



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 Sian L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

November 7, 1984

84-161

'Stand Up For Jesus' Southern Baptists Told

By Marv Knox

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—Southern Baptists must "stand up for Jesus"—not their own special interests—if the conflict in their midst is to be resolved, William H. Elder III told participants in a conference on issues facing the Southern Baptist Convention.

Elder's analysis came at the end of the conference Nov. 2-4, sponsored by St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, where he is pastor. About 200 persons from eight states attended.

"The real crisis we face in the Southern Baptist Convention is a crisis of the Holy Spirit," Elder said. "We are grieving the Spirit these days," he added, noting the political strife which has rocked the SBC for five years.

"Grieving the Spirit happens when people of faith allow their differences to separate them from each other and use their differences to establish hierarchies and power blocks," he said. It also happens when people "simply assume God is on our side and therefore make holy our own preferences and predispositions, instead of making our preferences and predispositions by what's already on his (the Spirit's) holy list," he added.

Southern Baptists are "guilty on both counts," Elder insisted, noting the effect "is to shrink the conduits through which the Spirit's power comes to us when, what we really need to do is to free up the Spirit."

Southern Baptists can do this by realizing that differences among them are real, by recognizing the sinfulness of grieving the Spirit and by repenting of the sins which separate them from each other and the Spirit, he said.

"The only way we can really pull off this freeing of the Spirit is by 'standing up' not first for the Bible or for our history or for our polity but for Jesus," Elder said. "For standing up for Jesus surely means standing up with him as our norm, as our standard, standing by his side." If Southern Baptists truly stand up for Jesus, they "might just see him once again out in front, waving us on, saying, 'Come together, follow me—for I am the way, the truth and the life,'" he concluded.

Other speakers in the conference included: Glenn Hilburn, chairman of the department of religion at Baylor University, Waco, Texas; Frank Stagg, emeritus professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Bill Sherman, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn.

The Southern Baptist Convention was "emphatically not created as a consequence of theological differences but for the propagation of the Bible," Hilburn said. He provided a sketch of Baptist history and noted Baptists traditionally have stood for several principles—liberty of conscience and the separation of church and state, evangelism, ministerial education and missions—which have united them beyond theological differences.

But a yearning for "security" has caused some Southern Baptists to seek theological orthodoxy, Hilburn said. He emphasized this leaning toward rigid theological interpretations has contributed to the erosion of Southern Baptist identity in recent years. Instead of placing their trust and hope for security in orthodoxy, Southern Baptists need to "find the authority of Jesus Christ" and be "open to the spirit of God," he noted.

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Stagg said authority of the Bible--center of much recent SBC debate--should be "understood according to its purpose and nothing else." He indicated Baptists' focus should be on how the Bible is "authoritative for faith and practice"--something all of them can affirm--rather than on theories about the inspiration of Scripture or its scientific or historical authority.

Sherman lamented "most layfolk don't know what's going on" in the Southern Baptist Convention. He described what he believes to be a political "machine" which has been used to "control the democratic process of the SBC" by controlling the convention's presidential elections and the president's appointments.

But Sherman said all Southern Baptists, laypeople included, can help heal the convention by being informed about SBC issues, sharing concerns and insights with others and participating in the SBC annual meetings. Informed Southern Baptists who attend the annual meetings and vote their consciences, immune to political manipulation of any kind, he said, will be "acting to preserve what is worthy of having in our noble convention."

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New York Convention
Increases CP Giving

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11/7/84

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (BP)--The Baptist Convention of New York adopted a budget of \$2,075,899 for 1984-85 and increased the percentage of undesignated receipts from local churches it will send on to the worldwide mission and educational programs of the Southern Baptist Convention through the Cooperative Program from 22 percent to 23 percent.

The 15th annual session of the BCNY attracted 209 messengers and 72 guests.

Reports from all areas of ministry of the convention showed increases for the past year. The convention's budget includes approximately \$1.5 million from the Home Mission Board and the Baptist Sunday School Board.

In other stewardship related matters, Cecil Ray led the convention in entering the Planned Growth In Giving program. Commitment cards were signed and received from the leadership of the BCNY, including staff, officers and executive board members. Also the convention voted to participate in the new church annuity plan to take effect in 1988.

A resolution expressed opposition to the appointment by the government of an ambassador to the Vatican. It urged the Executive Committee of the SBC to recind earlier action and actively join in the legal challenge to the appointment of an ambassador to the Holy See in the name of maintaining a consistent public stance on the matter of separation of church and stat .

Another resolution affirmed the establishment of a task team for increasing the availability of Southern Baptist theological education in New England.

The convention also voted to name the state mission offering after Paul and Ava James. James, executive director emeritus of the NYBC, and his wife were the first Southern Baptist missionary leaders in the Northeast.

