



## **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. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

August 16, 1979

79-139

### **Bible Conference Urges Revival, Avoids Conflict**

By Robert O'Brien

ST. LOUIS, Mo. (BP)--The much-publicized Heart of America Bible Conference started out in a blaze of expository biblical preaching by a battery of speakers at Tower Grove Baptist Church and ended up as an old-fashioned prayer meeting for spiritual revival.

Kneeling Southern Baptist pastors, many in tears, filled the aisle, the front of the church and the pulpit platform during the conference's final session. W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, knelt in their midst praying that each would commit himself and his church to take the message of Jesus Christ to each person in his community.

Criswell, co-sponsor of the conference with evangelist James Robison, closed the three-day meeting with a stirring sermon on the apostle Paul's dedication to evangelism. Then he told the conferees from nine states that his church had recently dedicated itself to taking the gospel directly to every person in Dallas.

"We have already knocked on the doors of 35,000 homes and found 5,000 people whose hearts are open and we have just begun," he said. "Already I can feel a new caring, a new intercession, a new spirit of outreach," he said of his 20,000-member church, the largest in the Southern Baptist Convention. "God is blessing us more than at any time in my 35 years as pastor."

The conference drew much advance publicity as the first of a projected series of 20 across the nation to "affirm the authority of the Word of God to strengthen pastors and churches through evangelism and bring about revival."

It attracted an official registration of 1,000 persons from nine states and had a top attendance at evening sessions of 2,300 in the auditorium and overflow areas serviced by closed-circuit television.

At a news conference on the opening day, conference sponsors stoutly denied that the conference, referred to in an advance letter to the press from the host church as an "inerrancy conference," was part of the political struggle which erupted during the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston in June. The issue involved biblical inerrancy (without error), amid charges of "liberalism" in Southern Baptist educational institutions.

Although a number of speakers referred to the folly of "liberalism" and urged support for an "infallible and inerrant" Bible, they mainly devoted themselves to expository Biblical preaching and avoided launching attacks against "liberals" in Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries.

-more-

In an address before the closing session, Criswell, a former SBC president, did speak pointedly about a modern-day attack on the Bible and of "professors in the academic world that scoff at and ridicule the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures." But he made no direct reference to Southern Baptist professors.

At the news conference, Criswell declared, in answer to questions about the conference's purpose, "I am praying that there will be such an avowal and affirmation and commitment to the word of God that a liberal in our midst would be as out of place as a piano at a Church of Christ convention or at a bar mitzvah."

The only presentation devoted entirely to biblical authority came from Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas, who gave a two-part address on the subject.

Not only did speakers avoid attacks on Southern Baptist institutions but two expressed direct affirmation for Southern Baptist higher education.

"I am thankful for training at a Baptist seminary and college," declared Bailey Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., as two SBC seminary presidents listened from the audience. "We know they have problems, but if you were president," he told the audience, "you'd have the same problems. . . . Let's pray for these men."

Larry Lewis, conference co-chairman and host church pastor, spoke of the beneficial impact that Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, has had on his life and the lives of other alumni.

Before calling Russell Dilday, Southwestern Seminary president, to the platform to pray, he declared that in a discussion in Dilday's office recently, Dilday pointed to his Bible and described it as "the infallible, inerrant Word of God." The audience applauded.

Another seminary president at the conference, Milton Ferguson of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, was also asked to close a session with prayer.

Criswell, Robison and SBC President Adrian Rogers, recently elected in Houston, said at the news conference that the series of meetings, which will convene next at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in November, were planned long before the Houston SBC to start spiritual revival to counteract the growing tide of secularism in America.

Repeatedly during the gathering in St. Louis preachers expounding on biblical themes drew standing ovations as they challenged pastors, who made up about half the audience, to apply the Bible to their personal lives and to their congregations and spearhead revival. The speakers also suggested practical approaches to improving evangelistic efforts.

Rogers, who spoke at the opening session, declared, "My aim as president of the Southern Baptist Convention is revival--real revival--heaven-sent, God-breathed, Holy Ghost, mountain-moving, earth-shaking, Devil-defying revival. That's what I want in my heart, in my family, in my church, in my denomination, in my country. That's what I'm praying for."

"I want something to happen," Rogers continued, "that cannot be explained by personalities, propaganda and promotion. I want something so real that the very ears of those who hear about it will tingle, and they'll have to say this is nothing less than the work of God."

"I want to tell you with all my heart that neither our convention or any convention is going to be changed with the banging of a gavel," Rogers said. "I believe that we need for the cleansing tide of Calvary and the winds of Pentecost to blow through our lives. That's what I'm praying for, that's what I'm believing God for, And I'll tell you something else, God has already told me it's going to happen."

"Right hard on the heels of that, I'm praying that the leadership God has placed in my hands as president of the Southern Baptist Convention will end in an upturn in baptisms, and I'm praying in the next several years we will baptize more souls than we have ever baptized in the history of our Southern Baptist Convention," he declared.

"I believe that the conference we are having (in St. Louis) is but a harbinger of that."

Conference planners and speakers--in presentations, in private conversation and in the news conference--made reference repeatedly to the need for revival to permeate individuals, churches and denominational institutions.

Although they repeatedly emphasized they weren't castigating the colleges and seminaries and that the Bible conference series is aimed at revival across the board, Criswell, Robison and Rogers indicated in the news conference that a spirit of "flaming evangelism" needs to invade students and professors. "We're producing too many academicians, philosophers, speculators, humanists, counselors--not the flaming evangelists there used to be," Criswell said.

