



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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SBC WRAPUP

**Ultraconservatives
Hold Convention**

By Stan Hastey

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)-- Ultraconservatives within the Southern Baptist Convention solidified their grip on the nation's largest non-Catholic denomination here this week by electing as president a strongly conservative Atlanta pastor and brushing aside every challenge from denominational moderates to replace new trustees to denominational agencies.

In other litmus tests of their growing strength, the ultraconservatives pushed through strongly worded statements opposing the ordination of women and condemning abortion and secular humanism.

Moderates in the 139-year-old denomination left Bartle Convention Center licking the wounds of one defeat after another as the ultraconservatives--who refer to themselves as biblical inerrantists--won every key vote save one.

In that action, messengers narrowly turned back an effort to withdraw funding from the embattled Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a denominational agency in Washington, D.C., that represents the SBC and eight other Baptist bodies in church-state affairs.

Charles Stanley, 51-year-old pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, and outgoing president of the influential Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, won a first-ballot victory in the presidential election Tuesday, easily defeating moderate candidate Grady C. Cothen, of Pass Christian, Miss., and outgoing first vice president John Sullivan of Shreveport, La.

A committed inerrantist (one who believes the Bible is truth without error of any kind), Stanley won 52 percent of the vote, a surprisingly strong showing in a year when moderates had geared up for what was supposed to be their strongest challenge to date in the five-year-old struggle for control of the 14.1-million-member body.

Both parties spent months preparing for the showdown through massive telephone calling and precinct-type organizing to get out the vote.

Although the inerrantists have used those tactics for the past five years, this was the first significant such effort by the moderates, who came here claiming as many as 8,000 votes for Cothen.

At a news conference following his election, Stanley repeated the statement made by every inerrantist president beginning with Adrian Rogers of Memphis in 1979 that no faction was responsible for his victory. He said further he had not decided to enter the race until an early morning prayer meeting in a hotel room when God told him he should.

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Stanley's answers to a battery of questions left no doubt that on a wide range of church and social issues he is a committed conservative, as he affirmed inerrancy, opposed ordination of women and endorsed a constitutional amendment on school prayer.

The Atlanta pastor, educated at the University of Richmond and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was a founding director of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, Inc., and is presently a director of another New Right organization, The Roundtable. He holds a doctorate from Luther Rice Theological Seminary, a Florida institution not connected to the SBC.

Conservatives also succeeded in electing Zig Ziglar, a motivational specialist from Dallas, as convention first vice president. He won in a run-off with Donald Wideman, a Kansas City pastor, who later won election in another run-off as second vice president. Re-elected to their eighth term as recording and registration secretaries respectively, were Martin B. Bradley and Lee Porter, both of Nashville.

Aside from elections, the Kansas City contest for control of the denomination was symbolized in moderates' unsuccessful effort to replace Houston judge Paul Pressler, unofficial head of the ultraconservatives, with Dallas pastor Bruce McIver on the powerful Executive Committee. That body, with offices in Nashville, receives and allocates Cooperative Program funds and performs myriad functions for the convention between annual sessions.

Pressler, who along with Dallas theologian Paige Patterson announced five years ago their intention to gain control of the denomination by electing SBC presidents whose appointments would permit inerrantists to gain control of denominational agencies, reacted angrily to the effort to replace him. Witnesses said he demanded an explanation from Amarillo, Texas, pastor Winfred Moore, who nominated McIver, in a confrontation outside the convention center.

Besides the challenge to Pressler, moderates also sought unsuccessfully to replace three other Committee on Boards nominees, but were easily defeated.

Feelings also ran high over the volatile question of ordaining women, an issue heretofore avoided by messengers to annual meetings who had left the matter alone in deference to local churches.

This time, however, the ultraconservatives succeeded in having a sympathetic resolutions committee bring a statement opposing women as pastors and deacons. Dejected women ministers in attendance pledged to continue their battle for recognition in the giant SBC.

In another resolution, messengers expressed opposition to abortion and called for passage of a constitutional amendment to ban the practice except in instances when the life of the mother is endangered. The statement also asked Southern Baptists to quiz their physicians on the matter, asking them whether they perform abortions or refer patients to other doctors who do.

Secular humanism was condemned as a "naturalistic" philosophy that "regard(s) human beings as lords of truth and light," and that has resulted in the irrelevancy of religion in modern America. The statement condemned the teaching of evolution to the exclusion of "scientific creationism" in public school classrooms and castigated the mass media for its concentration on "hedonism."

Other statements endorsed "equal access" legislation to give groups of students who want to meet on public school premises for religious purposes equal standing with other groups who meet for non-academic, extracurricular activities and asked Congress to exempt churches and church institutions from provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1984 relating to sex discrimination.

Still others among the adopted resolutions included condemnations of alcoholic beverages, drunk driving and cigarette smoking. Another objected to President Reagan's reestablishment of U.S. diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

After a brief debate, messengers adopted a special committee's recommendation that members of Southern Baptist congregations in Canada not be seated at the annual session. But it also provides for major new evangelistic outreach in the country's northern neighbor.

