



BAPTIST PRESS

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Sunday School Board President Reacts To Literature Criticism

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President Grady Cothen has reacted to the method used to criticize a misstatement in a February lesson in the "Sunday School Young Adults" quarterly.

Robert E. Lee, a Knoxville, Tenn., pastor and evangelist, said he mailed 4,000 copies of a two-page "indictment" of Sunday School Board literature headlined "Lies in our Literature."

The issue arose around a statement in the February 25 lesson that read:

"If a Methodist, a Presbyterian, a Lutheran, a Catholic, an Episcopalian, a Mormon, a Jehovah's Witness and a Baptist were to sit down together around a table to discuss their beliefs, they would discover many differences. But none could disagree with Paul's words in these verses (from Ephesians, chapter 4).

"No matter what our background or denominational preference, we all believe in one body (the church), one spirit (the Holy Spirit), one hope (the resurrection), one Lord (Jesus Christ), one faith (Christianity), one baptism (public profession) and one God (Yahweh)," the lesson said.

"We would argue about our modes of baptism, our church polity, our governmental structure, and so on. But on these seven points few, if any, would disagree. In fact, they are the basis for worldwide Christian unity."

Cothen replied to the mailout and to a letter he received directly from Lee, interim pastor of the Elm Street Baptist Church in Knoxville.

"There is no question but that we made an error in the 'Sunday School Young Adults' quarterly to which Lee referred," Cothen said. "It is a misstatement, acknowledged by both the author and the editor, to group all those denominations together and say they believe the same thing."

"We regret our error and will renew our diligence in guarding against such occurrences," he said. "To label the honest effort of dedicated people as a blasphemous lie or the encroachment of the devil or liberalism or modernism is a disservice to this institution, to the convention, and to the Lord."

Cothen said the widespread dissemination of information "related to the unfortunate affair" did serious harm to many honest people.

"We produced last year 156 million pieces of material, all of which, insofar as we are able to ascertain, was biblical, Christian, and conformed to the Baptist Faith and Message Statement."

The board president charged that Lee's treatment of an error was improper. "The Christian's responsibility would have been to notify me personally that an error had been made and ask for correction," he said.

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"Three members of the Sunday School Board of trustees live in the same town with Lee, but no contact was made of them or any other responsible person.

"We regret our mistake and will try again to catch our errors before they reach print. Since we are human I expect that we will fail sometimes, but it will not be because we are trying to depart from scriptural truth," said Cothen.

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Midwestern Trustees Say OK To Child Development Center

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees elected two faculty members, established two scholarships, authorized a building program and set a \$1.8 million budget for 1979-80 at their spring meeting.

The 35-member trustee board elected Thomas G. Smothers as associate professor of Old Testament Literature and Hebrew, and Maynard L. Campbell Jr. as assistant professor of preaching. Smothers, 45, is currently professor of religion and philosophy at Union University. Campbell, 36, is an instructor in preaching at Midwestern.

New scholarships were announced honoring president emeritus Millard J. Berquist and H. I. Hester. The Berquist Scholarship will be awarded annually to a Midwestern seminarian who has completed his or her first full year of study and has demonstrated "Christian integrity, academic excellence, and superior potential for effectiveness in the ministry of Jesus Christ."

The Hester Scholarship, established and named for the former William Jewell College administrator and first president of Midwestern's board of trustees, Hubert I. Hester, will be awarded to a William Jewell graduating senior whose commitment, academic excellence, gifts and abilities indicate "significant potential for excellence and effectiveness in the ministry of Jesus Christ."

Both awards are \$1,000 and will be awarded for the first time this fall.

The trustees heard a report projecting the development of a new family ministry resources program and authorized the construction of facilities to house a child development center, the first step in the family resources program.

The children's facility, projected to cost \$475,000, will be funded by a \$329,000 capital needs allocation recommended to the Southern Baptist Convention by the SBC Executive Committee and contributions from interested individuals. Ground-breaking for the project may be as early as August, according to seminary president Milton Ferguson.

Ferguson called the project a "significant opportunity for Midwestern Seminary to meet the needs of students, the community, and the churches in preparation for ministry to the family in today's society."

In other action, the trustees added dental benefits to the seminary's medical coverage for employees, and authorized a maximum of a seven percent increase in salaries and benefits.

Midwestern faculty who have served the seminary for 20 years or more were honored at an annual trustee/faculty dinner. Those professors were: William Morton and V. Lavell Seats--elected to the faculty in 1958--and J. Morris Ashcraft, George Thomason and G. Hugh Wamble--elected in 1959.

James Tharp, Springfield, Mo., was re-elected president of the trustees for the coming year.

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Tennessee Ernie Ford To Appear
On "MasterControl" Anniversary

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Tennessee Ernie Ford, who was featured on the first "MasterControl" radio program in 1959, will return April 29 to help celebrate the show's 20th anniversary.

