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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICESBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355W. 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** 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) Lloyd T. Householder, 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

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Baptist Missionaries
Firm On Liberia Stay

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries still plan to stay in Liberia, said a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board official the day after the United Methodist Church announced that its missionaries would leave.

Although leaders of both churches were included in the deposed regime of William R. Tolbert Jr., a Baptist minister, the Methodist missionaries decided to evacuate after former vice president Bennie Warner, a Methodist bishop, announced that he would form a government-in-exile in Ivory Coast. Tolbert was assassinated in a coup April 12.

John E. Mills, the Baptist board's secretary for West Africa, said that those he talked with in Liberia the afternoon of April 30 did not say the U.S. Embassy had asked missionary wives and children to leave Liberia. Instead, they told him the embassy had suggested that anyone planning to take a leave of absence or furlough in the near future move up their departure date a few weeks.

Southern Baptists have 45 missionaries in Liberia.

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Religious Leaders Push
Congress On Food Stamps

By Stan Hasteley

5/1/80
Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (BP)--Religious leaders have mounted an emergency campaign to pressure Congress for passage of legislation to prevent a temporary shutdown of the food stamp program.

Millions of poor citizens stand to lose food stamp benefits June 1 unless Congress approves and appropriates additional funding for the remainder of fiscal year 1980. Funds for the program have run short this year because of inflation and underestimating of recipients.

According to food and hunger experts within the religious community, Congress must finalize action by May 15 or the secretary of agriculture will be forced to notify states to shut down the program as of June 1.

Kitty Weiss, a United Church of Christ food policy expert, predicted that unless Congress acts by the May date the program could remain closed for two to six weeks, causing widespread hunger among the nation's poor.

Bread for the World, New York-based hunger organization, estimates that contrary to popular belief less than 14 percent of present food stamp recipients are able-bodied persons without jobs. Such persons, under the program, must register for work and accept jobs offered or be disqualified from benefits.

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Arthur Simon, executive director of Bread for the World, is urging church leaders and pastors to press Congress for the emergency legislation before May 15 and to prepare their congregations for a "personal ministry of food-aid to hungry people" if Congress fails to meet the deadline.

"The Christian community in the United States must be prepared to respond to the massive human need in our own back yards," Simon told Baptist Press. "These next few weeks could be viewed as a test of how serious the Christian church is about responding to human need."

"The current problem really began in 1977, when Congress first imposed a funding limit on the food stamp program," said David Sapp, director of organization for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"Now the nation's poor people are being threatened with hunger and malnutrition because of the unnecessarily low limit set for this year. Congress not only should take immediate steps to end this immoral situation, but it should act to prevent a repetition of this crisis in future years. Christ's compassion for the hungry calls concerned Southern Baptists to make their voices heard," Sapp said.

A number of other Southern Baptist leaders and pastors have joined in issuing similar calls for action on the food stamp crisis.

C. Welton Gaddy, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, decried the current emphasis in Congress on budget cutting at the expense of the poor. "Ironically, we're once again asking for belt-tightening among people who have no belts, people who know inflation not in terms of economics but only in terms of bellies bloated from lack of food," he said.

Joe Haag of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission staff said that because 90 percent of food stamp recipients in Texas are disabled, elderly persons, caring for children or the working poor, the threatened cutoff "is unbearable to people of Christian conscience."

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Baptists Help Victims
After Dynamite Explosion

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5/1/80

ARACAJU, Brazil (BP)--When a huge explosion shook Aracaju, Brazil, in the middle of the night, some people thought Christ was returning or a war was breaking out.

Instead, the April 13 blast occurred when a houseful of illegally stored dynamite exploded, killing 12 people, injuring 200 and causing damage as far away as 10 miles.

Baptist churches are now involved in a relief ministry, according to Southern Baptist missionary Leta Hulet. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has allocated \$10,000 in general relief funds and \$1,000 for hunger relief.

A report from Mrs. Hulet indicates that 50 homes close to the blast were destroyed, and as many as 12,500 homes suffered light to heavy damage in this coastal city of more than 226,000 people in North Brazil. Two Baptist families lost their homes and all their belongings.

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The house of Southern Baptist missionaries Clayton and Leta Hulet suffered minor damage when the windows broke on one side of the building. The metal window frames also were bent. According to Mrs. Hulet, glass flew across their children's bedrooms, but no one was hurt.

