



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
W. C. Fields, Director
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor
James Lee Young, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Orville Scott, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
MEMPHIS Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Gomer Lesch, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 254-5461
RICHMOND Richard M. Styles, Acting Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

June 28, 1976

76-106

Pioneer Black Seminarian Dies at 68 in Kentucky

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Garland K. Offutt, who may have been the first black graduate of any Southern Baptist Convention seminary, died here June 23 of cancer at the age of 68.

The Kentucky native successfully crossed racial barriers without incident in the early 1940's as a student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a decade before Kentucky lawmakers finally rescinded the "Day Law" which prohibited blacks from attending classes with whites in the state's educational institutions, a seminary spokesman said.

"Offutt, armed with a call to preach and a bachelor of arts degree from all-black Kentucky State College, applied for admission and was quietly enrolled by Southern Seminary officials in a precedent-shattering decision which opened the way for dozens of black ministerial students who enrolled in later years," the spokesman said.

He went on to earn Southern Seminary's master of theology degree in 1944 and doctor of theology degree in 1948, having written a dissertation on "The Concept of Kinsman in the Biblical Doctrine of Redemption."

In 1950, Offutt became pastor of West Chestnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, where he served until his death. He was a leader in the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

-30-

Southwestern Seminary
Slates Oklahoma Center

Baptist Press
6/28/76

FORT WORTH (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will open a branch center offering fully accredited seminary training in the Oklahoma City area beginning this fall, according to Jesse Northcutt, vice president for academic affairs. The center will be the second one opened by Southwestern Seminary since last year when a similar program was begun in Houston, Tex., Northcutt said.

The latest program is a joint endeavor of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, which is financially underwriting the program, Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU), which is providing the classroom and support space, and the seminary.

The program will offer accredited graduate level courses which will lead to the master of divinity and the master of religious education degrees. Officials also expect to begin offering doctor of ministry seminars at a later date.

The initial Monday only courses, to begin August 30, are expected to be taught on the OBU campus at Shawnee, with the full resources of OBU's Mabee Learning Center to be made available to the seminary students. Professors from the seminary will fly to Oklahoma each week to conduct the various courses.

Students participating in the Oklahoma project must hold a college degree and will be expected to meet all admission requirements which are set out for any other enrolling seminary student, a spokesman said. The standard application fee of \$10 will be charged and there will be a \$150 matriculation fee per semester for each student.

-more-

According to Northcutt, the opening of this second branch reflects a growing movement in theological education throughout the country. "As a part of this movement, more seminaries are taking their resources to the minister rather than have the minister come to the seminary.

"This is especially needed among Southern Baptists where less than half of all our pastors have any type of seminary training. We are encouraged by the response of pastors and church staff personnel to our program in Houston and in the state of Oklahoma," Northcutt noted.

Southwestern, which holds claim to being the largest seminary in the world, is one of six seminaries operated by the Southern Baptist Convention. Currently at least three other SBC seminaries operate similar branch programs in such areas as Los Angeles, Calif., Little Rock, Ark., Jacksonville, Fla., Norfolk, Va., Atlanta, Ga., Nashville, Tenn., and Columbus, Ohio.

-30-

Pastors' Wives Need
To Forget 'Pedestal'

Baptist Press
6/28/76

By Nancy Carter

LOUISVILLE (BP)--A pastor's wife should "forget the pedestal" on which members of her husband's congregation may unconsciously place her, believes Martha Nelson, author of several books on Christian women and a pastor's wife for 31 years.

"Pastor's wives are honored in special ways, when really they shouldn't be placed on a pedestal," she said in an interview at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here while doing research for her new book.

Her husband, Carl, is the pastor of Pelahatchie (Miss.) Baptist Church.

"We need to get in, roll up our sleeves and forget position, and focus on contribution," Mrs. Nelson added, noting all the women in the church are a part of "the team."

"I often say to the deacons' wives, 'We're in this thing together.' We are all ministering for God in our different ways--the working woman in her place at the desk, the school cook in a cafeteria line, the social worker, the teacher, the nurse--all have such a tremendous opportunity to minister."

She noted one way for women to feel more fulfilled in their work at the church is to specialize.

"So often we dabble at the task of the church. If we could just specialize, the church could gain so much.

"If you're a children's worker, become a great children's worker. Learn and grow and develop, rather than just doing a little of this and a little of that."

Mrs. Nelson's books include *The Christian Woman in the Working World*, *A Woman's Search for Serenity*, *On Being a Deacon's Wife*, and *Police Wife*. Her new book will be for the wives of men in church-related vocations.

She believes very strongly that wives of men called into church-related vocations share their husbands' call.

"Our call is a call to unique responsibility, a call to be adaptable and flexible . . . and a call to joy."

