later, on Feb. 23, 1996, the seminary's board of trustees, upon the unanimous approval of the search committee, voted unanimously to elect Kelley as the eighth president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Concluding his sermon, Kelley read what has always been one of his favorite Scripture passages, Jeremiah 33:3: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

"God is willing to speak to you and to clarify what he wants you to do, if you are willing to accept what he wants to provide," Kelley said. "You don't have to have a crisis to hear God speak if you are willing to call out to him and listen right now.

"What God has done in my life is nothing more than an illustration of what he wants to do in your life."

**NOBTS inauguration week
featured community events**

By Debbie Moore

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--At a time when music often seems to facilitate harmony, an interracial, intergenerational and interdenominational mass choir and orchestra joined together twice on the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during inaugural week events, Sunday-Tuesday, Oct. 27-29.

A community worship experience on Sunday night brought together nearly all of the 100-plus churches and missions in the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans. On Tuesday night, the day of the inauguration, a choir composed of men, women and young people from many churches in not only the greater New Orleans area, but also from other cities in southeast Louisiana, joined together to present the musical worship experience "God With Us."

"God's angels descended on me and touched me in a way I can't describe," was one of many comments received through the NOBTS division of church music ministries throughout the week as New Orleanians and guests to the campus for the inauguration of Charles S. Kelley Jr. expressed their appreciation for the event.

"This musical ('God With Us') is being used across our country in an extraordinary way to touch thousands of lives," said Sidney Buckley, chairman of the seminary's division of church music ministries. "It was awesome to witness the response of the people as they took part in this worship experience and thrilling to see God working in our midst," said Ken Gabrielse, director of the event and assistant professor of church music at New Orleans Seminary.

Accompanied by seminary orchestra members and local union musicians, the "God With Us" choir was composed of choir members from numerous area churches, each wearing their church choir robes. The colorful display in front of the chapel was further enhanced by six-foot banners all around the room, each artistically bearing a scriptural name for Jesus such as "Lamb of God," "King of Kings," and "Rose of Sharon." Banners were handmade by members of the First Baptist Church of Kenner, La.; Calvary Baptist Church of New Orleans; and Trinity Evangelical Free Church of Covington, La.

"The excitement was high in not only the music building, but also across the campus and throughout the area as we anticipated the upcoming performance of this powerful worship experience," Gabrielse said. Rehearsals started in early September and were held on the campus weekly until the performance.

"We enjoy performing a wide variety of sacred music here at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary," Buckley said. "This unique production was a contemporary style of worship," which included such nontraditional elements as a praise team and a band with electric guitar and drums.

Graham Smith, music director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention, narrated the presentation. Worship leader was Mark Foley, vice president for student development and institutional research and planning at New Orleans Seminary.

The highlight of the evening, Buckley said, was when Smith started in Genesis and went on through each of the 66 books in the Bible, reciting the names of Jesus presented in each book. As Smith finished, the audience on their own initiative rose to their feet and burst forth in applause. "The spirit of the Lord was present in a powerful way," Buckley said.

The inaugural week began Sunday, Oct. 27, with Kelley preaching during the morning worship service at New Orleans' First Baptist Church. That night, all of the churches in the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans were invited to join in a community worship experience on the seminary campus. Local pastors, music ministers and choir members had many roles in the service.

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Increased community involvement has been a growing emphasis at the seminary. For several years on the first Monday night in December, the seminary's division of church music ministries has sponsored one of New Orleans' first holiday events, a "Messiah Sing-Along." For several years at Eastertime, the seminary's choir has invited a college choir to sing with them in the famous St. Louis Cathedral in the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter.

Last October the seminary hosted a successful mass choir musical worship event, bringing together singers from 40 churches. This past spring Kelley hosted a luncheon at the seminary for the district city councilman and administrators of the four area schools of higher learning in the district, the University of New Orleans, Dillard University, Southern University of New Orleans and New Orleans Seminary. The councilman, Roy Glapion, presented his idea of a joint community project with participation from each of the area universities and the seminary.

In addition, during Kelley's inauguration, both the councilman and the mayor were not only present, but also spoke during the service.

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(BP) photos (color & black & white) available upon request from the NOBTS office of public relations; send e-mail requests to pr@nobts.edu or call 1-800-NOBTS-01, ext. 3292.

**Mississippi Baptists approve
covenant with its institutions**

By Tim Nicholas

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JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The Mississippi Baptist Convention, running shorter and smaller than in previous years, approved by a substantial majority sweeping changes in the relationship between the convention and its institutions.

