



- - BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219
(615) 244-2355
Wilmer C. Fields, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Craig Bird, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave. N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

February 3, 1983

83-19

Pro-Israel Resolution To Be Reintroduced In Pittsburgh

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)—A resolution supporting the state of Israel, tabled by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans last June, will be reintroduced at this year's SBC in Pittsburgh, the chairman of the 1982 resolutions committee says.

Norris W. Sydnor Jr., a Maryland pastor, told an audience of several hundred at a "National Prayer Breakfast in Honor of Israel" he will introduce the volatile statement again. He predicted it will be adopted.

Sydnor also presented a plaque engraved with the resolution's wording to the Israeli consul-general in the U.S., and added: "We Southern Baptists are committed and we give our continual support and we pray for the peace of Jerusalem frequently." He strongly implied the presentation was made "on behalf of 14 million Southern Baptists."

In New Orleans last June, the statement was brought to the floor by a resolutions committee dominated by political and theological "conservatives," but was twice turned down by messengers.

The resolution, which expressed "strong" support of Israel and urged that the U.S. government "publicly and privately assure Israel and her enemies of such support," drew spirited debate and was referred back to the resolutions committee for revision.

When it came back to the floor for a second time, the resolution's author, James DeLoach of Houston, and R. Keith Parks, president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, made a dramatic joint appearance on the convention platform in which Parks said such a resolution could endanger the lives of SBC missionaries and representatives.

The resolutions committee ignored the pleas of Parks and DeLoach and presented their resolution for adoption. Messengers, however, heeded and voted to table the pro-Israel resolution.

Harold C. Bennett, executive secretary-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, said: "I was surprised to learn that Mr. Sydnor had presented the engraved plaque of the resolution, especially since the messengers to the SBC voted to table the resolution."

Bennett also noted messengers amended the resolution, saying they "in no way condone Israel's recent invasion of Lebanon" and urging "peaceful means to alleviate problems between Israel and her neighbors."

Informed of Sydnor's actions, Parks said in Richmond he is "deeply concerned" about the statements themselves and also that these statements may be misunderstood both by Southern Baptists and by Israel and other countries.

Even though rejected in New Orleans, ideas contained in the resolution have caused the Foreign Mission Board ongoing problems during the intervening months in some parts of the Arab world, where Southern Baptists maintain the large majority of their missionary contingent in the Middle East.

-more-

"Southern Baptists as a convention have not taken any official position regarding the state of Israel," Parks said. He noted that the denomination has representatives or missionaries in many Middle Eastern and other countries around the world whose work could be affected by such a stand.

"Historically, our understanding of the scripture indicates our responsibility is to preach the gospel to all people. At a time when our convention is caught up in Bold Mission Thrust with this as its overarching goal, any resolution which would make this task more difficult or create greater obstacles in many parts of the world would be contrary to what the convention has voted," Parks said.

The breakfast at which Sydnor spoke was sponsored by The Roundtable, a New Right group founded by Southern Baptist layman Edward E. McAteer of Memphis, Tenn. It brought together Jewish and evangelical leaders with a common commitment to influence U.S. foreign policy in Israel's behalf.

In his remarks, McAteer declared: "We literally believe God's word when it says, 'I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee,'" a quotation from Genesis in which God promised Abraham his blessing on ancient Israel. McAteer also said "all things are mortal but the Jews," adding that Jews are "immortal" because God has never violated the covenant first made with Abraham.

Like Sydnor, McAteer said he will push messengers to the Pittsburgh convention to approve the resolution this time. After last year's New Orleans meeting, he told Baptist Press his biggest disappointment was the messengers' failure to pass it.

Principal speaker Jerry Falwell told the breakfast gathering that Christians should stand "unashamedly and fearlessly" for Israel's survival and prosperity. He praised Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, especially for what he termed last summer's "liberation of Lebanon."

Falwell, founder and president of Moral Majority, the country's largest New Right organization, condemned the American news media for its coverage of the war in Lebanon and said Israel has been forced to fight for its survival throughout its 35-year history.

He said further he supports Israel because it is "the only true friend we have in the Middle East" and that God deals with all nations according to the way they treat Israel. He added the land which constitutes modern Israel belongs to that nation, including the occupied West Bank.

McAteer and Sydnor were the only Southern Baptists on the program.

