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Alabama Hikes CP Giving Despite High Unemployment

MOBILE, Ala. (BP)—George E. Bagley, Alabama Baptist State Convention executive secretary for the past 19 years and an employee of the convention for 37 years, told messengers to the convention's annual meeting he will retire at the end of 1983.

Earlier in the day Alabama Baptists approved a record Cooperative Program budget goal of \$17,325,000 for 1983 of which \$6,917,159 (46 percent after deductions for general denominational causes) will go to Southern Baptist Convention causes. This represents an increase of one-half of one percent over 1981.

Prior to his announcement, in a state of the convention address, Bagley continued to stress the evangelism theme of the convention pointing to a "new spirit of concern among us to reach the lost for Christ." Bagley praised the giving record of Alabama Baptists as being "tremendous indeed in the face of the present economic situation in the state." Alabama has a 14 percent unemployment rate, second only to Michigan in the United States.

Messengers approved 15 resolutions with only two creating any discussion. One resolution called on the SEC Executive Committee to "exercise its ad interim responsibility and to use its collective wisdom and spiritual insight to find ways which will re-emphasize the harmony and preserve the unity of the SEC."

The most debated resolution dealt with tuition tax credits. The original resolution registered opposition to the measure and urged President Reagan to reconsider his support of the legislation. An attempt to amend the document to praise the President's stance and to urge passage of the measure was overwhelmingly defeated. The original resolution was adopted after deleting a paragraph which charged tuition tax credits would "most benefit those who could afford to finance their children's attendance at private schools, including elite schools."

A resolution on prayer reaffirmed Alabama Baptist historic commitment to the First Amendment as sufficient to guarantee the principle of separation of church and state and called upon those in political, religious and judicial positions to deal fairly, honestly and with good judgment in seeking to protect First Amendment rights, including the right to practice voluntary prayer.

An attempt to delete the phrase "including the right to practice voluntary prayer," was defeated after a member of the committee explained the phrase was to encourage the courts to re-examine their position on the matter.

A resolution on abortion reaffirmed that all human life, both born and pre-born, is made in the image of God and is therefore sacred and should not be terminated by social abortion or abortion on demand.

Another resolution on alcohol and drug abuse called for raising the legal age for the purchase and consumption of beverage alcohol in Alabama from 19 to 21 years.

Harrell Cushing, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Gadsden, was re-elected to a second term as president. A layman, Ira L. Myers, a health officer for the state of Alabama, was elected first vice president. He has a physician daughter, Martha Myers, who is an SEC medical missionary to Yemen.

The convention will meet in Huntsville in 1983 at the First Baptist Church on Nov. 15-16.

Moody Theology Draws
Arkansas Resolution

By Dan Martin

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP) — Arkansas Baptists passed a strongly worded resolution calling on Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees to "consider the termination" of theology professor Dale Moody because of his views on apostasy or falling from grace.

The controversy became public Aug. 16, when David Miller, director of missions of the Little Red River Baptist Association in Heber Springs, president of the pastor's conference and member of the executive board, brought a motion to the executive board calling on the seminary to "eliminate (these) heresies" concerning Moody's teachings.

Miller's motion was modified to ask Moody to respond in writing on his stance on apostasy, and for Seminary President Roy Lee Honeycutt to explain the matter. Moody, who has taught at Southern for 41 years, responded by requesting that a chapter of his book, *The Word of Truth*, reprinted in the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*.

The resolution concerning Moody was brought to the floor of the annual meeting by Clyde Glazener, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Little Rock, and chairman of the resolutions committee. It noted Moody "has challenged the biblical doctrine of security of believers," and urged Arkansas Baptists to "reaffirm our belief ... (that) all true believers endure to the end and are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

The original resolution ended with a request that Arkansas trustees on the Southern seminary board "share this resolution with officers and trustees" of the seminary.

Glazener, a former professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said the resolutions committee rejected a more strongly worded resolution and urged passage of the committee's version, admitting that it was not what many messengers wanted.

Messengers wanted the stronger wording. Jerry Hogan, pastor of Baring Cross Baptist Church in North Little Rock, presented an alternate version which requested "trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary consider the termination of Dale Moody and any other professor or teacher or assistant who advocates apostasy as true doctrine in any of the teaching institutions under your direction or supported by the Southern Baptist Convention."

Messengers approved the stronger worded resolution by an estimated 85 to 90 per cent majority, but only after heated debate.