The convention, meeting at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Oct. 29-30, also unanimously approved a \$24 million Cooperative Program budget for 1997 without discussion from the floor, and re-elected Jimmy Porter, pastor of First Baptist Church, McComb, unopposed for a second one-year term as president.

Resolutions included opposition to expansion of gambling in the state.

Messengers totaled 1,557, the smallest number in recent years, in four sessions, shortened from five in 1995.

Messengers approved a recommendation from the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board centering on a covenant of cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center, Baptist Children's Village, Blue Mountain College, William Carey College and Mississippi College.

Each new trustee of these institutions will yearly sign the covenant which notes that they will work to keep the institution "Christian in its purpose, solid in its business practices, compassionate in its ministry, and our judgments as near the mind of Christ as possible."

In addition, by convention vote, trustees of the hospital, the children's village, Blue Mountain and Carey will jointly nominate along with the convention's nominating committee new trustees prior to election at the convention. This is essentially the same system already in place for Mississippi College trustees.

Also, each institution will be allowed to have between 15 to 24 trustees, instead of a limit of 15 as before. And the convention promised to support "our institutions with our prayers, encouragement, and financial support."

This relationship change was brought about by the intersection of several events, each affecting the other.

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First, two years ago, Mississippi College trustees voted to withdraw from the convention, planning on electing their own trustees. Frantic negotiations brought the college back into the MBC fold, but with the concession that MC trustees would be able to nominate their own replacements with MBC nominating committee and convention approval.

In the wake of that move, Bill Causey, the convention board's executive director-treasurer, was asked to study the charters of the other institutions and make recommendations to prevent such a withdrawal among the convention's other institutions.

At the 1995 convention, read into the minutes was a proposed constitutional change which would require 24 trustees per institution and prevent any charter change without convention approval.

Then in June, in anticipation of the possibility of that constitutional change, trustees of the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center withdrew from the convention in order to retain the ability to continue operating the hospital according to state law. Bill Causey noted that proposal "spooked the Baptist hospital."

At this year's convention, John Voss, legal counsel for the hospital, and pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, said the hospital all along reaffirmed its intent to retain its relationship with Mississippi Baptists, but that the hospital was required to retain "final determination of all corporate matters."

A substitute motion which would have left nomination and election of trustees exclusively in the hands of the nominating committee and messengers failed by a substantial margin. A second substitute motion called for a year of study before implementation. That also failed.

Causey said no other institution lost to Baptists had ever been brought back into the fold. Mississippi Baptists have brought two back in: Mississippi College and the Mississippi Baptist Medical Center.

The 1997 Cooperative Program budget of \$24,145,086 is to be divided 37 percent, or \$8,933,682, for Southern Baptist Convention causes outside the state and 63 percent for Mississippi causes. The percentage division has been in effect for several years.

In addition to Porter as president, the convention elected David Raddin, pastor of First Baptist Church, Yazoo City, as first vice president, and Martin Hayden, pastor of Liberty (Miss.) Baptist Church, as second vice president.

All resolutions passed without opposition. One derided attempts to expand casino gambling to inland waterways in the state. Current law limits casinos to navigable waterways and the Choctaw Indian Reservation.

Another resolution noted support for the building of a lodge at Camp Garaywa, a girls camp operated by Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union in Clinton. And another resolution promised to encourage leaders of Mississippi Baptist institutions "to preserve the original purposes ... that would keep them tied to our beloved Mississippi Baptist Convention."

The 1997 convention will be Oct. 28-29 at First Baptist, Jackson.

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**CBF-related leaders asked
for views of Godsey book**

By Keith Hinson

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MACON, Ga. (BP)--When the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was formed in 1991, one of the reasons cited by CBF founders was the tightening of theological boundaries within the Southern Baptist Convention.

A conservative movement begun in 1979 had elected an unbroken string of SBC presidents, thereby gaining control of denominational committees and boards. SBC presidents expressed strong resolve to see only fellow inerrantists appointed to denominational posts.

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Now another debate about theological parameters has been sparked by a new book, "When We Talk About God ... Let's Be Honest" (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1996).

Written by Mercer University President R. Kirby Godsey, the book has provoked controversy in the Georgia Baptist Convention over Godsey's alleged universalism -- the belief all people eventually will be saved and no one will spend an eternity in hell.

The GBC executive board passed a resolution Sept. 9 calling for Godsey to "prayerfully reconsider his theological convictions" and to refrain from publishing doctrine "foreign to Baptists' traditional understanding of Scripture."

A reviewer in the Aug. 29 edition of The Christian Index, newspaper of the Georgia convention, suggested Godsey's book espouses other problematic doctrines, such as: the Bible is not inerrant, doctrinal soundness is unimportant, God is not all-powerful and Jesus is not God.