-30-

Search Committee Named To
Seek Stetson President

Baptist Press
6/28/76

DELAND, Fla. (BP)--A seven-man trustee search committee to seek a new president for Stetson University was named here by Douglas Stenstrom, chairman of the board of trustees of the Baptist school.

-more-

Earl B. Edington of St. Petersburg was named chairman and Wendell Jarrard, Sr., of DeLand, vice chairman, of the special committee responsible for finding a replacement for John E. Johns, who will leave the top Stetson post in August to become president of Furman University, Baptist school in Greenville, S. C.

The resignation of Johns to assume the presidency of his alma mater was announced in late May. His departure will end a 28 year tenure as a member of the faculty, an administrator, and the past six years as president of Stetson.

-30-

EDITOR'S NOTE: Southern Baptists around the country have received numerous queries from secular news media and others about what Democratic presidential hopeful Jimmy Carter, an active Southern Baptist laymen, means when he says he is "born again." Dr. Henlee Barnette, professor of Christian ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., wrote the following article to explain what the term means.

'BORN AGAIN': What
Does It Mean?

Baptist Press
6/28/76

By Henlee Barnette

LOUISVILLE (BP)--Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter's assertion in press interviews that he is a "born-again Christian" caused the reporters a bit of consternation as they attempted to figure out what he meant.

A religion editor of a leading metropolitan newspaper phoned a noted church historian and conversed for an hour attempting to gain some insight into this concept of "being born again."

All of this reminds us of another intellectual, Nicodemus, who was mystified when Jesus told him that he could not even "see" the Kingdom of God without the experience of the new birth (John 3:1-15).

Being born again is indeed a concept which is puzzling to the modern mind. It is in that category of religious terms such as love, spiritual, and salvation which become almost meaningless by much imprecise usage. Even some Christians have vague notions as to what the phrase actually means.

Being born again or "from above" is to be begotten or sired of God into a new being. The believer must not only be born of "water" (John the Baptist's repentance-baptism) but of the "Spirit" (John 3:5). John's baptism was "unto repentance." But the Spirit enters the process to bring about the new birth. One is begotten by a spiritual "seed" (sperma) of conception in contrast to the "seed" (sperma) of physical birth (John 3:6, cf. John 1:13; I Peter 1:23).

The new birth is not mere reform but being reborn. To be a new man is to have a new beginning. To have a "new whither, one must have a new whence." This is what one cannot have without being born "from above" or of God.

Being born anew was no strange idea in Jesus' day. Jews were familiar with this concept. The proselyte who embraced Judaism was considered a "newborn child." When a believer in the ancient Greek mystery religions achieved a mystic union with God, he was considered to be "twice-born."

What does the new birth mean for us today? How does this unique experience come about? What are its personal and ethical implications in our scientific and secular society?

The new birth is the result of a personal encounter with the contemporaneous Christ. This involves a consciousness of being a sinner, repentance from sin, and faith in Jesus Christ as redeemer and lord of life. It includes the commitment of the total self to a Person, not a principle; to the living Christ, not a dead creed. It comes about by divine grace and not merely good deeds (Eph. 2:8-9).

-more-

The new birth is deeply ethical. It means being born into a new way of life with new responsibilities. Hence, the experience of the new birth is a radical change of life, so radical that it is like being born all over again. This experience makes it possible to "see" or to enter the Kingdom of God and calls for the believer to submit to the Kingdom's ethical demands of love, justice and righteousness.

After his discourse on the nature of the new birth for Nicodemus, Jesus specifically identifies its moral expression (John 3:19-21). Born again disciples "do the truth." Doing the truth is living in the light of the truth as revealed in Christ who is the Truth (John 5:32). The doer of evil deeds avoids the light and scurries for cover for fear of exposure. To do the truth is to face reality concerning self and others and to practice truth in one's personal life, the church and society. In short, the new birth issues in "visible obedience" to the will of God.

The Christian celebrates his spiritual birthday because he is born into a new way of life. He possesses a whole new perspective on the world. While it is the same old world, he sees it through new eyes. Paul declares that: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2Cor. 5:17)

He is not speaking of a new creature in the sense of an ontological change in the individual. Rather, he is referring to the transformation of the perspective of the one who is in union with Christ. As the New English Bible puts it: "When anyone is united with Christ, there is a new world." This is the point of the context of the verse (2 Cor. 5:16-21).

Here the apostle asserts that he no longer regards man from the "human point of view." That is to say, he now looks at every man in the light of the new order which has begun with Christ.

For the born anew person, then, the old perverted outlook on life has passed away and there is a totally new perspective on reality.

-30-

Dr. Henlee Barnette is professor of Christian Ethics, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

#

SBC Wrapup

SBC 1976: A View
From the Afterglow

Baptist Press
6/28/76

By Robert O'Brien

NORFOLK (BP)--Still basking in the afterglow of a high-candlepower national spotlight, which radiated both heat and light here during three hectic mid-June days, Southern Baptist editors across the nation have started trying to interpret just what transpired during the 119th annual national meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

That spotlight, fed by media ranging from the Village Voice to the national TV networks, was lit by two men--one as highly visible by his presence as the other was by his absence.

