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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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**Diversity Necessary
For World Influence**

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptists, like the mighty Mississippi River and its tributaries, gain strength when they are joined by others who are moving the same direction, according to 1977 SBC President James L. Sullivan.

The secret of the 138-year-old Southern Baptist Convention has been the constant channeling of diverse, Baptist opinions toward the common goal of sharing the gospel with the world, said Sullivan.

Sullivan, who served 23 years as president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, contends many of the problems faced by the denomination today are caused by a serious misunderstanding of Baptist polity. He added there is an equally serious lack of self-understanding by the leaders in the current conflict.

"Both sides of the present controversy are wrong," he continued, "because one is operating at one end of the Baptist continuum and the other is operating at the other end. One is wrong in position and the other is wrong in attitude. They are carrying on a war that the people in the center don't understand. The people in the center, who are the majority, are disgusted with both sides.

"The leaders in the conflict do not understand themselves because they think they are at the center of the Southern Baptist religious continuum, when in reality they are not," Sullivan explained. "You cannot administer from a fringe position; it must be in the center of the constantly fluctuating constituency served.

"You destroy the backbone of the denomination when the group on the left and right sides try to greatly enlarge their followings," he said. "If the middle group divides into sides, it will split the convention."

Sullivan warned theological extremism is dangerous to the convention. He said the denomination's greatest challenges are from groups who try to do things legalistically and literally, because Southern Baptists are not that way.

"The truths of the Bible are literally true, but God used history, revelation, analysis, parables and every other available teaching tool to communicate truths which are absolutely profound," he said.

"For a democracy like the Southern Baptist Convention to exist, both sides are necessary," Sullivan said. "We will always have critics, but that is good because we need to hear both viewpoints. It is healthy for both sides to have full freedom of voice."

Sullivan said he believes, based on 57 years of involvement in the denomination, the problems today are not related to doctrine, but to polity. In effect, church members have little or no knowledge of how and why Baptists govern themselves.

"In the Southern Baptist Convention, every individual, church, association and state convention is autonomous," Sullivan said. "If each member goes his own way without thought for the other, it creates tensions and misunderstandings."

In a new book published by Broadman Press, Baptist Polity As I See It, Sullivan writes, "Our polity takes away all threats and appearances of coercion so that each church and person can participate without question marks or reservations."

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He further explained problems in theological positioning in the denomination arise when people take themselves too seriously, feelings become intense, humor is considered out of order and diversity is not allowed.

Sullivan arrived at his present understanding of the denomination through his experience as a local pastor for more than 20 years and his opportunities to serve as a state convention president and on the boards of numerous Baptist colleges, hospitals and agencies. He explained Baptist polity calls for mutual trust for the system and the people in it.

"Because our denomination is built on trust and voluntary cooperation, it is easy for offhand innuendos to reduce confidence," Sullivan said. "There are justifiable complaints, because there is no perfect denomination, but affirmation and cooperation are important.

"The current denominational conflict is one Baptist group promoting itself against another, rather than a broad base in which diverse groups cooperate side by side for the propagation of the gospel across the world," he explained.

In comparison, he said, "It's like the river trying to reverse itself back to the stream which makes it so powerful. Only with the diversity can we influence the world."

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Jester Has Christians
Coming And Going

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Christians for years have said "go" in following Jesus' Great Commission, but David L. Jester, president of Wayland Baptist University, told 404 Southwestern Seminary graduates they must be able to say "come."

"We need to be able to say 'come follow me and I'll show you how to win people,'" said Jester, who opened his address with a warning about the problems in public schools. "State colleges are not morally and spiritually what they used to be and likely never will be again," Jester said. Therefore Christians must provide education that is distinctively Christian.

He said Christians must be on the go, marking, making and maturing disciples. "We are so far behind in our concept of 'call' that we need to do research on it," Jester said. "There is only one call, the call to follow Jesus."

May's graduation had a taste of the first and the last.

Cary (Bubba) Woodlief Cox III became the seminary's first master of arts in communications graduate when he led four others across the stage at Travis Avenue Baptist Church to receive their degrees. Jack G. Partain became the last to graduate with a doctor of theology degree. That degree is no longer offered by Southwestern and has been replaced with the doctor of philosophy.

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Missionary Jeanette Hunker
Dies of Cancer in Taiwan

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TAIPEI, Taiwan (BP)--Southern Baptist missionary teacher Jeanette Hunker, 64, died May 30 in Taiwan after a long battle with cancer.