In another instance, a Baptist family with a small baby narrowly escaped injury. "The wall crashed down on the baby bed with such force that the baby flew over to the parents' bed and landed between them," Mrs. Hulet said. "As the wall began to fall in on their side, they were able to grab the baby and escape."

"One can't help but wonder how anything remained alive," she said after viewing the debris in the area closest to the blast.

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McCall Concerned About
Published Takeover Plans

By James Lee Young

Baptist Press
5/1/80

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Duke McCall is concerned over the published report of an organization to dictate Southern Baptist Convention presidential elections.

He is so concerned that he told participants at the annual meeting of the SBC Historical Commission and Society: "If I did not believe in God, I would predict and bet on the dissolution of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s."

McCall, who called himself an "inevitable optimist," nevertheless said he was shocked to read the Baptist Press account of the organized efforts. He said he views the organization under the direction of Baptist layman Paul Pressler and Baptist minister Paige Patterson as one "designed to do for Southern Baptists what Mr. (Samuel) Doe did for Liberia, with the revolution and death of my good friend, William Tolbert."

Tolbert, president of Liberia and former president of the Baptist World Alliance, was assassinated in a recent coup.

McCall referred to Tolbert and Liberia because Tolbert had told him last year that Liberia's stability "could not be shaken." He compared that atmosphere of invincibility with current attitudes of the majority of Southern Baptists.

He warned Southern Baptists not to think "it couldn't happen here," even though many think the "stability of the Southern Baptist Convention is self-righting and that it always comes back, and that our leaders, once in places of power, become the leaders representing the total fellowship."

Pressler is a Houston judge and Patterson is president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas. They were two key figures in the plan to elect an SBC president committed to biblical inerrancy in Houston last June and to ending an alleged drift toward "liberalism" in the SBC.

The Baptist Press story by Toby Druin concerned an April 3 meeting of an organization built around the question of adherence to biblical inerrancy whose goal is to elect SBC presidents espousing their views for at least four and even up to 10 consecutive years.

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Then, according to Druin's story, the organization hopes to control, through presidential committee appointments, the nomination of trustees of SBC agencies. The organization also is seeking lay involvement in that political process from every association and state Baptist convention.

McCall feels the majority opinion will not be carried if annual meetings are stacked by precinct politics pushed by a "hard nosed political cadre."

He said in a later interview that the issue is not theology but power. "Theology is simply the flag they wave," he said.

McCall likened possible success of the group to a "communist takeover," and said it would mean the end of free elections in annual conventions.

Control of Southern Baptist agencies by the group committed to a rigid theology could also mean the end of support for those agencies, McCall said. "How much of the eastern seaboard is going to contribute through the Cooperative Program to support agencies controlled by the Pressler-Patterson group?" he asked. The Cooperative Program is the conduit through which Southern Baptists support 18 national agencies in its program of world evangelism and missions.

In his address at the Historical Commission meeting, he reiterated the stance taken in 1951 at his inauguration as president of Southern Seminary.

"The democratic polity in our Baptist denomination rests upon the conviction that the composite mind of the entire constituency is likely to be right more often than the mind of any single organization or individual," he said in the 1951 speech.

He continued: "The danger in democratic polity is that in lieu of selected leadership we shall have self-appointed leaders . . . instead of a responsible body . . . to guide us."

"The checks and balances of our federal government were established by our forefathers to forestall such deterioration in our nation's democratic political life. The same principle . . . is needed in the life of a democratic denomination. The seminary will find its place . . . within the judicial system," McCall said.

"The force of its judgment is contained in no legal authority but rather in the amount of true light which it may shed," the Southern Seminary president observed.

"The seminary must ever be free to focus the light of its knowledge upon the plans and policies and decisions of the denomination," he declared.

"There will always be those who will attempt to maintain their position and support their cause by capturing the seminary as an instrument of propaganda and as a rubber stamp for their own judgments," he said.

"It is to the best interest of the denomination, therefore, not only to guard its interest in the seminary but to guard the seminary from those with special interest."

Wrapup

Controversy Not New to SBC
Historical Meeting Shows

By James Lee Young

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The latest episode in the continuing debate over biblical inerrancy and control of the Southern Baptist Convention made the question ever present at the SBC Historical Commission and Society annual meetings in Louisville.

