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85-12

Trustees OK Editorial Guidelines;
Elect Two Department Managers

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Trustees of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board adopted editorial guidelines concerning ordination of women, affirmed the actions of President Lloyd Elder in dealing with critical concerns about board products and employees and elected two veteran employees to department management posts.

The agenda of the two-day semi-annual meeting Feb. 5-6 was crowded with business items as the trustees also adopted a three percent increase in church literature prices effective April 1986, authorized an increase in the formula for state convention support and heard a report on 1983-84 from Elder.

Don Early, 49, was elected manager of the newly created financial and technical services department, effective March 1. A 26-year employee of the board, Early has been manager of the investment office since 1979.

Joe Denney, 46, was named to manage the telecommunications department formed Oct. 1, 1984. Denney, a 23-year employee, has led telecommunications work since its inception at the board in 1982.

After one hour of debate, the proposed editorial guidelines on ordination of women were adopted by a vote of 43-20.

Overall, the guidelines specify giving "clear support to basic Christian and Baptist beliefs" while dealing "factually and fairly with differing points of view among Southern Baptists."

The guidelines emphasize "ordination of deacons and ministers is a matter completely under the authority of the local congregation" and the board will "continue to affirm and encourage the biblical and historic contribution of women to the cause of Christ."

Acknowledging differences of opinion exist among Southern Baptists concerning ordination of women, the guidelines state that in church literature and Convention Press products, "the issue will be dealt with factually and fairly with neither point of view being ignored or disparaged."

The guidelines were adopted after a proposed amendment failed by a vote of 32-26 which would have prohibited any stand for or against ordination of women in any church literature or Convention Press product. The amendment was proposed by Ned Mathews, pastor of Parkwood Baptist Church, Gastonia, N.C.

Roland Maddox, a layman from Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., said the guidelines give equal treatment to opposing views when "I believe most Baptists are opposed to the ordination of women."

Elder said the board "will not become an endorser, advocate or disparager" of views concerning ordination of women. "If these guidelines are established, our editors and writers will conform to them," he said.

In the final action of the meeting, trustees adopted without opposition a motion expressing confidence in Elder's handling of critical concerns and affirming support of the "Baptist Faith and Message."

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The action followed a presentation by Elder the previous day in which he outlined a plan of action for responding to critical concerns.

Elder reviewed three recent illustrations of critical letters he has received in which the writers had also sent copies to each trustee. He said the incidents raise three important questions: "What, if any, impact should critical correspondence have on the agenda of trustee meetings? How should the president respond to critical concerns? and What is the commitment and practice of the president and trustees regarding Holy Scripture?"

One incident Elder cited was correspondence from Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, Dallas, in which he questioned whether a commentary on the book of Joshua by board employee Trent Butler adheres to the guidelines of the "Baptist Faith and Message." The commentary was written by Butler while he was teaching at Baptist Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, as a Baptist foreign missionary and was published in 1982 by Word, Inc., Waco, Texas.

Elder said he acknowledged Patterson's first letter which he received Jan. 10 and which Elder said was based on second-hand information. Elder promised Patterson in his response of Jan. 14 to look into the matter since he was not familiar with the book in question. Elder received a second letter from Patterson dated Jan. 25, with copies to each trustee, in which Elder said Patterson criticized his alleged inaction concerning the matter.

"In 15 short days he thrust the issue upon the trustees as if all the facts were known and the time for decision had already come," said Elder. "The urgent concern of Brother Paige Patterson is receiving the careful consideration of the president of the board. But the president of this board must not act irresponsibly based on incomplete information."

On the one hand, said Elder, "we should not allow each meeting to be dominated by correspondence concerning critical concerns." However, on the other hand, "neither should we be silent because it would tend to isolate trustees from the president."

Elder said his files are open to all trustees. "I want you to know all you want to know or need to know," he said.

In a related matter, Larry Holly, a physician from Beaumont, Texas, introduced two motions at the close of the meeting. The first motion, referring to the Plans and Policies Committee for further study, called for more stringent guidelines concerning biblical content of materials published by Broadman Press and specified all Broadman products on the market be reviewed and any found in violation be withdrawn.

A second motion which was defeated by a wide majority would have instructed the president of the board to apprise trustees of any questions concerning board products or employees and of his plan of action for responding to the questions.

In other business, trustees authorized the creation of a special ministries department to include black church relations, special education and language publishing. Revisions of program statements for the board's 17 programs were adopted along with changes in the formulas for support for state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Support to the state conventions will be increased gradually over the five-year period 1985-90 as part of the board's commitment to Bold Mission Thrust, with earliest increases going to work in newer convention states.

