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Role Playing At Funerals
Examined By Baylor Professor

By John Dellis

WACO, Texas (BP)—Few people smile. Some act as if nothing has happened. Most grieve. Others show a peaceful expression of tranquility. Funerals can be anything from a somber religious occasion to just one more opportunity to socialize.

After attending more than 100 Southern Baptist funerals while a pastor in Mississippi, Baylor University sociologist Tillman Rodabough identified definite, observable roles that people assume when they attend a funeral.

There are several distinct, yet common roles played by clergy, family and friends of the deceased, he found. Rodabough has written about these experiences in an article entitled "Funeral Roles: Ritualized Expectations."

"I saw some weird behavior during the research," Rodabough said. "Some relatives who grieved the most hadn't been around the deceased at all. I was curious as to why people act so differently at funerals."

While he was a pastor he first noticed different roles played at funerals. He started keeping notes. "When I did the research, I gave the roles descriptive names such as 'Eternal Evangelist' for one type of pastor and 'Party Goer' for one type of funeral goer," he said.

Some of the common clergy roles he has identified include the "Young Seminarian," who is easily recognized not only by age but also through attempts to interpret the reaction the funeral sermon will have on those attending.

The "Master Performer" uses the whole funeral as a stage and manages to keep himself the center of attention, Rodabough said. The crisp personal style of the "Harried Professional" is designed to communicate that the pastor is successful and busy. This type perceives the pastoral role as that of a professional and tries to accomplish the funeral responsibilities in a cool, businesslike manner.

The "Comforting Shepherd" clergyman realizes the impact of loss with its accompanying grief upon those who are bereaved, and then attempts to provide support for them through a soft manner and comforting words, Rodabough said.

"One question people often ask is, 'How do you learn what is expected of you at a funeral?'" Rodabough said. "We learn from others at funerals. A church molds a pastor into his role, and he also has an impact on the congregation. If he is young, he will adapt to them because he is learning his role as a pastor."

Rodabough identified five major roles enacted by friends or non-family members who are funeral participants. They include the "Party Goer," who feels any social event is better than no social event, so he or she "makes do" with the funeral, he said. He noted this type of funeral goer most frequently in the smaller communities.

The "Status Accountant," says Rodabough, has a pocket calculator instead of a brain. This type of funeral goer feels that if the funeral costs are high, the status of the family is enhanced, and vice versa. This type of persons attends funerals primarily to check out the lavishness of the funeral service.

Some friends display open expressions of grief that rival the grief expressed by those in the immediate family, Rodabough said. He labels these "Professional Grievers." They are most often individuals who attend all funerals in the community to openly grieve for the deceased.

But the "Family Supporter" is a person whose primary motivation is to provide support for the family members during their time of loss and grief. Those family members most in need are provided physical and emotional support which extends both directions in time from the actual funeral. Sometimes, months later, these friends are still providing the support needed by the survivors to work through the grief process.

"One of the most interesting things is someone playing 'Professional Griever' to the hilt," he said. "You can see these roles, especially in the smaller churches."

Denominational affiliation and geographic regions are not factors in the roles people display at funerals, he observed. What does make the difference is often the size of the church. It is unlikely to see the active roles in the larger churches, he said.

"Over time in a specific area among the same people, mutual expectations of how to act at funerals can become ritualized," Rodabough said. "These rituals provide the stable support so valuable during a time of emotional upheaval. Role expectations of ministers, family members and non-family participants can vary across situations and actors."

"These expectations can evolve over time into other sets of mutual expectations as roles and participating persons change," he said. "A funeral can be as inactive or as energetic as its participants desire."

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(Dellis is a student writer in the Baylor University Office of Public Relations.)

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Draper 'Elated' Over Missions;
'Grieved' SBC Lacks Awareness

By Robert O'Brien

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NAIROBI, Kenya (BP)—James T. Draper Jr. ventured onto what he has called the Southern Baptist Convention's "common ground" of missions and will return to the United States "both elated and grieved."

"I'm elated in seeing our missionaries down with the people starting churches, witnessing for Jesus Christ, paying the price," said the SBC president from Euless, Texas, during a 25-day working tour of foreign missions. He preached, taught and worked with missionaries as they witnessed, dedicated a church, planned evangelism strategy and visited mission points.

"I'm grieved when I realize how little Southern Baptists really understand what the missionaries are doing," he declared during his tour of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco. I find myself grieved in spirit and emotional at times because I realize I'm 48 years old and didn't fully realize that myself," he said. "Historically, Southern Baptists have found it convenient to give large sums of money to pay someone to do their mission work."

Draper said his experience on this and previous trips to Southern Baptist foreign mission fields has proven "missions and evangelism are definitely the SBC's common ground and the glue which holds us together."

