



BAPTIST PRESS

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November 22, 1985

85-148

Baptist Leaders React
 To Pending Bylaws Suit

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist leaders from the left and the right generally have responded with "regret" that a Birmingham, Ala., layman has instructed his attorney to proceed with a lawsuit against the Southern Baptist Convention.

Robert S. Crowder and his wife, Julia, told Baptist press Nov. 19, 1985 that he has instructed his attorney, Emmet J. Bondurant of Atlanta, to "proceed with the filing of a suit to enforce the existing bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Crowder, who said he is spokesman for a group calling itself "Baptists Committed to Fairness", said he expects the suit to be filed either in federal or state court in Georgia in late November or early December.

Crowder's complaint focuses on Bylaw 16 of the SBC, which concerns the nomination and election of the powerful Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees, and the interpretation the committee could only be named by the Committee on Committees.

The interpretation occurred during the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC in Dallas, when President Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta, on the advice of parliamentarian Wayne Allen of Memphis, Tenn., ruled efforts to amend the report were out of order during a day-long parliamentary wrangle that featured two ballot votes.

Crowder and Bondurant appeared at the September meeting of the SBC in Nashville, seeking relief. The Executive Committee, however, "affirmed" the actions of the SBC. Later, the committee adopted a list of 15 "findings and recommendations...in the event of litigation."

The Executive Committee's Bylaws workgroup, during conference telephone calls in late October and early November, adopted a recommendation which would allow nominations from the floor, but would prohibit the proposal of alternate slates.

Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, told Baptist Press: "My feeling is Mr. Crowder has expressed his views and others have expressed their views and it seems at this point there is no agreement. We would prefer it not to go to court for the sake of the whole Southern Baptist Convention and our image before the nation but if he insists on doing so, then that is the course we will have to take."

Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, and first vice-president of the SBC, said: "I understand his (Crowder's) concern, but I am just sorry to see us go to court about it. I had hoped that the Executive Committee or one of their subcommittees could come up with something that will satisfy the people."

Former SBC President James T. Draper Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, said: "The Executive Committee looked at it and felt—even with the wide disagreement—that the best way was to let it proceed through regular convention channels. Many times over the years I have been disappointed in things the Executive Committee did and things the convention has done, but I don't think it is scriptural for one Christian to sue another."

Wayne Allen, pastor of Briarcrest Baptist Church in Memphis, and the parliamentarian during the 1985 meeting, said: "It grieves my heart and I think it grieves God's heart. This is an unscriptural way to handle matters between brothers...and is a bad expenditure of missions money, both from the Crowder's side and from our side."

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Former SBC Second Vice-President Gene Garrison, pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, said he "understand's Bob Crowder's frustration. I feel the abuse of parliamentary procedure and the totalitarian tyranny of the presidential chair (at the SBC) is probably the most frustrating thing I have ever experienced at any meeting, of any kind."

However, Garrison added he does not believe a lawsuit "is the way to handle this. I am afraid the reaction to the suit would be even more negative than was the reaction to the way the president ignored parliamentary procedure."

Walker L. Knight, editor of the "autonomous" SBC Today, said there are "no easy answers when Christians are fighting among themselves," and added the Crowders had followed the limited appeals process in the SBC by appealing to the Executive Committee.

He said a strong effort at reconciliation was made by the Crowders, and added: "If the principle of love is to be involved, we should see some concession by those in power toward their brothers who have been treated unjustly."

The veteran Southern Baptist journalist said tarnishing the Southern Baptist image is not the issue because "we have already aired our differences before the world in convention after convention. More than 650 national media persons were in Dallas to witness the fight."

Inerrancy leader Paige Patterson, president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas, said Crowder's lawsuit is in "direct contradiction to the clear and lucid instructions of I Corinthians 6:1-8," which he said is "completely predicated on the doctrine of the Providence of God."

He added if "a brother...does not get the reparation he desires, he still has to deal with the rest of the passage (of Scripture). Once he has exhausted his appeal, he simply has to let himself be wronged with the view that the ultimate judge is God, whose judgment we can absolutely rely on. It is that admonition that has prevented many of us from filing suit (against the convention) in these days."

Moderate leader Cecil Sherman, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, said: "I wish it weren't necessary, but somehow, some way, we have to get it to where we can have a meeting that will be moderated in a fair way. If this is the only way we can get it, then I suppose Bob Crowder is doing us a service."

Executive Committee member Richard Patton, pastor of First Baptist Church of Portland, Tenn., who said he voted against the two actions of the Executive Committee to "affirm" the SBC actions, said: "I have felt along along he (Crowder) has no alternative but to sue in the light of the original action and the Executive Committee action. When the Executive Committee doesn't act responsibly, people have no alternative. But the grave error of the whole thing was the ruling of Charles Stanley (at the SBC)."