-30-

SBC Educators React
To Falwell's Suggestion

Baptist Press
2/3/83

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Southern Baptists won't be "misled" by someone who does not want to be a Southern Baptist but who chooses to make "self-righteous pronouncements," according to two SBC educators.

Arthur Walker, executive director of the Southern Baptist Convention's Education Commission, and Herbert Reynolds, president of Baylor University, the largest Southern Baptist university in the country, made their comments in response to Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell's suggestion that Southern Baptists sever all ties with the 47 colleges and universities they support because they no longer represent conservative theological views.

Baylor University in Waco, Texas, was the only school specifically named.

In an interview with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram Feb. 2, Falwell said the SBC should keep its six seminaries and take some "hard handed" actions to rid them of liberal influence.

-more-

Such a purge of the colleges and universities would be too difficult, however, he said, because local churches don't have as much influence over the college trustees as they do over the seminaries and because, "if you fired half the faculty, the students would hold demonstrations on campus" and national agencies would threaten the school's accreditation.

Walker and Reynolds challenged Falwell's assessment of SBC schools and noted his flawed understanding of how the schools are supported and governed.

"Southern Baptists are supported by state conventions which know them and appreciate them," explained Walker, who heads the only national SBC agency which relates to Southern Baptist colleges and universities, and that in an advisory relationship. "The trustees of each Southern Baptist college are local Baptists elected by the state convention which supports each college. Local Baptists will not be misled concerning the colleges they know and love."

Reynolds was even more specific. "Mr. Falwell continues to exhibit his self-righteous approach to all things and in this case a most presumptuous attitude. After all, he is not a Southern Baptist by choice but rather is an independent Baptist. This suggests he does not want to be associated with Southern Baptists in any of our multiple ministries but chooses to make far-reaching self-righteous pronouncements on a wide variety of topics to Americans and people the world over.

"We (Baylor) have been an SBC institution for 138 years and we will continue to be a Southern Baptist institution regardless of Mr. Falwell's meddling and whether our state convention chooses to own us or not. All along, I have believed, amidst the present controversy among Southern Baptists that ultimately the collective good judgment of our people would prevail and that love and wisdom would triumph over the self-righteousness and theocratic aims of some within our convention," Reynolds said.

"Texas Baptists (we are not owned or operated by the Southern Baptist Convention) support Baylor in more ways than just with money. Our people support us with their goodwill, prayers and the attendance of 5,000 quality young people in our student body of 10,000 from around the world. Baylor has some 50,000 alumni living in all 50 states and 101 foreign countries, among whom are the greatest number of missionaries produced by any Baptist college or university in the world.

"We at Baylor are not unfamiliar with the Jerry Falwells of this world nor are we strangers to controversy and attack. Much of our strength derives from our willingness and capacity to deal with such unpleasantness and inane as we determinedly provide our students superior undergraduate, graduate and professional university educations within a community of Christian teachers and scholars," he said.

William M. Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said because Falwell had singled out Baylor, it should be noted Baylor has contributed greatly to the cause of Christ through Southern Baptists and some of the foremost pastors and agency heads are products of the school.

"Baylor is strong in its emphasis on evangelism, missions and churchmanship. For example, it sponsors an annual evangelistic meeting on campus. It has a resident foreign missionary to make a mission emphasis among the faculty and students," he said.

Falwell claimed that two-thirds of Southern Baptists are where they have always been—"fundamentalists," but "it is true about a third have moved to the left and I think it is because of the (SBC) schools."

Falwell, pastor of the non-denominational Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Va., said if he were a Southern Baptist he would not condemn the schools in question.

"I would just say, 'You are no longer our school and we're going to start other schools that are in keeping with our beliefs,'" he said. "I think that rather than the fighting and feuding going on right now (in the SBC) the churches ought to dissolve connections with those schools that no longer support them theologically."

Regarding the seminaries—which are national SBC agencies governed by trustees elected by messengers to the annual national SBC meetings—Falwell said, with one exception, they had "moved to the left" but can be "corrected because Baptist churches can insist traditional theology be taught."

He excluded Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas from the blanket condemnation as "an exception—we send a lot of our people there" and noted New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, "had made a lot of progress" in righting itself.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., or Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., were not mentioned.

-30-

BSSB Trustees Authorize
Study For TelNet Studio

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
2/3/83

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Trustees of the Sunday School Board authorized a study and preparation for the development of a Baptist TelNet studio and heard a progress report on the satellite telecommunications network from board President Grady Cothen.

