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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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81-13

Bailey Smith Will Seek  
Second Term As President

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Bailey Smith has ended speculation about his future plans with an announcement he will seek renomination as president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I plan to be renominated," Smith told Baptist Press. "People in high denominational posts as well as people in the field have been encouraging. I feel I need to do it."

The announcement ended rumors Smith would bow out, as had his predecessor, Adrian Rogers, after serving a single term at the helm of the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

He added some of those encouraging him are "seminary professors," and said Joe Ingram, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, has asked to be allowed to present Smith's name to the 1981 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Los Angeles.

Rumors indicated Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., would not run again, primarily because of pressures on his family in the wake of controversy over his remarks about Jews. He added that although he had received many threatening and abusive telephone calls at his home, his wife, Sandy, has encouraged him to seek a second term even though the position puts him in a sometimes uncomfortable spotlight.

Traditionally, presidents of the 13.6 million-member denomination have served two one-year terms. Two recent presidents, Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., and James L. Sullivan, retired president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, declined to be renominated.

Rogers, president in 1979, said he wished to devote full attention to his pastorate, and Sullivan, president in 1977, cited travel pressures.

Smith said he has heard no report of an opponent, but other SBC leaders say he may face a challenge at the Los Angeles meeting. Traditionally, second term incumbents have been unopposed.

Such an opponent likely would come from a group formed to counter the influence of a faction promoting biblical inerrancy. The inerrantists, led by Paul Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge, and Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, are on record in their attempt to control SBC agencies and institutions by electing trustees committed to biblical inerrancy.

A key cog in the strategy is election of presidents committed to the inerrancy of the Scriptures, as is Smith. The president controls the machinery which appoints trustees.

A leader in the counter group, called "denominational loyalists" or "friends of missions," Cecil Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., commented: "I find it (the announcement) interesting. I am glad to get a verdict."

Sherman, also president of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, said he does not know if an opponent will be proposed to Smith's re-election.

"I am watching and waiting, and I am not alone in that," Sherman said, indicating a key factor in whether opposition will develop is Smith's appointments to the committee on committees and the committee on resolutions, which will be announced about an hour after the convention begins June 9.

Sherman, however, said a meeting is planned "sometime in February, some place in Texas" to discuss the issue. The core of the group will be "about the same" as a group which met in Gatlinburg, Tenn., in September.

"Several of us have pondered several names (of candidates), but have not decided about offering any of them. We will talk about that in Texas," he said. Neither Sherman, nor his brother, Bill, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, would reveal those being considered.

Sherman said the February meeting will discuss if it is best to offer opposition, and, if so, the chances of success. The final determination, he added, will be made after "Mr. Smith makes those (appointments). We will see if he is an independent person or is part of the Pressler-Patterson group."

Bill Sherman said the counter group is not "out smarting for a fight," and if Smith is "fair and honest and open, there is a good possibility everybody will be willing to live and let live."

However, he said, that is "not the signal we have been receiving from this group, those who are 'going for the jugular' of our convention and seeking to put in only their own kind and to exclude anyone who disagrees theologically with them."

Smith, in his remarks to Baptist Press, said he has not made his choices for the two key committees. "I will appoint people who have a commitment to evangelism and to missions and who love the Word of God, but they also must be sold out to the goals and the system of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I do not want troublemakers on those committees. I will do my best to bring harmony and peace (to the convention) and I think that will be reflected in my nominations."

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Editor Boosts Role  
Of Carter in SBC

Baptist Press  
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RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--Former President Jimmy Carter is a "natural" for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention, according to the editor of the North Carolina Baptist newspaper.

J. Marse Grant, editor of the Biblical Recorder, in a letter to friends and news representatives, expressed the hope Carter and his wife, Rosalyn, will "re-enter" Southern Baptist life in a "most meaningful way."

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Carter, Grant said, would be "a natural" for president of the 13.6 million-member denomination. "I don't believe he would have any difficulty being elected if he would give some of us the privilege of nominating him. Not in Los Angeles in June, of course, but later," Grant wrote.

The former president has been active in churches in his hometown of Plains, Ga., in Atlanta when he was governor of Georgia, and in Washington, D.C., often teaching Sunday School classes. He also served on the SBC Brotherhood Commission board of trustees prior to election as president in 1976.