Another moderate leader, David Sapp, pastor of First Baptist Church of Chamblee, Ga., said he agrees with the biblical injunction not to sue another Christian, but added: "But, we should not allow our objections to the lawsuit obscure the wrong that was done in Dallas. Every Baptist should ask what has driven a fine Christian like Bob Crowder to such an action."

Harold C. Bennett, president of the Executive Committee, said he is "disappointed" by the lawsuit and "would regret to see a court of law make decisions on the internal operations," of the SBC. "It is my prayer that if this suit is filed, it will not do irreparable damage to the cause of Christ through the Southern Baptist Convention and our churches."

SBC attorney James P. Guenther of Nashville, said he believes the "real controversy" in the SBC is deeper than arguments over Robert's Rules of Order and that "every event...is placed, or shoved, into the context of the current theological debate."

"Mr. Crowder's complaints about parliamentary procedure are merely symptoms of fundamental differences within the Southern Baptist Convention," Guenther added. "At a time when the convention awaits with hope reports from its own peace table, I regret we must divert energy and resources to meet the predilections of one messenger who wants to move the forum into a secular court."

Baptists Feed, Shelter Homeless
As Floods Soak Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (BP)--Flood waters continued to rise Nov. 21 as Baptists fed and sheltered families driven from their homes in what some Argentine officials are calling the worst flooding in the history of Buenos Aires province.

"About 22,000 people are officially evacuated," said Southern Baptist missionary Sarah Wilson, who's assisting in the ministry to flood victims. "That means probably about twice that number evacuated on their own. We have five different Baptist centers (in the city of Buenos Aires) serving as a place to receive the people. They're sleeping overnight and being fed."

Wilson, from Mt. Holly, N.C.; Southern Baptist disaster relief coordinator Charolette (correct spelling) Rock, from Barbourville, Ky., and Argentine Baptists are working in cooperation with provincial civil defense forces, who are handling evacuation efforts. The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board sent \$5,000 in hunger relief funds Nov. 21 to buy food for homeless families crowding into the Baptist centers. The board sent \$10,000 earlier in the month to pay for mattresses, blankets and roofing for victims of earlier flooding.

"After we get more definite facts, we'll probably ask for some more (money)," Wilson said. "Civil defense has been giving food pretty well up until now, but they're running out." She added that students from International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires also are bringing food and clothing to the shelters.

Wilson said 13 people had been killed so far by the latest flooding, which was caused by weeks of heavy rains in Buenos Aires province. Areas west of the capital city of Buenos Aires have suffered especially heavy damage. Water has submerged houses in some areas, and one town was "completely eliminated," Wilson said. Western and southern suburbs of the capital itself also have sustained heavy damage.

Earlier news reports said rains had flooded at least 10 million acres of land in Buenos Aires province, with property and crop damage estimated at \$1 billion.

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Consultation Focuses
On Domestic Violence

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
11/28/85

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--How can churches cope effectively with the growing social problem of domestic violence?

Participants in a Consultation on Violence and the Family dealt with that central question during a recent one-day meeting sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Harry N. Hollis, Jr., the commission's associate executive director and director of family and special moral concerns, told the group domestic violence must be viewed against the larger backdrop of violence in society.

"Violence is a tree with many roots which reach deep into the soil of American culture," Hollis said, and family violence, is a "dreadful tragedy" which "turns the home, which should be a safe place--a haven of security--into a prison of terror--a place of anxiety and fear."

Participants in the consultation examined the nature and extent of family violence and discussed strategies for coping with the problem. They agreed the first step in dealing with the issue is simply to recognize the problem exists--in churches as well as in society.

Experts estimate domestic violence is a problem in up to 60 percent of American families. Each year more than 1.8 million wives are beaten by their husbands. The problem of child abuse, with more than one million cases reported each year, has attracted national attention.

"If we hope to break the cycle of family violence, then the church must break its silence," said Mary Anne Jackson, executive director of the Nashville YWCA and a Southern Baptist.

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Jackson and Mary Bufwack, director of the Nashville YWCA's shelter and domestic violence program, described the needs of battered wives and the cycle of abuse which ensnares them. Both stressed the need for support groups in local churches for victims of abuse.

Douglas Anderson, executive secretary of the Sunday School Board's family ministry department, urged the Christian Life Commission to help create a "creative crisis" which will confront Southern Baptists with the issue of family violence and begin to bring the denomination's resources to bear on the problem.

Consultation participants also discussed:

- ways to increase awareness through existing programs in the local church, seminary training and denominational literature and programs;
- help for parents, pastors and other church leaders;
- ministries to the victims and the victimizers;
- ways to encourage greater sensitivity in denominational programs and literature to the problem of children and violence;
- ways to provide churches with information about available resources in their communities;
- the need for increased response from the courts and law enforcement;
- ways to influence public policy on behalf of families.