In his report of progress during the first year of his administration, Elder emphasized, "As far as I'm concerned, the single most burning issue at the Sunday School Board is the authentic success of Bold Mission Thrust. Bold Mission Thrust is a relationship we have to Jesus Christ. Bold Mission Thrust has been bedrock to the Sunday School Board in the last year."

Among contributions Elder cited included adoption of guidelines for treatment of the millennium in literature, participation in the denomination's study of Baptist work in Canada, launching of Baptist Telecommunication Network and commitment to a strategy for language publishing.

Trustees and the administrative staff of the board individually committed themselves to participation in Planned Growth In Giving, a 15-year plan for increasing Southern Baptist giving to support Bold Mission Thrust.

Trustee chairman John Bryan, a pathologist from Bluefield, W. Va., said, "Bold Mission Thrust will be little more than a catchy slogan unless it is immersed in bold praying and supported by bold giving."

Bryan was reelected to a second one-year term as chairman. Also reelected were John David Laida, pastor of First Baptist Church, Clarksville, Tenn., vice-chairman, and Pat Landrum, pastor of Brighton Baptist Church, Brighton, Tenn., recording secretary.

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

Dilday Claims Pressler Wants
To Create 'Criswell Clones'

By Jim Newton

Baptist Press
2/8/85

ATLANTA (BP)--The president of the nation's largest theological seminary charged that a conservative political takeover group within the Southern Baptist Convention is trying to make every Baptist seminary "just like Criswell Bible Institute" in Dallas and "create clones of Dr. (W.A.) Criswell."

Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, told about 1,000 "Concerned Southern Baptists" of Georgia that unless the takeover is stopped within the next three or four years, "Southern Baptists will lose Southwestern Seminary" and every other agency.

Dilday quoted extensively Judge Paul Pressler of Houston and Criswell Bible Institute President Paige Patterson, whom he identified as key leaders in the SBC conservative "control movement."

According to Dilday, Judge Pressler said in a radio broadcast that he wanted to make every institution in the Southern Baptist Convention "just like Criswell Bible Institute."

Dilday quoted Patterson as saying in a radio-broadcast sermon at First Baptist Church of Dallas his goal as president of Criswell Bible Institute was "to create clones of Dr. Criswell," the venerated pastor of the nation's largest SBC church, First Baptist of Dallas.

Dilday said he had difficulty believing Criswell was involved in the "takeover" movement until he and several others met with the Dallas pastor recently. Although Dilday said he and others had never known what to call the Pressler-Patterson conservative coalition, Criswell had referred to it as "a movement to control the Southern Baptist Convention."

"That's exactly what it is," Dilday said. The issue is not theological conservatism versus liberalism, or the infallibility of the Bible, the issue is control of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dilday said.

"The issue is what kind of a convention will we (Southern Baptists) be," Dilday said. "The very nature of the convention is at stake."

"Are we going to be a convention committed to pressing toward theological conformity and creedalism, or are we going to be a convention that comes together to cooperate in doing missions and evangelism and winning our world to Jesus Christ?" Dilday asked.

Dilday claimed the leaders of the "control movement" are unwilling to support anything financially they do not agree with totally and completely, and their approach to missions and evangelism is not to cooperate with others, but to operate like "Independent Baptists."

The other key issue, said Dilday, is leadership. "Who will be the leaders of the convention? Will they be cooperating Southern Baptists committed to missions and evangelism, or will they be independent and fundamental in mentality, committed to para-church activity?"

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"Will they be people more interested in a national political agenda than they are in what Southern Baptists do together in missions and evangelism?" Dilday said he was alarmed by "frightening indicators" that the same people involved in the movement to control the SBC are also involved in religious right political activities as expressed through such organizations as Moral Majority.

During a question and answer session, Jim Strickland, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cartersville, Ga., who presided over the meeting, said election of the convention president is the key to control of the convention. Strickland expressed hopes a "cooperating Southern Baptist" would be elected president of the SBC when it meets in Dallas next June.

When asked who might be a possible nominee to oppose Charles Stanley, current SBC president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Dilday said the name he has heard most as a possible nominee is Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, and current president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"Unless the current president decides not to seek reelection, there will not be a lot of people itching for that responsibility," Dilday said.

