



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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November 16, 1982

82-164

'State of Denomination'
Discussed By SBC Leaders

By Dan Martin

IRVING, Texas (BP)—Forty Southern Baptist leaders—representing all sectors of denominational life—met Nov. 12 to talk about the problems of the denomination and most came away talking about the depth and seriousness of the differences.

The leaders included heads of four of the six Southern Baptist seminaries, the Foreign and Home Mission Boards and Executive Committee and representatives of all factions in the SEC.

At the conclusion of the meeting, one participant, C. Welton Gaddy, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, commented: "I am disturbed by the depth of (theological) difference between us, but encouraged by the desire for us to find a way to work together.

John Sullivan, SEC first vice president and pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., who arranged the meeting, said it was part of SEC President James T. Draper Jr.'s effort to get the factions talking to one another rather than about one another.

While admitting "no resolution came about," Sullivan commented: "I think the most positive thing was a willingness on the part of these men to come to be a part of the healing process, adjusting busy schedules and paying their own expenses. There is a high level of concern."

Draper, pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, commented that "only time will tell if it (the meeting) did any good or not, but I feel it was positive a thing ... in which participants were able to discuss differences without anger or hostility."

R. Keith Parks, president of the denomination's Foreign Mission Board, said results of the meeting are "intangible" and added: "I felt there was a little moving together ... a little emotional drawing together, and I felt good about that."

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SEC Executive Committee, said he is "optimistic and grateful leaders with different theological positions are talking together about the work of our convention." He added that "if we will let ourselves, I believe God can bring us together in strong commitment and support of his work through the SEC."

William G. Tanner, president of the Home Mission Board, said the HMB must have "diversity in the field" if it is to be effective in reaching people for Jesus Christ. "We have never been polarized on our board. If we become so, we will not be as effective," he said.

Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, said the admission the problems are extensive is "progress. You have no hope of a solution until you can clearly identify the problems."

Patterson and Don Harbuck, pastor of First Baptist Church of El Dorado, Ark., presented papers on "My Definition of a Theological Conservative." Patterson has been a leader in the inerrancy movement and Harbuck has been identified with the "moderate-conservative" faction.

Patterson used the occasion to pose six questions, which he said must be seriously considered by denominational leaders, particularly agency heads.

Five of the questions start with, "Can assurances be provided that" The first two concern "parity" or representation of inerrantists on faculties, administrations and boards of SEC agencies and in the literature and books published by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

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The third concerns coverage of the views of inerrantists in denominational press. The fourth asks if assurances can be provided "that those theologians and denominational executives who do not adhere to inerrancy can be counted upon to state publicly, clearly and unambiguously precisely what they do believe without hesitancy and without duplicity?"

The fifth seeks assurances that students who are inerrantists will not be harassed in state or SBC-related institutions.

His sixth question raises the issue of financial support. "Is there a plan by which all Southern Baptists may participate together in a cooperative way without the necessity of supporting that which is morally and theologically repugnant to them? The question here is not that of funding some things about which there is disagreement. The question relates to the funding of that, which to us, is unconscionable."

Patterson noted he is aware the answer could result in a "radical revision" of the denomination's unified giving plan, the Cooperative Program. He told Baptist Press he believes "there is either going to have to be a revision of the Cooperative Program — not an abolition, merely a restructuring — or it will suffer some enormous trauma. That is not a threat, but just an observation of what I see developing."

Patterson said he would "be very comfortable" supporting the Home and Foreign Mission Boards, but "could not support the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs or the Christian Life Commission, as presently structured." He declined to say whether he could support the SBC seminaries or the other agencies "without giving it extensive thought agency by agency."

Adrian Rogers, who raised the issue of denominational support in an interview in Rome, Ga., last spring, reiterated he believes selective support of agencies which he can agree theologically is "second best. I think the best way is to believe alike and to work together."

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, and former president of the SBC, added: "I don't think we accomplished very much except to agree there is a substantial difference. It is more than rhetoric, more than politics, more than semantics. The challenge before us is to see at what points we can cooperate without compromising basic convictions."

Harbuck commented he "feels a lot like Charles Dickens in the Tale of Two Cities. It was the best of times and the worst of times." He added the positive side was the sharing of ideas but noted there was no agreement as to ways these differences "can be composed in terms of denominational life."

