



-- FEATURES

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European-Americans Still Seek
Southern Baptist Identity

By Patti Stephenson

CHICAGO, Ill. (BP)--Unlike turn-of-the-century European immigrants, Mariana Grigore and her parents, John and Cati Podea, came to America from Romania by plane--passing unseen from above the statue with its flickering lamp which welcomed millions of their predecessors arriving aboard packed immigrant ships.

Still, their dreams were the same: To own a home, to earn a good living, to know the luxury of a well-stocked pantry and a peaceful night's sleep. And, for Grigore's family, the right to worship freely as Baptists.

While European immigrants were flooding America's shores from the late 19th century until World War II, Southern Baptists had not yet ventured outside the Southern tier of states which incubated the Southern Baptist Convention.

Not until 1942 had Southern Baptists moved westward when California Baptist churches affiliated with the SBC. Throughout the 1940s, Southern Baptists spread west and north with churches often spawned from a nucleus of transplanted southerners.

By the 1950s, work with persons of European heritage was the logical, albeit belated, consequence of SBC expansion into northeast and north central states where 80 percent of these European immigrants settled.

The Home Mission Board now ministers to 13 different European-language groups with more than 60 churches, including Germanic, Scandinavian Baltic, Slavic and Latin nationalities.

One such church, Romanian Baptist in Chicago, offers comfort and security to Grigore and her parents. Now 12 years old, the church has 3,000 members, including recent newcomers as well as second-generation families. When immigrants like the Podeas come, members often find and furnish an apartment, stock it with food and second-hand clothes, and even pay the first month's rent and deposits. Then, Grigore explains, "They bring the family hope and say, 'All this is yours in America.'"

The church also helped find jobs for John and Cati at Cast Products, a small, immigrant-owned factory which manufactures parts for radios, televisions and cars. The Podeas earn minimum wage and often work 12-hour days, six days a week.

Alexa Popovici, pastor of Romanian Baptist Church, came with his family in 1976 after Romanian authorities forbade him to preach. He's now adept at untangling the bureaucratic red tape which ensnarls newcomers. He may stand in line all day at the immigration office to secure a visa or work permit for an anxious "greenhorn."

Grigore, who arrived four years before her parents, is a manicurist in the sleek, chrome-and-glass surroundings of a downtown hair salon. She scrimps to save \$3,000 to open her own electrolysis shop--her plans for a music career buried in favor of a more profitable future.

Already that future is tinged with frustration as Grigore feels torn between her Romanian heritage and her new American life. As other European immigrants like her and second- and third-generation European-Americans absorb American lifestyles and language, some join English-speaking congregations; others simply drop out of churches which worship in a mother tongue they cannot understand.

Oscar Romo, HMB director of language missions, thinks the challenge ahead is to reach not only European newcomers, but all "American ethnics" who identify with an ethnic culture, but not its homeland.

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Efforts are hampered, however, by lack of language materials and a lack of European-American pastors trained in Southern Baptist polity and organization. Romo concedes, "So far, we haven't been able to reap one second-generation European pastor."

If European-Americans are to be drawn into the mainstream of denominational life, Southern Baptists must cultivate those like Grigore who lead lives hyphenated between two cultures, Romo predicts.

For Grigore, her evolving identity is becoming clear. "I think like an American now," she says firmly. "My life is here."

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

Hastings, Brooks Join
Golden Gate Faculty

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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)—Carroll Brownlow Hastings and Oscar S. Brooks have been named to the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary faculty.

Hastings, retired assistant director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's inter-faith witness department, will direct the seminary's Northwest Center in Portland, Ore.

Brooks, professor of religion at William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo., since 1967, will be professor of New Testament interpretation.

Before joining the Home Mission Board, Hastings was assistant pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, for 10 years. He also has been pastor of churches in Kentucky, Illinois and Florida.

A graduate of Baylor University, Hastings holds a master of theology degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of philosophy degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Brooks also taught at Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Ky., and has been pastor or interim pastor of churches in Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri.

He is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn., and holds bachelor of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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Southwestern Names Miller
To College Relations Post

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—David W. Miller has been named director of college relations at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Miller had been interim director since February while completing his doctor of philosophy degree at Southwestern.

