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Olympic ministry stays course
despite pipe bombing at park

By Sarah Zimmerman

7/29/96

ATLANTA (BP)--It will take more than a bomb to keep Southern Baptists out of the Olympic city.

The July 27 pipe bomb explosion in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park sobered the city's festive mood, but Southern Baptists vowed to continue their ministries.

Acteens from Texas' Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association were on their way to Atlanta when they learned of the bomb. A 44-year-old woman from Albany, Ga., was killed in the early morning blast, and a Turkish television camera operator apparently died from a heart attack while running to the park to cover the event. At least 100 people were injured by flying shrapnel from the bomb. Most were treated and released at area hospitals.

Yet the Texas group did not turn back. "The Lord called us to do this," explained Beverly Beck, one of the group's sponsors. "If we feel in danger, we'll find another place to witness."

No volunteers serving with Atlanta International Ministries '96 were injured in the explosion, and no group canceled their trip to Atlanta because of the bomb, said Linda Johnson, director of the Southern Baptist organization coordinating volunteer efforts.

Bomb threats in nearby buildings forced evacuation of the AIM '96 downtown ministry center Saturday, July 27, but Sunday things were back to normal, said volunteer Charlotte Mullins. "No one has mentioned being afraid," said the member of North Stuart Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla.

Located near several Olympic venues and the main station for Atlanta's rapid transit system, the ministry center offers pedestrians free water, a place to rest from the heat and Christian entertainment. At least 300 people have made professions of faith there.

Inside the highly-secured Olympic Village, the bombing seemed to impact volunteers -- many of them from the Atlanta area -- more so than the well-focused athletes accustomed to avoiding distractions in order to perform at their peak, according to religious activities leaders.

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"There's been some anxiety about that (the bombing), but athletes feel pretty secure here (in the village)," said Elmer Goble, volunteer director of religious activities for the Atlanta organizing committee and a Home Mission Board employee.

"Recently we've had some people (volunteers and athletes) come by (the religious activities center) who were concerned about the bombing, but not too many," Goble noted. Chaplains in the village have been available to those seeking support.

A bomb threat forced cancellation of July 28 morning services at Atlanta's First Baptist Church. No bomb was found, however, and church offices were open Monday.

Lay Witnesses for Christ, a multi-denominational sports outreach, is based at the First Baptist Atlanta facility. Two youth groups scheduled to work there canceled after hearing about the park bomb, but Karen Oak, command center coordinator, said, "We're moving forward. We're going about business as normal, claiming victory in Jesus Christ." Oak is a member of Forest Cove Baptist Church, Kingwood, Texas.

A number of Southern Baptist law enforcement chaplains are in Georgia to serve security officers working Olympic sites. Danny Souder, pastor of Northlake Baptist Church in Dallas and a volunteer police chaplain, was on the scene minutes after the blast. He worked with other chaplains and psychologists using a "critical incident debriefing" plan. Souder said security officers working the site expressed shock and disbelief at the bombing, although they had been prepared for such an event.

A security guard at the park noticed a suspicious-looking bag moments before the blast and began moving people from the area. His action is credited for preventing more people in the crowd (estimated at 50,000) from being hurt.

The park was closed after the bombing and scheduled to reopen July 30. With no admission charge, the park is a favorite attraction of tourists and residents alike. People play in a water fountain shaped like Olympic rings, trade collectible Olympic pins, buy souvenirs from around the world and tour interactive exhibits sponsored by Swatch, Samsung, NASA and other organizations.

The park was under construction last year, and many Southern Baptist Convention messengers went by the site as they walked between downtown hotels and the Georgia Dome where the SBC annual meeting was held.

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John D. Pierce contributed to this story.

Safety concerns curtailed
some Tenn. Olympic ministry

By Connie Davis

Baptist Press
7/29/96

OCOEE, Tenn. (BP)--The pipe bomb which exploded in Atlanta early July 27 changed the plans of Baptists planning to minister at the Olympic venue in Tennessee.

Andy Jordan of Polk County Baptist Association who is directing Whitewater Ministries for Tennessee Olympic events, canceled plans of 31 youth and summer missionaries who were to work in concessions July 27-28 during the canoe/kayak events in Ocoee, Tenn. A local coordinator of workers also canceled his workers, Jordan reported.

Short-term ministry efforts should be safe training experiences for mission service, he said. "We're here to do a work, but you don't want to put somebody in harm's way if you can help it," Jordan said. The youth among some 200 volunteers from different states based at the association's Camp Agape in Benton, Tenn., to minister to athletes and visitors to the Tennessee venue and area. They were redirected to other ministry sites, Jordan said.