The rancorous debate caused Doug Dickens, pastor of First Baptist Church of Hot Springs to propose a motion to "protest" any "name calling or character assassination" during debate. He cited Miller's use of terms like "lily-livered, gutless and pussy-footing preachers" during debate.

After Miller "apologized" for "anything I have done in the convention offensive to anyone or that has been interpreted in any manner different from the attitude of my Lord," Dickens withdrew the motion.

Moody delivered the opening address of the pastor's conference, preaching on Hebrews 10:26 and II Peter 2:20, which he said "are the clearest of the 48 passages in the New Testament" warning against falling away. He said people who think "they can believe and be baptized and live like the devil" are "going to get a surprise at the Judgment."

He said his listeners "can bark at me with creeds and confessions and cliches every day, but you're never going to move me unless it is with the Holy Scriptures."

Another Pastor's Conference speaker, Jimmy Milliken, a New Testament professor at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, an independent school in Memphis, Tenn., suggested: "If I come to the concept that baptism is necessary to salvation, then I ought to be honest and join the Campbellites. If I come to the concept that the Bible teaches apostasy, then by the same logic I ought to be honest and join some other church."

Moody, when told of the resolution, commented: "Apparently very few Arkansas Baptists even bothered to read Chapter 55 of my book. If they had read the chapter, they would have learned that my interpretation of the New Testament teachings on apostasy is supported on every passage from the writings of A.T. Robertson, who taught at Southern for 46 years."

He noted he has been teaching his beliefs for 41 years and Robertson for 46 before him. "It is utterly inconceivable that it suddenly has become a 'heresy'."

Moody, 67, said it is "dishonest to claim that the term 'security of the believers' is a biblical term...I have pointed out that I have been unable to find the term in Baptist literature before Aug. 5, 1841...It entered into Southern Baptist literature on May 3, 1873. Surely they (Arkansas Baptists) know the New Testament was written before that date."

He added: "If I have in any way departed from the Bible, which I believe from Genesis through Revelation, let someone write out why he thinks I have departed from the Bible, and then give me equal space to reply."

He also charged that Miller "was hypocritical when he displayed brotherly love for me after I spoke" to the Pastors' Conference. He added he was well received. "You would have thought I was a brother beloved after I spoke. The people out in front of me were smiling ... They must have been the 10 percent that voted for me"

Moody said he "does not intend to retire or to resign until my retirement time (age 70) under pressure. I may retire this year, or this coming year, if this pressure is removed."

Southern Seminary President Roy Lee Honeycutt said the seminary administration has been discussing the issue with Moody "since I came to office" in the spring of 1982. He added the he "has not been inundated by complaints ... only one person (Miller) has raised the issue."

He said Southern "is not ignoring the issue, but is trying to take a deliberate approach rather than rushing headlong. My position now is that we are going to continue Dr. Moody teaching and are weighing some way to strike a balance."

Of the resolution, Honeycutt said the seminary "will receive it and will respond to it with integrity and seriousness, hearing their concerns. I think that is all they intend for us to do. I think we ought to avoid any precedent which would suggest there has been a change in the historic Baptist polity concerning the relationship of a state convention to an SBC agency or institution."

Honeycutt said his main concern is the Abstract of Principles, which is signed by every professor at the seminary. Moody first signed it when he joined the faculty in 1944, and again in 1980, when he became a senior professor.

Moody admitted he has difficulty with Article 13, of the abstract, saying he "called attention to the contradiction for 41 years. I am in agreement with the abstract as long as it is in agreement with scriptures, but it is not in agreement with the scriptures."

Honeycutt said he wrote a letter to Moody suggesting several options to resolve the conflict. One was retirement, which Moody has declined. He did retire at age 65 in 1980, then served two terms as a senior professor and currently is "at the midpoint of a five year contract." He no longer has tenure, and faces mandatory retirement at age 70.

The president said Moody "will be teaching next semester. The students have already preregistered for his classes, and it would be disruptive for us to take action."

Moody has asked for and received a leave of absence from June 1, 1983 through July 30, 1984. Whether he would return for the 1984-85 school year is unresolved.

"The issue we are confronting is a man who has taught here more than 40 years, who has made a tremendous contribution and is now in the last few months of his teaching. I do not think it would serve any good cause (to ask for his resignation or retirement)," Honeycutt said, adding any official action would have to be taken by the trustees at a "regular meeting" which would not convene until April 12-13.