He said that "our differences are probably wider than they have ever been; our diversity is greater than it has ever been." He said he believes "our confession of faith and our commitment to evangelism and missions, to the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of local churches will permit us to stay together in great dynamic unity as a denomination."

Harbuck added he believes the denomination can remain intact, "provided that the judgmental spirit and exclusivistic posture of fundamentalism does not insist upon a narrowing of our common faith to the point that many significant segments of Southern Baptist life are excluded."

"There is a strong tide of neofundamentalism in Southern Baptist life. The thing that is distressing to me is that fundamentalism is accompanied by an exclusivist character. Fundamentalists give others the right to hold different views, but insist their view is the only right and the only Baptist view. They also would exclude other views from the Baptist framework," Harbuck said.

He concluded, however, that "we have all imbibed the fundamentalist spirit and have not understood fully the fact that the heritage which calls us to be obedient to our own conscience also calls others to be obedient to their own consciences."

Chafin Says Opposition
To 'Takeover' Disbanded

By Dan Martin

HOUSTON (BP)—A group organized to counter a "takeover" of the Southern Baptist Convention by inerrantists is being disbanded, Kenneth Chafin says.

Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church of Houston and one of the organizers of the group, told Baptist Press "that as of last Friday (Nov. 12) there is only one group left."

The Houston pastor's remarks came in the wake of a meeting chaired by SEC President James T. Draper Jr., which called together forty denominational leaders—pastors, professors and denominational executives—from all factions to discuss the state of the denomination.

Since 1979 the convention has been marked by overt political activity. It was in the 1979 Houston meeting of the SEC that the inerrancy group first emerged. That group, generally believed to be led by Paul Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge, and Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, followed a strategy of controlling the denominational presidency, and with it, the appointment of trustees for the 20 SEC agencies and institutions.

Chafin said: "What we had in Houston (1979) and St. Louis (1980) was the 'takeover' group unopposed. Then, Cecil (Sherman) and I put together a little group to oppose them."

The group, variously known as the "denominational loyalists," "friends of missions," or the "Gatlinburg Gang"—after the Tennessee resort town where they first met—organized opposition to incumbent president Bailey E. Smith in 1981 drawing about 40 percent of the vote and in 1982 supported Duke K. McCall, a retired seminary president, who was defeated by Draper in a runoff ballot, the first time a runoff had been forced since 1979.

The group successfully challenged five nominees of the committee on boards in 1981 and two in 1982.

"We found that the (Baptist) state paper editors tried to paint us as part of the problem. They can't even tell the difference between the fellow who sets the house on fire and the fireman who comes to put it out. Well, as far as I am concerned, after the meeting Friday (Nov. 12) the firemen have all gone home.

"Now, there is only one group stirring the waters and that is the group that is trying to convince Southern Baptists that their institutions have been corrupted by people who do not believe the Bible. Unless those institutions are willing to defend themselves, the takeover people will turn them into Frank Norris—fundamentalist—type institutions," Chafin added.

Chafin referred to some of the participants of the Nov. 12 meeting as "fundamentalists," although they do not use the term on themselves. The "takeover" group is variously referred to as neofundamentalists, inerrantists, ultraconservatives or the Pressler/Patterson coalition.

"In the meeting my impressions of the takeover group were reconfirmed. These characteristics I saw refer to any of them—(W.A.) Criswell (pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas), Patterson, Pressler, Adrian Rogers (pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis and SEC president 1979), Bailey Smith, Jimmy Draper or any of them," Chafin said.

He said the fundamentalists have "a personal insecurity that taints their theology ... almost a paranoia about when they went to school. They say that all the time they were in school their faith was being attacked."

Chafin said the group is "basically dishonest" because they "repeatedly deny they are part of any group or that there is any political activity. It is pretty difficult to negotiate with a group that won't even admit they are a group."

A third characteristic he listed is that fundamentalists are "very judgmental. To them diversity is a dirty word. They treated with contempt anyone who had a different date or author for a book of the Bible or a different view of inspiration."

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He said they are also "unyielding ... appearing not to hear offers that are made," and are "very humorless ... they take themselves very, very seriously."