Some volunteers were committed to work at a street festival in nearby Cleveland, Tenn., a site not unlike the Olympic Centennial Park in that the event was Olympic-related and open to the public.

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Amanda Day of Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union said the 16 Women on Mission Enterprisers she directed decided not to cancel after the bombing although they discussed the similarities between the two situations. The Enterprisers were leading children's activities at the street festival.

"There are too many WMU members and Tennessee Baptists praying for us for anything to happen to us," Day said.

Edgar Gray, a member of Manley Baptist Church, Morristown, Tenn., who was directing a clown troupe at the street festival, said the group also had decided to continue their work at Olympic-related events in the area.

"We feel for those people (affected by the bombing). We're praying for them and we're just human so we're concerned, but we've just ignored that (the bombing). What we're doing fulfills our mission," said Gray.

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Oklahoma youth not deterred
from their Olympic outreach

By Barbara Denman

Baptist Press
7/29/96

ATLANTA (BP)--Their lives had been personally touched by a terrorist's bomb, but one group of Olympic volunteers refused to step away from their commitment to share the gospel message.

Two days before a terrorist placed a pipe bomb in the Centennial Olympic Park in downtown Atlanta in the early morning hours of July 27, an Oklahoma City youth group leader noted the real possibility of terrorism during the Olympic Games.

"If it can happen there in Oklahoma City, it can happen anywhere," said Jimmy Cox, minister of youth at Brookwood Baptist Church in the Oklahoma capital city. "It's a reality of that kind of terrorism. You can't avoid buildings or activities. You live in the faith and go about your business."

Cox brought 19 teens and seven adults to Atlanta where they were assigned to provide hospitality during the Olympic games. Together they handed out water, identification tags for children, interactive pocket guides and Olympic pins illustrating the gospel message to spectators at the equestrian events in the International Horse Park in Conyers.

In the hours after the bombing at the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Cox and the pastor of the church counseled families and victims of the explosion. Church members were injured in the blast. One of the teens in the youth group had lost an aunt during the explosion.

"Our parents were a little apprehensive" about their trip to Atlanta, Cox said, especially after the explosion on TWA Flight 800. "But we have taken every measure to keep our youth safe."

According to AIM director Linda Johnson, none of the groups involved in the Olympic ministry are being housed in downtown locations or near the venues. Most large groups are staying in church facilities in the suburbs.

Johnson, a native of Oklahoma who wears her home state pin on her Olympic hat in honor of those who died in the federal building bombing, said she does not think it is necessary to take additional precautions. "I believe the police has that in hand.

"We are ministering in pedestrian corridors which are well protected by police in every corner," she added. "The Olympic games are more secure than any event I've ever attended."

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**Ark. gambling opponents
meet petition deadline**

By Russell N. Dilday

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Opponents of gambling in Arkansas have submitted more than 86,000 signatures on petitions seeking to outlaw all legalized gambling in the state. The petitions contain about 15,000 more signatures than needed to include the measure on the state's Nov. 5 general election ballot as a proposed constitutional amendment.

Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Action Committee, filed the petitions July 5 -- on the final filing day -- with the elections division of the secretary of state's office.

The proposed amendment calls for all legalized gambling to be outlawed in the state, including existing gambling on thoroughbred racing at Oaklawn Park in Hot Springs and greyhound racing at Southland Park in West Memphis.

The CCAC amendment also seeks to counter four proposed amendments aimed at legalizing casinos and state lotteries that are expected to share space with the CCAC proposal on the Nov. 5 ballot.

The anti-gambling signatures came in slowly until the July 5 deadline neared, Page noted.

"We were gratified," he acknowledged. "There was a period there about three and a half weeks out ... that looked a little bleak."

He said at that time only 16,000 of the 71,684 signatures needed to qualify the petition for inclusion on the November ballot had been submitted to the CCAC office. The signatures, he noted, began flooding into his office "in dramatic numbers in the last week and a half."

"There were a couple of things we didn't factor in," he said. "One is the natural procrastination of everyone, and particularly churches, when they are doing this kind of thing."

Second, he added, "We really did make a strong appeal and did the mailings and phone calls, putting out the alert that we needed to step things up a bit."

He said that although Arkansas Southern Baptists represented the largest number of signatures because they "represent the largest proportion of our network, I think if you factor in everyone's relative size, it was a pretty healthy comprehensive effort across the board."

Although Page considers the 15,000-signature surplus "safe," he added that the CCAC workers "certainly feel that it would be the safe course and will be encouraging people that, if they still have petitions, to go ahead and collect those and send them in."

Among the four pro-gambling amendments expected on the November ballot, Page noted that only one has garnered more petition signatures than the CCAC initiative.