"I'll never forget the first 'MasterControl' program," Ford told "MasterControl" interviewer Jim Rupe. "And two years later I came back on Mother's Day and you even invited my mother to be on the show. She remembered it until the day she died."

"Master Control" is a weekly production of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. It's aired by more than 960 stations.

Ford's first hit record was his own composition, "Milk 'Em In The Morning, Feed 'Em, Milk 'Em In The Evening Blues." When the record was released, Ford was singing Saturday nights for \$25 at an American Legion Hall in southern California.

"Can you believe it? I thought they were overpaying me," he told Rupe.

In 1956 he starred on his own nighttime variety television show. But producers were a little leery when he announced he wanted to close each program with a hymn.

"They felt the hymn would bring the audience down. But I told them, 'Wait until you hear it and see those faces light up. We're not going to put on sack cloth and sit in a pile of ashes. We're going to smile and be happy.'"

So Ford got his hymns. During one performance after he sang "Just A Closer Walk With Thee," the audience gave him a standing ovation. "We didn't even have to hold up the flash card or turn on the light," he chuckled.

Ford still is most often remembered for his hit song, "Sixteen Tons." It sold a million copies in 21 days. "I think I was the only singer to ever snap my fingers on a record at that time," said Ford.

After 30 years of entertaining, Ford has a cache of many memories. But his fondest recollection evolved from an engagement at Lake Tahoe.

"I was having lunch and a very well-dressed lady walked up and told me she had something to say. 'Now when I go, I want you there,' she said. 'I want my casket open and for you to sing "How Great Thou Art." That will be the last time I have to move. And if I don't stir, you shut the lid and send me away.'

"I told her I didn't know what to say and she replied, 'Don't say anything. Just don't die before I do.'"

"I love people," Ford told Rupe. "I made up my mind if I ever attained any success in this business I would never be afraid of my fans. The greatest compliment anyone can ever receive is for a person to act like they know you when they meet you."

Ford added that he always hoped people would remember him as a person who cared. "I mean every song I sing and I hope the public sees that. I'm very thankful to God that I was able to use my talent to sing of Him. That's something I've never taken for granted."

Other highlights of "MasterControl's" 20th anniversary programs will be excerpts from early shows featuring Bob Hope, Michael Landon and former astronaut James Irwin.

Radio-TV Commission
Offers New Program

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A new Baptist radio program, "Sounds Of The Centurymen," will feature contemporary Christian music, interviews with guest artists and, of course, the sounds of the Centurymen.

The Centurymen is a group composed of Southern Baptist ministers of music from across the nation. It is directed by Buryl Red, music consultant for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, which produces the show. It will be distributed June 1.

Ann McAdams, a professional actress from Dallas, will host the half-hour program. "Her comments will deal with the goodness of God, individual worth and each person's responsibility to Christ and their fellowman," said Edwin S. Malone, head of the commission's radio department. "'Sounds Of The Centurymen' is basically a ministry through music to both Christians and non-Christians."

Guests on the first four shows will be Buryl Red, Cynthia Clawson, Mike Douglas, and Myrtle Hall.

Listeners will be encouraged to write for confidential counseling about personal and spiritual problems. Each letter will be answered personally by one of the commission's trained counselors.

Listeners may also write for a variety of free offers, ranging from booklets to record albums. "In addition, we'll also include literature on how a person may become a Christian," said Charles Roden, director of audience response.

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Strange Light Leads
Cambodian Refugees

KHAM PUT, Thailand (BP)--Khun Poat, a 19-year-old girl, escaped the Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia after an arduous journey with 100 others through miles of jungle, canals, mountains and rivers.

Numerous dangers stood between them and freedom, including Communist soldiers, the elements, and a stretch of jungle ground covered with thorns. Most of the escapees either were barefoot or wore flimsy thongs, no protection against the thorns.

A midnight-like darkness hampered the struggling group as it crossed a valley between two high mountain ranges. "We could see absolutely nothing," Poat later told missionary Maxine Stewart. "We didn't even know where to step."

Suddenly hundreds of fireflies swarmed into view. Their glow made enough light for the people to see the path. The refugees reached the next mountain by "firefly light."

After delays due to disorientation and weariness--at one point Poat, hallucinating, was sure she saw the ocean--the escapees literally staggered into Thailand. Poat had to be carried to the refugee camp. Two months of medical treatment were necessary before she recovered, said Mrs. Stewart in the April issue of The Commission magazine.

After Poat was transferred to Kham Put refugee camp, she was invited to a Christian meeting. Although she had seen enough bamboo to last the rest of her life, she agreed to attend the meeting in the bamboo-thatch enclosure.

"I know that old man," she exclaimed at a picture on the wall of the chapel. "He is the one who led us and showed us the way to Thailand and freedom."

She was pointing to a picture of Jesus.

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