"I see missions as a common ground now more than ever," he declared. "We can never be held together through our academic institutions. We will always argue in academia. That can't be the glue. Evangelism and missions in the U.S. and overseas are going to have to be the things that bind us together."

He said the experiences continued to prove to his satisfaction foreign missionaries do the right kind of jobs in evangelism, Bible teaching and church development—despite "erroneous perception" to the contrary which some of his fellow inerrantists have developed during the SBC inerrancy debate.

"There may be some duds on the foreign mission field," he said. "There probably are because we have some of them in the pastorate in the U.S. But the missionaries I've met out here want to see people get saved, and they're building churches and training national leaders. Man, that's what it's all about."

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Draper also expressed "grief that Southern Baptists have treated missionaries more like novelties when they're home on furlough rather than as people who can make a real contribution to our ongoing missions consciousness."

"We've isolated them to missions emphases," he continued. "It's almost like a zoo. The missionaries are often our spiritual zoo and we parade them periodically. But we don't really use them effectively in our ongoing work."

Draper issued a call for more thought and planning by the Foreign Mission Board; national, state and associational leaders; pastors, church staffers and lay people to solve the problem.

Some ideas he suggested were a better information system of furloughing missionaries' availability and expertise, more missionaries on church staffs to increase missions awareness, and better use of SBC presidents and former presidents "as emissaries for missions."

"Every SBC president who's set foot on the mission field is sold on missions," Draper said. "He has to be impressed with what he sees. The missionaries are out here hitting the ball. I'm going to stop being president in a few weeks, and if the pattern follows, there'll be no plan to utilize me in a positive way toward building missions consciousness and support."

"There ought to be. Do you realize we have more living former SBC presidents now than at any other time in history? Every one of them has stature in somebody's eyes and there ought to be a concerted effort to utilize their influence. The further you get from a man's presidency, the more stature he has. Even if his presidency has been controversial, he will be more accepted as time passes."

Draper said former presidents need a way to voice their support for missions. "We need to have a planned way of keeping missions alive. Don't make us do it from the back seat of a church and then criticize us for building a super church. Let us help carry the ball."

Draper added if Southern Baptists "knew more of what was going on out on the mission field, they'd funnel more money over here and we'd have more youth surrendering to missions."

Elaborating on the denomination's Cooperative Program budget and missions offerings, he said: "We have a system which isn't perfect. The reason it isn't perfect is that none of us is perfect. I think Jesus had awfully good advice when he said the one without guilt should cast the first stone. None of us can cast the first stone. It's not a perfect system by any means," he continued, "but it's the best system that's ever been devised."

Draper said Southern Baptists should continue to feel it is worth their effort to support the Cooperative Program and missions offerings "as long as we're free to ask questions and do our best to correct things we think are wrong, and as long as denominational leaders will listen and give people a fair hearing." He said lack of that kind of openness or a move of the SBC towards centralizing authority will create more polarization.

"But I see a tremendous move toward openness," he said. "Everyone I've talked to among the conservatives feels like there's more openness than there's ever been. I think our system works, and that it's worth cooperating together to help it get even better."

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

Cooperative Program
Tops \$9 Million Again

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Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—April receipts to the national Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention were \$9,428,869, an increase of more than \$890,000 over April 1983.

It was the fourth highest single month dollar total ever. March was the second highest month ever (\$9.62 million) and January was the best (\$10.23 million). The string of record collections brightens the budget picture for the 20 mission and educational agencies of the SBC, although it still appears the yearly totals will fall short of the \$114.5 million 1983-84 operating budget which ends September 30.

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Receipts would have to average more than \$10.2 million the final five months to underwrite the operating budget. Through seven months receipts have averaged just over \$9 million. Since January, however, the average has been more than \$9.54 million, leading to optimism the final shortfall will be less than earlier feared.

For the year, the Cooperative Program is 6.22 percent ahead of 1982-83 receipts for the same period, reflecting a healthy gain in real dollars when compared to the drastically lowered inflation rate.

In 1982-83, monthly receipts only exceeded the \$9 million mark three times. Through seven months, the current year has had three over the \$9 million mark—all in the last four months.

Florida continued to show the way among the 38 state conventions which voluntarily contribute to the national Cooperative Program. Florida is third in total dollar giving (\$4,927,928) and fourth in percentage increase over last year (15.21).

Other percentage increase leaders are: West Virginia (31.45); Hawaii (22.37); Nevada (19.78), and Arizona (13.34). Texas is the total dollar leader (\$11,122,857) while four other states in addition to Florida have contributed more than \$4 million: Georgia (\$5,400,133); North Carolina (\$4,406,148); Alabama (\$4,270,806) and Oklahoma (\$4,223,125).