When the veteran missionary became too ill to go to class and teach her seminary students, the students came to her. She taught at home until about six weeks before her death.

Hunker, said a colleague, was determined to live to see the class of 1983 graduate at Taiwan Baptist Theological Seminary in Taipei. She died on the evening of graduation day.

Highly respected by missionaries and Chinese Baptists, Hunker taught religious education at the seminary for 30 years. Her husband, missionary W. Carl Hunker, has been seminary president and vice president and an active professor and pastor.

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The Hunkers went to China after World War II and taught at Yates Academy, Soochow. They worked with Chinese in the Philippines after 1949 and transferred to Taiwan in 1952. In addition to teaching, Hunker worked with Baptist women throughout Taiwan, training leaders and helping local organizations. She also worked in churches in Taipei.

Born in Texarkana, Texas, Hunker, the former Jeanette Roebuck, received the diploma from Texarkana Junior College and the bachelor of arts degree from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

She received the master of religious education degree from Woman's Missionary Union Training School (now merged with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), Louisville, Ky. The Hunkers were appointed in 1946 by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

She is survived by her husband and two children, David Hunker and Joyce Lynn Maslin, both of Kansas City, Mo.

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

Ministers Call On SBC
To Meet Needs Of Poor

By Michael Tutterow

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ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists have the resources to meet the needs of the poor but they lack a plan, according an Episcopalian minister.

Harvey Oostdyk, a former staffer with Young Life and now founder of STEP (Strategies to Elevate People) Foundation, a program concerned with church response to urban problems, told participants in the Home Mission Board's Spring Forum on Urban Evangelism that poverty in America stemmed from churches' lack of a plan to respond to the needs of poor people.

Seminaries do not train pastors to meet inner-city needs and pastors in turn do not marshal their church members to address urban concerns of poverty, unemployment, racism, inadequate housing and medical care. Yet, said Oostdyk, the Bible lists more than 400 passages regarding the church's care for the poor.

Oostdyk proposed rallying church members around social services workers, offering support and help in meeting needs. "Doses of good will are not going to get the job done," he asserted. "We must change institutions."

In addition, he called on churches to provide funding to staff inner-city churches, providing inner-city residents quality ministerial leadership they otherwise could not afford.

Oostdyk challenged church members to pair themselves with inner-city residents and serve as resource persons. Oostdyk predicted church members would use their skills in ministry if churches would offer laypeople a plan for action. Instead, he said, pastors preach on what the church should do for the poor but offer little in the way of practical suggestions, creating guilt for church members who do not know of ways they can serve.

"The best way to do evangelism," said Oostdyk, "is through friendship." Church members paired with inner-city residents would tie the vast numbers of poor into an endless resource bank--the church.

He suggested organizing laypeople into JESUS (Jobs, Education, Social services, Useful financial and Spiritual) teams. "The only way to solve poverty in America is to meet all the needs of people all at once," Oostdyk claimed. He has set up a prototype in Dallas, Texas, using four churches, including two Southern Baptist churches, working in an 18-block section of the city. From the initial work, he hopes to offer churches throughout the nation a model for addressing inner-city needs.

Alderson, former vice-president of Pittron Steel Foundry in Pittsburgh, Pa., and founder and director of The Value of a Person Ministry, added the church "must move off the reservation and out into the streets away from our steeples" to meet the needs of people.

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Alderson was promoted to vice president of the faltering foundary in 1973 and implemented a program that took the foundary from a \$6 million loss over three years to a \$3 million profit in 18 months. The turnaround, insisted Alderson, resulted from a management posture of mutual respect for employees based on the value of the person. Through Bible studies and spending time with workers, Alderson bridged a wide gap between labor and management.

Alderson says a similar gap in understanding is taking place between the pulpit and the pew as ministers teach theology but communicate less content to church members. He termed much of contemporary preaching "a strange language no one can interpret" with little practical application for the average layperson.

Alderson contended many pastors no longer see the need to "go down and be with the people," but without a knowledge of their experiences, pastors will miss the needs of their own congregations. Each person has a God-given right to be treated with dignity and respect," he said but, even in the church "we are so busy doing ministry that we have no time for people."

He said some techniques for church growth "prostitute" people, using them and then throwing them away.

"We must flush out the value of a person in a language that is understandable in the marketplace," said Alderson. Part of the change, he said, will come when churches are freed from faulty images of success.

