



## BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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June 8, 1981

81-88

Inerrancy's Role  
Debated For Writers

By Dan Martin

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Biblical inerrancy: Is it a deep theological concern in the Southern Baptist Convention or a "ruthless power grab?"

The question was aired during a debate between two Southern Baptist leaders in the SBC at the annual workshop of the Religion Newswriters Association.

Inerrancy, a theological belief that the original autographs (manuscripts) of the Bible were free from any error, has become a center of controversy within the denomination.

The RNA debate, however, did not deal with whether the Bible is literally true, but had as its topic: "Is Biblical Inerrancy a Factor Crucial To the Survival of the Southern Baptist Convention," and featured Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas, Texas, a leader in an effort to commit the SBC to a belief in inerrancy, and Kenneth Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church, Houston, a leader of a wing formed to resist plans of the inerrantists.

During the two-hour debate, both men defended the Bible, but used different terms. Patterson spoke of inerrancy, but Chafin, a former seminary professor, talked of the Bible as "the authority" for Baptists.

The strongest exchange came over the motivations of the inerrancy group, headed by Patterson and Paul Pressler, an appeals court judge from Houston.

Chafin referred to the effort as a "ruthless reach for personal power" while Patterson called it a "theological movement...a deep concern" for the future of the denomination and its viability in evangelism and missions.

"The only way in which inerrancy is an issue for the Southern Baptist Convention is that it is a code word of those who have a need to seek to control this denomination, who have a need to undermine the confidence in the institutions we have created," Chafin charged. "The (code) word has introduced a different spirit into the life of the denomination; critical, judgmental, accusing, slanderous, censorious, with anger and hatred.

"I do not think that this is a seeking after assurance about the Word of God. It is a ruthless seeking of power, a ruthless reach for personal power, which acts as if any means are justified."

Chafin predicted the movement will be rejected by Southern Baptists "when the issues are clear" and the SBC is again representative, rather than "stacked" with inerrantists as he claims the Houston (1979) and St. Louis (1980) conventions were.

Patterson, after a presentation of the seven reasons he supports inerrancy, took sharp issue with Chafin, as he asked: "What power do I have? What office have I sought?"

He noted the charges are "somewhat unusual" because he has not called for the dismissal of anyone, nor for a narrow creedal statement, nor for the jettisoning of any seminary professor with whom he does not agree. "I have entered this because of a deep theological concern that when you begin to lose your theology, you lose your impact," he said.

"We want to see a reaffirmation of our faith in the Bible so our denomination can remain viable with the real message of Jesus Christ to the world."

Chafin commented, "Baptists have always given the Bible the place of authority. This does not mean there is total agreement among Southern Baptists about the Bible. There are different views...all part of the 'soul freedom' to interpret (the scriptures) in light of our best understanding. This diversity is our strength, not our weakness."

In a question-and-answer session, Patterson said he believes the Baptist Faith and Message statement of 1963 is "very adequate" as a statement for Baptists but added there are "two phrases" he would delete from it, which he characterized as "neo-orthodox theology."

Patterson identified the two as: "...and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man..." and "the criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ."

Commenting that he believes the statement spells out belief in inerrancy, he questioned professors who would sign it and then teach the Scriptures were "embellished" and are not without error.

"It is (in this case) an adequate doctrinal statement, but an inadequate integrity."

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Philadelphia Eagles  
Draft 'Kicking MK'

Baptist Press  
6/8/81

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Being drafted for the Philadelphia Eagles pro football team fulfilled a long-time dream for Alan Duncan, Southern Baptist missionary kid from Kenya.

Duncan, a soccer-style place kicker who earned three team scoring titles and seven kicking records while at the University of Tennessee, was seventh-round draft choice for the Eagles.

Coached by Dick Vermeil, the team has been having some problems with its kicking game and Duncan will be competing with present place kicker Tony Franklin for the team spot.

Duncan, known as the University of Tennessee Volunteers' "Preachin' Place Kicker," says being drafted doesn't alter his plans to return as a missionary to Africa, where his parents, Marshall and Margie Duncan, serve.