Page said he sees the strong support for the amendment as an encouraging forecast of the November election. "One thing people need to keep in mind is that, unlike the four pro-gambling amendments, our signatures were gathered strictly by unpaid volunteers. The other side had to pay canvassers."

He said the CCAC will not win its campaign on money, but through the strength of local churches.

"We would like to have \$500,000 to run a media campaign," he said. "Even if we had a half million dollars, that would still be a small fraction of what the other side will spend."

Page said that the CCAC has a current campaign balance of only \$900 and that they "already have turned down funding from Las Vegas, which has casinos in Mississippi and doesn't want competition in Arkansas. We've turned down some real money.

"We can't match that dollar for dollar," he said. "When you consider that our effort was motivated by altruistic concerns, when you compare that to what the other side was unable to do with a vast treasury, that tells us that the truth is on our side and a concerned citizenry is on our side.

"Without paying canvassers," he speculated, "none of the other four amendments could have gathered much more than 10,000 signatures.

"There's no zeal out there for gambling," he explained. "Gambling initiatives always have been and are now driven by greed. The impetus is on the part of a few individuals who stand to gain handsomely from the establishment of gambling.

"What our nearly 87,000 signatures tell us is that there are a lot of folks out there who feel strongly about the issue ... because they feel a real concern about their state, about the economy, about the well-being of people and they have a real good sense that gambling is a harmful, destructive presence in any state."

Looking toward future actions prior to the November election, Page said CCAC volunteers are "still waiting on verification of the signatures. If additional signatures are needed, of course, that takes priority.

"The secretary of state has 30 days from July 5 to finish verification," he said. "Once the process is finished, if we are deficient in the number, the secretary of state notifies us and we have an additional 30 days from that notification date" to collect additional signatures.

Page said that the CCAC's next major initiative "is a drive to register 250,000 new Arkansas voters through the existing organizational network."

He said the CCAC network consists of "both churches and the network of grassroots volunteers that we have raised up. We'll do strong encouragement with pastors and denominational leaders to encourage this and we'll be asking our grassroots individuals to encourage drives in their churches and communities."

The voter registration drive, Page explained, "is still being planned, with a formal announcement within a couple of weeks."

Meanwhile, Arkansans "can do a couple of things" to prepare for the election, he offered. "They can become aware of the need for this voter registration drive and to get out the vote.

"One thing I strongly encourage people to do is become informed," he emphasized. "Get the fact sheets from us, watch publications like the excellent article in the April issue of Reader's Digest about problems in Minnesota or the May issue of Money magazine that has an article on the lottery that just devastates, with firm, empirical, substantiated material, lottery proponents that say it's a good economic tool.

"Become informed and aware and be prepared to discuss this on break in the workplace, in the classroom, in Sunday school classes or informal meetings with neighbors across the fence," Page urged. "Be able to talk intelligently about the issue -- not just know that we ought to be opposed to gambling, but the myriad reasons why."

The Arkansas Christian Civic Action Committee's toll-free number is 1-800-NO LOTTERY.

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School choice debated
at congressional hearing

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
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WASHINGTON (BP)--Bob Inglis slammed his palm down on the desk which stretches across the front of the hearing room of the Rayburn House Office Building. The second-term congressman's action added emphasis to an agitation already obvious in his words.

"We've had enough of your monopoly," Inglis had just told Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Boards Association. "We've had enough of your lousy results."

Still speaking loudly and passionately, Inglis pointed at another witness, Bob Smith, African American principal of a Catholic high school in Milwaukee, Wis. Why would she want to prevent Smith and his school from competing with public schools? he asked.

While private schools have every right to exist, Bryant said, "there is a difference when using public funds to fund private schools."

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Her answer did not satisfy Inglis. Nor did cries of religious discrimination sway opponents of educational choice programs at a recent hearing on a proposed religious freedom amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The clash over school choice developed at a July 23 hearing before the Constitution Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee. The subject was House Joint Resolution 184, which says:

"In order to secure the right of the people to acknowledge and serve God according to the dictates of conscience, neither the United States nor any State shall deny any person equal access to a benefit, or otherwise discriminate against any person, on account of religious belief, expression, or exercise. This amendment does not authorize government to coerce or inhibit religious belief, expression, or exercise."

Some opponents and supporters of the amendment focused on the "equal access" language, which apparently would clear the way for religious schools to be included in voucher and tuition tax credit programs.

One of the witnesses supportive of the amendment was Smith, who told how Messmer High School was excluded from the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. Messmer was willing to participate in the program, though the voucher per student would have been \$1,500 less than the cost of his or her education, he said. The Milwaukee public schools have an enrollment which is 90 percent minority students and a dropout rate of 50 percent, Smith said.

This issue is "not about separation of church and state," Smith told the subcommittee. "It's about giving all people equal rights who do not have money."