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HMB Discusses Budget Shortage,
Elects Three Staff Members

By Michael Tutterow

Baptist Press
5/10/84

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptist Home Mission Board President William G. Tanner has cautioned HMB directors a shortfall in Cooperative Program operating budget receipts may force the agency to cut back on programming for 1984.

In opening comments to board members, Tanner noted HMB allocations from the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist Convention's unified budget, fell short by more than \$600,000 during the first six months of the 1983-84 fiscal year.

Tanner warned if Cooperative Program gifts continue at the same rate, the board could find itself more than \$1 million under 1984 budget needs.

Tanner explained October-through-March Cooperative Program contributions are more than \$3.5 million under the amount necessary to fund all SEC agencies 100 percent. The HMB is receiving only about 95 percent of the CP funds needed to fully fund all HMB endeavors for 1984. Tanner said HMB administrators will study whether to initiate a contingency budget in June with a five to 10 percent reduction should CP gifts fail to increase.

Tanner expressed optimism, however, that early receipts of Annie Armstrong Easter Offering funds for 1984 show a 13.2 percent increase over the same period a year ago. Tanner said more than \$3.9 million of the offering has been received so far, about 14 percent of the 1984 goal of \$29 million.

"I'm grateful we're showing an increase, especially in light of Cooperative Program giving," said Tanner. But he added Southern Baptists would need to give 28 percent above last year to meet the 1984 goal.

In a separate action, board members overwhelmingly approved a motion "expressing our confidence in and thanks for Richard Eskew's faithful service to the Home Mission Board as director."

Eskew, pastor of First Baptist Church, Yadkinville, N.C., and a board member since 1977, was eligible for another term but was not recommended for reappointment by the 1984 Committee on Boards. Eskew had served an unexpired term and a full term, and another term would give him 11 years on the Home Mission Board, an "excessively long period of time," according to the Committee on Boards report released April 25.

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HMB board members added their motion "in no way weakens our hope that the Committee on Boards for our Southern Baptist Convention will rescind their published report of deleting Richard's name for his rightful place on this Board."

Board members appointed six missionaries and four missionary associates, including a church planter couple, approved 16 persons for mission service and elected three staff members.

Daniel Bennett Euliss was elected director of the promotion department, effective June 1, and will head the planning, coordination, budgeting, implementing and evaluation of a general educational, promotional and marketing service for the board.

Euliss, a native of Newport News, Va., has been associate director of communications for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina for the past two years, and has been on the communication staff of that state convention since 1974. He has worked in typesetting, as director of publications/art instructor at Elon College in North Carolina and as an art teacher in the Durham County, N.C., school system. He is a graduate of East Carolina University.

James Ervin Forrest, director of missions for Long Beach Harbor Baptist Association, California since 1970, was elected assistant director for the HMB church loans division's western region. He will appraise church programs and church facilities of churches seeking loan/bond assistance and/or counsel from the church loans division.

Prior to appointment as director of missions, Forrest was pastor of churches in Pueblo and Canon City, Colo. and Texas. He is a graduate of Tyler (Texas) Junior College, Baylor University in Waco, Texas and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

J. Leon Boyd, director of missions for Pinellas Baptist Association, Florida, since 1980, was elected associate director of the HMB's metropolitan missions department and will assist in developing and implementing strategies for metropolitan areas with 50,000 to 1,000,000 residents. He will also assist in leading, supervising and correlating the Urban Training Cooperative, a coalition of Southern Baptists organized to equip people and churches for missions in an urban society.

Boyd has been pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla., and of churches in Alabama and Kentucky. He also was a consultant for the Baptist Sunday School Board and associate director of the extension division for Samford University, Birmingham, Ala. He is a graduate of Samford and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Board members also discussed a \$250,000 grant given to the Metro Baptist Church in New York City to help the congregation purchase a church facility in Manhattan. Board members were polled by mail to approve the action after the Metro congregation came up short of the money needed to close on the property.

HMB Mission Vice President Gerald Palmer said he knew of no other situation in the United States where he would recommend such an action by the board. Funds from an endowment by the late Cecil B. Day, founder of Days Inn motel chain, were used because of Day's commitment to reaching the urban northeast, said Palmer.

In other actions, board members approved the "termination by mutual agreement" of James Lowder, pastor/director of Dolores Street Baptist Church in San Francisco, as a Christian social ministries missionary.

Lowder, arrested last year for his part in a nuclear protest in San Francisco, had been jointly employed by the Dolores Street congregation, the Home Mission Board and the California Southern Baptist Convention. The move will make Lowder accountable only to the local church.

The HMB and the California convention will continue to provide a grant to support ministries of the Dolores Street church.

The Dolores Street church is one of several CSM pastor/director positions to be phased out except for grant support, said to Paul Adkins, HMB director of Christian social ministries.