"There's more to this than just planning a conference and saying 'ya'll come,'" said Beth Taylor of the Sunday School department of the Sunday School Board. "We need to create a climate in our churches that gives families permission to admit their problems and to seek help."

Glenn Saul, professor of Christian ethics at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., agreed. He pointed out that while expertise is sometimes needed, parents can often help other parents. "We need to foster an attitude of openness in the church about family issues," he said. "You don't have to be an expert to help someone."

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Alabama Baptists Elect
Marler, Reject Cargill

Baptist Press
11/28/85

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (BP)—Alabama Baptists adopted a 1986 Cooperative Program budget goal of \$23,068,700 and elected a Jasper pastor president during their 163rd annual convention.

Southern Baptist Convention causes are projected to receive \$9,801,219, which is 42.48 percent of the budget. In 1985 SBC causes received 40.59 percent.

Lewis Marler, pastor of Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church in Jasper, will be convention president during 1985-86. He retired two years ago from a 14-year pastorate of First Baptist Church, Gardendale, and moved to Jasper.

Marler, whose opponent was Jimmy Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville, succeeds Wallace Henley, pastor of McElwain Baptist Church of Birmingham, who was president for two one-year terms.

Steve Tondera, a Huntsville layman, was elected first vice-president. Charles Ed Howell, a retired minister of education from Decatur, was elected second vice-president.

The convention defeated a proposed 26-month, \$10 million college endowment campaign which would have been administered by Cargill Associates of Fort Worth, Texas, and funded through the churches. The endowment funds would have been used for scholarships at the convention's three colleges: Sanford University, Birmingham; Mobile College, Mobile, and Judson College, Marion.

Messengers extended a three-year partnership with the Wyoming Southern Baptist Convention two additional years, and voted to begin a two-year partnership with Alaska Baptists in 1986.

Messengers decided to put on hold, pending a case study, a proposal to sponsor housing for severely handicapped young adults at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind in Talladega. The proposal will be resubmitted next year.

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The convention restated its long-standing opposition to "any and all forms of gambling" and opposed "the push for a state lottery." Another resolution urged passage of a state measure which "addresses the need for parental notification regarding an abortion on an unwed teenager living at home and receiving more than half of her support from her parents."

A resolution on world peace commended President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev for "their first steps in dialogue" at the Geneva summit.

The convention approved a motion expressing concern about fund raising efforts in Alabama by Southern Baptist Convention institutions and agencies. The motion was presented by Edgar Arendall, retired former pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham.

The 1986 meeting of the convention will be Nov. 18-19 at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile.

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Tennessee Baptists
Adopt Record CP Budget

Baptist Press
11/28/85

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Tennessee Baptists, meeting at First Baptist Church, Memphis, for their 111th annual convention, adopted a record Cooperative Program budget, approved a resolution in support of the Southern Baptist Convention's Peace Committee and defeated a challenge to a nomination from the Committee on Committees.

The Cooperative Program budget-goal for the November 1985-October 1986 convention year will be \$21 million, a seven percent increase above last year's goal. The convention increased the percentage of gifts shared with the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program from 36.50 to 36.75 percent, the ninth consecutive year the SBC percentage share has increased.

The messengers approved a resolution expressing gratitude for the SBC Peace Committee and pledging support "by praying earnestly that it will be sensitive to the leadership of God; by fostering an atmosphere of love, cooperation, and understanding, and by nurturing an expectant faith in the sufficiency of God to meet every need."

The Committee on Committees' nomination of Ruth O'Leary, South Pittsburg, to the committee on boards was challenged when Knoxville pastor Robert Sharp was nominated from the floor, because two other members of Mrs. O'Leary's church serve on TBC standing committees.

O'Leary was elected to the committee on boards. Longtime convention attenders could not recall a nomination from the floor in opposition to a committee on committees' nomination.

The nomination was challenged after the messengers had referred to the Constitution and Bylaw Committee a bylaw amendment related to the issue. The amendment would have added to the duties of both the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Boards a restriction that "no church be represented by more than one member at any time.

Registration was 1,504—the smallest since the 1980 Tennessee Baptist Convention.

James McCluskey, pastor of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church in Knoxville, was elected president.

The 1986 convention will meet Nov. 11-13 at Freedom Hall in Johnson City.

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CORRECTION—In (BP) story, "Ingram To Resign As Oklahoma Executive," mailed 11/19/85, please change the last phrase in the second paragraph from, "but will not devote fulltime to that job," to the correct reading of, "but will now devote fulltime to that job."

Thanks,
Baptist Press



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