"I know that many are blessed by our professors," said Robison. "I have been. It would be foolish to lay all the blame on any institution or educator. I believe there may be and are some (professors) who have discredited the word of God, who have brought about a skeptical attitude toward evangelism which our denomination is trying to emphasize. But we're not here to point the finger at them. We've got to trace our problems back through the family, through emphasis on material things. Let's see mothers and dads revived, pastors revived, music directors revived and evangelists revived," Robison said.

"The largest Protestant denomination in America is Southern Baptists," Criswell told the news conference. "That carries with it a colossal, astronomical responsibility. If this denomination can turn itself toward a great soul-winning evangelistic effort, it may surprise even the politicians and sociologists what may happen."

-30-

(BP) photo will be mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the "Word and Way"

---

Southern Seminary  
Gets Brown Grant

Baptist Press  
8/16/79

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has received a \$100,000 grant from the J. Graham Brown Foundation of Louisville which will be used to begin development of multi-media, visual communications and television laboratories.

The funds will also help Southern Seminary participate in a new television system which will link the six higher education institutions in the Louisville and southern Indiana area which comprise the Kentuckiana Metroversity.

-more-

The cable-based inter-campus system could be used to air live lectures on any of the six campuses, faculty development workshops, and eventually, courses taught by teams from the six institutions.

The grant was made in response to a joint proposal by Southern Baptist and Louisville Presbyterian seminaries. The Brown Foundation has provided substantial support for Kentucky's four-year colleges, but this marks the first time that grants have been made to Louisville's two graduate-professional theological schools.

-30-

Iran Missionaries Uncertain  
Of Future When Summer Ends

By Ruth Fowler

Baptist Press  
8/16/79

BANGALORE, India (BP)--The Henry E. Turlingtons had planned to remain in India for their summer teaching assignment and then return to their ministry in Iran. All that may change.

Now Turlington is not sure if he and his wife, Helen, will ever be able to live and minister in Iran again. New reports of continuing turmoil in the Islamic republic and the loss of all but a few church members lead the Turlingtons to believe their September return to the country will only be a business trip to arrange for the final closing of their church in Iran.

The Turlingtons, the only Southern Baptist missionaries currently assigned to Iran, had worked there for more than a year when the Muslim-controlled revolutionary forces began their move to overthrow the shah. In February, when the conflict became critical, the Turlingtons left Iran, along with most other Americans and many of the members of their English-language congregation.

When the Turlingtons returned to Iran for April and May after the successful takeover of Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini, they found that they were the only Americans left in their congregation and among the few Americans left in the country.

"From what we hear, our church is down to one Iranian, one Nigerian embassy family, and possibly one British woman," Turlington said. "News of Iran here in India is very sketchy, but nothing we read encourages us to think we can go back in September and resume a ministry through that church. We have no idea there will ever come another time when Americans will be in Iran in anything like the previous numbers."

Turlington believes that other Christian groups and minority religions may be affected by the strict Muslim government.

"Khomeini and others have strongly asserted that there will be, under their planned Islamic republic, complete freedom for Iran's religious minorities," Turlington said. "It is difficult to believe that this will be much more than simple tolerance and that only as long as these groups do not threaten Islam."

Turlington told of a priest from another Christian group who was murdered by two Muslim men the priest had recently baptized. Turlington believes the men were under a great amount of pressure from their peer group. This priest's father had also been killed because of his faith.

-more-

The Christian hospital in a nearby town has been taken over by Iranians and the Christian medical staff was denied entrance to the grounds.

The church where Turlington served as pastor continued to meet each Friday morning when the Turlingtons were there, with almost 100 percent attendance of those members still in the country. "We chose to meet in our home rather than the Persian Evangelical Church where we had been meeting regularly for several years," Turlington said. "Our group was quite small and we did not wish to create any problems for the Iranian Christians whose church building it was. We were in no way threatened nor did they appear to be."

Another Christian church building in Tehran was occupied by Iranians in February with some desecration of crosses and looting. But this was justified by the Iranians on the grounds that the property was a part of the American military establishment and really belonged to the Iranian people. The membership had been mostly American.

"On the other hand," Turlington said, "when I went to Ahwaz to see about property there, the person who was the most helpful to me was the archbishop of the Chaldean Catholic Church. He seemed to be both well-known and well-respected in that city."

The Turlingtons emphasized that many of the people of Iran were still friendly, some even more so than before. "We were invited into more Iranian homes to eat than we had been during the 20 months we were in Tehran previously," Turlington said.

Some Iranians wanted to know why the Turlingtons were leaving Iran, assuring them they were welcome. But Turlington said they did not always feel welcome when they were out on the streets.

"To go shopping in our own neighborhood where there had once been so many Americans and other expatriates and to see no one except Iranians was sometimes a lonely experience," Turlington said. "But at no time did we personally experience anything other than stares that we interpreted as hostile."

Anti-American feeling was strong, increasingly so at the end of May when people reacted negatively to the U.S. Senate's censure of the executions and certain other methods being used by the revolutionary government, Turlington said. "The last weekend we were there we saw anti-American demonstrations all over Iran, especially in Tehran. Needless to say, we kept a low profile and did nothing to further antagonize anyone."