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Editorials Give Varied  
Convention Evaluations

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By the Baptist Press

"Routine . . . significant . . . untroubled . . . worshipful . . . flat and uninteresting . . . important . . . interim . . . harmonious . . . quiet . . . successful . . . dull and weak . . . good . . . calm and determined . . . issueless . . . smooth . . ."

With these words, editorials in a score of Baptist state weekly newspapers described and evaluated the 109th annual session of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting recently in Detroit. (May 24-27)

The editorials seemed to have one point of common agreement---that the convention steered clear of controversy and dealt with the business in a calm manner.

Said the Kentucky Baptist Western Recorder in summary: "To those who prefer conventions that do their business with minimum trouble, the Detroit meeting could be called a success."

"But to those who expect lively discussion, stimulating presentations and high inspirational moments in a convention, this year's meeting was disappointingly dull," said the Western Recorder.

The varying views expressed in the Baptist state paper editorials tend to confirm this assertion. Few of the editorials were agreed on whether or not the Detroit convention was a "good" one.

The Christian Index of Atlanta, Ga., for example, called the convention "one of the best" and said that Southern Baptists may have reached maturity.

But the Virginia Religious Herald termed the convention proceedings "flat and uninteresting," offering the familiar printed reports and usual speakers.

Just as the editorials disagreed over whether or not it was a good convention, they also were not in full accord over which issues and actions were most significant.

Most of the editorials said that one of the most significant things the convention did was to launch plans for the Crusade of Americas, a vast evangelistic campaign slated in 1969 when Baptist groups in North, Central, and South America join hands in one big evangelistic effort.

Some of the state Baptist papers said that the spirit of the convention was more significant than the action taken.

Commented the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger in a typical statement: "Having passed through a long period of criticism, controversy and self-analysis in recent years, the convention this year gave its primary emphasis to missions and evangelism."

What the convention refused to do could be more significant in the long run than what it did do, said an editorial in the Texas Baptist Standard.

Citing examples, the Standard said the convention refused to censure a Baptist minister (White House Press Secretary Bill Moyers) for dancing the watusi; refused to consider a resolution opposing a seat in the United Nations for Red China; refused to allow the convention "to become too involved in the ecumenical movement"; and refused to shuttle aside a motion reaffirming Baptist dedication to church-state separation.

In a similar editorial, the Missouri Word and Way cited two other things the convention refused to do as significant: refusal to consider a motion to deny seats to an Arkansas church because of its doctrinal practices, and refusal to instruct the convention's program committee to set aside two hours in the 1967 convention to discuss current moral and theological issues.

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The California Southern Baptist, however, termed the business transacted as "highly significant."

"Although it appeared routine, the adoption of program statements for several SBC agencies brought to conclusion a monumental task that has been in the mill for several years," said the California paper. "The importance of this cannot be overestimated."

"The convention was likewise noteworthy for launching the greatest evangelistic campaign ever attempted, and for adopting a record \$24.2 million missions budget," said the California editorial.

The Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, in contrast, described convention actions as "amazingly routine." Said the editorial: "We elected a new president, as everybody knew in advance we would. We voted, without a ripple, the proposed budget...We adopted some challenging resolutions, with never a word of debate."

The Kentucky paper said election of H. Franklin Paschall of Nashville, Tenn., as president was "the most interesting event of the convention and maybe was the most significant."

"His election reversed the disturbing trend of recent years which saw presidential aspirants ride the tide of popularity from performances in the Pastors' Conference into the presidency of the convention. The messengers this year would have no more of this," said the Kentucky paper.

Editorials in the Arkansas, Georgia, District of Columbia and Ohio papers also had high words of praise for the presiding of outgoing SBC President Wayne Dehoney of Jackson, Tenn. Many editorials credited him with steering the convention clear of controversy.

The Western Recorder called the Detroit meeting "an issueless convention," adding that the name change for the convention and the criticism of Bill Moyers as recipient of the Radio and Television Commission Communications Award...never reached the convention floor."

Both the Western Recorder and the North Carolina Biblical Recorder said it was an "interim convention"---"a lull after the storms of recent conventions and before prospective tempests in coming years."

Editorials in the California and Colorado Baptist state papers praised the SBC Executive Committee for a "wise decision" in asking for more time to study the possibility of changing the convention's name. Both papers favor a possible new name, when one is determined.

The South Carolina Baptist Courier, said the mood in Detroit was not for a name change. "Southern Baptists are not about to change their name," said the Courier. But the matter is not settled, the editorial added. It will come up again in later years.

Another issue which never fully developed was the question of federal aid to Baptist institutions, pointed out several editorials. Editorials in Texas, Virginia, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and California Baptist papers lauded adoption of a resolution reaffirming Baptist devotion to separation of church and state and opposing use of tax money for sectarian causes.

The Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine cited as significant a "far-reaching declaration" that expressed happiness "in present-day signs of a growing spirit of respect and good will among many religious bodies."

But editorials in the Texas, Mississippi, and Colorado papers classified the convention as "anti-ecumenical."

The Baptist Standard said the resolution adopted "left no room for anyone to believe Southern Baptists have budged an inch toward structural organization of all believers."