Chafin, a former evangelism professor at two Southern Baptist seminaries and director of the evangelism section of the Home Mission Board, said Draper revealed himself in the Nov. 12 meeting as one of the fundamentalists. "After the meeting, it is clear that we cannot expect our president to lead us down the middle of the road. He said he is a fundamentalist and agrees with Pressler and Patterson."

The Houston pastor had sharp criticism for the leaders of SEC agencies, seven of whom attended the Nov. 12 meeting, saying the "most discouraging things about the meeting is that the agency heads seem to believe Jimmy Draper is different from the takeover group ... do not feel that his appointments will in any way endanger them."

Attending the meeting were Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SEC Executive Committee; R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, and William G. Tanner, president of the Home Mission Board.

Also present were the presidents of four of the six seminaries: Roy Honeycutt of Southern; Russell L. Dilday Jr. of Southwestern, Landrum Leavell of New Orleans and Milton Ferguson of Midwestern. Golden Gate is currently seeking a president, and the other president, Randall Lolley of Southeastern, was prevented from coming because of a family commitment.

"If the agency executives do not feel endangered by this, why should I spend my money, energy and time—which could be devoted to serving my church—to defend them?" Chafin asked.

"One of the basic qualifications of helping someone is that they must be willing to help themselves. Up to now, the agencies have not been willing to fight their own battles. Until they—heads, employees, faculties—are willing to risk, there is absolutely nothing I or anyone else can do to help them," he said.

He commented, however, that he does not believe the agency executives agree with the fundamentalists, either theologically or methodologically.

He predicted, however, if the inerrancy faction gains operational control of the denomination — which he believes will be a long process — they will make the institutions, particularly the seminaries, "so unattractive that any kid with a brain would have to consider going somewhere else to get a theological education."

For himself, however, he says he has "decided to study, pray, preach, minister in my church and to write in 1983. I have no intention of fighting the takeover group in Pittsburgh (the 1983 SEC) and then having some sanctimonious editor paint me as a troublemaker."

The other leader of the counter group, Cecil Sherman, was attending the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina annual meeting, and was not available for comment on Chafin's remarks. However, following the Nov. 12 meeting, he told Baptist Press he "was not at all certain how I feel" about the meeting, but has previously said "sitting out the 1983 SEC" is an option he is considering.

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DC Delegates Address
Economic Justice, KKK

By Larry Chesser

Baptist Press
11/16/82

WASHINGTON (BP)—Delegates to the District of Columbia Baptist Convention approved a 1983 budget of \$807,020 and addressed several public issues during the 106th annual session.

Resolutions ranging from a call for economic justice to a strong condemnation of the Ku Klux Klan were approved by the convention, which registered 321 delegates.

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Recognizing "the Bible teaches Christians are to be actively involved in feeding the hungry and assuring justice for the poor and destitute," the economic justice statement called on the convention to "communicate to the president of the United States and the members of Congress representing our constituency our desire that they give full attention to defending the rights of every citizen to the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter and adequate medical attention."

In a statement on individual liberties, delegates reaffirmed their historical stand for separation of church and state and the "individual right for freedom of choice" while expressing their concern over the "eroding of federal protection against sex discrimination," and the "reversal of the justice department's stand on the use of the courts to uphold the law of the land concerning busing and integrated classrooms."

Delegates also addressed the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the D.C. area, expressing their "outrage" over "un-Christian acts" by the KKK and other "hate groups."

Resolutions in support of public education and efforts to alleviate hunger were also approved. A resolution opposing capital punishment was referred to a study committee.

In other actions the convention elected Mark Caldwell, pastor of University Baptist Church, College Park, Md., as president. Everard Hughes, a black layman from Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church, D.C., was elected vice president and Joan Personett of Twin Brook Baptist Church, Rockville, Md., was re-elected secretary. By convention tradition Hughes is expected to succeed Caldwell.

As the only state convention dually aligned with both the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Churches in the USA, 21.5 percent of the 1983 D.C. budget will go for SEC causes while 6.5 percent will go to the ABC.

The 1983 session is scheduled for Nov. 10-11, at Luther Rice Memorial Baptist Church, Silver Spring, Md.