Baptist theologians and historians, and even a non-Baptist national magazine editor, cited the present Southern Baptist Convention control-inerrancy issue either directly or indirectly as one of importance to Southern Baptists.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Duke McCall referred specifically to the announced plans of an organization to seek control of the denomination through election of SBC presidents and committee appointments and said, "If I did not believe in God, I would predict and bet on the dissolution of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s."

McCall, who called himself an "inevitable optimist," nevertheless warned Southern Baptists not to think "it couldn't happen here."

McCall said he was "deeply shocked" to hear about a "closed meeting (on April 3 in Dallas) of some of our colleagues where they were planning the dissolution of the Southern Baptist Convention."

"Not since Frank Norris (the late dissident Southern Baptist Texas pastor) have we had so clear a group of people determined to disfranchise those with whom they disagree," McCall said.

In business session, the Historical Commission adopted a 1980-81 budget of \$312,750; named H. Leon McBeth, a Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor, as chairman, and approved the addition of a director of information services to begin work in 1981-82.

In view of the excellent reception given by Southern Baptists to the Baptist Heritage Series pamphlets published by the commission in 1979, the commission voted to consider developing a new series of pamphlets focusing on Baptist biography.

The inerrancy question was one of several issues in Southern Baptist life given to illustrate the fact that the denomination projects a series of positive and negative images to others.

James Wall, editor of Christian Century magazine, told the Baptists that the images place the denomination outside the national "religion of civility."

While Wall made much of the "state-recognized" civility religion and of the secular opposition to Jimmy Carter's born again declarations, he also addressed the four areas in which Southern Baptists project both positive and negative images.

He pointed out the difference in image between Bible-believing people or inerrancy dogmatists; diligent missionaries or arrogant proselytizers; rigid moralists or defenders of values; and defenders of church-state separation or anti-Roman Catholic.

Wayne Dehoney, a former SBC president and pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville, said that the SBC president must "take charge" of the Committee on Order of Business for annual SBC sessions "if he is to fulfill his dreams and goals for the convention during his term of service."

Dehoney was asked if he thought the SBC president could abuse the appointive powers he has to name the Committee on Committees and Resolutions Committee. He said although it was possible, "you can't strip that authority from the president. But a man who doesn't handle it with integrity will subject himself to nominations from the floor."

Controversy is nothing new to Southern Baptists, as other speakers emphasized.

W. Morgan Patterson, academic dean and church history professor from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, discussed two different kinds of controversialists in his text.

J.R. Graves, editor of the Tennessee Baptist, who dates to the mid-to-late 1800s, sought controversy, perhaps as a means of purifying and informing on doctrine, Patterson observed. E.Y. Mullins, former president of Southern Seminary, was a successful, quiet mediator during the evolution controversy of the 1920s.

Baptist Theologian Fisher Humphreys observed that although Baptists are not a creedal people, a theological consensus does exist among them. He noted that consensus includes beliefs about God which Baptists share with all Christians, beliefs about salvation which Baptists share with Protestants, and beliefs about religious and church life which Baptists share with other Christians who have been influenced by revivalism.

He cited five observable minority groups in the denomination in addition to the 90 percent or more he estimated to be in the mainstream of Southern Baptist life. The five he suggested were: hyper-Calvinists, ultra-fundamentalists, neo-Pentecostals, Landmarkists, and an avant-garde.

"My great hope," Humphreys noted, "is that we learn to appreciate more deeply the Christian understanding of God as transcendent and personal, as good and loving, and as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Walter Shurden, dean of the School of Theology and church history professor at Southern, cited the re-emergence of the Southern Baptist pastor as the denominational theologian, replacing the "teaching-theologian" (seminary professor).

Doctrinal, social and ecclesiastical developments in recent years have caused Southern Baptists to "revere the voices of the pastors of large pulpits," Shurden said.

Bill J. Leonard, church history professor at Southern, said there is a "clear indication that denominational leaders can exercise theological influence upon the (Southern Baptist) Convention."

But that influence is more likely to occur when "it reflects certain aspects of accepted or developing denominational consciousness," Leonard said.

In another vein, James E. Carter, addressing himself to "Outreach Theology," in a comparison of Southern Baptist thought and the church growth movement, said that church growth among Southern Baptists has occurred because the denomination has "consciously concentrated on it."