In his speech Dilday offered four suggestions on "how to get out of the mess we are in": (1) pray, not superficially but with real concern; (2) meet and become informed about the issues; (3) speak out and take a stand, and (4) go to the convention in Dallas and vote.

"Neutrality is not a positive position to take," Dilday said. He said he reached the point in his own pilgrimage as a Christian that he could no longer be silent and be true to himself, his family, the faculty and students at the seminary, and "true to my Lord."

He said as part of his struggle in deciding to speak out, he had studied the Scriptures on what Jesus did when he saw things he felt were wrong in the Temple. Dilday compared the techniques being used by the "control movement" to techniques used by the chief priests who sent out spies to trap Jesus.

"Surely there is no Baptist, no Christian, who could agree that the tactics of spying and tape recording and trapping are appropriate in any Christian organization," Dilday said.

In another speech to the group, a Baptist layman from Claxton, Ga., Norman Cavender, said the conservatives seeking to control the SBC are not true to Baptist heritage emphasizing religious liberty and the priesthood of believers.

Cavender, a farm products executive, claimed the group seeking to control the SBC "wants their system of understanding of the Bible to be imposed on the convention's seminaries and agencies. That's why if a seminary professor or agency employee says something they disagree with, they want him fired. They want everyone else to think and believe the way they do.

"What they are trying to do," Cavender said, "is shackle the Bible with their own opinions about the Bible."

Cavender drew applause when he declared, "It is not their right to use a political machine to seize control of this denomination and drag all the rest of us along with them."

He challenged Baptist laypeople to attend the Dallas convention as messengers and take a stand for liberty. "We Baptists have been fighting for liberty for 300 years," he said. "Liberty can win again in Dallas if we will stand up and start acting like Baptists again."

The meeting at WeiUCA Road Baptist Church was the first of three such rallies sponsored by "Concerned Southern Baptists" in Georgia featuring addresses by SBC seminary presidents. Similar meetings are scheduled Feb. 21 at First Baptist Church, Tifton, Ga.; and on April 9 at First Baptist Church, Savannah. Roy Homeycutt, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., is to speak at the Tifton rally; and Randall Lolley, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., is scheduled for the Savannah meeting.

Pressler, Patterson
Respond To Dilday

HOUSTON (BP)--Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler say the main issue in the Southern Baptist Convention controversy is the nature of Scripture, not control of the denomination.

Baptist Press contacted Patterson and Pressler after an address in Atlanta by Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, in which Dilday warned of a "movement to control the Southern Baptist Convention."

Pressler, a Houston appeals court judge, said: "Russell Dilday continues in his usual tactic of trying to make non-issues issues, to accuse conservatives of things they have not done and to make wild charges that are not accurate.

"The issue is what Scripture is and that is the only issue that I know of. Conservatives are not seeking adherence to a particular interpretation of Scripture, merely agreement that Scripture is entirely God's word and does not make mistakes," Pressler added.

Pressler charged Dilday, rather than inerrantists, has tried "to make an interpretation a creed," and cited an "address to (Southwestern) students July 5, 1984, in which he (Dilday) said dispensational premillenniumism was a Southern Baptist heresy...labelling many, many Southern Baptist leaders heretics.

"He (Dilday) has sought to make his interpretation a basis of orthodoxy, something conservatives have never done and will never do," Pressler added.

Pressler said Dilday "misconstrued" remarks about Criswell center. "What I was emphasizing was that if every Southern Baptist school taught people to be soul winners and had the evangelistic zeal of Criswell (Bible Institute) our convention would be in good shape."

Patterson, reached in Fayetteville, Ga., where he was teaching a Bible study, said he made a remark during a sermon that his goal as president of CBI was to "create clones of Dr. (W.A.) Criswell," the pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas and sponsor of the Bible school. He added: "The statement was made in fun, which Dr. Dilday very well knows. However, the expression of concern apparently reflects a fear on Dr. Dilday's part of the powerful pulpiteer with an authoritative message from God.

"It is interesting to me the paranoia that is involved. Dr. Dilday alleges we are going to lose Southwestern (seminary) and all of our other agencies. I would simply ask: To whom are we going to lose them? To Criswell? Rogers? Draper? Stanley?"

Patterson referred to the current president and two former presidents of the nation's largest protestant denomination. Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.; James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, and Charles F. Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, are all inerrantists.

Patterson also noted Dilday raised questions of leadership. "I wonder if inadvertently he did not put his finger on the real problem. Is it just possible that the real concern of some is the possibility of forfeiting their own leadership role?"

(BP)

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