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**Baptists Moving to Detente
With Glossolalia Groups?**

By Walker Knight

RICHMOND (BP)--Southern Baptists and other large Christian denominations are moving toward detente with members who practice speaking in tongues (glossolalia) a Baptist educator said at a conference here.

Watson Mills, a professor at Averett College, a Baptist school in Danville, Va., and a non-participating authority on the charismatic movement, said no major denomination today is without a tongues-speaking cell, and with the spread of the movement and more knowledge coming from extensive studies, the practice is viewed as less bizarre and not as a pathological illness.

"As the movement has enlarged, the participants have become less confronting than previously," he said. "We are moving toward a detente, an era of good will. Those writing are less defensive and less dogmatic on both sides."

Mills' observations were underscored by the small group of invited participants at the dialogue, which also discussed the independent Baptist movement in relationship to Southern Baptists. About 35 pastors, superintendents of missions of associations and other denominational workers attended.

Almost to a person the pastors indicated they had members who spoke in tongues, some as many as 20 per cent of their membership. However, none of the pastors indicated they practiced glossolalia themselves, but all appeared to have accepted the fact that the experience was valid for some.

They did not oppose the practice as long as it did not foster disunity.

The dialogue, sponsored by the missions department of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the rural-urban missions department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, did include two participants from those who speak in tongues--a Presbyterian and a Baptist layman.

Charles E. Maurice, the Presbyterian and a retired assistant commonwealth attorney from Richmond, said, "When I spoke in tongues the first time I thought it was gibberish, and it took some time to convince me that it was the Spirit. It is something that gives you power." Maurice has been a part of the movement for more than 20 years.

The Baptist, Bob Bremner Jr., is a more recent participant. A deacon and electrical engineer, he described his experience as one that followed a recent conversion by about two weeks. However, he had been a church member since childhood.

He said the tongues experience turned his life upside down, giving him a thirst for God's word, a new prayer experience and prompted him to start a jail ministry.

When Bremner was asked if he witnessed to other church members concerning his experience, he answered, "At first I wanted to run up and grab others to tell them what had happened to me, but not now" (since he has met some opposition). "The people at the church know my wife and I are active in the movement, so we wait for them to come to us."

William Lumpkin, a Richmond pastor and a former professor of church history, spoke on "The Charismatic Movement: A Threat or a Challenge."

He saw the movement as often a threat to the peace and mission of the church, especially when attitudes of superiority were expressed based on gifts and experience.

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Charismatics threaten to reverse the theological order of placing Christ first by glorifying the Holy Spirit, who actually functions to glorify Christ, Lumpkin said.

He saw the account of speaking in tongues in the New Testament as being given to authenticate the apostles as the messengers of God, and by the time Paul is dealing with the tongues gift the value had largely passed.

One of the challenges Lumpkin cited was to deal with the contradiction of 19 centuries of history when the practice is largely absent. "The early Christians brought speaking in tongues with them from a non-Christian background," he said.

It is also a challenge to understand the sources of the modern-day movement, whether from a repression of religious talk, personal insecurity or the declining value of words, he said.

It can also be seen as a form of escapism and an attempt to avoid the concrete, he added.

The movement challenges Southern Baptists, he continued, to more dynamic participation in their churches, to more individual involvement and to a better relationship to a Christian world view.

In addition, Christians are challenged to study the scripture and not to misinterpret Christian experience. "Experience must not dictate doctrine," he said. "The Bible is the norm of our faith and practice," and the Christian must not have an experience and read back into the scripture a meaning for that experience.

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Independents Challenge
SBC to Inform People

5/10/74

By Walker Knight

RICHMOND (BP)--Independent Baptists who attack the structures and orthodoxy of Southern Baptists challenge the denomination to respond by keeping people informed.

This was the consensus of a Baptist dialogue here which looked at the history of such groups, heard participants from an independent Baptist church and studied where the independents either threatened or challenged Southern Baptists.

The conference, which also included dialogue on the so-called charismatic movement, involved a small group of invited pastors, superintendents of missions and other denominational workers. It was sponsored by the rural-urban missions department of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the missions department of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Participants not only called for Southern Baptists to be better informed, but one suggested a denominational position statement outlining the benefits of SBC "connectionalism" be written and distributed.

