



# 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  
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

### BUREAUS

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Richard T. McCartney, 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) L. Bracey Campbell III, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798  
**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** Stan L. Hastey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4228

June 13, 1979

79-98

Colson Urges Prayer  
To Open Texas Prisons

By Bob Stanley

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Charles Colson, a former Nixon Administration official who has become an unofficial missionary to prisoners, urged some 15,000 Southern Baptists, to pray that Texas' prison gates will be opened to the witness of God's people.

The former Watergate figure who was converted in prison five years ago, received repeated applause and a standing ovation at the close of his speech before the Southern Baptist Convention.

Colson, who has helped to start Christian fellowship groups in 100 prisons, said he has been told that volunteers working with his program will not be allowed to come into the Texas prisons.

He urged united prayer that the gates will be opened. "I don't believe anybody has ever built prison gates big enough or strong enough to keep the Holy Spirit out," he declared.

Emphasizing his membership in Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, Va., Colson won applause frequently as he spoke of his commitment to Christ and his concern that Baptists must speak out against the "moral rot and sickness" flaunted on television today.

He criticized forms of "cheap grace" that fail to make clear the necessity of repentance and had some harsh words for the fast-growing electronic church, which he said is trying to "package the gospel like soap."

"What comes out is not the cross but a glib, sentimental pietism, a prosperous, positive-thinking Johnny Carson who lives happily ever after."

Instead of joining the headlong rush for more media manipulation, he said, "Let us let the world know that we stand foursquare for the integrity of the church of Jesus Christ and its authentic witness in the world today."

He urged Christians to live out their faith. "If our churches are loving and caring communities, the people will flock to them," he said.

At the close of his talk, Colson was thronged with men and their sons seeking his autograph.

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Colson Opposes  
Capital Punishment

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Former White House aide and Watergate figure Charles Colson expressed opposition to the death penalty, citing in a press conference four reasons why he opposed the execution of criminals like John Spenklink recently executed in Florida.

Colson said he opposed capital punishment because he did not feel the state should have the power to take a human life, because capital punishment is not a proven deterrent to crime, because he had met too many men in prison who are innocent, and because "I don't think the state should play God."

In Houston to deliver a major address during the Southern Baptist Convention, Colson acknowledged that his response might be as acceptable to some Baptists attending the convention as throwing a hand grenade into their midst, but he felt deeply about the matter.

"As a lifelong conservative," Colson explained, "I have always been reluctant to give the state the power to take a human life. Give the state the power to take one life, and it will take 20 lives, and then where do you draw the line?" He added he opposed capital punishment even before he became a Christian.

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"As a deterrent to crime, capital punishment just does not work," Colson insisted.

He quoted a hardened criminal and hired killer in one prison who told him capital punishment only makes the cost of paid killings higher, and thus is not a deterrent to organized crime "hits."

Colson observed that 83 percent of American crimes are committed by people under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and capital punishment is certainly not a deterrent to such killing. He also pointed out that crimes of passion will not be deterred by the death penalty.

He claimed that he had met many prison inmates personally who are innocent, and he did not want the guilt of taking the life of an innocent person on the conscience of society.

"Finally, in my reading of the New Testament, I cannot accept the practice of capital punishment if I am to live by the commandments of Jesus," Colson said.

He explained that if the state takes the life of a person "prematurely," it denies that person the right to make a decision to accept Jesus Christ, and "once you execute that man, it's too late. I don't think the state should play God," he declared.

Asked what is an effective deterrent to crime if capital punishment is not, Colson said the greatest deterrent to crime is "a movement of righteousness across the nation" and "when people meet Jesus Christ personally."

He was critical of Christians who fail to live out their faith and convictions, pointing out that one out of every three Americans contend they are "born again," and yet the values in society are hardly "Christian."

"If 13 million Southern Baptists really came alive, and lived out their faith in today's society, it would turn this country upside down," Colson said.

He acknowledged he did not know where or when a "movement of righteousness across the nation" would begin, but said "perhaps it might begin in the prisons and penitentiaries" in 22 states where Colson is involved in a prison fellowship ministry.

Colson said he was disappointed in the response to his movie, "Born Again," which had very poor response in the Bible Belt, "perhaps because by the time it came out the phrase 'Born Again' had worn thin."

