

(BP)**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 15, 1979

79-101

Wrapup**SBC Turns to Right, Moves
Straight Down Missions Road**

By Jim Newton

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Taking a sharp turn to the theological right, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting here elected a conservative believer in an "inerrant" (error free) Bible as its new president and moved rapidly down the road of missions and evangelism in high gear.

Adrian Rogers, pastor of the 11,000-member Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis and an avowed conservative, won the presidency on the first ballot over five other, by a 51.36 percent margin in an election the messengers later asked officials to investigate for possible "irregularities."

Amid charges and countercharges, the messengers also adopted a motion disavowing "overt political activity and organization as a method of selection of its officers."

The 15,947 convention messengers, in a snarl of confusing business actions some compared to the Houston traffic jams, took several other actions leading toward the conservative right.

They reaffirmed the Scripture portions of the 1963 convention-adopted Baptist Faith and Message statement, elected an active member of the conservative Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship as second vice president, and reaffirmed for the second consecutive year a 1976 SBC resolution opposing abortion by demand.

But the messengers also heeded an impassioned plea by outgoing SBC president Jimmy Allen of San Antonio not to allow the debate over doctrinal integrity to derail the convention's Bold Mission Thrust plan to proclaim the gospel to every person in the world by the year 2,000.

During a Bold Mission Thrust commitment rally at the Astrodome Wednesday night, about 48,000 Baptists filled the Astrodome when 1,100 mission volunteers knelt for a service of commitment and dedication. Later, following a stirring message by evangelist Billy Graham, more than 1,100 persons came forward to make personal commitments to Christ in an altar call.

Speech after speech during the 3-day convention called Baptists to deeper commitment to missions and evangelism.

During business periods, the messengers adopted an \$93 million Cooperative Program budget goal for 1979-80, and suggested a \$226 million goal for all state conventions to help finance their Bold Mission plan.

Elected first vice president of the convention was Abner V. McCall, president of Baylor University in Waco, Tex., who earlier had been nominated as a moderate candidate for president.

Don Touchton, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Brandon, Fla., and an active member of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship (BFMF), was chosen second vice president in a run-off with Homer Lindsay Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

In another election which passed by almost without comment, the convention elected Harold C. Bennett of Nashville as convention treasurer, a position he will hold as the new executive director-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, effective Aug. 1

Bennett succeeds Porter W. Routh, who has held the position for 28 years and is retiring July 31. Routh, who delivered his last major address to the convention in that role, was honored throughout the meeting, with a resolution of appreciation adopted for his significant contribution to Southern Baptist life.

Unsnarling the traffic jam of motions and debates over alleged irregularities in the election of the convention president prompted outgoing President Allen to remark at one point he was "grieved by the spirit that is now moving in this meeting."

During debate on a motion proposed by Ernie White of St. Joseph, Mo., calling on the convention to "disavow overt political activity" in the election of officers, former SBC President Wayne Dehoney, of Louisville, Ky., leveled charges of "overt political activities" at Houston Appellate Court Judge Paul Pressler, whom Dehoney claimed was an "illegal" messenger to the SBC.

After messengers approved the motion, Pressler made an impassioned and tearful personal privilege speech, defending his use of "skyboxes" where he and others watched convention proceedings. He denied he was an illegal messenger, although he was elected by First Baptist Church, Bellaire, Tex., where he is an "honorary member."

Pressler, who helped lead a conservative coalition to elect Rogers president, denied rumors that he and others encouraged local and area churches to bus messengers to the convention for the election, and that some churches had more than the maximum of 10 messengers

Shortly after adoption of the motion on "overt political activity," the messengers adopted a motion by local registration chairman James Varner of Houston which instructed registration secretary Lee Porter of Nashville to investigate "registration irregularities" and report to the SBC Executive Committee in September any suggested procedures to correct the problem while maintaining the integrity of the ballot system.

Rogers won the presidency on a vote of 6,129 out of 11,975 ballots cast, a majority margin of 163 votes. He would have had to receive 5,967 votes to win on the first ballot, or be thrown into a runoff with Robert E. Naylor, retired president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth.

Rogers said he supported such an investigation of irregularities, but added he had "doubts in my own heart" that there were widespread abuses of registration and balloting.

"I believe there has been no plot or plan or movement to do anything like that and I would be disappointed in anyone who would make such an accusation."