New officers, all pastors, are: Edwin Hewlett, Metropolitan Baptist Church in Rochester, president; Sam Simpson, Bronx and Wake Eden Baptist Churches, New York City, first vice-president; Conrado Navarro, William Carey Spanish Baptist Church, Long Island, second vice-president, and Lawrence Coleman, Bellewood Baptist Church, North Syracuse, recording secretary. Waylen Gray, pastor of Stamford Baptist Church was elected chairman of the executive board.

Hewlett established Metropolitan Baptist Church five years ago, following a successful ministry in Missouri. During that time the church has raised over \$400,000.

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CORRECTION--In (BP) story, "Southeastern Trustees OK Student Center," mailed 11/5/84, in second paragraph Beaver had been "chairman of the board" for the maximum two one-year terms.

Thanks,
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Southern Baptist Missionaries
Set To Re-Enter Mozambique

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries will re-enter Mozambique in late 1985 or early 1986 when a new missionary couple completes orientation and Portuguese language study.

Mozambique officially became the 105th Southern Baptist mission field at the Foreign Mission Board's October meeting. The board appointed Alabama pastor James R. Brock and his wife, Brenda, to do church development, evangelism and leadership training in the southern African nation.

Southern Baptists had missionaries in Mozambique earlier, but they departed in September 1975 because anti-American sentiment, then prevalent in the newly independent Marxist nation, made their work practically impossible.

The Brocks will enter orientation at the board's Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va., in January 1985, and then go to Portugal for language study the following April. The board is seeking another couple for the same work.

Mozambique, which has been troubled by political unrest and austere economic conditions, has become a high priority because of "tremendous evangelistic potential," according to Marion G. (Bud) Fray, the board's associate director for Southern Africa.

The Mozambique Baptist Convention, which invited Southern Baptists to re-enter the country, currently operates with eight churches and 26 mission congregations. "We have a tremendous opportunity to help train leaders in this young convention which stands on the edge of really doing something for Jesus Christ," Fray said.

Meanwhile, national Baptists from six nations where Southern Baptists have missionaries have been responding to needs in Mozambique.

Brazilian Baptists have sent a missionary couple and two single missionaries to work there on a full-time basis, while Southern Baptist missionaries and national Baptists in five surrounding African nations have provided hunger relief, evangelistic and leadership training assistance.

In the latest effort, an interracial team from South Africa took in more than 15 tons of relief supplies and did evangelistic work, according to Southern Baptist missionaries Dwight and Lila Reagan, who accompanied the team.

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Mechanics And Ministry Merge
For This Seminary Student

By Michael Dudit

Baptist Press
11/7/84

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—While other seminarians find their ministry outlets in pulpits and classrooms, Chuck Edwards has found his under the hood of an automobile.

Combining a commitment to evangelism with a knack for mechanics, Edwards, a third-year student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., has begun conducting "Auto Clinics" in area churches.

"People bring in their cars and I diagnose them and instruct volunteer laymen and owners in making repairs. It builds friendships and breaks down barriers for sharing Christ," Edwards explains. "It shows people in the community this church wants to help."

The idea started when Edwards helped a neighborhood boy repair his car, "and I saw how I reached him through auto mechanics. He learned I was willing to get my hands dirty with him," Edwards recalls.

Since age nine, Edwards has been tinkering with cars. As a teenager he dropped out of high school to work as a mechanic. Church was the last thing on his mind, but two incidents—each involving cars—brought him to a new relationship with Christ.

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"I loved to hot rod and zigzag through heavy traffic," Edwards recalls. "I picked up a hitchhiker one day and took him for the ride of his life. He never flinched. When I let him out, he asked me, 'Brother, are you saved?' Electricity ran through me. I told him yes, but the answer was no. It haunted me. I couldn't fool him or God."

Later Edwards encountered a Methodist minister whose car was being repaired at a shop where he worked. Because of the delay by the shop owner in placing an order, the car was held up for six weeks. When the owner finally confessed to the minister, he simply said, "An honest confession is good for the soul." "He should have been angry. What peace, I thought. That stayed with me," Edwards explained.

When his own car broke down, Edwards decided his father might let him borrow his car if he attended a local Baptist church as his sister had been urging. It was at the service Edwards committed his life to Christ.

Sensing a call to preach, Edwards obtained his GED certificate, then graduated from Fruitland Baptist Bible Institute in Hendersonville, N.C., and Furman University in Greenville, S.C., before entering Southern seminary.

His "Auto Clinic" ministry is seeing results. It has proven to be very effective "as an outreach and evangelistic tool for the local church," according to Dallas Vincent, pastor of Ormsby Heights Baptist Church, Louisville, where Edwards conducted a clinic a year ago.

Edwards hopes the clinic idea will spread. "If I do a clinic, I can only touch a few. But if I share the concept with others, a lot more can be reached. A church can hire a good mechanic for a day," he explained.

