

October 31, 1974

Churches Can Get Help In
Preparing for Bicentennial

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By Teena Andrews
for Baptist Press

With the countdown for the nation's 200th birthday on July 4, 1976, at less than two years, plans for the big birthday celebration are well underway for many groups, both secular and religious, all the way from the largest national commission to the smallest community project.

Southern Baptists, along with hundreds of other religious and civic groups, already have their fingers in the Bicentennial birthday cake, and rightly so, says the denomination's Historical Commission in Nashville.

"This historic anniversary offers to Southern Baptists an unusual opportunity to learn about their religious heritage and the significant contributions which Baptists have made to the origin and development of America," said Lynn May, executive secretary-treasurer of the commission.

"Through meaningful involvement in Bicentennial programs and projects each individual and church can learn to draw on the resources of the past to help solve problems confronting them today," he continued.

Leaders of other religious and civic groups, in the same vein, seem to agree on one thing: the Bicentennial should be a grass roots celebration, with communities, churches and individuals involved in some sort of project.

Many of the largest programs now underway are for that purpose--not to undertake monumental projects themselves, but to assist smaller groups, such as churches, to find and plan their own ways to celebrate.

On the national level, the official American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA), created in December, 1973, acts as a "coordinating agency, not a program agency," explained Daniel McKenzie, private sector liaison officer with the administration. "We are here to lend assistance, to help get things started or see that local communities get things started," he said.

ARBA coordinates, schedules and facilitates activities of local, state, national and international significance, drawing on the resources of public, private, civic and other organizations.

ARBA can help Baptist groups with their Bicentennial plans by offering a publication which contains detailed information on projects and events already underway. The Official Master Reference for Bicentennial Activities is published quarterly, and the second volume contained over 2,000 activities.

Churches planning Bicentennial programs are urged to send information to the administration for listing.

On the religious scene, another national group which can help churches in planning a "meaningful observance" of the Bicentennial is project Forward '76 (Freedom of Religion Will Advance Real Democracy), sponsored by the Interchurch Center in New York.

The center offers a national information bank, containing information related to the spiritual dimensions of the Bicentennial, a newsletter, planning assistance, scholarly research and program resources. A number of prominent Baptists are among the sponsors of this organization.

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Many other denominations are working with their historical groups to emphasize the importance of religious freedom and their denomination's history. Presbyterians, United Methodists and Episcopalians are among those groups who will place a special emphasis on historical materials.

"The (Southern Baptist) Historical Commission will emphasize the role of our heritage in light of Bicentennial planning," said A. Ronald Tonks, assistant executive secretary of the commission. Among other activities, the commission plans conferences on the Bicentennial at Glorieta and Ridgecrest national conference centers in New Mexico and North Carolina during Bible Preaching Weeks.

"One of the emphases will be the Bicentennial celebrations in local churches. And there will be workshops on how local churches can use the celebration, especially to emphasize their Baptist heritage," Tonks continued. "We plan to encourage all churches to have a Bicentennial Project--of any sort. Every Baptist in every church should have his or her own project."

Although not on the official SBC calendar, the commission plans to encourage Baptist churches to designate June 20, 1976 as Baptist Heritage Week.

The commission also hopes to move aggressively into gathering oral history from local churches in 1976. "This is the greatest opportunity of the half-century to develop and increasing awareness of Baptist history," Tonks emphasized. "People will be especially interested in history and the past at this time," he said.

Other non-denominational religious organizations, such as the American Bible Society, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, The Religious Communities and the Arts and The American Revolution (RCAAR) have special plans.

The American Bible Society plans to release the complete Today's English Version of the Bible in 1976 as a "gift" to America on its 200th birthday. Their theme for the Bicentennial era is "Good News, America!", and the ABS will work with local churches in preparing portions of the scriptures for special Bicentennial events, spokesmen said. They will prepare special illustrations and additional written materials to coordinate with a specific local event.

Americans United plan to celebrate May 2-8, 1976 as National Religious Freedom Week.

RCAAR, an interfaith project has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, RCAAR will focus primarily on local areas and regions, relating religion and art.

Southern Baptists plan to ring in 1976 with a nationwide Baptist meeting in San Antonio for young people, Dec. 28, 1975-Jan. 1, 1976.