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New Mexico Baptists
Elect Partain President

By J.B. Fowler

Baptist Press
11/16/82

ROSWELL, N.M. (BP)—The Baptist Convention of New Mexico meeting at Calvary Church, Roswell, registered 499 messengers and 288 visitors.

Calvin Partain, pastor of First Baptist Church, Gallup, was elected convention president in a run-off vote with Dean Mathis, pastor of Taylor Memorial church, Hobbs. Mathis was elected first vice president and Bennie Romero, pastor of Toas Indian Baptist Mission was elected second vice president.

Convention messengers approved a Cooperative Program budget of \$2,036,904 which will be divided on a 71/29 percent ratio between local mission causes in New Mexico and worldwide mission ministries through the Southern Baptist Convention. This is the same percentage division followed by the convention in its 1981 meeting. Contributions from Southern Baptist agencies, state agencies and mission offerings will swell the overall budget to \$4,132,794.

In a convention marked by harmony messengers were challenged to begin 120 new missions in the state by 1990. Chester O'Brien, executive director, pointed out only 49 new Baptist missions had been begun in the state in the last 20 years. O'Brien said Baptists have grown from a numerical strength of 80,000 to 108,000 during the past two decades but the state's population has grown from about one million to 1.3 million in the same period.

Joel Gregory, professor of preaching at the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, was the keynote convention speaker. Gregory brought five messages on family living designed to complement the convention theme, "Living and Loving In God's Family."

The 1983 convention will be Nov. 8-10, at First Baptist Church, Las Cruces.

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Begin-Israel Rally
In Dallas Cancelled

By Norman Jameson

DALLAS (BP)—The death of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's wife cut short his U.S. visit and sponsors cancelled a Nov. 16 Dallas rally in support of Israel at which Begin was to be primary speaker.

Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, said the rally at First Baptist Church primarily was to give the prime minister a chance to tell Israel's side of the Middle East conflict—a side Patterson said goes untold in the secular press.

All 3,000 rally tickets were gone a week before the event and First Baptist was preparing closed circuit television for overflow attendance by another 1,500.

According to both Patterson and Regional Director of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League Mark Briskman, Israeli officials already are speculating Begin will seek a return trip to the U.S. He hopes to talk with U.S. President Ronald Reagan, a conversation originally scheduled for this trip.

Begin participated in several rallies sponsored by Jewish constituents while in the U.S. He was "eager" to attend the First Baptist Church event, Patterson said, because "Israel may be in need of good public relations right now."

Patterson feels, despite widespread criticism of Israeli military decisions and conduct in the Middle East, fundamental evangelical support for the nation is unshaken.

The Dallas rally, proposed by the ADL after which First Baptist invited Begin, was not "to endorse a particular person, government or governmental policy," Briskman said, but was to reaffirm basic support of the nation of Israel.

A possible side effect, he said, was improved relationships between Christians and Jews and specifically between Baptists and Jews. A significant part of that side development was the rally's location at what Briskman called "the most important Baptist church in the world."

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Medical-Dental Fellowship Opens
Umbrella To Organization For Nurses

By Laurie Taylor

Baptist Press
11/16/82

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)—"God's spirit is moving across the laity and members of the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship are front-runners in a worldwide evangelism," said James H. Smith, president of the Brotherhood Commission, as he addressed 400 people attending the fifth annual Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship in the Lexington, Ky., meeting Nov. 11-14.

"I foresee the day Baptist attorneys and men in agriculture, construction, communications, transportation and government band together as you have done to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Our eyes are on you. You are modeling this for us," Smith said.

The Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship is an independent, spiritually-oriented professional organization working in cooperation with the Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention. Its purpose is to provide Christian professional fellowship among the membership and to strengthen individually and collectively their relationship and commitment through Jesus Christ.

The membership, open only to doctors and dentists, has mushroomed from 231 members to 935 since Henry Love, executive director, assumed his position 22 months ago. Love, 69, worked 45 years as a religious educator before assuming his present responsibilities.

"The doctors and dentists in BMDF are the most spiritually devout group of Christians I have ever had anything to do with," Love vowed. "The longer I work with them the more devout I find them."