The amendment could "undermine the scarce educational resources" available for public schools, the NSBA's Bryant testified.

More than one opponent called the amendment an "unfunded mandate," including Americans United for Separation of Church and State Executive Director Barry Lynn, who said, "This is not only an unfunded mandate. It's an unfunded mandate of biblical proportions."

Amendment supporter Greg Baylor of the Christian Legal Society told Baptist Press such an "argument is completely unfounded."

"The opponents are fear-mongering because they are afraid to defend the current system of discrimination," Baylor said.

At the hearing, Baylor criticized a strict-separationist viewpoint which has produced a federal code "literally saturated" with examples of religious discrimination in education.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, testified in support of the amendment. Outside the hearing, he said in defense of the "equal access" language:

"This amendment is about religious freedom and government discrimination against religion. It does not say that the government must or should offer vouchers to parents who choose alternative schools for their children. It does say that if the government chooses to offer such vouchers, it must not and cannot discriminate against religious schools as opposed to other private schools."

In a statement released on the eve of the hearing, the Baptist Joint Committee called the amendment a "money grab," which "would permit, and probably require, government funding of religious activities."

Yet one opponent -- Oliver "Buzz" Thomas, former BJC general counsel and now special counsel for the National Council of Churches -- said he did not "think the Supreme Court would strike down a properly drafted voucher system."

The Christian Life Commission has joined the Christian Legal Society and the National Association of Evangelicals in a brief arguing the inclusion of religious schools in the Milwaukee program would not violate church-state separation, while exclusion of such schools would infringe on the free exercise of religion. Last year, a county circuit court blocked the expansion of the Milwaukee program to include religious schools. The case is before the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

**'Doctrines of Grace' expounded
at Baptist Founders Conference By James A. Smith Sr.**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--The "doctrines of grace" are the most consistent way for Christians to understand God's work of salvation, speakers contended at the 14th annual Southern Baptist Founders Conference, July 23-26 at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.

In addition to hearing preaching on evangelism, missions and encouragement, the doctrines of grace were expounded in five presentations by three speakers. The conference also included historical studies of Synod of Dort and life of Jesse Mercer.

The Founders Conference drew its highest number of registrants this year, 342, a 30 percent increase over the previous high, according to conference coordinator and Florida pastor Tom Ascol.

More widely known as "Calvinism," the doctrines of grace are summarized in the acrostic TULIP, each letter representing the main points: T -- total depravity; U -- unconditional election; L -- limited atonement; I -- irresistible grace; and P -- perseverance of the saints.

The featured speaker of the week, Geoffrey Thomas, pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, Wales, told the gathering the doctrines of grace are "such big doctrines," stressing their importance.

Thomas preached on the total depravity of man from Romans 3:23 and asserted there are four truths about sin to be understood from "this great assessment, 'all have sinned.'"

"Sin is not a violation of conscience. Sin is not a violation of social consensus. It is not a violation of the expedient or the practical," Thomas said first, noting the views held by humans. "It is a violation of the will of God."

Although sin is often seen in outward actions, Thomas said sin is "not only in our words and in our actions, but in our thoughts and in our ambitions, in our decisions, in our motives, in our aspirations."

A second emphasis of Scripture is that sin dominates the lives of human beings, Thomas said.

"There is no moment, there is no act, there is no area of human life in which sin does not affect us," Thomas said. "Every man in the world a slave to sin. Birmingham, a city of slaves. Alabama, a state of slaves. America, a country of slaves. North America, a continent of slaves. The world, a cosmos held in the grip of sin."

Third, Thomas also noted sin affects "every part of man and woman ... this is what we mean by the notorious doctrine of total depravity. ... Total in the sense that my whole nature is corrupt.

"The wages of sin is death," Thomas said in commenting on the fourth aspect of total depravity. "There is always the imminent and impending judgment. The moment when God sends in the bill -- when there is an account and we have to render that account."

While stressing the clear examples of man's depravity in notorious persons and acts, Thomas said, "I don't need to look to Hitler. I don't need to look to the man who planted the bomb in Oklahoma City. I'm acquainted with it. It's in my heart. It's in my life. And my only plea ... 'Oh, Lord, cover it.'"

The doctrine of unconditional election, the "U" in "TULIP," was also addressed by Geoffrey Thomas.

Preaching from 1 Peter 1:1-2, Thomas said, "Election is, in its very essence, God's selection. And it is always selection that implies the non-selection of those left."

Thomas offered several observations concerning the doctrine of election.

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"There is a divine election which is unto the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," Thomas said. The elect were chosen "to be experientially and practically brought into covenant with Almighty God."

Thomas also said that believers "are elected unto obedience," rejecting the argument that the doctrine of unconditional election permits human beings to "live as they please."