Several agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention will sponsor the meeting which will seek to "speak to students and young adult involvement in the mission of the church at the beginning of the 200th anniversary of our nation," said Charles Roselle, secretary of the National Student Ministries of the denomination's Sunday School Board.

Other Baptist agencies, such as the Christian Life Commission in Nashville, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D. C., the Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth and the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, are planning special activities.

But the local church and community hold the key to each individual American being involved in the realization of what they owe to their heritage, Bicentennial spokesmen say.

"Through such involvement Baptists can help to make the United States Bicentennial what it should be," said May, "a time for individuals, churches and our nation to consider who and what we are and to look at our failures as well as our successes; a time to work for reconciliation; a time to look at the future."



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Foreign Board; Seminary
Leaders Explore Missions

RICHMOND (BP)--Twenty-two theological educators from all six Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) seminaries and the administration of the SBC Foreign Mission Board focused, in an historic meeting here, on their mutual responsibilities for worldwide dissemination of the Christian gospel.

The dialogue, hosted by the board, represented the first such meeting of the two groups in the 129-year history of both the SBC and the board. It grew out of a long-standing recognition of interdependence between the two groups, a board spokesman said.

The Foreign Mission Board's desire for input toward the development of new approaches for the remaining 25 years of the century was the particular challenge at the meeting, according to Jesse C. Fletcher, director of the board's mission support division.

"Few people in Southern Baptist life have more involvement with the missionary task than you," Baker J. Cauthen, the board's executive secretary, told the seminary presidents, deans and professors of missions in his welcoming statement. "All doors are open. The closets are open. Let's probe together into this task and share our common insights."

Duke McCall, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., said, "If you want to know how important we regard this meeting, just look around." McCall was referring to those in attendance--all six seminary presidents, representative deans from each institution and all the professors of missions.

Fletcher, who coordinated the historic meeting, said discussions on the nature and manifestations of God's call to missionary service, the challenge of preparing potential missionaries through seminary education, strategic problems facing the Foreign Mission Board the next 25 years and continuing education of the missionary dominated the two-day event.

"There was a remarkably open and frank discussion on all points," Fletcher said. "The diversities without our ranks were evident, but they served only to enhance the basic unity which undergirded the whole group."

Winston Crawley, director of the overseas division, led the board's seven administrative area secretaries in briefing the seminary professors on the overseas situation.

"We want you to have a behind-the-scene look at the task as we are now attempting it with 2,579 missionaries in 81 countries," Crawley stated.

Robert Naylor, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex., opened the discussion of the seminary's role in preparing missionaries. "We can do a better job," he said, "but we need your help and commitment to our role in the missionary task."

In an evening discussion dealing with future directions of both the seminaries and the foreign missions task, McCall and Cauthen shared their own thoughts with the group about the next 25 years. McCall dealt with trends in seminary education, as well as particular challenges, while Cauthen dealt with world developments which will encroach upon Southern Baptist witness in the years ahead.

Harold Graves, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., suggested a continuation of the dialogue involving the full faculties of the six seminaries.

In a letter following the meeting, L. Jack Gray, professor of missions at Southwestern Seminary, wrote, "The dialogue sessions were magnificent in spirit, basic in content and will be historic for the future of Baptist world missions. As the sessions unfolded I marveled that our freedom so increased. Each session was blessed with a cumulative trust. Human camaraderie gave way to brotherly love. By the time we came to those closing moments of prayer, I found myself worshipping our Lord in the midst of sheer business discussions."

Another Baptist Association
Castigates Charismatics

TULSA, Okla. (BP)--The Rogers Missionary Baptist Association, comprised of 24 Southern Baptist churches in northeast Oklahoma, has lashed out against the charismatic movement, characterizing it as "heresy."

The association thus became at least the second association of Southern Baptist churches to go on record in recent days against the charismatic movement, according to reports received by Baptist Press news service.

An earlier report indicated the Dallas (Tex.) Baptist Association, made up of 234 churches, requested any member churches involved in the charismatic movement to desist or voluntarily withdraw from association membership.

The Rogers Association resolved, in its annual session, to "express our opposition to this heresy as we do all other heresy. . . and (to) encourage our churches to deal with this heresy, as with all heresy, with Christian love and compassion, but with firmness, following the New Testament guide for church discipline in dealing with heresy (Titus 3:10-11)."