Grant, in his letter, said he hopes Carter will pick up denominational relationships as time permits, and suggested it would be appropriate for an SBC agency, such as the Foreign Mission Board, to use the Carters as "ambassadors at large" both at home and abroad.

"At one time, when he was in office, Mr. Carter expressed an interest in some type of mission work," Grant wrote. "Security problems would likely rule out their serving for any length of time, but they would make ideal emissaries if they were able to do so."

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U.S. Must Keep Word,  
Baptist Ethicist Says

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press  
1/23/81

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Even though Americans are justified in their anger, the United States must keep its word to Iran, Southern Baptist ethicist Foy Valentine says.

Valentine took issue with those who urge the Reagan government to abrogate the agreement which released the 52 Americans held hostage in Iran for 444 days.

Valentine said the view was most strongly expressed by a Wall Street Journal editorial Jan. 21, which called for Reagan to renounce the deal and commented: "Two wrongs don't make a right. Extortioners and kidnapers don't deserve to be treated honorably; but as an honorable nation, America must continue to be honorable ourselves and to act honorably."

Valentine, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said revelations that some of the former hostages were grossly mistreated in addition to being kidnapped and imprisoned, leave Christians, like all Americans, intensely angry and compelled now to deal with that anger.

"This anger has arisen out of our feelings about the insult to our nation and the grave injustices against our fellow citizens," he said. "But the Iranians precipitated their injustices against us because they felt we were responsible for the grave injustices visited on them by the shah."

Another ethicist, James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C., urged patience and a recognition that the entire nation of Iran is not responsible. "Americans, of all people, should understand the limits of national responsibility. We would not like to be held accountable as a nation for the bloody terrorism of the Klan, the psychotic fanaticism of a Jim Jones cult or the criminal corruption of a Nixon administration."

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Glenn Igleheart, director of the interfaith witness department at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, encouraged Southern Baptists—as well as all Americans—to avoid a "new open season on hating Middle Easterners..."

He noted Iranians and other persons from the Mid-East face the possibility of violence, vandalism and discrimination as "national anger transfers to somebody nearby." In that situation, Baptists should respond with a commitment to minister rather than retaliate.

C. Welton Gaddy, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas, said he is "very anxious that our government not respond at the same level as did the government of Iran. When you return evil for evil, you perpetuate the cycle of evil, but when you return good for evil, you break that cycle."

"I am concerned about what has happened to these people (the hostages), and about the primitive, barbaric actions against them. But, I am also concerned about the possibility of us responding with equally hateful, savage actions," he said, adding he believes President Carter's restraint "paid off in the long run."

William Pinson, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., and a former seminary ethics professor, said he applauds the Reagan administration's decision to look over the agreement between the U.S. and Iran very carefully.

"We need to get the facts. Obviously, there is going to be lots of venting of frustration and emotion which has been bottled up for 14 months, and that makes this a dangerous time. We could overreact, and that is not a Christian response," Pinson said.

He added he believes what the Iranians did was "wrong, and when folks do wrong, they ought to be reprimanded and encouraged to do right, but not from a view of retribution, and not in hate. As Christians, we ought to seek justice and order."

Valentine said the United States has "a very special role to play in the moral leadership of the world. We want to demonstrate the patience of strength and the wisdom of maturity."

"We have a right not to be happy after being lawlessly mistreated by a minor nation but let us not now assuage our injured pride with a vindictiveness unbecoming our great country."

"In America we are committed to the rule of law. We will not stoop to the level of uncivilized barbarity which Iran manifested in this whole episode. We want to be a nation recognized in the world and in history for authentic integrity."

Valentine said this country's experience with the Civil War should now be a reminder of how slowly old wounds heal and of how terrible are the scars of anger, violence and unresolved hatred.

"God has shown us a better way," Valentine said. "It is the way of forgiveness for those who have sinned against us. It is the way of love and brotherliness. In the strength of moral superiority, both Christians in particular and Americans in general can bear witness for peace with justice."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story "Reagan Era Begins as Carter Steps Down," mailed 1/21/81, in the fourth paragraph, reference is made to Jimmy Carter being the third Baptist to serve as president. Please change that to the fourth Baptist. The others, for your information, are Chester A. Arthur, Warren G. Harding and Harry S. Truman.

Thanks,

Baptist Press