The book also has attracted attention outside the SBC, including the lead article in a recent issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., said the book "represents the repudiation of Christianity's most central doctrines and truth claims. ... Dr. Godsey casts his lot with those who have departed from biblical faith of the church and have remade the faith into a spiritual search fully compatible with modern secularism."

Mohler agreed Godsey "has indeed written an honest book -- and we should honor his candor and honesty. ... His book offers believers yet another opportunity to affirm biblical truth in the face of its rejection."

Another seminary president acknowledged he had not yet read the book, but Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., indicated he has heard about the book from several Georgia Baptists.

Patterson predicted that in two years Mercer University will have become "a former Baptist institution," similar to universities elsewhere once supported by state Baptist conventions.

In recent telephone interviews, leaders in the CBF and CBF-funded institutions were asked for their impressions of Godsey's book and the ongoing debate over how much doctrinal diversity is appropriate.

Opinions ranged from a strong endorsement by former CBF moderator Hardy Clemons to the view of Russell Dilday, distinguished professor of homiletics at Truett Seminary at Baylor University, who praised the book's candor but was strongly critical of its theology.

Others who granted interviews were Cecil Sherman, retired CBF coordinator; Bill Leonard, dean of Wake Forest University's divinity school; and Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, former CBF moderator and executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, from 1974-1989. Richard Jackson, former pastor of North Phoenix (Ariz.) Baptist Church, declined to be interviewed at length but made a few brief comments.

Daniel Vestal, pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston and CBF coordinator-elect, also declined an offer to send him a copy of the book for later comment. He said the book's publication is not a CBF matter but one for the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Molly Marshall, a professor at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kan., also declined an interview, citing what she said was past unfair coverage by Baptist Press.

Godsey's book has entered its third printing, with 9,000 copies in print, said Cecil Staton, Smyth & Helwys publisher and president. "Already, frankly, the book has done better than we anticipated. This is a serious theological work. Any publisher would have been happy to sell 5,000 copies of this book. ... I think easily it will probably go to (10,000)."

Commenting on a key aspect of theology in Godsey's book, former CBF moderator Clemons, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, S.C., said he wonders "why someone would accuse Dr. Godsey of having a low Christology. ... I think that's an unfair characterization. It makes me wonder if that person read the book."

Just as Unitarians overemphasize God the Father and Pentecostals overemphasize God the Spirit, Clemons said, some of Godsey's critics overemphasize God the Son.

"I think fundamentalism in Baptist circles overemphasizes Jesus the Christ to the point that they become docetic: ... (that) Jesus seemed to be human, but he was not really human. ...

"As I have observed Baptist theology in the last 20 years, I would say we have moved more and more and more away from trinitarianism toward what I think could -- in some cases -- be accurately diagnosed as a 'Jesus-olatry,'" said Clemons, pronouncing a word that rhymes with "idolatry."

"Jesus said, 'I am the door,'" Clemons continued. "I interpret that to mean, 'I am the door to God.' I don't think you go to that door and worship the door. You go through the door to where the door leads.

"Jesus said, 'I am the way.' I interpret that to mean the way to God. You don't go to a way and sit down and say, 'I have found the way.' You go to the way, and once you have found the way, you follow. You don't build three tabernacles and write a creed," Clemons declared.

However, Dilday, who was president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, from 1978-94, indicated he disagrees with many aspects of Godsey's "weak Christology" and criticized Godsey's "reluctance to acknowledge that Jesus is God's ultimate revelation."

Former CBF moderator Sherman said he has not read the book but plans to do so. However, he said he will not offer public comment about the book's contents. Sherman also stated strong personal support for Godsey.

"What would you do if someone who has been a constant friend to you were under attack by one group of people? Kirby Godsey has been a constant friend to me," Sherman noted.

Some theological parameters in Baptist life are appropriate, Sherman indicated. "The line ought to be something about 'Who is Jesus?' In 1 John, the text says, 'Who is the antichrist but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.' Well, if somebody really does that, then probably we ought to break fellowship with them.

"But nobody I know has argued in the last 15 years that the people opposing them were Unitarians. Now maybe that's what a few of them are -- and I might come over and vote with the fundamentalists if you could really find me some Unitarians. But I haven't found any," Sherman said.

Clemons agreed some theological boundaries are appropriate. "I would not want to hire a colleague on my staff who was an atheist or who was a Unitarian or who was a Pentecostal. ... I would want the parameters to be framed in terms of a confession of faith more than a creed or a litmus test."