A pro football career doesn't last a lifetime, he comments. If he makes the team, he will take advantage of the off-season to continue his education, and if he doesn't he probably will go immediately to seminary.

But for now, he plans to remain in Knoxville, preaching on weekends and working out during the week. He says the Eagles have the reputation for having the toughest training camp in pro football and he wants to be ready.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

Moral Majority Reflects  
Culture, Researcher Says

Baptist Press  
6/8/81

By Linda Lawson

LOS ANGELES (BP)--A University of California professor told Southern Baptist researchers that burgeoning evangelical movements such as the electronic church and the Moral Majority are reflections of the culture rather than agents of change.

Phillip E. Hammond of Santa Barbara, professor of religious studies and sociology, speculated that "religious groups today may be more the followers of cultural developments whereas earlier they were contributors to change.

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Characterizing the evangelical phenomenon within Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths as "less formal, more emotional and less liturgical," Hammond said persons in these groups also are "more inclined to participate in public affairs through the church and on their own.

He called political issues that interest evangelical groups--sexual immorality, abortion and family life, for example--"style issues rather than pocketbook issues. These are free-floating issues that are hard to get written into legislation."

Hammond said he believes the Moral Majority had little impact on the 1980 elections. He said the people who support activities of the Jerry Falwell-sponsored group tend to be those with less education, lower income and little influence in society. He predicted the group will not have a "lasting impact" on the political scene.

In another address, futures researcher Wayne Boucher of Los Angeles urged denominational research specialists to do "a better job of forecasting" in order to positively affect decision- and policy-making in their organizations.

Boucher, senior research associate at the University of Southern California Center for Futures Research, said the top priority in futures research today is to "evaluate the adequacy of current theories of social change. In other words, what is the probability of World War III?"

Officers of the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship are J. V. Thomas, Baptist General Convention of Texas, Dallas, president; Martin Bradley, Sunday School Board, Nashville, program chairman; Chester Davidson, Houston-Galveston Baptist Correlating Committee, Baytown, Texas, secretary-treasurer; Don Mabry, Louisiana Baptist Convention, Alexandria, membership vice president; and Willis Bennett, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., awards chairman.

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Six Profess Faith  
At Crewman's Funeral

Baptist Press  
6/8/81

NEW ALBANY, Ohio (BP) Six persons made professions of faith in Christ at the funeral for a crewman killed in the crash on the aircraft carrier Nimitz.

The funeral for Ronald Lee Wildermuth, 19, was conducted at First Baptist Church, New Albany, by its pastor, Kenneth Branham.

Wildermuth was working on a parked aircraft when another airplane crashed on deck.

The accident occurred in the Atlantic Ocean off Jacksonville, Fla.

Branham said the family of the killed crewman asked for an evangelistic emphasis along with the normal funeral service. An invitation was given and six persons indicated they wished to receive Christ.

The six included relatives and friends of the serviceman.

Wildermuth had made his own profession of faith at New Albany nearly two years ago. Nine members of his immediate family have been baptized at New Albany during the past year, according to Branham. This includes an older brother and two younger brothers of the sailor, also his grandparents. The mother of the dead crewman is waiting baptism. His father has indicated a call into the ministry.

A surviving crewman from the Nimitz escorted the body to New Albany and the Columbus Naval Reserve unit gave the military tribute at the funeral.

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Michigan Counselor  
Elected to Head WMU

LOS ANGELES (BP)--Dorothy Elliott Sample, a psychological counselor and educator from Flint, Mich., was elected president of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union here for a one-year term.

Also elected to a one-year term as recording secretary was Betty Gilreath, a homemaker from Charlotte, N.C.

Sample succeeds Christine Gregory of Danville, Va., who has been president for the maximum six consecutive one-year terms.

Sample, a native of Alabama, holds five earned degrees, including two doctorates. She has served as president of Michigan WMU and on the Executive Board and Committee of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Her husband, Richard Sample, is an educator and bivocational pastor of Ainsworth Baptist Church, Flint.