He also expressed disappointment in the few segments he saw of the television series "Blind Ambition," on Watergate, and was especially critical of the TV documentary, "Sacred Straight," which he called "a sham" because it made prison inmates look like animals and used X-rated language on TV.

Colson said he had no plans ever to enter politics, pointing out that he is a convicted felon and has no right to vote or hold office in his home state. When the governor offered to reinstate his right to vote and hold office, he declined unless the law were changed to allow every other ex-felon the same privilege.

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Rogers Disavows  
'Witch Hunt'

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Newly-elected Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers of Memphis, Tenn., said in his first full-fledged news conference he would not favor a "witch hunt" investigation of "liberalism" in SBC seminaries, but would support such an investigation if it were carried out by a committee that was "fair and balanced."

Rogers, nominee of what some have described as a "conservative political machine" within the SBC, also said he hoped that the kind of political organization which led to his election would not be a pattern for future elections of SBC presidents.

"I was not a part of this campaign. I never went to a single meeting. I don't belong to Paige Patterson or Judge Paul Pressler, or even to this convention. I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ."

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"I'm not here to represent any splinter groups," he declared. "I'm here to represent the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I love Paige Patterson and Judge Paul Pressler, but if I can't be the president of all Southern Baptists, then I have no business being president of the Southern Baptist Convention!" said Rogers, pastor of the 10,000-member Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn. The church is the fifth largest in the SBC.

Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, and Pressler, a Houston appellate courts judge, were reported to have been the key organizers in the campaign to elect a convention president who upholds the Bible as "the infallible, inerrant (without error) Word of God."

Amplifying the question of a committee to investigate charges of liberalism in SBC seminaries, Rogers added: "I would not favor any group that came with blood in its eye to go on a witch hunt."

He added, however, that any "liberalism" is too much if it means that Baptist seminaries, agencies, or institutions have employees who doubt the Bible is the authentic, infallible Word of God.

Rogers said in an opening statement that his goals as convention president would center on missions, evangelism, faith in God's word, and loving each other.

Declaring he wanted to be positive in his approach, Rogers said, "I am not against anyone or anything except the devil and sin."

"I want to try to be a good, conservative, soul-winning, Bible-believing, church-building pastor and convention president," Rogers said.

He said he did not agree to be nominated for president of the convention until after a 2:30 a.m. prayer meeting with two other men in his hotel room the night before the nomination.

During that prayer meeting, he said, "God so came down that tears of joy" streamed down the faces of those in the room and he was sure God had spoken to him and given him assurance to accept the nomination.

Rogers said any plans he might have for dealing with "liberal" trends are extremely premature.

"I didn't have a plan because I was not a candidate," he said. "Most of what I'll be doing is setting a tone." Rogers said Southern Baptists have processes that will remove anyone who doesn't teach according to the Bible.

"These processes work best when the body is strong and healthy. I would like to help us be strong and healthy. I would rather be giving strong doses of vitamins than amputations."

Concerning a resolution presented earlier by Wayne Dehoney, of Louisville, Ky., asking reaffirmation of the Scriptures section of the 1973 Baptist Faith and Message Statement, Rogers said he wished Dehoney would be more specific in what he means by "the Bible is truth, without any mixture of error..."

"Some mean one thing, some another, and I wish they would clarify what they mean. If they mean the truth of the Bible is true, that's a nonsensical question. The truth of anything is true."

Pressed to name a former SBC president he considered liberal, Rogers cited a reference by former United States Congressman Brooks Hayes of Arkansas in his book, "Is the Bible a Human Book?" Hays served as SBC president, 1958-59.

Asked for an example of what he means by "inerrancy," he cited a message by a seminary professor who indicated that one narrative of God's creation of man in Genesis should take precedent over another.

"Therefore he's saying here's a section of God's word that should be shunted aside. That's more than quibbling over the words. I don't care what you call it as long as you believe God's Word is God's Word."

Rogers said he didn't favor the political efforts of the Patterson-Pressler caucus. But he added: "I think what they did has been done since time immemorial. Their methods are not my methods," he said. "I have never been a candidate."

Rogers was asked what he meant in a pre-convention statement that "if the liberals would come to the cross all Heaven would break loose."

He explained that "a man who doesn't believe in the blood of Jesus Christ isn't a Christian."

Asked if he thought any Baptists might be offended by the political campaign of the Patterson-Pressler group, Rogers said, "I know some people are disgruntled" but repeated, "I did not run for the office, I ran from it." He said rallies held by the group in 15 states were a surprise to him.