Asked if he had doctrinal differences with any of Godsey's ideas in the book, Clemons said, "I doubt seriously I would have agreed with everything he said. I really didn't read it from that point of view. ... When I read a new book, I try to learn from it -- and I learn from getting new ideas or new information, or I learn from being challenged with an idea I don't agree with."

Ongoing discussions over where to set theological boundaries are both legitimate and important, said Wake Forest's Leonard, who formerly chaired the religion department at Samford University in Alabama and has written numerous articles and books on historical topics.

"Baptists live in what I call this very creative and terrible tension between the conscience of the individual and the commitments of the community," noted Leonard, who said he has not read the book. "The community does have a right to say, to determine this. Sometimes the community is right when it makes these determinations and acts on them. Sometimes it's wrong."

Crumpler commended Godsey's effort to verbalize his beliefs and praised his emphasis on listening to God through the church, through Scripture and through disciplined devotion.

In an interview before she had finished reading the book, Crumpler said she disagrees with what she had heard was the book's universalism. "My whole concept of missions is that Jesus commands us to share his Word with everybody and that people can't make a decision without knowing about Jesus Christ."

Later, after reading the rest of the book, Crumpler added, "I think I feel more like just saying simply, 'I don't agree with all of his findings in his personal devotional pilgrimage.'"

Jackson, now an evangelist living in Granbury, Texas, said he did not want to comment on the book. "I appreciate much of the book. ... Probably if I wrote down what I believe -- there would be places somebody wouldn't agree with it. ... I just really don't think I'm qualified nor in a position to say anything. ... I just don't feel I can say it enough and say it properly to where I won't be misunderstood by some."

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An additional story is posted in SBCNet News Room. A statement by R. Albert Mohler Jr. is scheduled to be posted in the News Room the week of Nov. 4.

Dilday's view of Godsey book entails strengths, weaknesses

By Keith Hinson

**Baptist Press
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WACO, Texas (BP)--A new book by a Baptist college president has a few good qualities but more troubling weaknesses, according to Russell Dilday, distinguished professor of homiletics at Truett Seminary of Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Dilday served as president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, from 1978-94.

But Dilday said he doubts R. Kirby Godsey, president of Mercer University, Macon, Ga., is surprised at the criticism from Baptists in Georgia and elsewhere of the book, "When We Talk About God ... Let's Be Honest."

In the book, Godsey said he intends to speak with candor, Dilday noted. "I get the impression he knows there's going to be reaction to his approach -- and there certainly has been and certainly should be," Dilday said, "because I think his views in large part fall outside the parameter of what most Baptists would hold theologically."

Dilday listed several strengths and weaknesses of the book in a recent telephone interview. Among the strengths Dilday cited were:

- Godsey's honesty and invitation to readers to dialogue with him about his "faith claims."
- emphases that faith must be expressed in the marketplace and that doubt is not a sin.
- a call to "study the Bible in the context of the church, listening to the judgment of fellow believers."
- an emphasis that faith should be reasonable and that there is no contradiction between faith and reason.

- an emphasis on love and relationships as the essence of true faith.

- rejection of "professionalistic religion" and a call for vibrant, authentic faith.

However, one of the key weaknesses Dilday cited was Godsey's Christology, which Dilday termed as "weak," citing several examples from the book:

- that people do not need to accept or reject what Christ has done and said. "I think he has said something and done something that we're supposed to decide on," Dilday stated.

- that replacing the Jewish temple with the Christian church was not the focus of Jesus' ministry. "While that may not have been the main thing Jesus came to do," Dilday noted, "the implication is there that the church was not his plan and that he would have been just as happy to see the Jewish temple continue -- and I don't think that's true."

--more--

-- that Jesus' followers mistakenly defined him as a divine figure to be worshiped. "In several places, (Godsey) makes the point that it was not Jesus' plan that he would be recognized as deity or be worshiped. Godsey says the message of the Christian faith is not to worship Jesus but to follow him," Dilday said, adding Godsey's belief is contradicted by a verse from Philippians 2 that says, "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" that Jesus is Lord.

-- that Jesus' virgin birth may not be historical. "He really minimizes that. ... He says the virgin birth is not a fact but a truth," Dilday stated. "But it's kind of a roundabout way of saying he doesn't hold to it, that it's not an essential doctrine."

-- that Jesus is not God. "That contradicts what Jesus said about 'I and the Father are one' and 'If you've seen me, you've seen the Father,'" Dilday said.

Dilday acknowledged Godsey's theology would have excluded him faculty status at SWBTS. "With these views, a person would not have been able to teach at Southwestern. We've not set our parameters yet here (at Truett Seminary). ... I'm sure that Truett would adopt something like the Baptist Faith and Message statement. These views (of Godsey's) would be contradictory to that and therefore would not allow that person to be here."