In the Feb. 1-2 meeting in which Lloyd Elder was elected to succeed Cothen, trustees also elected Royce Dodd, 33, as manager of the western region of Baptist Book Stores.

Dodd joined the board in 1976 as manager of the Columbus, Ohio, store and since March 1979 has managed the Asheville and Ridgecrest, N.C., stores.

A 1984 increase in church literature prices which will average approximately 6 percent also was approved. The increase will be effective in April 1984.

Cothen told trustees that Baptist TelNet equipment prices will be available later this month. The network to churches, associations, state conventions and other Baptist groups is expected to be operational in the spring of 1984.

Cothen said the board will offer several choices in equipment, ranging from cheaper, manually operated TVROs (television receive only units) to more expensive models with automatic features.

He said subscription costs for programs will be determined before the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in June.

"Because prices will be significantly lower than original projections, we believe it will be possible for many churches and most associations to participate if they choose," he said.

Cothen said he will meet this month with state executive secretaries to develop plans to market equipment and that several states and many SBC agencies have expressed interest in using the network.

He said the board's uplink is expected to be completed in the fall.

"This thing is already far bigger than all of us and we have only begun to explore the potential," said Cothen. "Southern Baptists are in the vanguard in telecommunications and I rejoice because of the opportunities for reaching people for Christ."

Cothen called president-elect Lloyd Elder "a bright, organized, Bible believing Baptist and a great leader."

He said Elder's 10-month orientation process will include an introduction to the board's 16 programs of work and that he will meet with board personnel and leaders of state and SEC agencies.

-more-

"He will be involved in all planning decisions and will have all information available to him," said Cothen.

Cothen said a task force appointed in 1982 is working to determine how best to represent differing views on biblical eschatology (last things) in church literature.

Speaking of opinions that the pre-millennial view has not received adequate treatment in materials, Cothen said, "I suspect there is some justification in that point of view."

"However," he noted, "a view of eschatology affects one's entire view of scripture and space limitations in quarterlies present problems in covering alternative views thoroughly in a single lesson. The goal of the task force is to meet the needs of the major groups of Southern Baptists."

Reflecting on his eight years as president, Cothen said, "My heart is filled with rejoicing and gladness. We have not always agreed but that is part of being a Baptist.

"Another part of being a Baptist is that no person is permitted to thrust his faith upon another but each is accountable for himself before God. We have gotten things done because we are people of good will and people of Christ. We practice the Book as much or more than we talk about the Book."

Reporting on one of four corporate priorities established for his administration in 1975, Bible teaching for the masses, Cothen cited the addition of the Bible Book Series for youth and adults and the Convention Uniform Series for preschoolers and children.

He also listed "At Home with the Bible," a radio and television program and Bible correspondence course, and numerous efforts including "8.5 by '85" to restore a growth psychology to Southern Baptist churches.

In other actions, trustees approved a new quarterly periodical, Urban Review: A Journal of Urban Church Studies, to begin publication June 1, 1984.

Re-elected as trustee officers were: chairman, Alton McEachern, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.; vice chairman and chairman of the executive committee, John B. Daley, pastor of Brook Hollow Baptist Church, Nashville, and recording secretary, A. Sidney Waits, pastor of Hickory Hills Baptist Church, Memphis.

-30-

Reagan Proclaims 1983 'Year Of The Bible'

WASHINGTON (BP)—Calling the biblical message "priceless and timeless," President Ronald Reagan has proclaimed 1983 the "Year of the Bible."

In his annual address at the National Prayer Breakfast, Reagan told more than 3,000 participants he has agreed to serve as honorary chairman of the year-long emphasis. "Can we resolve to read, learn and try to heed the greatest message ever written—God's word in the Holy Bible?" he asked. "Inside its pages lie all the answers to all the problems man has ever known."

Reminding his audience that "many people in the world are imprisoned for trying to read or possess a Bible," he declared, "we should take more advantage of what we can do so easily."

In his official "Year of the Bible" proclamation, Reagan said that no influence on the nation has been "more fundamental and enduring than the Bible."

"The Bible and its teachings helped form the basis for the Founding Fathers' abiding belief in the inalienable rights of the individual, rights which they found implicit in the Bible's teachings of the inherent worth and dignity of each individual," he said.

-30-