"Jesus is not a Jesus of success but of the way of the cross," Alderson contended. "Ministers have developed a success syndrom," he added, noting few pastors accept calls to smaller churches for less pay. He also charged laypeople have propagated ministerial moves by seeking out only "successful pastors."

Alderson suggested churches look for success in terms other than number of baptisms and how many professional degrees their pastors have.

Dale Cross, director of the HMB's metropolitan evangelism department and sponsor of the forum, added that Southern Baptists must decide if "we are called to servanthood or whether we are to be upwardly mobile, successful mangagement persons in religious institutions."

Gostdyk contended helping the poor and caring for people is a primary task for the church. "The church has to go out and share the incredible message of our Lord," he said. "The church has the capacity and the commission to meet the needs of the poor. But when the people respond, the reinforcements must be there. We're the only people who have the care and the res urses to do anything about poverty."

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Tanner Awaits SBC's Will
On Canadian Question

By Patti Stephenson

Baptist Press
5/31/83

ATLANTA (BP)--The future of Southern Baptist work in Canada must be charted by the will of the Southern Baptist Convention body, according to William G. Tanner, president of the SBC's Home Mission Board.

The recurring question of whether to seat messengers from Canadian Southern Baptist churches at the SBC is expected to surface at the upcoming session in Pittsburgh through a motion to amend the SBC's constitution. The Foreign Mission Board has announced its opposition to the effort.

Tanner, who favors including the Canadian churches, explained the Home Mission Board has not taken a public stand supporting such action because "it's not the position of SBC agencies to instruct the convention, but rather the prerogative of the SBC to instruct its agencies."

Tanner said "the unusual growth of Southern Baptists in Canada has not been through work initiated by the Home Mission Board but rather through the Home Mission Board responding to needs and requests from Canada at the SBC's bidding."

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Since the HMB began responding to Canadian Baptists' call for assistance in the 1950, "work in Canada has grown in an unprecedented manner," Tanner noted. In the past five years baptisms have risen 43 percent, total membership of Southern Baptists in Canada has increased 37 percent and total giving to SBC missions by Canadian Southern Baptists is up 178 percent.

Such gains "indicate a deep, concerted interest on the part of Southern Baptists in Canada to reach people for Christ through the SBC's doorway of worldwide missions," he said.

Tanner views the Canadian churches "as an asset to our convention, and as a resource for giving rather than as a liability for taking." He named as one resource "the young Canadians who are beginning to surrender to a call to missions and are entering Golden Gate seminary for training."

The HMB leader observed the Canadian Southern Baptist churches are already part of the Northwest Baptist Convention. "If it's logical for them to affiliate with the Northwest convention and for the SBC to accept their financial support of its missions causes, then it's illogical to deny them full membership in the SBC," he said.

Tanner said he has "no problem with the motion being referred for study if that is the will of the messengers." The Foreign Mission Board has recommended the proposal be referred to the Executive Committee, the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board for joint study with a report to be submitted at the SBC's 1984 session.

"We do need to carefully consider our response to this motion in light of our philosophy toward worldwide missions," Tanner stated. "Southern Baptists have the responsibility to examine its long-term implications." He noted "some time in the future, the Canadians may wish to form their own Canadian Southern Baptist Convention" apart from the various Baptist bodies already in existence there. He added his hope that "any evaluation will be supportive of the work Canadian Southern Baptist churches are doing to win people to the Lord."

Tanner reported growing evidence of a spiritual awakening in Canada--a nation where the number of evangelical Christians has dropped from 25 percent in 1900 to 6.7 percent in 1980. Declaring "there are more Christians in some Iron Curtain countries than in Canada," he said efforts to reach Canadians "are what Bold Mission Thrust is all about." A spiritual awakening in Canada could reverberate throughout the United States as well, he predicted.

Tanner stressed "the Home Mission Board will seek to implement the convention's direction" on the Canadian issue. "We are amenable to any relationship which will assist us in reaching people for Christ."

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Southwestern Seminary
Receives Charitable Trust

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will distribute \$3,000 each to 10 students next fall from a perpetual bequest of Opal G. Cox.

Mrs. Cox, an Austin, Texas, widow who died Jan. 7, 1981, left Southwestern and Baylor University the proceeds from producing mineral rights, to share equally for scholarships. This year, the proceeds totalled \$60,000. Proceeds will vary annually according to the production of the numerous mineral sites.

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