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84-42

Mission Board Affirms
Policy On Ordination

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (BP)--Insisting ordination of women is an issue to be settled only by the local church, directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board reaffirmed the agency's current policy which does not require ordination as a qualification for missionary appointment.

Directors rejected a motion calling for appointment of a committee to study board policies concerning ordination of women, adopting instead a substitute motion reaffirming the board's current policies. There were six dissenting votes.

The issue arose after board chairman Jerry Gilmore, an attorney from Dallas, pointed out the current policy does not require ordination or licensing of ministers for appointment of either men or women as missionaries.

Ordination, Gilmore said, is a matter to be determined solely by each individual church in the Southern Baptist Convention, not the agencies of the convention. "Our policy is that we appoint (as missionaries) qualified people who are valid members of SBC churches," Gilmore added.

Gilmore brought up the subject during a miscellaneous business session, referring to a report mailed to all board members indicating the number of ordained women related to the board.

Only seven ordained women are currently appointed among the board's 3,800 missionaries, and four of them are under "short-term" appointment for two years, according to the report.

In addition, 21 ordained women have been endorsed by the Chaplains Commission of the Home Mission Board to serve as military, institutional or hospital chaplains. Ordination is not required for endorsement by the Chaplains Commission, but in most cases is required by the agency which employs the chaplain and sets the qualifications for each position, the report said.

In discussion following Gilmore's comments, Ronnie Yarber, pastor of Gross Road Baptist Church in Dallas, argued if the mission board appoints any ordained woman as a missionary or endorses an ordained woman chaplain, it makes the local church feel it is "bucking" the mission agency if it refuses to ordain women.

Yarber said he deeply resents the Home Mission Board's publishing a mission study book entitled, "We Spell Missions AMERICA", which included the testimony of a woman who had been ordained.

"This article is a veiled criticism and condemnation of those of us who take a Bible-centered position on the issue of ordination of women," Yarber charged. "The gist of the article is pro-ordination of women."

Yarber added he appreciates a letter going to all board members and to Baptist state papers from HMB President William G. Tanner clarifying the board's current policy on ordination, but said the letter was "post facto" after the damage had been done.

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Following Yarber's comments, Gaylon Wiley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Angleton, Texas, made a motion that the board chairman appoint a committee "fair to all of us" to study the board's policies and bring back a report.

"The real issue," said Wiley, "is not ordination of women but the authority of the Word of God." Both Wiley and Yarber said they believe scripture prohibits ordination of women. Bill Sherman, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., opposed Wiley's motion, saying he found no support in the scripture for ordination of either men or women, including his own ordination.

Sherman said the board and the Southern Baptist Convention cannot dictate to the local church what position should be taken on ordination or interpretation of scripture.

"As a pastor, I will not tolerate this board telling my church what to do on interpretation of scripture. There is no way this issue can be resolved by a committee," Sherman insisted.

"I long for the day," said Sherman, "when we stop seeing human beings as men or women and stop placing value on their worth by their gender."

Both Sherman and Gilmore supported the mission study book published by the board. Sherman commended the writer of the book, saying "I think he told the truth." Gilmore said the book was "an extremely well-written, marvelous study of home missions."

Following Sherman's comments, Emmett Henderson of Atlanta, executive director of the Georgia Council on Moral and Civic Concerns, introduced the substitute motion finally adopted reaffirming the board's current policies.

Gilmore said his prayer is that Southern Baptists will not become so divided over the issue of ordination of women that they lose sight of the Home Mission Board's goal of evangelizing and congregationalizing the whole nation.

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Progress Pleases Inerrantists;
Say SBC Course Irrevocably Set

By Dan Martin

Baptist Press
3/15/84

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Three leaders of the inerrancy movement in the Southern Baptist Convention say they are "encouraged" by progress they have made in the past five years in getting "equity" for their views in the nation's largest protestant denomination.

Paul Pressler, an appeals court judge from Houston, and Paige Patterson, president of Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, emerged into the spotlight in 1979 with their claims the denomination was becoming increasingly liberal and a concerted campaign to wrest political control of the 20 national agencies--particularly the six seminaries--from the "enormous bureaucracy" running them.

The focus of their campaign has been the boards of trustees. The strategy has been to elect "solid conservative presidents" who will make key appointments insuring placement of inerrantists on the boards.

The structure of the effort has been a network of "those who had a conservative disposition" in every state. The method is to "inform" interested Southern Baptists of what is being written and promulgated by denominational employees and to encourage active involvement.