The two verses in Titus declare: "As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned." (RSV).

"The so-called 'charismatic' movement, including glossalalia (speaking in tongues) and 'divine healing,' seeks fervently to entice Baptists into its movement," the Rogers Association resolution said.

"The heretical teachings of this movement create, in adherence, a false sense of piety (and) superior holiness and creates a breach of fellowship, all contrary to the New Testament."

In other action, the Rogers Association opposed ordination of women as unscriptural and opposed acceptance by Baptist churches of unscriptural baptisms.

The resolution on women said ordination of women, "practiced by some Southern Baptist churches," represents "a departure from the fundamental teachings of the New Testament."

The statement recorded "opposition to this practice. . . (and encouraged) our churches to remain true to the New Testament teachings. . . (and) faithfully teach their members this fundamental truth."

Elaborating on the baptism question, the association said "some Southern Baptist churches have erred from the truth and received for membership those who have not been scripturally baptized."

For baptism to be scriptural, the resolution said, "It must be done by authority of the New Testament church, . . . the candidate must have accepted Christ Jesus as his savior, . . . its (baptism's) purpose is to portray the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the believer's death and burial with Him and his resurrection to a new life, and can be done only by immersion in water."

The earlier Dallas Baptist Association action did not name a church by name but was apparently aimed at Beverly Hills Baptist Church in suburban Dallas, which had been featured in a local newspaper article dealing with the charismatic movement. It is the only church in the association known to practice charismatic expression of spiritual gifts.

The Dallas Association's strong stand, taken during its annual meeting, labeled practice of charismatic gifts, as "disrupting to the fellowship of our churches." It declared that if member churches "cannot work in harmony with our historic views (in opposition to charismatic expression), we strongly urge they voluntarily withdraw from our association and seek fellowship with churches of more common practice."

Beverly Hills' pastor, Howard Conatser, said the church has no present plans to withdraw from the association.

Lad Trades Pennies
For "Big Money"

By Marion Harvey Carroll

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--A small boy, with an infectious grin, recently came into "big money" while helping to alleviate the penny shortage at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Several months ago five-year-old Scott Fox began stock-piling a supply of pennies, cajoled from his parents and friends. When his family moved here in the summer, young Scott carefully packed his piggy bank, now grown heavy with copper coins.

In October, his dad, Russell Fox, a diploma in pastoral ministry student at the seminary, saw the "Pennies Needed" sign posted in the institution's business office and learned that the cashier would exchange quarters for pennies.

"Which would you rather have, pennies or quarters?" the former Anniston, Ala., business executive asked his son.

"The big money," quickly replied the shrewd young trader.

Piggy bank in hand, the preschooler hurried to the business office for the great exchange.

As the cashier gratefully accepted his hoard of 325 pennies, Scott smiled and counted his 13 quarters. "I like the big money better," he grinned.

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Seminary Elects Cate to
Faculty, Grants Increases

10/31/74

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary elected a new member to the school's Old Testament faculty and approved staff salary raises among actions at their fall meeting here.

Robert L. Cate, pastor for 10 years at First Baptist Church, Aiken, S. C., was elected associate professor of Old Testament, effective Jan. 1, 1975.

Cate, a Nashville, Tenn., native, is a graduate of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, and holds bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

Faced with spiraling inflation, trustees increased faculty and administrative staff salaries four per cent, retroactive to August 1. The increase, along with six per cent voted in April, was possible because of the seminary's share of national Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts above 1973-74 total budget requirements. The SBC Executive Committee distributed the additional funds on a pro-rata basis to SBC institutions and agencies.

The seminary's administration reported \$78,000 received from Cooperative Program capital grants is being used for repaving, remodeling faculty offices, replacing underground utility lines and fencing.

The trustees passed a resolution commending and expressing appreciation for the support of the Cooperative Program.

In other action, three new trustees were elected to fill vacancies created by resignations. Their election is subject to approval next June at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Miami Beach. All laymen, they are R.C. Howard of Cushing, Okla., Bill Shannon of Puyallup, Wash., and Dr. Wallace Denton of West Lafayette, Ind.

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