Carter, the pastor of University Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, said, "Southern Baptists have made missions and evangelism an article of faith along with belief in God, the Scriptures and the church."

Pastors Reemerging As SBC's
Theologians: Seminary Dean

By David Smith

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Doctrinal, social and ecclesiastical developments in recent years have caused Southern Baptists to "revere the voices of the pastors of large pulpits," the new dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's School of Theology said.

The turn toward pastors has signaled the reemergence of the Southern Baptist pastor as "denominational theologians," a position previously occupied by "teaching theologians (seminary professors), Walter Shurden said in an address to the joint annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission and Society.

"The people whom Southern Baptists unofficially select to be our denominational theologians reflect what we value in ministry," said Shurden, also professor church history, during the event held on the Southern Seminary campus.

"At different periods in Southern Baptist history and in different social contexts, Southern Baptists have valued different kinds of ministry," he continued.

"Prior to 1859, the farmer-theologian served as theologian to the rural areas while the gentlemen preachers served as theologians in the growing towns."

From 1859-1960--a period in which Southern Baptists formed six theological seminaries--a developing pride in ministerial education helped the denomination select the "teaching theologian" as the "denominational theologian," Shurden said.

"Since 1960--and the date may be pushed back to the 1940s," Shurden continued, "doctrinal, social and ecclesiastical developments have led Southern Baptists to listen more closely to the voices of the pastors of large pulpits."

When Broadman Press sought a revision of "The Axioms of Religion," written in 1908 by E.Y. Mullins, the late Baptist theologian and former Southern Seminary president, they turned to ex-pastor Herschel H. Hobbs.

Shurden maintains that the decision to turn to Hobbs was "highly symbolic and not altogether coincidental."

Hobbs--still prominent in retirement--served Southern Baptists as "the E.Y. Mullins of the 1960s and 1970s," Shurden said. Hobbs, though he never studied under Mullins directly, was "supremely influenced by him," Shurden said. "Hobbs, the pastor, replaced Mullins, the professor, as Southern Baptists' major spokesman and denominational theologian."

Shurden cited four reasons for the reemergence of pastors and the decline of professors as denominational theologians.

"One, theological controversies for the last two decades have rocked the denominational ship," he said. "These controversies usually have been focused in theological seminaries. The result is that theological education in general, and seminary personnel specifically, have been placed under suspicion.

"Two, pastors of large churches, as exemplified in the presidency of the SBC, have become dominant leaders in Southern Baptist denominational life. Seminary personnel, as well as other denominational workers, are not as visible in the denominational process as they once were," Shurden said.

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Third, Shurden said that "the reemergence of the pastor as theological interpreter of denominational life is also related to the role of the media in Baptist life." For example, the Baptist Hour radio program has featured prominent Baptist pastors, specifically Herschel Hobbs.

"Also, the telecast of Sunday morning worship services has tended to project the influence of pastors of prominent churches over a much wider geographical area.

Moreover, Broadman Press--the book publishing arm of the SBC--has often called on the pastors for an inspirational and homiletical approach to theology."

Fourth, Shurden said, "Pastors have popularized while seminary personnel have increasingly specialized. Though the point is debatable, seminary professors may not have published as much for the average Southern Baptist in recent years as did Mullins and his colleagues of a former day."

"Preaching has been a major channel for theologizing in Southern Baptist life. If indeed pulpit skills have atrophied among professors and denominational workers, one can find here an explanation for the rise of the pastor as denominational theologian," Shurden concluded.

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David Smith is news director for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Missionary Family Evacuated
After Floods in Argentina

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AZUL, Argentina (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries Robert and Annette Crockett were forced to evacuate their home in Azul, Argentina, because of flooding, but the family is safe in a hotel.

Seventy percent of Azul is under water, according to Southern Baptist missionary press representative Frances Roberts. Azul is located in the central area of the Buenos Aires province. A number of Baptist churches are located in the affected area.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has designated \$5,000 in general relief funds and another \$5,000 for hunger relief. The money will be used to provide food assistance, blankets, and temporary shelter for flood victims.

The flooding forced the Argentine Baptist Convention to change its annual meeting, scheduled for May 1-3, from Azul to Buenos Aires.

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