Asked to cite similarities between this and other SBC presidential campaigns, Rogers repeated again that he had never sought the office of president. "But I assume there have always been telephone calls and people saying, "I think so and so would make a good president."

At the close of his press conference, Rogers said, "If you will give me a chance and pray for me, you will find me transparent, loving and positive. No man in the world believes more in soul winning and missions, and all you have to do is look at the record."

Rogers said his church gives \$3,000 per month to support Mid America Baptist Seminary in Memphis, an independent Baptist seminary which was organized by conservative Southern Baptists who felt Southern Baptist Convention seminaries were too liberal.

He added the church gives about \$170,000 or six percent of its total budget to support world missions, Christian education, and other benevolent causes through the SBC Cooperative Program.

Rogers said his salary at Bellevue, including all fringe benefits, is just over \$50,000.

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SBC Reaffirms Baptist  
Faith and Message

By Larry Crisman

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)-Like father, like son.

This adage captures the spirit of action taken by messengers attending Wednesday morning's session of the 122nd Southern Baptist Convention when they approved a motion by a former convention president.

With minimum discussion, the messengers approved the motion of Wayne Dehoney of Louisville, Ky., calling for a reaffirmation of the Scriptures section of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement.

Adopted by the convention in Kansas City in 1963, the historical statement amounts to a declaration of the fundamental beliefs held by most Southern Baptists. The statement also represents an updated version of a report of a committee which first presented it to the convention in 1925.

Dehoney's motion, first presented to the convention on the opening day of the convention, apparently was inspired by a flap on biblical inerrancy (without error)--an issue which has raged at the Houston meeting.

Dehoney's original motion called for the convention to reaffirm the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Statement which he said was adopted to "serve as information to the churches and agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention."

A key part of the statement, according to Dehoney, reads that the Bible "has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter."

Speaking to messengers, Dehoney said he just returned from a press conference involving newly-elected convention President Adrian Rogers, a strong proponent of biblical inerrancy. Dehoney said Rogers told him he had his permission to tell the convention body that the two agree on biblical infallibility.

The two agree the Bible's "original autographs" were without error, Dehoney explained.

Exhorting the convention to lay aside the question of biblical inerrancy after agreeing on scriptural validity, Dehoney drew applause when he asked messengers to arrive at unity.

Larry Lewis, pastor of Tower Grove Baptist Church in Ridgeland, Miss., supported Dehoney's motion, saying he "thanks God" Southern Baptists are people who continue to be "of the Book."

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Herschel Hobbs of Oklahoma City, a former convention president who served as chairman of the committee that drafted the 1963 version of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement, supported Dehoney's motion.

Hobbs said those who served on the committee in the early 1960's accepted the infallibility of the Bible as a matter of course.

There was never a "squeak" of discussion about the inerrancy of Scripture, Hobbs said.

The only opposition to Dehoney's motion was presented by Bill Brock of Bradenton, Fla., who read a poetic statement in which he described the Bible as being an oasis in the desert of life."

"To accept inerrancy is to deny the grass exists," Brock said.

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SBC Calls For  
Uniform Retirement

By Bracey Campbell

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention spent too much time embroiled in discussions about the retirements of top executives during the past year, Baptist pastor Jerry Don Abernathy of Tulsa, Okla., told SBC messengers.

Abernathy's concern over the retirement policies affecting denominational employees prompted him to introduce a motion adopted by the convention without dissent that the trustees of the boards and agencies consult with the Southern Baptist Annuity Board over the development of a uniform retirement program.

Abernathy, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, said the announcement of the retirement benefits for Porter Routh of Nashville, stepping down this year as executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, and Paul Stevens of Ft. Worth, who stepped down this year as president of the Radio and Television Commission, created the bulk of the discussion.

"The adoption of a uniform policy would help us avoid this--and certainly we don't need this type of problem," Abernathy said. He reminded them the Annuity Board has previously recommended the adoption of a uniform policy.

The pastor said all Southern Baptists appreciate and desire that denominational employees be adequately compensated during their years of labor.

"A uniform retirement policy will help insure that they can retire with dignity," he explained.

Approved without discussion, the motion states that a report on the interaction between the Annuity Board and trustees of the agencies, boards and commissions, who have the responsibility for setting retirement guidelines, be presented at the 1980 convention in St. Louis.