In his first news conference as president, Rogers pledged "100 percent support" for continuing the emphasis in the SBC of Bold Mission Thrust, and assured Baptists he would not support a "witch hunt" investigation of "liberalism" in SBC seminaries.

Rogers said he would support such an investigation of seminaries "If it were done by a committee that is fair and balanced," but the convention took no action during the sessions later to initiate such an investigation.

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

Later the convention adopted a resolution expressing "gratitude to our seminaries" in the face of accusations questioning the doctrinal integrity of seminary staff and faculty members. The resolution encouraged anyone who questions the doctrinal integrity of seminary faculty members to lodge their complaints and charges directly with the boards of trustees of the respective seminaries.

When the presidents of the six seminaries presented their annual report to the convention, messengers applauded comments from the presidents that there has been no liberalism and deviation from biblical orthodoxy on their campuses.

Later messengers were braced for a motion introduced by Eli Sheldon of Oklahoma City which would require establishing a "loyalty oath" for future convention officers, but by an oversight the motion was not printed in the last day's Convention Bulletin and Sheldon agreed to withdraw the motion and consider offering it next year.

In other actions, the convention adopted a motion asking SBC agencies to work with the SBC Annuity Board in considering the development of a uniform retirement program for all SBC agencies, asked the Christian Life Commission to organize a coalition of religious bodies to establish a committee to evaluate and label television programs, and accepted a recommendation from the SBC Executive Committee against establishing a seventh theological seminary.

Messengers rejected several other proposals, including a motion to prohibit the home and foreign mission boards from appointing ordained women as missionaries, a motion requiring the Sunday School Board to include temperance lessons in Sunday School quarterlies, and a third asking for a special committee to study financial practices of SBC agencies.

Out of 37 resolutions introduced, resolutions on 20 subjects were adopted.

Resolutions endorsed the SALT nuclear disarmament treaties and encouraged peacemaking, urged increased U. S. overseas development assistance to combat world hunger, decried violence and child abuse in America, reaffirmed the 1976 SBC stance on abortion, urged Congress to defeat legislation to rewrite the 1934 Communications Act providing for "public interest" religious broadcasts, advocated more stringent energy conservation efforts by Baptists, and supported the preservation of family farms.

Other resolutions condemned a proposed Internal Revenue Service procedure which would deny tax exemption to church schools which fail to prove they are not racially discriminatory, urged Baptists to develop creative ministries to minister to migrant farm workers suffering from poverty, disease and malnutrition, decried pornography as a "moral cancer" in society, encouraged Christian stewardship as a powerful anti-inflationary force, and opposed increases in second-class mailing costs for religious publications.

Loud applause and "amens" greeted messages by Graham, Allen, Routh, country comedian Jerry Clower, retiring SBC Foreign Mission Board Executive Secretary Baker James Cauthen, New Orleans pastor Bill Hinson, former Watergate figure Charles Colson, black Baptist pastor Emmanuel Scott of Los Angeles, and Russian Baptist pastor Georgi Vins.

The convention voted to hold its 1984 session in Kansas City, and its 1985 meeting in Dallas.

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Vins Charges KGB
Infiltration of Churches

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
6/15/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--The Soviet Secret police (KGB) has attempted to infiltrate Baptist and other Christian churches in Russia, and to blackmail Christian leaders to work for the Communist government within the church, Russian Reform Baptist dissident Georgi Vins charged here in a news conference.

The KGB planted electronic "bugs" in the homes of Reform Baptist leaders to learn church plans, added Vins, a major speaker at the 122nd meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention at the Summit.

Ironically, the electronic devices were made in the United States and sold to the KGB he claimed.

Vins, who was freed along with four other Russian dissidents two months ago in exchange for two convicted Soviet spies, also said that he believed the KGB intentionally detained his family in Moscow, preventing them from arriving in the United States as scheduled on June 14, in an effort to prevent him from addressing the convention members.

Vins' entire family, his mother, wife, five children, a niece and even a St. Bernard dog, were scheduled to arrive in New York City from Russia June 14, said Olin Robison, president of Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vt., where Vins and his family are to live temporarily.

Robison reported the Vins family was temporarily detained by Soviet officials in Moscow, causing them to miss their plane and delaying their arrival in the United States by at least 28 hours.