Pressler and Patterson have been the point men. Several years ago, they were joined by Russell Kaemmerling, Patterson's brother-in-law, who established and edits the independent inerrantist publication, Southern Baptist Advocate.

During a recent symposium on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, the three say they want their view that Scripture is without error taught at the six Southern Baptist seminaries and reflected by the other 14 agencies.

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Kaemmerling said the effort "is not a matter of imposing interpretation," but is a "matter of being represented." He cited a Gallup Poll which claims 96 percent of Southern Baptists are inerrantists, and said: "Assuming that he (Gallup) is only half right, where is the 50 percent of faculty members who hold to an inerrant Bible? My money is being expended, but my views are not being represented."

Patterson said: "We have seen no substantive effort on the part of any institutions or agencies to date to rectify the injustice that presently exists in representation," he said. He answered with an unequivocal "No!" when asked if any agency is approaching "equity."

Patterson did, however, say he "must put in an asterisk because I think in the case of the Home Mission Board...Dr. Bill Tanner is very much sensitive to what conservative Southern Baptists feel and are saying...I think if it were as simple as his just declaring it is going to be fair, it would be tomorrow, but things don't happen that easily."

He added, however, that in the case of the Home Mission Board, "things are moving in that direction (toward 'equity')."

Pressler mentioned Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., and said: "Frank Pollard (the new president) is a very conservative, Bible-believing man. He has two openings on his faculty, and what he does with them will probably affect their future."

Progress, Patterson said, is being made on the trustee level. "We do feel we have seen some progress in establishing more nearly an equitable situation in terms of the people who serve on the boards of directors. There has been some progress made there."

Patterson said it is a "logical deduction that provided we continue to be able to rectify the inequity on the boards it would have to follow that at some point or another the inequities that actually exist...would also begin to straighten themselves out."

He said: "We knew we wouldn't get to the break-even point on the trustees in five years unless we started the process of knocking people off. I think the people who have been serving on the committee on boards have wisely chosen not to take that action. We are not up to the elimination of people. What we want is to gain adequate representation and that means that we have to spread it out over a longer period of time."

Pressler said the group has "no timetable," for when political control will shift. "When rank and file Southern Baptists are involved, the problems are going to work themselves out."

Previously, "nobody understood how the system worked; nobody was sufficiently involved. The convention (machinery) was overwhelming," he charged. "There was an enormous self-perpetuating bureaucracy that was not sensitive to lots of issues."

Now, however, Pressler claimed the inerrancy movement has had an impact and "the direction of the convention is irrevocably set. I do not think there will be any reversing of the direction that is now set."

Patterson said inerrancy "is a life and death matter" to him because he "believes heaven is real and hell is real and that lost people go to hell. The only difference is the vicarious substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. I believe that is only maintained by an absolute allegiance to the word of God as infallible and inerrant in every statement that it makes."

"It is unconscionable for me to be forced to pay to support the propagation of another view," he said, comparing it to asking him to "send money to Russia to propagate communism."

He added he believes the denomination was "rapidly moving toward a day of disintegration" when the inerrancy effort began and warned that "if something isn't done to rectify the inequity it (the Southern Baptist Convention) is going to disintegrate...."

During the symposium, sponsored by the Conservative/Evangelical Fellowship, a group of 25 students at the 1,200-student school, Patterson was asked: "If you have it your way would all seminary faculty be inerrantists or would you allow those who don't feel that way to teach?"

Patterson said "we are 40 million light years away from that," but responded: "If I were personally selecting the faculty...yes, the whole faculty would be inerrantists."

"If I were in the position of the presidency of one of the seminaries--which I think is exceedingly hypothetical--my first move would be to replace existing faculty members...with folks who have no questions about the full validity of the scriptures," he said.

His second move would be to make chapel programs "vibrant affairs with people coming in to represent primarily that viewpoint." The third would be that no faculty member or staff member "would fail to be a personal soul winner. Dismissal for that would come more quickly than for any other reason. This is the first work as far as I am concerned, and the emphasis on personal witnessing, evangelism and missions would do much to solve difficulties," he added.

He said if he still had people on the faculty "after a period of time who were advocating that the Bible was not entirely accurate, I would try very hard to spend special time with them, to listen to them, but also to persuade them of my view."

Patterson admitted he did not know what would happen "if all that doesn't work. I haven't faced that yet; I don't have that problem at Criswell Center."

Patterson also explained that students at Criswell Center are taught the other major "strands of theology," but added: "Very honestly, we provide an evangelical answer to those."