In other areas of theology, Dilday said Godsey's view of the church often comes across as cynical. "All through (the book), I get the feeling that, as the author, he has a strong cynicism about the church -- and it's not really veiled that much. He's cynical about preachers, theologians, denominations and orthodoxy. That tells me that his experience was probably a distorted view of faith instead of authentic church experience, and he's reacting to it."

Also troubling, Dilday said, were Godsey's claims he "learned more about faith at the soda fountain than at church" and "the Bible and the church become barriers between us and God's light."

Godsey does not see the Bible as a "boundary of belief," Dilday said. "But Baptists have said it's our only authority for faith and practice," Dilday stated.

Another problematic teaching about the Bible is Godsey's belief that Jesus tried to lead his disciples beyond the Scripture, Dilday said. By contrast, Dilday said he agrees with John Calvin who taught "God may speak through the Spirit, or He may speak through nature. But He never would speak to us in ways that are beyond or contradictory to Scripture."

Dilday also disputed what he called Godsey's claim that the "Bible does not command us to proclaim the gospel or to observe the Lord's Supper and baptism."

Other topics on which Dilday differed with Godsey include:

-- Salvation. Godsey sees salvation as more about self-realization, human and individual relationships, and the practice of love, Dilday said. "I find the concept of conversion missing in the book. It doesn't seem to be there, either in his testimony or in his doctrinal teaching."

-- God's omnipotence. Whereas Godsey believes God cannot abolish evil and suffering, Dilday said, "That statement would need a lot of explanation. God may have withheld his power and allows things to happen -- and if he does allow freedom, he withholds his abolishing of evil. But it's not that he can't do it."

-- the existence of Satan. Godsey discounts the biblical concept of Satan as a "personal power of evil," said Dilday, adding he believes most Baptists still believe in the existence of Satan.

-- repentance. Godsey rejects the importance of repentance and teaches God's forgiveness is unconditional, Dilday said. "I call that kind of an 'easy believism' -- that we don't have to repent and turn from sin: ... (that) we're already forgiven, ... (that) it's going to be ours, whatever we do."

-- evangelism. To Godsey, evangelism is "not sharing the good news as God's plan of hope and the only name under heaven, but kind of 'Dialogue (with) and respect of others and see that they have some truth as well,'" Dilday said.

**Southwestern adds 1,400-volume
key missions research resource**

By Bryan McAnally

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's Roberts Library recently purchased a rare 1,400-volume world missions microfilm collection from Day Missions Library at Yale University.

"This is significant," said Bob Garrett, director of Southwestern's World Missions Center. "It includes a number of primary sources related to missions work from the last half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. This information is irreplaceable and not easily accessible."

Among other areas, the collection, purchased for \$7,800, adds 178 titles about missions in China to Southwestern's resources.

"Careful study might enlarge our understanding of the roots of the modern Christian community in China," said Bob Phillips, reference librarian at Roberts Library. That includes "great information on the Shantung revivals," Garrett noted.

The material also provides rich resources for the study of missionary biography and the history of different foreign mission societies, Phillips noted. "We've added four new titles to our collection of William Carey because of this purchase." Carey, an Englishman, is credited with launching the modern missionary movement.

Southwestern, in Fort Worth, Texas, is one of only 11 libraries in the world -- and the only one in the southwestern United States -- to have purchased this collection from Yale.

"People who want to research this period in mission history will no longer need to travel to Connecticut to use this material," Phillips pointed out.

Adding such a large collection to Roberts' resources will take some time, Phillips noted.

"For now, students will use printed finding aids to locate specific materials. During the next year, our library will add most of the titles to our computer catalog. Then scholars can search the collection from anywhere in the world."

Phillips noted, "Having this collection in microfilm makes a wealth of material available in a relatively stable form. We do not have to worry about losing this information even after the paper copies have deteriorated beyond repair."

Comprised of 1,294 titles on 202 rolls of 35mm silver halide microfilm, the Day collection is named after George Edward Day, Yale professor of Hebrew language and literature from 1866-91. He was a devotee of missions until his death in 1905.

"Professor Day was a strong missions advocate from the beginning of his work," Garrett said. "He was a tremendous encourager of the student volunteer movement in missions. He was responsible for gathering the initial wealth of resources that benefit us all today."

Garrett said Southwestern's purchase "proves that as a seminary we are committed to missions and evangelism. We are proclaiming that we will leave no stone unturned to bring all interested students here and prepare them to go wherever in the world God calls them to minister."

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