Vins said he spent one hour talking on the telephone to his family when they arrived in Frankfurt, Germany, and his wife told him that he "must be in Houston, for this is more important than meeting your family."

Vins had been in prison for five years, from 1974-79, and had not seen his entire family for almost six years. He spent a year in hiding before he was arrested.

During the 90-minute news conference, translated by Peter Deyneka Jr., of the Slavic Gospel Association in Wheaton, Ill., Vins displayed photographic evidence of torture of Russian Baptists and other Christians in the Soviet Union.

About 40 Russian Baptists are now in prison in Russia for their faith, he said, adding that in the last 10 years, at least 10 Russian Baptists have become martyrs, tortured to death while in prison for their faith.

Vins said he was not beaten while in prison, but he was interrogated and oppressed psychologically.

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The KGB, he explained, is "more subtle today than physical," and use torture only as a last resort.

"Primarily they (KGB) are trying to get into the church and thereby influence the whole Christian church and oppress the leaders of the church," he said.

Vins disagreed with claims by Baptist World Alliance officials that there is no need for smuggling Bibles into Russia, saying "there is an enormous need for Bibles in Russia."

He cited the fact that there are 260 million people in Russia, and many Russians want more Bibles. "Whoever is involved in getting Bibles into Russia is doing a good job," he said.

Vins, secretary of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (commonly called the Reform Baptists), was asked about leadership within the government-recognized All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), specifically Michael Zhidkov and Alexi Bichkov who have spoken at many BWA meetings.

Answering the question about the integrity of Zhidkov and Bichkov with another question, Vins simply asked if they had ever told about persecution of Baptists in Russia when they spoke at religious gatherings. Then Vins cited statistics, including the fact that between 1929 and 1940, at least 25,000 Baptist preachers were imprisoned in Russia, and 22,000 of them (including Vins' father) died there.

In Moscow, there is only one registered Christian house of worship for a city with 8 million people, yet Christians in Moscow are being persecuted by the Russian authorities, Vins added.

"Did they (Bichkov and Zhidkov) tell you of these things?" he asked.

"There are two sides to the church in Russia," Vins explained. "One side states there is religious freedom for Christians in Russia, and the other side tells of great persecution of Christians. The Soviet-controlled press and the authorities say there is full religious freedom in Russia, and this is what Bichkov and Zhidkov say. I will let you decide for yourself."

Vins said that Christians in America should be concerned about religious persecution in Russia, "for all of us as Christians make up one body. If one member of the body suffers, we all do. I feel Christians who are suffering in Russia should receive the prayers and support of Christians in the United States."

Asked what Christians can do to help oppose persecution in Russia, Vins said the most vital question is to strengthen the work of the persecuted Reform Baptist group which stands for the principle of separation of church and state.

He expressed deep appreciation for the human rights stand of President Carter, saying even non-Christians in Russia were grateful for Carter's stand on human rights.

"When Jimmy Carter was elected president of the United States, Baptists in the Soviet Union rejoiced that their brother in the faith had been elected to such a high position," Vins said. "We thanked God for President Carter's stand on human rights."

Asked if his comments publicly about persecution of Christians in Russia might cause Russian authorities to intensify oppression of Christians, Vins claimed it would help rather than hurt. "The more information we give to the world, the more we pray for Christians in Russia, the better off they will be."

He said that his own situation improved dramatically in prison in 1976 after Congressman John Buchanan, a Baptist pastor and Republican representative from Birmingham, introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives calling for Vins' release.

Asked if he regrets that the BWA recognizes the official All Union Council, Vins said what he would like to see is BWA recognition of the Reform Baptist group as well. "They have already recognized me," he added.

Vins said that the Soviet officials had tried to "seal my lips" but now he thanks God that "I am free to preach the gospel and tell others about my brothers and sisters who are trying to preach the gospel in difficult circumstances in Russia."

Vins attributed his freedom to "an answer to prayer."

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Hinston Urges SBC
To Shun 'Power Plays'

By Roy Jennings

Baptist Press
6/15/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Southern Baptists were encouraged here to put aside denominational power plays and the propagation of half truths and to start praying for their missions agencies in a spirit of cooperation.