The messengers also approved a motion offered by Owen Cooper, a Yazoo City, Miss., business executive and former convention president, that the Christian Life Commission form a consortium of religious bodies that would establish a national committee for the evaluation and labeling of television programs.

"Something needs to be done about it (TV programming), and I think one positive step is a national committee that could help keep Christians informed about what is being broadcast into their homes," he said.

Cooper said the committee would look at television--and possibly other entertainment media programs--in regards to "violence, crime, sexual aberrations, vulgarity and such personally and harmful practices as the consumption of beverage alcohol, smoking and drug use."

An amendment offered by Cooper was accepted by the messengers, asking the convention's Executive Committee to study funding needs of the proposed committee.

Also added to the motion was an amendment, offered by William Whitfield, pastor of the Cypress Shores Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., stating that the proposed committee would work with "other groups" involved in television program interpretation.

SALT II Doesn't Go Far  
Enough, Graham Says

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham said in a news conference here that the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) does not go far enough, and expressed fears that its adoption will give the world a false sense of security that world peace is eminent.

"But SALT II doesn't even touch on some of the worst weapons," Graham said prior to his appearance at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Decrying the fact that the nation spends \$400 billion on defense every year, Graham added, "Just think what that much money could do to feed a hungry world."

Graham said he feared that even with SALT II, dozens of nations not included in the treaty could develop nuclear weapons. "Someone like Idi Amin will get them and push the button to save himself, and it's likely to start a nuclear chain reaction involving the whole world," Graham said.

Fielding a wide-range of questions, Graham also touched on homosexuality, the so-called "fairness doctrine" in television broadcasting, commented on the death of John Wayne, gave his beliefs on the Bible as the infallible Word of God, an issue which has caused controversy in the 13.2 million member denomination this year.

Commenting on a current controversy in the SBC over the inerrancy of the Bible, Graham reaffirmed his own personal belief that the Bible "is the infallible Word of God."

He said he was delighted to be a Baptist and to attend the Southern Baptist Convention for "there is no other religious denomination like it in the world." He added that the charge of liberalism comes up during the SBC almost every year, for it is a "world problem" that has existed ever since Adam and Eve.

Graham highly complemented Pope John Paul II, saying he is "probably the most able Pope in our generation" and has more charisma than any Pope with the possible exception of Pope John.

He also complemented Adrian Rogers, the newly-elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention, saying he is "one of the best friends I have."

Asked why he has not given stronger support to Anita Bryant's campaign against homosexuality, Graham repeated his views that homosexuality is a sin, but is one of many sins. "The Lord has not called me to lead a crusade on any particular sin, but has called me to preach the gospel."

Asked about the cancellation of Baptist evangelist James Robison's television program by WFAA-TV in Dallas because of Robison's statements on homosexuality, Graham said he had never had any problems with television stations cancelling his telecasts because of violation of the "fairness doctrine" nor had he felt any restrictions on his preaching "on any subject in the Bible" (including homosexuality) because of the fairness doctrine.

Graham expressed deep personal loss in the death of Actor John Wayne, saying "a part of America died when John Wayne died."

Citing his friendship with Wayne, Graham recalled one incident in which Wayne laughed so hard he spilled champagne all over his head and coat. "Preacher, everybody's going to think you've been drinking," Wayne laughed.

Asked about his relationship as a "religious counselor" to presidents, Graham said he's not sure he's ever been a religious counselor to any president, and that he's never been invited by Baptist President Jimmy Carter to come to the White House, but if invited he would go.

He told reporters that the Watergate experience seemed "demonic" to him, but denied that he ever said former President Nixon had demons.

Graham also took issue with some of the things published about him by Marshall Frady, but he refused to cite specific inaccuracies in Frady's book. He added that Frady, author of a biography on Graham, never took any notes or used a tape recorder in their interviews, and questioned, "How a man can quote you accurately some days later."

He said that the center of Christianity seems to be shifting from America to Asia and Africa, citing predictions that 85 percent of Africa south of the Sahara may someday be Christian. He pointed to tremendous revivals going on in Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore where he recently held crusades.

Graham, however, refused to get into a detailed discussion of peace initiatives in the Middle East, or Bible prophecies on the Middle East, saying it would take more time than he had and was too complicated."

He said he was delighted to see "the first steps toward peace," and called for Christians to support efforts for world peace and nuclear disarmament.