He will be responsible for all activities related to student recruitment and will work with Baptist Student Union directors and professors of religion and related fields in student recruitment. He also will host student groups and individuals visiting Southwestern's campus.

Miller is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University and currently is pastor of Gibtown Baptist Church near Jacksboro, Texas.

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New Orleans Seminary Names
Heflin To Preaching Faculty

NEW ORLEANS (BP) -- James L. Heflin, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, Miss., has been named associate professor of preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Heflin, a licensed pilot, is a graduate of the University of Arkansas in his native Monticello. He earned master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He has been pastor of churches in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas and is currently on the board of trustees for Southwestern Seminary.

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Howell Challenges Church
To Minister To Divorced

By Gail Rothwell

Baptist Press
6/7/82

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Helping churches minister to persons in a world with an increasing divorce rate was a challenge given to consultants at a national conference for leaders of single adults.

John C. Howell, professor of Christian ethics at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., told participants that tension between the ethical demands of Christianity and the reality of humanity has existed throughout Christian history.

Explaining that divorce is a "violation of God's creative purpose for marriage," Howell said, "Divorce is essentially our own human sinfulness. It is not God's purpose for us to sin, but when we do he forgives and receives us into his fellowship."

A total of 82 persons from 20 states attended the four-day conference sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department. They were trained as consultants to work with churches, associations and state conventions.

"The needs of the 60 million single adults in the United States will ultimately be met by the local church," said Horace Kerr, supervisor of the board's single and senior adult section. He challenged the consultants to "increase awareness of the need for ministry and to provide successful role models of single adult ministries."

Ann Smith, single adult consultant in the family ministry department, said the changing role of women who remain single and the expanding ministry needs of single parents are two trends impacting church ministries with single adults.

She said almost one-fourth of all households are headed by single parents and churches need to minister both to parents and children. "Churches need to provide support systems and counseling services both to non-custodial and custodial parents," said Smith.

With divorced persons, Howell said, not only does the church need to forgive them but the divorced person needs to recognize his own human failure and receive forgiveness.

"Some divorced persons never come to grips with the reality of their failure and receive forgiveness," he noted.

Once divorced persons have worked through the grief process of losing a mate, recognized their failure and accepted forgiveness they should be allowed to assume positions of leadership within the church, Howell said.

He said the church needs to follow Jesus' example when ministering to single persons. "Jesus offered all people forgiveness and a new way of life. Then he loved them into being a new people when they failed to be what they should."

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Likely Presidential Nominees Happy with Faith Statement

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--None of the four men who likely will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention want to see the Baptist Faith and Message statement rewritten.

In a survey conducted by Lynn Clayton, editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message, James Draper, Duke K. McCall, John Sullivan and Perry Sanders all answered "no" when asked, "Do you favor any rewriting of the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message, especially as related to the section on the Bible?"

McCall, Sullivan and Sanders have all indicated they will be nominated to succeed Bailey Smith when Smith's final second and final one-year term as SBC president expires after the annual meeting June 15-17. Draper, mentioned prominently as the candidate for a coalition of "conservative" Southern Baptists, says he will not decide until he arrives in New Orleans whether to allow his name to be placed in nomination. Grady C. Cothen, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, has said he will nominate McCall.

Clayton asked the men two other questions. He first asked their response to the statement of Adrian Rogers, former SBC president and pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., at a press conference in Rome, Ga., that "Southern Baptists have made a Golden Calf of the program...it's almost easier to be against the Virgin Birth than the program."

He also asked what they thought is the key issue in the present controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, and how would they recommend dealing with it?

James Draper, pastor of First Baptist, Euless Texas, thought Rogers' comments were taken out of context, although he has heard Rogers make similar statements. "What I have heard him say is that if cooperation is deemed more important than doctrine then we've made the program to be a golden calf," Draper said. "So, the statement as you have given to me seems to be an incomplete statement and I really would have no comment on it."

Concerning the key issue in the current controversy, Draper said: "I think the main issue that seems to be important is how broad is our theology going to be and still be acceptable, and how broad should our services be, such as literature and program material and so on. Should it be in the same breadth as the theological positions that we accept? I think this is what we are trying to struggle through.