The seminarian hopes to continue his clinics, as well as do prison ministry, when he finishes at Southern in May because "I want to try innovative ways to reach people who are hostile to God."

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(BP) photo available upon request from Southern seminary

CORRECTION--In (BP) story, "Louisiana Association Disfellowships Church," mailed 11/6/84, fourth paragraph, the associational moderator is Roger Freeman, pastor of Trinity Heights Baptist Church, Shreveport, La.

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Baptist Medical Fellowship
Hears SBC Leaders, Missionaries

By Mike Davis

Baptist Press
11/7/84

ATLANTA (BP)--Six hundred physicians, dentists, nurses and pharmacists attended the eighth annual meeting of the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship, Nov. 1-4, in Atlanta.

The guest list included six SBC agency heads, the Georgia Baptist Convention executive director, the current Georgia Baptist Convention president, two former Georgia Baptist Convention presidents and a world renowned leprosy expert.

Paul Brand, chief of rehabilitation at the Hansen's Disease Center, Carville, La., challenged the doctors to reach out to people in a keynote address.

"Guard most carefully those things that are committed to your charge," Brand urged, quoting from I Timothy. He emphasized individual Christians are responsible for passing the gospel from generation to generation and praised the doctors for their mission involvement. Brand warned the doctors not to let medical technology make their practice impersonal.

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"We have to identify ourselves with the people we serve," he said. "It's easy to go to a place and dazzle the people with all the high technology we have. Technology can help demonstrate the love of God, but it can also hinder.

"We have to be the flesh in every generation," he added, referring to God's becoming flesh by allowing Christ to minister on earth. "We have to touch people. The real essence of the gospel of Christ is that it has to be done through individual persons."

James Smith, Brotherhood Commission president, praised the doctors for their involvement in missions and urged the laymen not to be sidetracked from missions by apathy or by theological debates. Smith said he sees a new day in missions because so many laymen are volunteering for short term mission assignments.

William Self, pastor of Wieuca Road Baptist Church, led a series of Bible studies on the modern prophets. He urged the doctors not to think of religion as something just to make you feel good. "The gospel is not to feel," he said, "it's to go. It's not how high we jump, but how straight we walk." Usefulness in God's kingdom is the goal of religion, not happiness per se, he added.

Randall Lolley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., asked the doctors not to put labels on each other and to work to build trust in one another. Christ chose laymen as his disciples, he reminded the doctors. "The call is to make disciples as we go," he said, calling for Southern Baptists to develop lifestyles of evangelism.

William Tanner, Home Mission Board president, told the doctors America is the fourth largest unchurched country in the world. In 1983 more missionaries of all kinds were sent to the U.S. than to any other country in the world, he said. Tanner called on the doctors to make spreading the gospel in America a priority, and urged them to care about each other and non-Christians.

Jimmy Allen, Radio and Television Commission president, pointed out the importance of modern communications to spreading the gospel. "God's doing great things among us," he said, "and we need to get that information to the homes of America." He noted the 18-week-old ACTS network is adding 126 homes a week and 56,000 persons a day with expectations of having ACTS accessible to between 20 and 25 million viewers in the near future.

Georgia Baptist Executive Director-Treasurer James Griffith reminded the doctors they play a big part in the Bold Mission Thrust by participating in medical missions. He revealed a 10-year plan to establish enough clinics to provide free medical and dental care to needy people in each of Georgia's 92 Baptist associations. The clinics will be staffed by volunteers. "The Great Commission is not selective or elective," he said. "It's imperative. The Lord waits on our giving, our praying and our going."

Current Georgia Baptist Convention president, Nelson Price, exhorted the doctors to be enthusiastic Christians and to measure their ministry by asking three questions: "Was the work done well? Was the Lord well pleased? Was the word well applied?"

Several other SBC leaders participated in the meeting. WMU President Carolyn Weatherford, met with the Baptist Nursing Fellowship, a companion fellowship to the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship. Former SBC President Louie Newton gave a welcoming speech, and Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks, led in worship services at Wieuca Road Baptist Church where the conference participants worshiped.

The 1984-85 fellowship officers elected at the meeting included: president, Jack Bennett, a Kansas City, Kan., dentist; president-elect, Dewy Durn, a Nashville, Tenn., gastroenterologist; finance chairman, Judy Orosz, a Martinez, Ga., pediatrician; service chairman, Curtis Jordan, a Tulsa, Okla., family practitioner; membership chairman, Joel Alvis, a Jackson, Miss., urologist; scholarship chairman, M.A. Winchester, a Whitley City, Ky., family practitioner; student chairman, Raymond Reed, a Tampa, Fla., dentist, and 1986 program chairmen, Franklin Fowler, senior medical consultant with the Foreign Mission Board and Bill Gabenta, director of medical services at the Foreign Mission Board.

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*460 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37219*

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
127 9TH AVE NO
NASHVILLE TN 37234