"In most independent Baptist churches there is much less independence than in a typical Southern Baptist church," said John Edens, executive secretary of the Middle District Baptist Association in Virginia.

"While the church may not be controlled by denominational machinery it is bound tightly by fundamentalist teachings and by a pastor caught up in the same slavery," Edens said.

Edens spoke on whether independent groups posed a threat or a challenge to Southern Baptists.

"Independents do remind us that the emphasis on evangelism must never be lost," he said. "They warn us that the emphasis on a warm, personal religious experience must be preserved, that zeal and commitment are treasured assets, that the concern for the common man has strong biblical support and that the Bible is tremendously important.

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"However, the scope and limits of their evangelism are too limited. Their stance of withdrawal and separation offers too little positive good in society. Their tightly bound congregations and pastors tend to produce a mass mentality."

Others at the conference agreed that independents served the denomination by providing an alternative, as well as by challenging Southern Baptists to match their zeal, commitment, concern for the common man and appreciation for God's word.

At this point Edens said that instead of trying to support the authenticity of the Bible through a system, "we need to affirm the Bible as God's word in such a way that the Holy Spirit validates it as the authentic record of God's revelation through his people culminating in Jesus Christ."

Independents challenge Southern Baptists to speak to the meaning of life "in terms the average person can feel at a gut level," he said. They also teach us at the point of demanding a strict and committed loyalty.

"We may be afraid of a superficial emotionalism, but an arid intellectualism is no valid alternative," he said.

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'Associations Alive, Well,
Indispensable to Growth'

By Toby Druin

RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--The Baptist association, oldest organization in Southern Baptist life apart from the local church, is alive, well and indispensable to the continued growth of the denomination, speakers emphasized here at the National Convocation on the Southern Baptist Association.

Sponsored by the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and coordinated by the Home Mission Board's (HMB) division of associational services, the convocation was attended by some 1,300 superintendents of missions, pastors and denominational leaders.

Designed to consider the future of Baptist associations and evoke ideas as to how to make them more effective, the convocation featured speeches, dialogue, worship and 32 study groups probing areas of associational concern.

All the speakers underscored the importance of the local association in Baptist life and its strategic role for the future.

Allen Graves, director of the conference and research center at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said he believes "There is a place--an important, continuing place--for effective, autonomous Baptist associations" in the denominational system.

James L. Sullivan, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, said that next to the local church the association is the most indispensable organizational unit in denominational life.

And Arthur Rutledge, executive director of the Home Mission Board, said the association is the starting place in crossing barriers with the gospel of Christ.

Rutledge said there is a need to help Southern Baptists recapture the mission of a Baptist association. He quoted the definition of an association used by the HMB's division of associational services--"A fellowship of churches on mission in their setting." The association must identify the barriers to the gospel in its own setting, he said, and move to cross them.

He cautioned against a narrow understanding of the task faced by Christians.

"It is easy for churches to concentrate on 'our kind of people,' and bypass the hurting, needy, Christless people whom we have grown accustomed to overlooking because they are

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of a different racial or cultural background or because they live on a different economic or educational level from ours," he said.

Graves, speaking on "The Association and the Churches," said, The associations exist to minister to, for, through and from the churches to the glory of God.

Associations, he said, legitimately serve as a link between churches and conventions, "but they should be more than simply promotional tools to project programs of the larger denominational bodies."

At the heart of all associational programs, Graves said, should be the concern for Christian fellowship, mutual edification and support and doctrinal discussion.

"Two big things that are fundamental to the genius and heritage of the association are fellowship and doctrinal discussion," he said.

Sullivan, speaking on "The Association and Baptist Doctrine," said it is a "must" for local associations to set doctrinal guidelines and withdraw fellowship from churches which have ceased to be "Baptist."

But he cautioned against hasty action that would create even more of a problem than that posed by churches violating doctrinal guidelines and noted that early churches had doctrinal differences but did not sever fellowship ties.

"They were of differing opinions, yet each remained positive and forward looking," he said. "We need to allow breath-of-air diversity. There is no time when two thinking men ever see things alike."

New Testament churches which had differences talked themselves into consensus, he said.

"Coercion had no part in their relationships. They were willing to allow for differences. They wanted unity without forcing uniformity. It was their desire to continue to provide diversity, knowing that different churches would appeal to different people. Such diversity does not work against Christianity but for it. The same need still remains even though the centuries have passed."