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In a major action of the annual meeting the doctors voted to form an umbrella organization, the Baptist Health Care Fellowship, which would include fellowships for nurses, hospital administrators, pharmacists and allied health professionals. Plans are in motion to incorporate the Baptist Nursing Fellowship by the next annual meeting in November 1983.

Elected to the nursing executive committee were: Saramma Joseph, RN, Nashville, Tenn.; Ellen Tabor, RN, Winston-Salem, N.C.; Betty Hall, CRNAT, Wize, Va.; Betty Larimer, missionary nurse, Nigeria; Nancy Muldrow, RN, Nashville, Tenn.

Bill O'Brien, vice president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, told the doctors the FMB plans to hire a consultant for health care strategies and to establish an office of human resources with a department of medical services. The new office will work with the BMDF. "We take you seriously," O'Brien stressed. "You are why we formed this marriage."

Earlier this year the fellowship donated \$16,000 to pay the expenses of 21 career missionary doctors in Africa and the Middle East to fly to Nairobi and attend a continuing medical education seminar. Meanwhile, 21 BMDF doctors paid their own way to the mission hospitals to take their places.

In January 1983, the fellowship plans to provide missionaries' expenses for another continuing medical education seminar for missionary doctors in Malaysia.

Ken Hinton, missionary pediatrician in Indonesia, emphasized the importance of continuing medical education during the meeting. "We need continuing education credits to keep our licenses updated," he explained. "The BMDF provided us this opportunity and we appreciate it."

Hinton also expressed gratitude for the Christian fellowship and support BMDF offers. "When you are a missionary doctor on furlough you get the feeling everyone is saying, 'That's a nice thing to do but isn't he a freak,' but here folks know and support what you are doing. In fact many of them have been overseas and have seen firsthand what you're doing. It's good to rub shoulders with kindred spirits."

Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship officers elected at the meeting include: Joseph M. Pipkin, DDS, Orlando, Fla., president; Franklin Fowler, MD, medical consultant, Foreign Mission Board, president elect; John McKiver Hodges, MD, Memphis, Tenn., finance chairman; G. Dewey Gunn, MD, Nashville, Tenn., membership chairman; Merrill Allen Winchester, MD, Whitley City, Ky., service chairman, and Wilbur C. Lewis, MD, Oklahoma City, Okla., program chairman.

Anyone interested in the BMDF or the proposed umbrella group can contact Love at 1548 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, Tenn., 38104.

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(Laurie Taylor is a freelance writer and regional correspondent for the Western Recorder, Kentucky Baptist newsjournal.)

Indiana Convention
Atmosphere Consiliatory

By David Simpson

TERRE HAUTE, Ind. (BP)— Though Baptists in Indiana faced several provocative issues, the 24th State Convention of Baptists in Indiana Nov. 9-11 in Terre Haute proved to be an arena for conciliatory action.

The 270 messengers passed a Cooperative Program budget of \$1,271,246 with 31.5 percent to be forwarded to national and worldwide Southern Baptist Convention mission and educational causes—the same percentage as last year.

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Carver Tinsley, pastor of States Street Baptist Church in Hammond for over 25 years, was elected president. Rodell Stovall, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Terre Haute, was elected first vice president and Bill Smith, pastor of Crasy Lane in Lafayette, was chosen second vice president.

In the 1981 convention a constitutional study committee was appointed to study each area of the constitution, creating the potential for major changes. However, few major changes were suggested and the ones proposed passed with only minor alterations. The changes must be approved in the 1983 convention by two-thirds majority.

Raising capital funds for the development of Highland Lakes Baptist Center, the conference center owned and operated by the state convention, was also studied over the past year. A feasibility study was accomplished by an independent fund-raising corporation.

The study revealed Indiana Baptists have the potential to raise the \$5-plus million needed for the development. However, it also showed Baptists need to be informed regarding the center and its potential. The motion to "build a case" for HLBC passed with minor questions. A vote to proceed with the campaign will come before the 1983 convention.

The SCBI convention will convene in Indianapolis at the First Southern Baptist Church on Nov. 1-3, 1983, for its 25th annual meeting. The convention started in that church two-and-a-half decades ago.