William M. Hinson, pastor of First Baptist Church of New Orleans, told the messengers to the 122nd annual meeting of the 13.2 million member Southern Baptist Convention the only power plays which score for eternity are those involving God's Holy Spirit working through committed Christians.

In the annual SBC sermon, Hinson called critics of the denomination without credentials a bore who keep many Christians on the sidelines with their debates instead of sharing their Christian faith.

"Many of them are better known for what they are against, rather than what they are for," Hinson contended. "They are constantly out to denounce something or someone. They organize all of their loyalties around whatever they oppose.

"God's primary demand calls for us to stop talking about our convention, and start talking about Jesus. God's primary demand urges us to stop classifying Christians and start edifying one another in Him."

Hinson also warned the messengers about becoming enamored with programs instead of Christian commitment.

"Great programs do challenge us, and often stimulate some human-response success," Hinson reminded. "But we will not march to God's positive declaration for his particular day with any sense of real revival without crowning him anew as the Lord of our individual lives.

"For too long, we have been waiting for another program. In reality, we are merely playing church. In an antiseptic kind of way we actually cheat because we have not made a basic commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

While strident voices want to make Christ a past event, Hinson said, record enrolments at Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries are evidence God wants Southern Baptists to expose the world to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

"If we are going to reach our goal of sharing the Gospel with every person in the world by the year 2000, we must decide to take spiritual risks today."

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Clower At
SBC: 'Whooeee'

By Larry Crisman

Baptist Press
6/15/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--"The 'awflest' dog fight I ever seen was over a bowl of okra!"

William Shakespeare, the immortal bard, likely revolved in his grave when Jerry Clower, self-identified "Christian entertainer" from Yazoo City, Miss., unleashed that line on messengers at the last session of the 122nd Southern Baptist Convention here.

Clower, resplendent in a red tuxedo monogrammed with an embossed head of a raccoon on the left lapel, claimed he hitchhiked to the Summit, site of the annual meeting of the country's largest Protestant denomination.

Maybe he did, maybe he didn't. One thing's sure: the standing ovation messengers extended the guru of giggles and Gospel said they didn't care how he came.

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They loved Jerry Clower.

"Get it on in the local church!" he blasted. "Pray for me as I pray for you. Keep looking up. I'm on your side!"

Clower's emphasis on the local church--plus a pitch for the SBC's Cooperative Program--represented two of the few serious subjects addressed by the man outgoing SBC President Jimmy Allen introduced as a "country court Jesler."

Most of the time the high priest of humor, punctuating points with periodic "whoeee," spun his spell on the sublime and ridiculous.

"Did you ever kiss a 1,500-pound, sweaty, bad-breath mule on the mouth?" uncle Vercie Ledbetter demanded of the prying city slicker after backing him over the hood of a limousine with a "thumb-cocked" shotgun.

"No sire," the previously brash intruder whispered. "But I always wanted to!"

The Southern Baptist yahoo from Yazoo kept the comedy coming through the first part of his presentation, then masterfully moved messengers into a more serious moment for the coup de grace.

He told his testimony. He described his career. Then he boomed:

"The local church can change the world!"

Maybe Jerry Clower can too.

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Hawaii Baptist Academy
Admitted Into ASBCS

Baptist Press
6/15/79

GALVESTON, Texas (BP)--Hawaii Baptist Academy has been accepted into membership in the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools.

The action came during the annual meeting of the Association during the National Conference on Bold Christian Education and Bold Missions at Moody Convention Center.

Hawaii Baptist Academy is the 72nd school to become a member of the association of academies, junior colleges, colleges, universities and seminaries affiliated with the Southern Baptists. The last school to become a member was Valley Baptist Academy in Harlingen, Tex., in 1970.

Hawaii Baptist Academy is owned and operated by the Hawaii Baptist Convention. It was started by Southern Baptist foreign missionaries serving in Hawaii in 1940. When Hawaii became a state in 1959, operational control of the academy passed from the Foreign Mission Board to the Hawaii Baptist Convention.

Joe Sanders, president of the Hawaii Baptist Convention, told the educators that 80 percent of the 760 students "are not Christians, so the Academy gives us a tremendous evangelistic opportunity."

The school provides education from kindergarten to the 12th grade in facilities in Honolulu. Stanley A. Sagert is president of HBA, and Tommy Watt is academic dean.