In other business actions, the convention handled a host of miscellaneous motions by referring most to denominational agencies. Among these was a pair designed to force the SBC Christian Life Commission to oppose abortion more forcefully.

Another motion, sent to the Executive Committee for study, would establish an office of governmental affairs in Washington in addition to the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Another, asking more time for business sessions at the annual meeting, was referred to the Order of Business Committee. The action came after numerous messengers expressed frustration at dealing with complicated matters in short business sessions.

For the second consecutive year, messengers approved by-law changes to require names of persons appointed to the Committee on Committees and Committee on Resolutions to be released through Baptist Press at least 45 days before the annual meeting. In the future, the by-law change prescribes, resolutions must be submitted by the conclusion of the first day of the convention session.

Messengers also rejected efforts to condition election to SBC offices and trustee slots on the level of contributions to the Cooperative Program. A fall-back motion to amend the SBC constitution to insure that future officers and trustees come from churches that give a certain percentage to the Cooperative Program was referred to the Executive Committee.

Also rejected was a motion asking a special 10-member committee to study ways to reduce tension and foster reconciliation in the denomination. Opponents felt the messengers should handle the problem on the convention floor.

Debate over funding of the Baptist Joint Committee came early Tuesday, when what is ordinarily the routine approval of the Cooperative Program budget turned into a testy argument over the role of the Washington-based agency. Criticism of the BJC by ultraconservatives has centered on the group's opposition to President Reagan's proposed school prayer amendment, a measure defeated in the U.S. Senate last March.

The charge to withdraw funding was led by Dallas attorney Ed Drake, an Executive Committee member who moved to amend the \$130 million 1984-85 budget by reallocating the \$411,436 line item for the BJC. After the move failed by 52-48 percent ballot vote, the budget was routinely adopted.

Of the \$130 million, \$118 million is for the basic operating budget, nearly \$7 million is for capital needs and just over \$5 million is a "challenge" budget.

Other bright spots for moderates came after the crucial votes, when on Wednesday morning Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president Roy Honeycutt defended his own biblical conservatism to the cheers of the messengers. He had been challenged by a messenger who questioned Honeycutt's commitment to an inerrant Bible.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president Russell H. Dilday, who delivered the convention sermon, rebuked inerrantists in thinly-veiled exhortations to seek "higher ground" by leaving the "misty flats" of "suspicion, rumor, criticism, innuendoes, guilt by association and the entire demonic family of forced uniformity."

He also decried the surrender of individualism in Baptist life in favor of by those he called "a coterie of the orthodox watching to catch a brother in a statement that sounds heretical, carelessly categorizing churches as liberal or fundamentalist, unmindful of the effect that criticism may have on God's work."

Dilday also warned that the Baptist commitment to separation of church and state is threatened when religious leaders seek help from government in achieving religious ends.

Inspirational moments during the three-day gathering included the launching of ACTS, the American Christian Television System, and BTN, the new television ministry of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

ACTS, a network of the SBC Radio and Television Commission, is designed as a Christian alternative to commercial TV, while BTN is a service to local congregations for Christian education and training.

Messengers also heard reports from each of the denomination's 19 boards and commissions, highlighted by colorful presentations by the Home and Foreign Mission Boards. The annual meeting attracted 17,085, making it the fifth largest in the 139-year-old history of the convention.

At next year's June 11-13 session in Dallas, Charles Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va., will preach the convention sermon. Grady Wilson, a North Carolina evangelist, is alternate preacher.

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Resolutions Cover
Rang Of Issues

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
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KANSAS CITY, June 14--Messengers to the 127th Southern Baptist Convention overwhelmingly adopted 11 resolutions Thursday on a wide range of issues, including opposition to the ordination of women and a U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, while favoring equal access legislation.

SBC President James T. Draper Jr. of Euless, Texas, emphasized that the actions merely represented opinions of the messengers attending this annual meeting of the denomination and are not binding on local Southern Baptist churches.

A strongly-worded resolution opposing ordination of women was passed by a vote of 4,793 to 3,466 after an unsuccessful attempt by Wayne Dehoney, pastor of Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Ky., to have the resolution ruled unconstitutional on the grounds it attempted to instruct local churches.

"The conclusion of this resolution tells the local church to exclude certain persons from serving as pastors," said Dehoney. "That is dealing with something that is the affair of the local church entirely. We have the Bible, the Holy Spirit and the free autonomy of local churches in this matter.."

Draper's ruling against Dehoney's point of order was challenged by Bill Cox, First Baptist Church, Nevada, Mo., but messengers voted to sustain the ruling.

The resolution takes the position that the Bible excludes women from pastoral leadership positions.

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"We encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination," the resolution concludes.

