

May 13, 1974

Cooper Views Years
As SBC President

By Baptist Press

(A Baptist Press interview with Owen Cooper, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1972-74. Cooper is a retired industrialist from Yazoo City, Miss.)

Q--What in your view are the greatest accomplishments of Southern Baptists during the past two years?

A--The fact that Southern Baptists for the third consecutive year have baptized more than 400,000 people is a noteworthy accomplishment. We had an all-time high in the number of foreign missionaries under appointment. We are maintaining the same number of home missionaries. With the exception of one year, we've had the greatest enrollment in our seminaries we've ever had. The income last year in aggregate was over \$1.2 billion.

On intangible accomplishments, one of the things most pleasing is the growing interest of laymen to become meaningfully involved in the total denominational program, not just in the local church but beyond that.

And I see a quest on the part of many Baptists to try making a greater place in their life for the Holy Spirit. I think this is needed in Southern Baptist life. . . that we should make a greater place for the direction and leadership, filling, power and strength of the Holy Spirit.

Q--What do you think will be the key issues at the SBC meeting in Dallas, June 11-13?

A--The matter of evangelism and missions is going to be paramount in the minds of the people. It is my understanding that a motion will be presented to take the evangelism division out of the Home Mission Board. I think also there is going to be a motion that will have something to do with the ordination of women as deacons or ministers. I don't know what form it will be in, but I have been in communication with one man who says he intends to make such a motion on women. I have an idea it will be debated.

I would hope there are enough "issues" to maintain interest but not enough to push us off into any acrimonious debate.

Q--What about the controversy between so-called conservatives and so-called liberals among Southern Baptists with reference to the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement adopted by the SBC in 1963? Should Southern Baptists be greatly concerned about this, especially in light of the Concordia Seminary and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod controversy?

A--Basically, 99.44 per cent of Southern Baptists would subscribe to the (Baptist Faith and Message) statement adopted by the convention in 1963. But that doesn't mean every one of us will interpret any verse of scripture just exactly alike. When we all begin to think exactly alike we are going to stagnate.

Actually, a "liberal" Southern Baptist in the classical sense is somewhat of a conservative, himself. We just have varying degrees of conservatism.

A few years ago it was the less conservative people who were coming to the SBC annual meetings in an organization and creating quite a little comment. Now it is the more conservative people who are coming.

I do not look at either of these as threats at all. Those who are less conservative among Southern Baptists are always challenging us to broaden our horizons and maybe to a little greater involvement in social ministries and programs.

And then there are those who always call us back to the "fundamentals" of the Bible.

I do not see either of these forces assuming the proportions that they will be actually divisive to any substantial extent among Southern Baptists.

Q--Do you have any regrets about things that have happened in Southern Baptist life within the last two years? Or do you see any trends in Southern Baptist life that you don't like?

A--My biggest regret would be that Southern Baptists have not become more meaningfully involved in the program of "reconciliation through Jesus Christ" sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance. Almost 100 Baptist groups are involved in the program.

Southern Baptists have the greatest reservoir of know-how and techniques in evangelism and missions of any religious body in the world. This isn't something we should hoard but should share with others.

One way to share it is to get involved in the programs that cross denominational lines, such as this one.

I would have wished our baptisms this year (1973-74) would have exceeded the most we've ever had. I look forward to the time when we have one-half million baptisms. But we're going to have to work hard on it. The population decline means there will be fewer children from Baptist families and homes to baptize in the future.

Q--What hopes do you have for Southern Baptists' future?

A--My hope is that we will measure up more nearly to our potential. I think probably Southern Baptists' greatest enemy is success, not theological differences.

My hope is that we will reverse the trend of giving a smaller proportion of our income. Ten years ago, we were giving 2.2 per cent of our income, and the last figures I saw we were giving about 1.9 per cent.

We've got to give more to offset inflation and to expand.

I also hope we can increase the areas in which we have missionaries and increase the number of missionaries at home and abroad. We have the resources and potential to claim the lives of more people and to send more people out as missionaries.

Then I have great hopes for the involvement of multitudes of lay people. These people are available. We have 80,000 people who retire every year. Great numbers of students are graduated from Baptist colleges. I feel that we should have an "employment agency" to help graduates find secular employment in places where they can serve Christ.

Another hope is that we will go all out in carrying the gospel to the Northeast section of the country. If you drew a line from Chicago to St. Louis and over to Norfolk, Va., you'd take in about one-sixth of the land area of the country, but one-half of the people. And I'm told that 45 per cent of those people are unchurched.

Q--Would you comment on your view of the Cooperative Program's role in Southern Baptist life today, particularly in light of the coming 50th anniversary of the Cooperative Program in 1975.

My understanding is that of the undesignated dollar that comes into a church, 91 cents stays in the local church; six cents of it goes to the Baptist state convention and three cents goes to Southern Baptist convention causes.

The Cooperative Program (unified budget of Southern Baptists) has proved to be the most effective way of channeling our support for our mission agencies and other agencies of

the convention. I think the average church needs to review its giving through the Cooperative Program. After all, these agencies of the SBC and states are just extensions of the local church.

And when the local church cuts the Cooperative Program, you just reduce the number and effectiveness of our foreign or home mission commitment for Christ. Personally, I believe that a church should give at least 10 per cent to the Cooperative Program.

I trust that by 1975 when the Cooperative Program will be 50 years old, we will be giving \$150 million that year through the Cooperative Program to sustain these great mission and evangelistic and training agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Q--How much time and travel has the Southern Baptist Convention presidency taken?

A--I made myself available in the fall of 1972 almost full time for this task. Before the SBC in Dallas, Mrs. Cooper and I will have visited each of the 50 states and we've been on five continents. I estimate I've been averaging about 400 miles a day.