"I'm saying that if a man is elect and is chosen by God, then the very meaning of that election is that God is determined to make him holy," Thomas said.

Noting the biblical concept of knowledge is "much more affectionate than cerebral," Thomas thirdly asserted that election is "according to the foreknowledge of God."

"Christ is so in love with the church that he has taken all the liabilities of the bride to himself. And he's gone to the cross and he's died out of love for her," Thomas said.

Thomas also told the conference that God's election is personal and individual.

"Our names are carried on the heart of the Savior. He whispers our worthless names in the ears of his Father in heaven," Thomas said. "It's even possible for me with all humility in the face of Almighty God to say, 'I am the meaning of Calvary. He gave himself for me. For me he became incarnate. For me he suffered the agony and bloody sweat.'"

In contrast to those who suggest that unconditional election requires "some terrible contraction" of the number of those saved, Thomas said God's election is "of an innumerable company of people," recalling God's promise to Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the sands on the seashores and the stars in heaven.

The doctrine of limited atonement, the "L" in "TULIP," also was briefly addressed by Thomas.

Preaching from Hebrews 1:1-3, Thomas noted that the letter was addressed to Christians.

"It is always so particular. It is always so definite. ... Christ has made an effective purgation for these people's sins," Thomas said, arguing that the atonement was only effective for those God has elected.

Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., said the phrase "limited atonement" is, among all the points of TULIP, especially misleading, "as if anyone other than an universalist doesn't limit the atonement."

"Particular redemption" or "definite atonement" are more accurate descriptions of the doctrine, Dever contended.

In a spirited address quoting numerous biblical passages, Dever spoke to the conference on the doctrine of irresistible grace, the "I" in "TULIP."

Reminding the audience of a "before picture" containing lost, dead sinners and an "after picture" containing saved, alive sinners, Dever asked the question, "How do we get from this before picture to this after picture?"

The doctrine of irresistible grace, Dever asserted, is the answer. Dever offered several reasons the Bible teaches this doctrine.

Noting God is the "great initiator," Dever said, "... this is the pattern throughout history. This is no Calvinistic aberration. This is how God has worked forever.

"God's initiative is the only way we can find the truth," Dever said, illustrating the point with several examples from the Bible.

"The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ himself is the fullest picture of God's initiative, seeking those who are lost," Dever said.

For those who are unconvinced by the doctrine of irresistible grace, Dever suggested John 6:35-44 as the passage "which convinces me that the only way to get from this before state of spiritual inability to this after state of spiritual life is by God's certain initiative."

Dever also said Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches that faith is a gift from God and asserted that the Southern Baptist Convention's "Baptist Faith and Message" is weaker than previous confessions of faith. He called for a revision of the 1963 statement.

"You don't get from this (before picture) to this (after picture) except by the grace of God giving us the gift of faith," Dever said to a chorus of "Amen!"

"The problem with the phrase, 'irresistible grace,' is that it sounds like we don't want to go," Dever said.

Addressing the "P" in "TULIP," Mark DeVine, assistant professor of theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., spoke on the doctrine of perseverance of the saints.

"Our understanding of the nature of salvation, indeed, of the very character of God, is at stake in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints," Dever said.

Quoting Southern Baptist theologian Timothy George, Dever defined the doctrine of perseverance -- in that "the elect despite their temptations and lapses into sin, are faithfully preserved by the grace of God unto the end."

Asserting that "Arminianism represents the most focused and persistent denial of the doctrine of perseverance of the saints," DeVine addressed some of the Arminian challenges to this doctrine. Arminianism is an alternative understanding of God's work of salvation which is opposite Calvinism and takes its name from the movement's founder, Jacobus Arminius.

In answer to the Arminian "holy of holies," which insists of the right of human beings to resist God and its perceived alternative of "robotic Christianity," in which believers are manipulated by God in every aspect of their lives, DeVine offered a third option.

"This option affirms that God (through) the Holy Spirit non-coercively yet unfaithfully vivifies, awakens, illuminates and effectually draws blind, dead sinners to enduring and therefore saving faith in Jesus Christ," DeVine explained.

In response to the claim that the doctrine of perseverance of the saints is unimportant, DeVine asserted, "The nature of faith, one's view of God's character and of God's glory are all transformed according to one's position on the doctrine of perseverance."

DeVine added, "A firm embrace of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints frees the believer to pursue holiness of a character more obviously biblical than an Arminian view can."

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Speaker calls for revision
of Baptist Faith and Message

By James A. Smith Sr.

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7/29/96

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)--A speaker at the Southern Baptist Founders Conference called for a revision of the Baptist Faith and Message article on salvation, while several leaders of the conference have questioned the call.