"Now the answer is, we need to get together. I think there needs to be a forum where people that represent various camps can sit down and talk and share their views. I was in such a forum several months ago on an informal basis with people of wide extremes and it was a very healthy thing. We openly discussed differences and openly admitted that there were some problems. I think it could happen across a broad section of the convention and that we could take some giant steps toward finding common ground and moving ahead with our Bold Mission."

McCall, president emeritus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and current president of the Baptist World Alliance, in response to the first question, said: "Some think the Cooperative Program is a Golden Calf. With John Sullivan, I think it is not even a sacred cow. I do think it is a sacred how. It is a way God has led Southern Baptists to work together to become the most effective, evangelistic, missionary force in the world today. And I pray that God will give us wisdom and understanding that we will strengthen this cooperative effort in Christ's name rather than weaken it."

McCall sees the key issue as, "the politicizing of the election of officers and the introduction of spoils politics into the Southern Baptist Convention. I think we need to go back to the day when the messengers met, and the messengers prayed for God's leadership and the majority of the messengers voted what they believed to be the will of God in the selection of their officers, rather than giving the kind of advance political maneuvering by any group of any sort."

Perry Sanders, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lafayette, La., said he had no interest in a war of words with "my good friend, Adrian Rogers," but was glad to speak for the Cooperative Program.

"My participation all of my life has been because I wanted to," Sanders said. "And I think a record of every church I have ever served indicates my commitment to and belief in our cooperative mission effort.

"Since I am a Southern Baptist, and that's our program, I'm for it. The things that need changing in it, I have been a part of those changes throughout all my years of denominational involvement. I wouldn't hesitate to be part of making any other changes that I felt needed to be made.

"But it's a cooperative effort, requiring participation by people who might not like every single facet of everything that's going on."

In response to the question about a key issue, Sanders said: "According to widely circulated press releases that I have read--and that is the only knowledge I have--the issue seems to be because of what a group considers to be a theological drift to the left; they want to take control of the agencies and boards to reverse that drift.

"I'm not sure that theology lies behind their reasons to do it, but apparently, according to their statements, this is their concern.

"Of course, I feel that the overwhelming majority theology of Southern Baptists is so staunchly conservative and so deeply committed to a cooperative effort that, except for a few persons, there is little concern about what we're doing. People like what we're doing.

"The answer to this is the spirit of Christ. The Lord is displeased when his people who love him don't love one another enough to resolve differences without acrimony and dispute and division. I really feel very kindly toward all my Southern Baptist brethren, those that are considered on either end of the spectrum. I have no real ill feelings toward either. I truly want our people to be together, in a united spirit. There are too many people to win to Christ to be fighting and grumbling with one another."

John Sullivan, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, La., in response to Rogers' statement, said: "Probably more already has been said than is necessary, but since this election is critical my commitment to the program of the Southern Baptist Convention is commonly known--especially to the Cooperative Program. In 25 years, I have never had any one harass me to cooperate or "do" the program. It has been my choice as track for ministry. The Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention is of the Lord. I'm in print as saying, 'It is not a sacred cow, but it is a sacred how.'

"I believe the Augusta framers of the 1845 Constitution had the Cooperative Program in mind when they used 'elicit, combine, distribute' to describe the purpose of the convention. All of these are words of cooperation. It simply took until 1925 for it to finally evolve as our program of work. Cooperation rises and falls in direct relation to trust, integrity, and commitment--not doctrinal conformity."

Sullivan believes Baptist Faith and Message interpretation was settled last year at the Los Angeles meeting. "Therefore I do not believe the controversy is theological and haven't from the beginning," he said. "I will match conservative credentials with anyone in the denomination. In my opinion, the issue is -- who will control the agencies? Whoever controls the agencies determines the very character of the denomination. Apparently some want to change the character. I don't. The president must work from the middle of the constituency and not from either end."

Other nominees may surface at the convention, which begins June 15 at the Louisiana Superdome. The four mentioned above have figured prominently in pre-convention speculation and in the cases of McCall, Sullivan and Sanders, have stated they will be nominated. A person must garner a majority of the votes to win the office. A first-ballot win, though rare, was accomplished by immediate past president Adrian Rogers and current president Bailey Smith.