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SBC Honors  
Porter Routh

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention here honored the retiring executive secretary-treasurer of its Executive Committee by adopting a resolution declaring that "Southern Baptists are better people because of his work among them."

Routh, whose retirement takes effect July 31, has served in the chief administrative post for the denomination since 1951. He will be succeeded by Harold Bennett in the Executive Committee post and as SBC treasurer.

Before that he served as secretary of survey for the Baptist Sunday School Board, as editor of the Baptist Messenger of Oklahoma, as secretary of Brotherhood and promotion for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, and as instructor in journalism at Oklahoma Baptist University.

The Lockhart, Texas native, who will be 68 on July 14, was cited as leading the denomination in its period of most extensive growth. During his 28 years as executive secretary-treasurer the number of SBC congregations increased from 28,289 to more than 35,000, while church membership grew from 7,373,493 to more than 13 million.

Contributions to the denomination's Cooperative Program method of financing its missionary and educational programs have increased from \$21.5 million to \$150 million and total mission gifts from \$37.2 to \$318.3 million.

The resolution paid tribute to Routh's "personal dedication to Jesus Christ, his personal discipline as an accomplished administrator and leader and his personal loyalty to Baptist ideals and causes."

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SBC Elects 'Small  
Church' Pastor as 2nd VP

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--In a run-off election, Don Touchton, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Brandon, Fla., was elected second vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Touchton, pastor of the 400-member church, was nominated as a "great pastor of a small church" who will represent the majority of Southern Baptist churches which are not large "super churches."

Earlier, messengers elected Adrian Rogers, pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., as president, and Abner McCall, president of Baylor University, Waco, Texas, as first vice president.

Touchton received 56.89 percent of the run-off votes against Homer G. Lindsay Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., and immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference.

Other nominees in the first election for the second vice-presidency were Roy Ladd, pastor of Baptist Temple, Houston, and Milton Cunningham, pastor of Houston's Westbury Baptist Church and current president of the Texas Baptist Convention.

Other new convention officers include Harold Bennett, incoming executive secretary-treasurer, SBC Executive Committee, Nashville, Tenn., convention treasurer; Lee Porter, Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, convention recording secretary.

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Hollis Takes SBC Television  
Resolution to State Panel

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

WASHINGTON (BP)--Word of Southern Baptist Convention action on broadcasting legislation was carried to Congress by a Christian Life Commission spokesman here.

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Harry N. Hollis Jr., the commission's associate executive secretary, appeared before the Senate Subcommittee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the Communications Committee.

He said that messengers to the annual meeting of Southern Baptists in Houston had "unanimously and enthusiastically" passed a motion calling on Congress to include the public interest standard in any communications legislation they write. He also said that the motion included reaffirmation of the idea that the airwaves belong to the American people.

The subcommittee is holding hearings on amendments to the 1934 Communications Act which currently regulates the broadcast industry. Similar hearings are in progress on the House side.

U.S. Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., sponsor of one of the measures before the subcommittee, said that "our purpose is to deregulate broadcasting as much as we can." Hollis responded by saying that he "would hope the task would also be to protect the public interest."

Goldwater said that he also dislikes some television programming but fears violation of First Amendment rights if government continues regulation. "We must depend upon the decency, if there is such a thing, in the programmers' heart," he commented.

Hollis told Baptist Press that his reading of the public mood is concern for the effect of violent exploitative programming. "People don't care if television is deregulated. They care about what's happening to their children."

Hollis also charged that the sponsors of legislation are prepared to do whatever the broadcast industry wants rather than protect the public. "The lines are clearly drawn," he said. "It's deregulate, as the industry requests, or maintain the public interest standard and serve the people of the nation."

Joining Hollis and other religious spokespersons before the subcommittee in attacking the removal of the public interest standard was Jack Golodner of the AFL-CIO. "We have here a misplaced confidence that marketplace forces can protect the public interest," Golodner said. "If there is one thing we have learned in the American experience, especially in the labor movement, it is that the profit motive is not appropriate in all circumstances and cannot be deified."

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Pressler Explains

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

By Jim Newton

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--In an impromptu press conference explaining rumors about the campaign of theological conservatives to elect the Southern Baptist Convention president, Houston Judge Paul Pressler denied planning, strategizing or implementing any organized effort to elect Adrian Rogers.

"Simply the conservatives are communicating with each other for the first time," Pressler explained.