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Truth: Written in the
Blood of the Martyrs

By Stan Hastey

Baptist Press
6/15/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--"Where can we read the true story of what has happened? It is written in the blood of the martyrs."

So declared Georgi Vins, the exiled leader of the Reform Baptist movement in the Soviet Union, to 9,000 applauding messengers attending the final session of the Southern Baptist Convention at the Summit.

Before introducing the 51-year-old Vins, SBC President Jimmy R. Allen made the dramatic announcement that just moments earlier a plane carrying Vins' wife, mother, and children had landed at New York's Kennedy Airport. The Baptists roared their approval.

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Allen related that Vins had spoken with his wife earlier in the day during a stopover for the family in Frankfurt, West Germany, and that Mrs. Vins had insisted that he fulfill his commitment to address the SBC.

During a news conference earlier in the day, Vins said that his wife had told him he "must be in Houston, for this is more important than meeting your family."

Mrs. Vins has seen her husband only once during the past five years, and then for only a brief visit.

Vins completed a five-year sentence in prison six weeks ago and was being transported via cattle car with other prisoners to serve an additional five-year sentence in a Siberian labor camp when Soviet authorities suddenly rerouted him to Moscow. From there he and four other Russian dissidents were sent to New York City in exchange for two convicted Soviet spies.

Vins spoke of the dramatic turn of events, saying that he had never dreamed "of such freedom" as he has found in the United States and attributed his release to the "amazing grace and blessing of God."

He said that for the first time in his life he was preaching in a large auditorium.

Before reading his biblical text, Vins asked the crowd to rise for a prayer of thanksgiving for his release and that of his family. With hands clasped to his chest, he offered thanks "for allowing the Gospel to be spread throughout my motherland and fatherland, the Soviet Union."

The text, 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Now it is required that those who are given a trust must be found faithful," formed the basis for the address.

"There is no evil power in this world that can shake us," he declared. Referring to figures throughout Christian history persecuted for their faith and to the biblical image of sheep among wolves, he declared, "All that the lamb has is the voice of the shepherd saying, 'Go.'"

Vins expressed special concern for the president of the Reform Baptists, Gennadi Kryuchkov. Lifting up a large photo of the man he called "my best friend," Vins said Kryuchkov has been leading the Reform--or unregistered--group of Baptist for the past 18 years, living in hiding for the last 15 years after serving a three-year prison term.

Vins repeated a conviction shared often since his arrival in the U. S.--that the efforts of American and other Christians helps imprisoned Soviet Christians.

"We are grateful you have not forgotten us. I ask you, continue this."

Vins reviewed the history of Baptists in the Soviet Union, a history dating to 1867 when the first convert was baptized. The first 40 years were "extremely difficult," he went on, pointing out that the first actual church was not organized until 1906 in St. Petersburg, today Leningrad.

Strangely enough, the first 10 years following the Communist revolution of 1917 which overthrew the Czarist government were the best ones for Baptists, he said.

Several Russian Baptist leaders attended the Baptist World Congress in Toronto in 1928, he said, but the following year "the whole scene changed" and the bloody Stalin purge was underway.

Between 1929 and 1940, 25,000 Baptist preachers were arrested, he said, and of those, 22,000 died in prisons and labor camps.

Fifty years since "that terrible purge began," he declared, Russian Baptist and other Christians live and witness under "difficult circumstances," but are encouraged that "our spiritual forefathers...left us a priceless Christian heritage.

"The servant of Jesus Christ cannot be unfaithful," he declared, even at the cost of imprisonment or loss of life.

He said the Reform Baptist movement is sustained also by its commitment to seven principles, which he identified as the absolute authority of the Bible, the absolute freedom of conscience, the complete separation of church and state, the new birth as a

requirement for church membership, believer's baptist, the practice of a holy life, and the autonomy of the local church.

Vins spoke also of a daring plan to print copies of the Bible and other religious literature, carried out primarily by Baptist young people who run "The Christian Press." Because publication of religious materials is illegal in the Soviet Union, he related, young people constructed printing presses from "bits and pieces" of metal and other materials.

To the applause of the crowd, he held up a copy of the New Testament printed on one of the illegal presses.

He seemed to sum up the posture of his beleaguered group when he declared: "We tell the Soviet authorities that the Lord of the church is Jesus Christ and nobody on earth can tell the church what to do or contro it--only Jesus Christ."