Q--What are your plans after leaving the SBC presidency this year?

A--I will re-retire, and then will review the situation. I am working with the Baptist World Alliance men's department, trying to help strengthen that organization. I am president of the Pan American Union of Baptist Men and I will be giving more time to that.

I am very much interested in India, and the Lord willing, I hope to participate in some programs that will bring the gospel to more people in India. I will continue serving on the board of directors of several companies.

Mrs. Cooper and I now want to travel "leisurely!" We want to enjoy our children and grandchildren and our local church. Maybe I'll play a little more golf. (BP)

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Randall Lolley Elected
Southeastern President

5/13/74

WAKE FOREST, N. C. (BP)--Randall Lolley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, N. C., has been named to succeed Olin T. Binkley as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here, Aug. 1.

Lolley, 42, a Southeastern alumnus, was elected unanimously in a special session of the seminary's trustees here.

A native of Troy, Ala., Lolley graduated from high school in Samson, Ala., earned a bachelor of arts degree from Samford University, Birmingham; bachelor of divinity and master of theology degrees at Southeastern Seminary, and a doctor of theology degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth. He was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Wake Forest University in 1971.

Lolley held student pastorates in Alabama and North Carolina, and served as associate pastor of both First Baptist Church, Greensboro, N. C., and Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, before becoming pastor of the Winston-Salem 2,500-member First Baptist Church in 1962.

Active in Southern Baptist denominational life, he has served since 1969 as a member of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, and was chairman of the SBC resolutions committee in 1970. He is a former president of the North Carolina Baptist Pastors' Conference and a member of the board of trustees of Campbell College, a Baptist school in Buies Creek, N. C.

At Southeastern as a student, Lolley maintained a grade point ratio of 3.0 on a 3.0 scale and served as president of the student body.

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As third president of Southeastern Seminary, one of six seminaries operated by the Southern Baptist Convention, Lolley will succeed Binkley, Southeastern's president since 1962. The seminary's first president was the late S. L. Stealey.

"In addition to the academic qualifications, Dr. Lolley has demonstrated competence in relating Christian scholarship to the pastoral dimensions of the Christian ministry, especially in dynamic urban centers in the South," said Binkley, commenting on Lolley's election.

Lolley's election was also praised in an editorial prepared by Marse Grant, editor of the Biblical Recorder, for the publication's May 18 issue. The Biblical Recorder is North Carolina's state Baptist journal.

A search committee of the seminary's board of trustees nominated Lolley after consultation with the faculty, representatives of the alumni association and student representatives. Claud Bowen of Greensboro, N. C., headed the search committee.

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Photo mailed to state Baptist editors.

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U. S. Senate Acts to
Delay Postage Increases

5/13/74

WASHINGTON, D. C. (BP)--By a vote of 71-11, the U.S. Senate passed and sent to the House of Representatives a bill designed to stretch out proposed postal rate increases for second-class publications.

The new measure, which was considered in committee for over a year before being brought to the Senate floor, passed overwhelmingly with very little debate. Sen. Gale McGee (D.-Wyo.), the bill's floor leader, said his was "a bill designed to benefit the general public by strengthening the free press."

McGee also said much of the bill's benefit would go to non-profit mailers, such as churches, fraternal organizations and charities.

Proponents of the measure pointed out that the action was needed to insure the survival of thousands of journals, periodicals, and newspapers which otherwise might be forced out of business due to escalating postal rates.

In a speech on the Senate floor favoring passage of the measure, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D.-Mass.), summed up the problem, "The trouble began with the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, which created the postal service and imposed a general requirement that the mail should pay its way." Kennedy charged the independent U.S. Postal Service with "disregarding other equally important requirements in the act" in determining to become financially self-sufficient.

Earlier in the current session of Congress, Kennedy and Sen. Barry Goldwater (R.-Ariz.), introduced a stronger measure than the one passed by the Senate. Kennedy stated on the Senate floor that while he had hoped for stronger legislation, he was joining in support of McGee's measure because it accomplished the primary goal of his bill, phasing in postal rate increases over a longer period of time.

The original 1970 act setting up the postal service as an independent agency decreed that regular second-class publications should pay their own way within five years and nonprofit second-class publications within ten years.

Under the new Senate measure, regular second-class patrons would be granted another three years' extension, or until 1978, while nonprofit second-class customers would have an additional six years, or until 1986, before being forced to pay their own way.

Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D.-Wis.), who also favored a stronger bill, stated that the Senate measure "does not go far enough to remove the threat" to the quality and even survival of "small periodicals and independent journals of opinion." He quoted the publisher of a small periodical as saying that the bill would merely "mean postponement of the death

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sentence."

Nelson said that he had decided not to introduce stronger legislation in the current session because a number of publishers feared such a bill would not pass now. He promised, however, to introduce "considerably stronger legislation" next year.

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University of Richmond
Receives Matching Grant

5/13/74

RICHMOND (BP)--A gift of \$150,000, to be matched on a \$2 for \$1 basis to provide a \$450,000 endowment for grants to faculty for excellence in teaching has been given to the University of Richmond.

The Baptist school accepted the gift from the Robert G. Cabell III and Maude Morgan Cabell Foundation of Richmond.

The gift was accepted with the provision that matching funds will be sought in the immediate future so the first grants might be made "around the middle of 1975," according to President E. Bruce Heilman.

The gift will be added to the total of funds already given and pledged in the university's "Our Time in History" development program. The university is seeking \$50 million to complete a building program and to provide scholarship and academic support.

A total of \$21 million has been raised in the first two years of the 10-year campaign, under the direction of national campaign chairman F. Carlyle Tiller, president and chief executive officer of Wheat First Securities.

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