Extricating himself from his frantic scramble to win the Republican presidential nomination from Ronald Reagan, Gerald R. Ford, an Episcopalian, journeyed to Norfolk to become the first incumbent U. S. President ever to address the SBC.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist deacon and SBC agency trustee, remained out of sight--but not out of mind--putting the finishing touches on his remarkable surge to an apparent presidential nomination by the Democratic Party.

That combination intrigued the news media--already intrigued by the Carter phenomenon alone. It either puzzled, ruffled or dazzled individual Baptists, depending on how each viewed the political and religious ramifications of the invitation to Ford to speak and the presidential security and fire safety measures which entangled with SBC procedures and kept several thousand registered "messengers" at bay.

-more-

Only the first 10,500 messengers of the unofficial record 18,672 to register for the convention got special passes to let them in to hear Ford in the Scope Convention Center, a facility too small for the nation's largest Protestant denomination even in a normal year. Some 2,500 others got into adjoining Chrysler Hall to see Ford on closed circuit TV. Others either watched a live telecast on local TV or fumed outside Scope unable to get in.

Considering Baptists' historical penchant for a good fight, it could have been grim--especially since a number of messengers had arrived with their spiritual teeth set on edge over some internal doctrinal/political disagreements.

They bent but they didn't break.

"Like a strong rubber band, the Southern Baptist Convention was stretched to new formations during sessions in Norfolk . . . , but always returned to its original shape of cooperation and abiding by the will of the majority," wrote Oscar Hoffmeyer Jr., associate editor of Louisiana's Baptist Message.

It was the sign of a denomination come of age. "The messengers to the SBC seemed to be growing in maturity," noted J. Everett Sneed, editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine. The SBC showed "balance and poise," said James F. Cole, editor of the Baptist Message.

The Ford invitation had drawn criticism of some in advance of the meeting on grounds that it was not wise in a political year to give a candidate a platform at the SBC. One state Baptist editor, Robert J. Hastings of Illinois, had urged the committee on order of business to withdraw the invitation. The committee, chaired by Maryland editor R. Gene Puckett, declined, saying Ford was invited not as a candidate but as President to speak on a Bicentennial emphasis.

With one notable exception--C. R. Daley, editor of Kentucky's Western Recorder--state Baptist editors, expressed general approval, in retrospect, of the Ford address. Hastings, echoing most of his colleagues, said Ford's message "was a high point of the convention. Refusing to use the platform as a political springboard, he paid what I took to be genuine praise of Baptists and what they stand for . . ."

For Daley, though, it was his "most disappointing day in 25 years of convention attendance." The Kentucky editor noted that the "President behaved becomingly," was "treated cordially and respectfully" and "read an excellent speech containing expressions of fundamental Baptist convictions." But he declared that the "security arrangements for the President's visit were understandable but to subject convention messengers to such treatment is deplorable."

Calling the presidential appearance "a case of civil religion in its classic form," Daley said that it should be "the first and last time a President is invited to speak to a Southern Baptist meeting, simply because he is President . . . Baptists as a minority group have never sought prestige and attention from visits of high political officials. And now as the largest evangelical group in America we should not risk selling our soul for a 30-minute visit of an appointed American president running for election."

But Bob S. Terry, editor of Missouri's Word and Way, wrote: "The convention did not endorse President Ford by having him on the program. In fact, a resolution was adopted which stated that the traditional policy of not endorsing candidates be affirmed. But the President's appearance constituted the highest form of praise for Baptist principles of religious liberty, morality in government and the personal relationship of every person to Jesus Christ."

Without exception, however, the editors agreed that while Norfolk area Baptists were to be commended, the Scope was too small. They agreed with a convention proposal, passed in Norfolk, which will limit future conventions to cities which can offer no less than 16,000 seats and 6,500 hotel rooms.

At first it appeared SBC business would get sidetracked in the presidential hoopla. But it didn't.

"It is unfortunate that the 1976 SBC will be remembered as the year the President came," wrote Alvin C. Shackelford, editor of the Indiana Baptist, "when there were a number of significant matters on the agenda--the missions challenge for the remainder of the century; a

study report on the operation of our SBC Executive Committee; the convention's first statement on homosexuality; an operating budget for our combined agencies which is increased nearly 20 percent above the previous year; and record messenger enrollment . . ."

Editorials in state Baptist papers expressed strong approval of such actions as voting of a \$55 million national Cooperative Program unified budget and approving recommendations to double the SBC mission force at home and abroad and bring the gospel to every one in the world by the year 2000.