"Liberals should have been uncomfortable in this convention session," said the Baptist Record of Mississippi.

Editorials in seven state Baptist papers presented opposing views on the merits of a convention decision against devoting two hours in the 1967 meeting to a discussion of current moral and theological issues.

The North Carolina and Virginia papers strongly opposed the decision against a discussion of issues, while state papers in Indiana, Tennessee, Florida, Missouri, and California generally agreed with the decision.

The North Carolina Biblical Recorder said the motion "could turn out to be one of the most significant things injected into convention discussion." Charging that the decision means that "many of our churches are not facing reality as they should," the North Carolina paper said that "sooner or later, Southern Baptists will have to face the hard, divisive issues."

The California Southern Baptist, argued, however, that an assembly of 10,000 to 15,000 people is not the place to handle controversial issues. "There is considerable opportunity to handle controversial subjects in various conferences called for that purpose."

Editorials in the Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana papers urged a re-evaluation of holding the SBC Pastors' Conference prior to the main convention, saying that the messengers are emotionally drained from listening to sermon after sermon before the convention starts.

The Missouri Word and Way chided messengers for being "rough on speakers" during the convention. Time and again the speakers addressed vanishing congregations, the editorial said.

Editorials in the Georgia, Florida, District of Columbia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Colorado papers praised the convention facilities of Cobo Hall, calling them "the best ever," but they decried Detroit hotels for turning away messengers with confirmed reservations.

What affect will the editorial comments in the Baptist state papers have on future conventions? Ask 20 different editors and you'll probably get that many different opinions, if the widely divergent viewpoints expressed in SBC editorial evaluations is an indication.

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#### Nashville Church Upholds Pastor as New SBC Leader

NASHVILLE (BP)--The First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tenn., unanimously adopted a resolution pledging to stand behind their pastor, H. Franklin Paschall, during his tenure as the new president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The resolution pledged the church's 4,000 members to pray for their pastor and convention president, to redouble their own personal efforts in visitation and soul winning, and to assure their pastor "that we stand unitedly behind him in every activity of the church..."

Paschall, 44-year-old pastor of the church, was elected president of the 10.7 million-member convention during its 109th annual session in Detroit, May 25.

Almost immediately after his election, Paschall and his wife departed on a tour of Baptist missions work around the world. He was in the Phillipines at the time the church adopted the resolution.

The resolution urged the church members to pray especially for the pastor "during these weeks when he is making a world missions tour visiting missionaries and Christian nationals in various parts of the world."

It also pledged "to assure him we are holding up his hands as he challenges all Southern Baptists to meet today's demands."

The resolution said the church members "joyfully share him with other Southern Baptists and other Christians to the end that men might be brought to God through Jesus Christ, and our nation shall become more Christian in its attitudes, its actions, and its loyalties in today's world."

The resolution was recommended for adoption to the church by its deacons.

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Binkley Ends Presidency  
Of Theological Association

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (BP)--A Southern Baptist theological educator, in the presidential address to the 25th biennial meeting of the American Association of Theological Schools here, declared that "we have been thrust into the serious responsibilities of a decisive moment in a revolutionary age."

Olin T. Binkley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N. C., made the statement in his presidential address concluding two years as head of the American Association of Theological Schools.

Binkley called attention to the advancement of science, the enormous growth of the human family, and the emergence of large-scale intergroup tensions and conflicts as "three relatively new factors in the human situation."

In spite of the pressures created by these new factors, Binkley affirmed his confidence in ministers "whose coherent interpretation of life, informed by the mind of Christ, establishes them as courageous prophets of God's redemptive purpose."

In addition to his two-year term as president, Binkley has in the past ten years served the association as a member of its commission on research and counsel, a member of the commission on accreditation, a member of the executive committee, and as secretary.

During the meeting here, Charles L. Taylor, executive secretary of the organization, expressed gratitude to Binkley for his service as president, saying Binkley, "in his connection with theological education in America has shown himself one of its most loyal, devoted, and helpful sons."

Taylor said Binkley has been a leader in theological education in the United States for more than 30 years.

Educated at Wake Forest College (Baptist), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Yale University where he received the doctor of philosophy degree, Binkley has been awarded honorary degrees by the University of North Carolina and Wake Forest College.

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Baptist Pastor Almost  
Gains Eskimo Baby

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--Clifford McConnell, pastor of Grandview Baptist Church in Anchorage almost brought home an Eskimo baby when he made his first trip north of the Arctic Circle into real "Eskimo territory" recently.

After boarding his plane at Kotzebue, Alaska, an Eskimo man came up to McConnell with a baby in his arms.

"You hold," he inquired. "Sure, replied McConnell, thinking that the woman standing behind the man waiting for a seat on the plane was the baby's mother.

After she boarded the plane, the woman made no effort to claim the child. And when the plane made a stop before it arrived at the preacher's destination, the woman deboarded, without the child.

It did not belong to her.

McConnell spent the next few minutes flying to his destination wondering what to do with the small Eskimo baby.

When he arrived at Shungnak, Alaska, the child's grateful parents claimed their traveling infant from an equally grateful preacher.

For a minute McConnell was really worried. How could he ever explain this new acquisition to his wife?

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