Mark Dever, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., urged revision of the Southern Baptist Convention statement of faith at the 14th annual meeting of the Founders Conference, July 23-26 on the campus of Samford University, Birmingham, Ala. The conference is attended by Southern Baptists who hold to the "doctrines of grace," known most widely by the title, "Calvinism."

The doctrines of grace constitute the five points of Calvinism which gained its name from 16th century Protestant reformer John Calvin and were codified in 1619 at the Dutch Reformed Church's Synod of Dort.

Speaking on the topic of "Irresistible Grace," one of the five points of Calvinism, Dever asserted the 1963 version of the Baptist Faith and Message leans more toward the Roman Catholic position of salvation by works than the traditional Protestant position of salvation as a gift of grace from God.

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"There has been a lamentable decline in Baptist understanding that faith is a gift and it is crucial for our understanding of the gospel," Dever declared, citing the 1963 Baptist statement as the prime example.

Dever, who was elected to the planning committee of the Founders Conference, quoted from Article IV, section A of the statement, which says: "Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour."

Taking issue with the phrase "inseparable experiences of grace" in 1963 statement, Dever noted the original Baptist Faith and Message statement, adopted by the SBC in 1925, merely says repentance and faith "are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God."

Speaking of the 1963 statement, Dever asserted, "I do not hear that they are wrought by the Spirit of God. I do not hear that they are gifts given. I hear they're things that we do. I hear Schleiermacher in that 'experiences of grace,'" referring to the 19th century German theologian.

"Faith is not a meritorious work of man on the basis of which God accepts the sinner," Dever said. "It is a gracious gift of God by which he converts us."

Speaking of the 1963 statement, Dever said, "I'm not asking for it to become an exclusively Calvinistic document. I simply want it to rejoin its long line of Baptist predecessors ... and end this 30-year exile. I want it to come home ... and be more clearly Protestant!"

In an interview following his speech, Dever stressed he could sign the 1963 confession "happily."

"Thank God for the truth that's there," Dever said. "It's just that we've been clearer in the past and I think most Baptists would feel fine about being clearer today. ... It doesn't seem like it would be a difficult adjustment to make."

Dever noted the emergence of ecumenical activity between Roman Catholics and Southern Baptists, "especially these days with discussions like 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together,'" as a cause for concern regarding the Baptist Faith and Message.

ECT is a statement drafted by a group of evangelical Christians, including several prominent Southern Baptists, and Roman Catholics in 1994 which was highly controversial due to a conviction among some evangelicals that the document ignored distinctions brought about by the Protestant Reformation.

While Dever's call for revision of the Baptist Faith and Message was met by hearty "Amen!" from the audience at the Founders Conference, it was met with a mixed review among the movement's leaders.

Although he agreed the statement could be strengthened, Tom Ascol, coordinator of the Founders Conference, said in an interview, "I see no significant purpose that could be served" by amending the confession at this time.

"Perhaps in the wake of our historic return to the unambiguous authority of God's Word, Southern Baptists will one day consider restating our beliefs with a fresh declaration of faith. If and when that occurs, then the Baptist Faith and Message article on faith and repentance could be re-examined along with the other articles," said Ascol, a Florida pastor who also serves as editor of "The Founders Journal," a publication of the conference.

Tom Nettles, professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago, also disagreed with Dever's call for revision of Article IV of the Baptist Faith and Message.

"I think that the phrase 'inseparable experiences of grace' is clearly consistent with the position that Baptists have taken on that issue in the past and, therefore, do not feel the same alarm that Mark (Dever) does. I would not issue a call for revision for the sake of that one issue," said Nettles who also serves on the planning committee of the Founders Conference.

Dever is correct the 1963 statement "is not as explicit as some former confessions," Nettles added.

"I agree with the central burden of Mark Dever's concern that the confession be more bold and explicit in its articles concerning the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," Nettles said.

Dever said that he has no plans to undertake a campaign to revise the confession of faith, but hoped the change might come about as more Southern Baptists come to understand the inadequacy of the 1963 statement.

"We're a congregational people and don't believe confessions are set in stone. We believe in the authority of Scripture," Dever noted.

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Missionary kids' concerns
focus of Hawaii conference

By Karen L. Willoughby

Baptist Press
7/29/96

HONOLULU (BP)--Many children of internationally based missionaries suffer from feelings of abandonment and isolation when they leave their homeland to attend college in the United States.

Other MKs deal with the same issues when their parents' death, divorce or resignation results in their being removed from the only home, lifestyle and culture they've ever known.

Still other MKs -- lost in the shadow of their parents' missionary zeal -- struggle with personal identity issues. Some talk of sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

About 300 adult MKs, missionaries and leaders from several denominations and mission-sending boards met the last week of July in Honolulu to discuss the unique needs of MKs at what might be the first-ever conference of its type.