Explosive Arkansas Convention Battles Over Moody, Junior College

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)—A junior college and a seminary provided volatile topics for debate at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

The convention overturned a 25-year plan approved last year to move to a 50-50 split of gifts from ABSC churches between the state and the national Southern Baptist Convention mission and educational programs and reduced the percentage going to the national level to 38.41 percent of the 1983 budget of \$10 million from the 43.07 percent figure of 1982.

The major issues—the theology of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Dale Moody (see related story) and the request of Southern Baptist College to become a four-year institution—were discussed and decided by more than 1250 messengers in a manner characterized by one messenger as "name calling" and "character assassination," but defended by others as simply emotional exuberance.

The proposal to allow Southern Baptist College in Walnut Ridge to begin offering bachelor level degrees came from the convention's executive board after studies by a professional research firm, the college and the convention groups.

After extended discussion, including debate over the college's intention to accept federal government aid, the motion failed 42 votes—459-417. The college is one of two institutions operated by the state convention.

The only other action to spawn active debate was a resolution opposing tax credits. It passed on a split show-of-hands vote after arguments that tuition tax credits are not "parochial school aid legislation" but are for individual taxpayers similar to other tax deductions. One messengers admitted tuition tax credits for parents of children in parochial schools would hurt public school education but cited the conditions of public schools saying that he does not want "an atheist educating my children."

Don Hook, retired pastor and former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, spoke for the adoption of the resolution, agreeing with the need for private schools, but saying "I think people who operate private schools and send their children to private schools should pay for it themselves."

In more traditional business matters, Dillard Miller, pastor of First Baptist Church, Mena, was elected to a second one-year term as president of the convention without opposition. Bill Probasco, pastor of First Baptist Church, Conway, was elected first vice president and Allen Thrasher, pastor of First Baptist Church of Booneville, was selected second vice president.

The 1983 convention will be Nov. 8-10 in Pine Bluff.

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'Counter Force' Future
Undecided, Sherman Says

By Dan Martin

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ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP)—The future of a group organized to counter a "takeover" of the Southern Baptist Convention by inerrantists is not at all decided, Cecil Sherman says.

Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church of Asheville, N.C., and a leader of the group organized two years ago, said the future course of the group—known variously as the "friends of missions," "denominational loyalists" or "moderate-conservatives"—will be decided at a meeting of the 15-member steering committee Nov. 29 in Atlanta.

"Our group will decide at that time whether we will continue or not," he added, responding to comments Nov. 15 by Kenneth Chafin, pastor of South Main Baptist Church of Houston, that the group was being disbanded. Chafin and Sherman helped to form the group and are its most visible leaders.

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"It is very difficult to keep from being discouraged on our side," Sherman said. "I understand exactly why Kenneth said what he said. We have been trying to save drowning people who don't want to be saved; trying to alert editors who don't want to be alerted."

Both Sherman and Chafin participated in a meeting Nov. 12 in Irving, Texas, of forty denominational leaders to discuss the future and the state of the denomination. It was chaired by SEC President James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas.

The struggle is between a group of inerrantists who want to turn the denomination to a more conservative stance and those who wish to keep it in the middle of the road.

"There is a political party of inerrantists," Sherman said. "It is the party of (Adrian) Rogers, (Bailey) Smith and Draper. (Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn., was SEC president in 1979, and Smith, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, Okla., was president 1980 and 1981.)

"Their party has been in control since Houston (1979). I don't know how long they will continue to be in power," he added.

Sherman said the inerrantists are in the "majority position at this time. I am not going to give you a bunch of weasel words to say they aren't. We have only one forum for Southern Baptists and that is the SEC (annual meeting). We only count once a year and for the last four years they have won ... fair and square."

He said one of the discouraging things for the moderate-conservative camp is that "what support we have in high places is often vacillating. It often seems the denominational leaders (heads of the 20 SEC sponsored agencies and state newspaper editors) overlook evidence. It seems they are so intent on harmony that it has become the end all."

When the steering committee—including Chafin—meets in Atlanta, Sherman said, "one of the things that we will have to consider is whether we will step back and let the convention be managed by these people (the inerrantists)."

"We believe we have had some restraining effect," he said, adding that the "SEC is caught up in a lively debate and the verdict is not yet in."

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CORRECTION—In (BP) story "New York Convention Adopts Peace Resolution" released 11/9/82, the fourth paragraph, fourth line should read: "calls for a 'mutually verifiable freeze on the manufacture, testing and placing of nuclear weapons' " not "calls for a unilateral freeze on nuclear arms by the United States" as sent.

Thanks,
Baptist Press