Rumors to which Pressler responded centered around his use of a "skybox" executive suite in the convention meeting hall from which some said he orchestrated the election of a president committed to the accuracy of the Scriptures.

Pressler admitted participating in an open dinner meeting attended by 400 conservatives where an "advisory sampling of opinion," was taken to "reflect to the three individuals under consideration" for possible nomination as president.

The three, he said, were Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis; Jerry Vines, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile; and Bailey Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla.

At one point in the impromptu explanation, Pressler, highly regarded in the Houston legal circles, showed the strains he said have accompanied him during the convention week.

With tears in his voice and a near-trembling in his face, Pressler said after this court term he plans to take an ailing son to Colorado before returning to Houston in September.

Pressler said, when he returns "conservatives will continue to do what others have done: communicate."

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When hypothesizing about a possible inquiry into the commitment to biblical inerrancy among Southern Baptist personnel, Pressler said what he would do if he were president of the convention and a president of a Southern Baptist seminary.

As seminary president he would "welcome" any inquiry out of concern for his institution. As convention president he would "communicate his concerns" to the appropriate persons.

Although he would not refuse appointment to an inquiry panel to search for persons not committed to inerrancy, he reminded, "I have a job."

Pressler was reminded that the six Southern Baptist seminary presidents in a joint news conference in May denied having any faculty members who would call into question the creation accounts in Genesis or the bodily resurrection of Christ as reported in the New Testament.

He responded by saying he is concerned about statements certain seminary professors made in their books and to the press concerning biblical inerrancy.

He also criticized Baptist Press, the news service of the SBC, which he claimed labeled him in a pre-convention story as an "ultra-conservative." He said he was not "ultra" anything, but was part of the mainline of the SBC.

Pre-convention reports indicated that Pressler and Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas, had conducted meetings across the country to discuss electing an SBC president committed to biblical inerrancy.

During the interview, Pressler received persistent questions from Baptist Standard Editor Presnall Wood of Dallas who questioned whether Pressler was a valid messenger to the convention.

Pressler claimed he was a messenger from First Baptist Church of Bellaire, Texas, a suburb of Houston, where he is an "honorary" member, but not a messenger of First Baptist Church, Houston, where he is a member. Pressler explained that he is actually a member of First Baptist, but has spoken so many times at the Bellaire church that he had been made an "honorary" member there.

When questions arose about the validity of his credentials, Pressler said he went to SBC Registration Secretary Lee Porter and offered to turn them in, but Porter said he had no authority to accept them.

Porter later explained that decisions about whether a messenger is bonafide or not must be handled by the convention's credentials committee if any messenger's registration is challenged.

Porter added, however, that in his personal opinion, Pressler was not a valid messenger because Article 3, item 4 of the SBC Constitution states that each messenger must be a member of the church which elects him, and that the convention makes no provision for "dual" membership or "honorary" membership.

Pressler said he offered to turn in his credentials, and charged that the controversy over the validity of his credentials is "a non-issue" being blown up by the Baptist media. He said he voted during the SBC because his credentials were not withdrawn after he volunteered to relinquish them. He said it was obvious that his one vote did not affect the outcome in an election (in which Adrian Rogers received 51 percent of the vote on the first ballot in competition with five other persons).

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Executive Committee  
Re-Elects Wester

Baptist Press  
6/13/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Brooks Wester, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, Miss., was re-elected chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee in a meeting here.

The committee also expressed appreciation for its outgoing executive secretary-treasurer Porter Routh, who will retire July 31. The committee went through the formality of re-electing Routh to serve until his retirement date and re-electing Harold Bennett to serve as Routh's successor.

Rodney R. Landes, El Dorado, Ark., businessman, was elected vice chairman; Preston H. Callison, attorney from Columbia, S.C., was re-elected secretary.

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## INSERTION

In story on page 7 of today's Baptist Press mailing, entitled "SBC Elects 'Small Church' Pastor as 2nd VP," please insert the following paragraph after graph number 3:

Touchton contributes regularly to the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship, an independent group dedicated to advocacy of biblical inerrancy and seeking out of Southern Baptist "liberals," according to Bill Powell, editor of the fellowship's publication.

## CORRECTION

On page 4 of today's Baptist Press mailing, entitled "SBC Reaffirms Baptist Faith and Message," please make the following correction in line one of graph 11: Change Ridgeland, Miss., to St. Louis, Mo.