During the symposium, Pressler was asked what his goal in the movement is. He replied that "in some of our institutions there are individuals who undermine the faith of our young people in the complete authority of the scripture."

"My goal," he said, for the Southern Baptist Convention "is that any student who goes to any one of our Baptist institutions comes out with his faith built up, his faith encouraged and as a stronger believer and a stronger witness than when he entered."

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Frank Black's Recipe For Success,
A Career Mixing Missions, Camping

By Mike Davis

Baptist Press
3/15/84

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--You couldn't really call him the father of Royal Ambassadors. Royal Ambassadors was already middle-age when he came along. But, you could say whatever Royal Ambassadors is today, it's largely due to Frank Black.

Black, who retired in February after 29 years with the Brotherhood Commission, is partly responsible for the rebirth of Royal Ambassadors in the middle 50s when the program was shifted from Woman's Missionary Union to the Brotherhood Commission. Black revamped advancement plans, authored advancement and leadership books, edited magazines, and spent as many as 200 days a year on the road during his early days at the Brotherhood Commission.

Later, he worked in associational and pioneer states Brotherhood work, helped revise the Royal Ambassador program in the 70s, and most recently has served with the Baptist Men's staff coordinating disaster relief and volunteer activities.

But, Black is best known as Southern Baptists' reigning camping expert--a title he got for writing a book and sleeping under the stars more nights than he can remember.

"I'm not really an expert," Black says recounting how he used an Oregon State University thesis and some camping skills information from a girl's organization as the foundation for Royal Ambassador Campcraft. The camping book, twice revised since its first printing, has been a consistent Brotherhood bestseller and is recognized as one of the premier camping manuals in the country.

"As an expert" he has led campcraft training in all kinds of places, even in Woman's Missionary Union offices in Birmingham, Ala., where he once gave a flaming demonstration on how to make camp stoves out of tin cans.

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Black is also known as a jewel of a junker, sometimes stopping 20 times between Memphis and Nashville to wander through old buildings in search of discarded treasures.

One of his jaunts turned up a solid wood secretary desk, but most end with a few, not so valuable, but very interesting pieces of "good" junk which he either peddles at flea markets or shares with friends--for a fair price.

Twenty-nine of his 51 years as a Christian have been spent helping involve men and boys in missions. They have been the happiest 29 years of his life, he says, because he knows God wanted him in the business.

His recipe for happiness during those years is simple. "First," he says, "you have to have a wonderful wife who can put up with you in the travel (a son was born while Black was in Mexico). Second, you have to have a terrific secretary to have everything organized. Third, you have to have a great editor who can make sense out of your scripts. And fourth, you have to have a talented art department to make what you wrote look good."

One of Black's achievements that not only looks good but sounds good is the Royal Ambassador pledge. He wrote it and says his greatest joy is to hear boys saying, "As a Royal Ambassador I will do my best...."

And that pretty much sums up Black's career--he did his best because he was doing what he knew God wanted him to do.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission.

Missions Teleconference
To Be Repeated March 25

Baptist Press
3/15/84

ATLANTA (BP)--A two hour teleconference on home missions held on Feb. 4 involving 2,000 people in 10 cities will be repeated via videotape and satellite telecast on March 25.

About 300 to 400 Southern Baptist Churches which already have installed "down-link" satellite receiving "dishes" are expected to videotape the teleconference for showing to church members at their own convenience, said J. C. Durham, director of the media department for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

A letter has been sent to churches which purchased satellite receiving dishes from the SBC Sunday School Board as part of the Baptist TelNet (BTN) system, informing them of the satellite transmission and encouraging them to record the teleconference for later showing.

Durham said several hundred SBC churches have bought and installed down-link dishes from commercial suppliers, but there is no way to know which SBC churches have done so. "We hope the word will spread and the churches will respond," Durham said.

The teleconference will be broadcast at 4:15 p. m., EST, on March 25, and repeated at 5:45 p.m., EST the same day, on SAT COM III Transponder 18.

Response to the live teleconference on Feb. 4 was tremendous, Durham said. It was the first nationwide teleconference used by Southern Baptists in missions education. It was held in connection with the Week of Prayer for Home Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions.

The teleconference features Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner and Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Carolyn Weatherford, videotape segments of home missionaries, and telephone hookups with missionaries as far away as Cold Bay, Alaska. Tanner and Weatherford also answer questions from Baptists meeting in 10 cities via telephone hookup.

Durham, host for the teleconference, said the March 25 rebroadcast would enable members of hundreds of churches which have satellite receiving dishes to see the teleconference even if they were unable to attend the event on Feb. 4.

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