Susan Lockwood Wright, an ordained minister and pastor of Cornell Avenue Baptist Church, Chicago, Ill., was on the platform when the resolution was discussed and had sought to speak on a point of personal privilege. She repeated her request when the vote was announced but was turned down on both occasions, she said.

After the session, Wright told Draper that she understood the dilemma of granting personal privileges to messengers but "women feel shut out because there wasn't enough time to discuss" the resolution.

Draper reiterated the non-binding nature of the resolution. "The more we say the more emotional and complicated the issue becomes," he said, adding that a lack of time was a major factor in refusing to allow Wright to address the messengers.

Earlier, the messengers voted to limit themselves to eight minutes of discussion on each resolution.

Resolutions Committee Chairman Bailey Stone of Odessa, Texas, said after the morning session, "I feel it would be against the intent of the committee and certainly my intent were anyone to use this resolution to withdraw fellowship from any church that happens to believe in ordination of women.

"This was a statement of the convention," Stone emphasized. "It binds no church or association. Please remember the first part of the resolution reaffirms our conviction on the authority and autonomy of the local church."

A resolution registering continuing opposition to a U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, authorized earlier this year by Congress at the request of President Ronald Reagan, was adopted virtually unanimously.

An amendment that would have expressed indignation at Reagan's action in initiating the appointment of an ambassador failed after Resolutions Committee member David Simpson, Indianapolis, Ind., said the amendment "carries political overtones we need to avoid."

A resolution supporting equal access legislation to allow students to use school facilities for religious meetings was also passed with little opposition.

Ira Peak, a messenger from Memorial Baptist Church, Columbia, Mo., said, "This is an issue on which we must speak definitely and profoundly. Equal access legislation calls on us to allow people free speech in the public schools and not have this right abridged because the voice is a religious voice."

A resolution on secular humanism passed by a wide margin after a failed attempt to have it referred to the SBC Executive Committee for further study.

Bill Blackburn, Trinity Baptist Church, Kerrville, Texas, called the resolution "vague, confusing and contradictory." In addition to secular humanism, Blackburn charged the resolution dealt with prayer in public schools, equal access, hedonism, mass media and calls on public schools to teach doctrine.

George Schroeder, a member of the Resolutions Committee and an ophthalmologist from Little Rock, Ark., said the resolution, "rather than vague, is all-encompassing. It deals with the invasion of humanism into American life."

A third resolution relating to religious liberty and separation of church and state called for changes in the 1984 Civil Rights Act currently under consideration in Congress in which religious schools and institutions are being defined as recipients of federal financial assistance. The resolution asked Congress to redefine the term "recipients" or clearly exempt exclusively religious organizations, religious schools and institutions.

Urging support for the resolution, Richard Land, First Baptist Church, Dallas, called the legislation the "greatest federal power grab in the history of the federal government. It would put all private education under federal legislation."

Resolutions condemning alcohol and tobacco were adopted with amendments.

A wide-ranging resolution against cigarette smoking urged increased efforts at educating people to the dangers of smoking and asked church leaders to encourage people not to smoke.

Messengers added amendments which encouraged Congress to terminate subsidies to those who plant, grow or sell tobacco products; encouraging Southern Baptists who grow tobacco to cease doing so and switch to another crop; and urging efforts at every level of the denomination "in encouraging people, pastors and SBC leaders to refrain from using tobacco in any form."

The alcohol resolution urged support for raising the minimum drinking age to 21 as well as warning of the dangers of alcohol and drunk driving.

Messengers accepted an amendment from Woodrow Robbins, Balfour Baptist Church, Asheboro, N.C., asking for a ban on alcohol advertisements especially during athletic contests and urging Congress to put warning labels on all beverage alcohol containers.

A resolution opposing abortion for any purpose except to save the life of the mother and urging the passage of appropriate legislation and/or a constitutional amendment was adopted. The resolution also urged Southern Baptist institutions to provide abortion alternatives such as counseling and adoption services.

An amendment by Dick Maples, pastor of First Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas, that would have broadened the language of the resolution to allow for abortion in cases of rape or incest failed by a vote of 3,494 to 3,316.

The remaining three resolutions voiced strong opposition to legalized gambling, urged increased efforts toward worldwide evangelism and expressed appreciation to the host city, state conventions and officers of the convention.

A total of 30 resolutions were submitted by convention messengers. Of these, the committee recommended no action on nine without stating a reason. Six others were not acted upon because they related to issues addressed in resolutions in recent conventions.

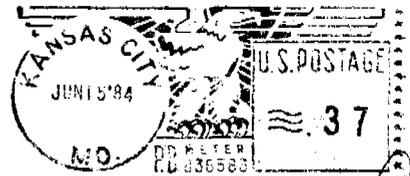
One resolution was referred to the Foreign Mission Board and 14 were incorporated into seven of the 11 resolutions the committee submitted to the convention.

Resolutions on cigarette smoking, the Civil Rights Act of 1984, worldwide evangelism, and appreciation to the host city were initiated by the committee.

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