The week-long conference, billed as "Mission Meeting 1996," was sponsored by the International MK Fellowship, an independent, trans-denominational organization founded in 1989 by Southern Baptist MK Steve Solesbee of Dallas.

"The price for doing missions is too high when it includes sacrificing our children," Solesbee said in an interview July 26 at the Aloha Tower, a Honolulu landmark. Exhibits for the conference were set up at the tower; daily sessions and workshops took place at Waikiki Baptist Church; evening services were held at the south end of the professional sports-size Aloha Stadium.

"We need to stop sweeping this problem under the rug," Solesbee continued. "We can't go forward if we're not honest. The important thing is that we want to make a statement to these kids and it has to be brutally honest and transparent; we want to say they don't have to live in bitterness the rest of their lives."

The purpose of the conference was to affirm MKs, to provide a forum for dialogue and to search for solutions, Solesbee said.

"This is not just for Southern Baptists," Solesbee said. "There are 34,000 evangelical missionaries under appointment at the present time. Southern Baptists have 4,000. We're the biggest, but by far we're not the only game in town."

Other denominations and mission-sending boards at the conference include Presbyterian, Lutheran, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Episcopalian, International Missions and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Dwight Baker, a retired Southern Baptist missionary who served in Israel and India, coordinated conference participation with non-SBC mission agencies, missionaries and MKs.

"I believe in what Steve (Solesbee) has envisioned," Baker said. Some missionaries "have answered God's call. The kids have to fend for themselves."

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While the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's family ministries department is among mission agencies' efforts over the years to address MK needs in the context of missionary families, Baker said the International MK Fellowship is one of the few organizations specifically formed for MKs.

IMKF has a toll-free crisis line available 24 hours a day -- 1-800-DIALMKS -- which has racked up more than 7,000 calls since its inception in 1990, Solesbee said. That total includes at least seven suicide calls.

The conference, in addition to large-group sessions, was designed to provide 18 Bible study groups pertinent to MK issues and eight small-group support-type sessions with topics such as feelings, anger, terminal illness, aging parents and sexual abuse.

"This year has been one of the hardest of my life," said Southern Baptist MK Elaine Sutton during a first-day session that revealed some of the hurts MKs feel. Sutton, whose parents serve in the Philippines, just completed her freshman year at Louisiana College.

"I don't hate my parents. I don't hate God," Sutton said. "But I don't feel I belong here (in the United States)."

One young woman -- an MK from Brazil -- spoke through her tears about her continuing struggle to find her place. She felt like an outcast despite her best attempts to fit in, she said.

"Why is it I love other people so much but the love isn't there for me? When I'm stranded, no one is ever there for me," she sobbed. "How do you overcome being the different one? It's practically impossible. How do you deal with it?"

Joe Cook, an MK whose parents served in China, talked about the rejection he felt as a youth.

"The way I responded to abandonment issues was to be a good boy," Cook said. "I went to college and to seminary without making any waves and then went back to the mission field. Three years later I had a breakdown.

"I had to learn to cry," Cook said.

The conference continues through July 31.

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MK recounts feelings of
'2 cultures stuck in one'

By Karen L. Willoughby

Baptist Press
7/29/96

HONOLULU (BP)--Missionary kids all over the world call it "aircon" but not Americans.

Air conditioning in the United States is referred to as "AC." How's an MK supposed to know?

"When I said aircon I got laughed at," Elaine Sutton, 19, whose parents are missionaries in the Philippines, said during an interview at the International MK Fellowship meeting in Honolulu, an international city where more people are Asian than Caucasian.

Of her recently completed freshman year at Louisiana College, Sutton recounted, "At first I felt really out of place because I knew I was different, but nobody else knew. I looked like them. I talked like them -- until I said something stupid. I was lost.

"Getting in lines was another thing," Sutton said. "In the States it's so nice -- very polite and orderly. But in the Philippines you've got a mass and it's squashing together like a Tetris game.

"So you automatically do something -- like getting in the middle of a line -- and no one knows why you're doing that. They just think you're rude," Sutton said. "You know you've done something wrong, but you don't know what it is.

"The beginning of my second semester, I got into bad depression," she continued. "I hadn't been to church in three months. Didn't want to do anything -- study, go to class, anything.

"I called my mom and told her I needed her real bad," Sutton said.

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The Filipino church where the Sutton family attends provided Judy Sutton with a round-trip plane ticket.

"That meant a lot," the college student said. "My Filipino church was taking care of me."

The Foreign Mission Board is paying for her to see a counselor, Sutton said. And now that she's made friends and is in a church where she felt able to get more involved, she is ready for her second year of college.