Gilreath has served in numerous offices of the North Carolina WMU including a five-year term as president. She is currently a member of the Committee on Order of Business for the Southern Baptist Convention, one of three women ever to hold that position.

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Black Baptists Staff  
Registration Center

Baptist Press  
6/8/81

LOS ANGELES (BP)--The first group of black Baptists to staff registration facilities at a meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention say they were getting a blessing from their service as volunteers.

Thirty-four people from St. Stephens Church, La Puente, Calif., boarded the bus at 6:30 a.m. Monday morning to serve in the registration booth at Convention Center. Some of the group also served with other members of the church as ushers at the night session of Woman's Missionary Union.

Dorothy Peoples, advisor to the youth of the church, said the 800-member church has been affiliated with the SBC and the Los Angeles Baptist Association for about 10 years.

Peoples said their pastor, E. W. McCall, appointed team captains and asked people to volunteer.

"It was no trouble getting volunteers," she said.

Ken Fullington said he volunteered because he thought "they needed somebody to lift boxes."

Fullington said he found it a blessing to meet people from so many states.

"Everybody I meet has a smile on their face," he said.

Jackie Broughton, who said she's just become a Baptist, agreed with Fullington.

"It's been lots of fun. Everybody's really friendly," she said.

Joyce Irving, director of the senior choir at the church, also complimented messengers for being so friendly and patient.

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Texas Churches Lead  
Home Missions Giving

LOS ANGELES (BP)---Two churches which led the Southern Baptist Convention in gifts to the 1980 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions basked in the spotlight at the annual meeting of Woman's Missionary Union.

Plaques of commendation went to First Baptist Church of Houston for leading the SBC in overall giving to the offering and to Oklaunion (Texas) Baptist Church for per capita giving to the offering.

The Houston church gave \$45,051, and the Oklaunion congregation contributed \$2,550, an average of \$68.92 for each of its 37 resident members. John R. Bisagno is pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston, and Grady V. Kays is pastor of Oklaunion Baptist.

The 1980 offering was the largest in home missions history, totalling \$16,479,032. Sponsored by the WMU, the offering annually provides about half of the Home Mission Board budget, with the rest coming from the Cooperative Program.

"We appreciate all Southern Baptists for making the 1980 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering the greatest yet, and we especially are grateful to these two fine churches for carrying torches of leadership along the way, said HMB President William G. Tanner.

Determination of top contributors to the offering was made using statistics provided by churches on their 1980 Uniform Church Letters, said Robert E. Bingham, HMB vice president in charge of the services section and director of the tabulations.

The remainder of the top 10 overall contributing churches and their pastors included (2) First--Jackson, Miss., Schuyler Batson (associate pastor); (3) First--North Augusta, S.C., Charles D. Page; (4) South Main--Houston, Texas, Kenneth L. Chafin; (5) Wleuca Road --Atlanta, Ga., William L. Self; (6) First--Decatur, Ga., Peter Rhea Jones; (7) First--San Antonio, Texas, Franklin D. Pollard; (8) First--Amarillo, Texas, Winfred Moore; (9) Cottage Hill--Mobile, Ala., Fred H. Wolfe; (10) First--Columbus, Miss., Joe N. McKeever.

Other churches and their pastors in the top 10 for per capita gifts were (2) Borinquen --Aquadilla, Puerto Rico, E. McKinney Adams; (3) Robinson--Union Point, Ga., Floyd T. Jenkins; (4) Palmersville--New London, N. C., J. C. Hough; (5) Friendship--Baker, La., J. O. Hopper; (6) Mustang--Pilot Point, Texas, Ronnie L. Allen; (7) Wingate--Wingate, Texas, Charles L. Myers; (8) Mount Whitney--Lone Pine, Calif., Benjamin Sparks; (9) First--Canadian, Texas, Ralph Chapman; (10) Hebron--Columbia, Ala., Ted Forrester.