Except for some scattered comment about heated discussions surrounding it, the SBC action reaffirming its moderate position on abortion drew no opposition. And editors expressed general approval of stands against homosexuality, the teaching of Transcendental Meditation in public schools, government interference in church pension plans, advertising of beverage alcohol, and distribution of pornography.

But the editors were mixed in their views of whether the convention was "significant" or "not so significant," "good" or "great" or "not so spectacular." "Views of the convention, as always, are determined by the mind-set of the beholder," explained James Langley, editor of the Capital Baptist of the D. C. Convention. "Some came away inspired by challenging speakers and stirring music. Others found little of the courageous and prophetic, and no real 'rocking of the boat.'"

An editor or two--particularly Jack Harwell of Georgia's Christian Index--voiced the annual complaint that there's still not enough time to conduct convention business and hear what messengers want to say in the midst of a welter of other program features. But several editors commented on the convention's "fairness" and "democracy" in allowing a messenger from Georgia, Herschel A. Markham, to express his views on what he felt was communistic public school literature, even though they felt he did so in a disruptive manner.

The editors unanimously--and profusely--praised the work and ability of outgoing SBC president, Jaroy Weber of Lubbock, and the move by the convention to elect James L. Sullivan, retired SBC Sunday School Board president, on the first ballot. Sullivan, running against four other nominees, reportedly collected 54 percent of the vote.

Two editors--Theo Sommerkamp of the Ohio Baptist Messenger and Daley of Kentucky--applauded the election as a recognition by Baptists of the need to use the pool of talent of retirees. Several praised Southern Baptists reaching back for a historical SBC practice of electing SBC agency-related statesman.

John Roberts, editor of South Carolina's Baptist Courier, summed up the unanimous reaction of the editors, noting that the new president "is one of the best prepared men ever elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Few people are more knowledgeable in denominational matters. He knows Baptists, their strengths and their weaknesses, better than almost anyone else living . . . Baptists love and respect Sullivan . . . They admire him for his frankness, openness and integrity. They see both his doctrinal beliefs and his denominational loyalty as genuine."

A number of the editors interpreted Sullivan's election as rejection by the messengers of divisiveness and ultra-conservatism.

"The unity of the convention was seen in the choice of Dr. James L. Sullivan as president on the first ballot, even though other strong candidates were nominated," wrote Joe Odle, editor of the Mississippi Baptist Record. "This first ballot choice reveals the great confidence Southern Baptists have in Dr. Sullivan and also their determination to keep the convention in the path of the 'middle of the road conservatism' where it has so long stood."

John Hurt, editor of the Baptist Standard in Texas, said the convention "turned its back on dissidents both organized and otherwise, and accepted as a major thrust the sharing of Christ with all the world before the turn of the century."

But Hurt also said the election "was not a clear-cut issue since Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis and a director of the (Baptist Faith and Message) Fellowship, withdrew after being nominated. He explained he had not given permission for the nomination and was declining because the 'Lord spoke to my heart,'" Hurt wrote.

Rogers had been the focal point of preconvention criticism by some state Baptist editors, who expressed concern that he had packed speakers with members and sympathizers of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship (BFMF) and that he would use the Pastors' Conference as a springboard to the SBC presidency. He had been touted by BFMF leaders as a candidate of the ultraconservative group formed in 1973 to ferret out what it calls convention liberals and to emphasize the verbal inspiration theory of Scripture.

His withdrawal of his nomination and the manner in which he conducted the Pastors' Conference, an annual pre-convention meeting of SBC pastors, raised his stature in the eyes of several editors, summed up by Edgar Cooper of Florida Baptist Witness: "It was evident that his action relieved the tension that had built up over the election . . . Rogers did the right thing . . . "

"This editor's fear that the Pastors' Conference would provide an opportunity for a special interest group to influence the convention proved to be without foundation," wrote Sneed of Arkansas.

Harwell of Georgia and Shackelford in Indiana commended the Memphis pastor, respectively, for his "statesmanship" and being "a man of his word" because he had said he would not be a candidate and followed through on what he said. Puckett of Maryland and Harwell both noted that Rogers' looms as an eventual candidate for president. ". . . If he disassociates himself from the BFMF, he may someday be president of the Convention," Puckett said.

The editors in general saw a unified convention, with missions and evangelism at its heart and an unswervable commitment to middle of the road conservatism. "It was truly one of our finest hours," said Julian Pentecost of Virginia's Religious Herald. "The outlook continues to be bright for Southern Baptists," added Marse Grant of North Carolina's Biblical Recorder. "The few detractors and critics will continue to be around, but will serve a good purpose by keeping those in the mainstream alert and aware of what's going on," Grant continued. "Southern Baptists refuse to go off on tangents--a characteristic which is significant in these days when extremists in some denominations are having a field day sowing division and discord."