Her continuing struggle is that she does not want to give up her homeland.

"I'm an American but I'm also Filipino," Sutton said. "I'm really two cultures stuck into one. There's parts I don't want to lose of my culture in the Philippines. It's part of who I am."

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Hawaii pastors voice rebuttal
to 'apology' for missionaries By Karen L. Willoughby

Baptist Press
7/29/96

HONOLULU (BP)--Pastors and church leaders here sputtered when they read page 3 of the July 27 edition of the daily newspaper.

The headline announced in bold letters at the top of the page: "Hawaiians to hear apology."

It was an accurate headline.

An apology was made the night of July 26 in Honolulu's Aloha Stadium for some actions of some missionaries in Hawaii's distant past.

Steve Solesbee, founding president of the International MK Fellowship, made the apology at the direction of his board during the opening evening service of a week-long conference for the fellowship.

The conference was designed to draw attention to the needs of the adult children of missionaries who serve or have served outside the United States.

Solesbee used the phrases "concerned for many years" and "our sincere regret" in the apology.

Some Hawaiian pastors say there is no need for an apology.

"I am heartbroken," said Rick Luzor, pastor at Nu'uaniu Baptist Church in Honolulu, to his congregation July 28. Several pastors called him after the article appeared in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin, he said. They were amazed an apology was made.

Luzor talked to the congregation about the earliest missionaries to Hawaii. Because of their influence, he said, the state's first constitution, written in the 1840s, included the clause, "No law shall ever be enacted which is in variation with the Word of God."

"These missionaries never ever need to be apologized for," Luzor said. "Let us praise God for what our missionaries first did. They came to this state with nothing but the gospel on their hearts. We have nothing to apologize for."

The congregation of about 300 people applauded.

Luzor explained his comments after the Sunday morning service. The native Hawaiian government was overthrown in 1893, he said. The 100th anniversary of the event sparked the formation of the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement. Radicals in the movement want Hawaii to revert to nation status and the United States to 49-state status.

For a Christian figure to suggest that missionaries contributed to the overthrow adds fuel to the impassioned movement, Luzor said.

According to what he had been told, "Steve's words Friday probably were right on," said Luzor, who had not attended the Friday night service in Aloha Stadium. "But the media picked up on them and twisted them.

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"I know how ugly the media are here," the pastor said.

It was some children and grandchildren of the earliest missionaries who saw that profit was to be made from the peaceful green island, Luzor said. But long before their input, American traders and entrepreneurs had started developing Hawaii, he said.

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**Teens make unanimous choice
for ministry over Six Flags**

By Tim Ellsworth

**Baptist Press
7/29/96**

CHICAGO (BP)--For most teenagers, summer is a time of fun.

But for a youth mission group from First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Texas, ministry came before fun when Chicago-area towns received nearly 17 inches of rain July 17-18.

The group, consisting of 75 teens and 15 chaperons, voted unanimously to forego a trip to Six Flags to help area residents with the flood situation.

The mission team had been in Three Rivers Baptist Association that week, leading Bible schools during the day and holding youth rallies at night.

"We felt like it was more important than Six Flags," said team member David McKenzie, 16, of the added ministry. "It made me feel good to help people."

As for the unanimous vote, McKenzie said, "It makes me feel good about the people in our youth group. They gave up an afternoon of fun to stay and work."

The vote also impressed Brent Gentzel, Gainesville's youth minister. "I was excited about it. It showed some real maturity on their part," Gentzel said. "I was thankful they made that choice."

When Joe LaCognata, pastor of Westview Baptist Church in Shorewood, found the church building and connected parsonage flooded Thursday morning, several team members showed up to help him move furniture and remove water.

"They just jumped right in and started helping," LaCognata said. "They were just amazing. I don't know what we would have done if they had not been here."

"They had a great attitude and a great spirit about them. They were willing to do whatever needed to be done."

LaCognata's 7-year-old daughter, Alleson, lost her Bible in the flood, but the teens have promised to replace it -- with one autographed by the whole team.

"They were just servants the whole time," LaCognata said.

The Gainesville team, however, didn't stop with Westview. Even though the group was supposed to leave Friday, the teenagers voted to stay and work.

Guys helped fill sandbags and move furniture, and the women set up a day care for children in Shorewood.

The team also made and distributed sandwiches and water Friday in Channahon.

"I thought it showed their character and the fact that God had been working to change them," Gentzel said. "In a crisis situation, your character comes to the surface."

Anna Brown, an 18-year-old freshman in college, said the mission effort made a positive impact on her. "I took home a good heart," she said. "Just to be able to help them like that, it's the greatest feeling in the world."

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