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SBC Messengers See
Unity Despite Diversity

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
6/15/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Three days, 37 resolutions, 24 reports, seven major addresses, and countless votes later, a sampling of messengers to the 122nd annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention were asked what they considered to be the most significant occurrence in the meeting.

Their responses, for the most part, touched on three major themes--commitment to mission, the election of a president, and, despite frequent wrangling over various issues on the convention floor, a "spirit of unity."

"As always, we've had lots of diversity," summarized Clay Warf, pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Durham, N.C., on his way out of the Houston Summit after the closing session.

"We've had doctrinal controversy, emotion, frustration, even anger. Yet we're one, and the overriding impression is unity--unity of purpose--and that in itself is a miracle."

Charles Reat of the host city of Houston, agreed: "For me, the highlight was the realization that in Christ's love and through God's grace, we can have the kind of union and love for one another that we never dreamed possible a week ago."

Indeed, a week ago reports were flying about a brewing battle over the issue of biblical inerrancy (without error) that threatened to sidetrack the convention's emphasis on Bold Mission Thrust, an ambitious plan to share the gospel with the entire world by the turn of the century.

Most of the messengers polled felt, however, that a Bold Mission Thrust rally at the Houston Astrodome on Wednesday night dispelled dissension in the ranks and turned the convention toward a positive conclusion the following night. The rally, attended by more than 48,000 persons, featured the "commissioning" of 1,100 foreign and home missionaries.

"I appreciated the fact that we were allowed to be part of the commissioning of these missionaries," said Frank Queen of Madisonville, Ky. "That really stands out in my mind."

"I've been coming a long, long time (30 years, to be exact), and I've never seen anything like that," said Mrs. Earl Ogg of the Astrodome rally. Mrs. Ogg, a pastor's wife from Monroe, La., added, "I think that service will have a great impact on Southern Baptists."

Larry Payne, pastor of First Baptist Church, Beaver, Okla., said, "Without question, the Bold Mission Thrust rally was the most important event because it expressed the total unity of missions in our convention. Despite everything else we may have gotten into, everything revolves around missions and I think the rally was an indication of that."

For others, the key aspect of the sessions was the election of Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., as president of the denomination.

"I think it was most important because it was a kind of reconciling factor after all of the talk about biblical inerrancy," said Jerald Hicks, an Orlando, Fla., pastor.

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"I think it was most important because it was a kind of reconciling factor after all of the talk about biblical inerrancy," said Jerald Hicks, an Orlando, Fla., pastor.

Lee Kirkman, of Bassett, Va., felt Roger's election was most significant "because of his doctrinal position. And I hope the message gets across to the leadership of the convention."

For Lydia L. Cheung of the Chinese Baptist church in Houston, the big event during the convention was "a personal thing."

"I've been married 25 years," she explained, "and I met four people here who were in my wedding."

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Scott Rallies
SBC to Togetherness

By Judy Touchton

Baptist Press
6/15/79

HOUSTON, Texas (BP)--Emmanuel Scott, the only black man to address the Southern Baptist Convention in a three-day meeting at the Summit, rallied the denomination to togetherness and unity.

Scott, pastor of the 200-member downtown Los Angeles Calvary Baptist Church, dually aligned with Southern Baptists and the National Baptist Convention, Inc., received a standing ovation from the crowd before ever saying a word.

In 45 minutes--in a sermon designed to last into eternity, as Scott called it--he said the Bible, the nature of the universe and the nature of God mandate togetherness.

"We experience disease and difficulty, crises and calamity, population and overt infanticide all vigorously, ruthlessly attacking the human family....

"...All primarily because we're not together," he said.

With a lone black-covered Bible-closed-as his text, Scott--with eyes gleaming, skin glistening, shoulders straight, arms extended downward--begged and berated Southern Baptists to maintain unity, despite differences.

Technological and sociological advances are not the root of society's trouble, Scott contended. "If we leave out moral and spiritual attitudes, the tragedy will be multiplied and the triumph will elude us."

"God did not create a MULTI-verse, he brought into being a UNiverse," Scott added, drawing applause with every animated turn, dance, strut and gesture.

"Anyone who fights against fusion and fellowship fights against the very nature of God. And, parenthetically let me say, if you are fighting against God, you can't win."

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