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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
 SBC Executive Committee
 901 Commerce #750
 Nashville, Tennessee 37203
 (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, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201-3355, Telephone (214) 720-0550
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 Stan L. Haste, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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'Conservatives' Rally
 Lashes 'Liberal Deceit'

By Greg Warner

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--For the third time in recent months, "conservative" Florida Baptists gathered for a rally, this time listening to speakers lash SBC "liberals" who they say are trying to "deceive" Southern Baptists and "destroy our convention."

Jacksonville pastor Homer Lindsay Jr., who said he is Florida chairman of a national effort to elect inerrancy candidates, organized the Orlando "Conservative Pastor's Rally."

Most of the 353 people attending the meeting were in town for the State Evangelism Conference at First Baptist Church. While the first two meetings--one in Orlando in November and the other in Jacksonville in December--were by invitation only, the Orlando luncheon was open to the public and had been advertised in the Florida Baptist Witness.

Following the rally, Lindsay said he was unaware of a request by Charles Fuller, chairman of the SBC Peace Committee, that Southern Baptists refrain from controversial rhetoric during the traditional January evangelism conferences. "I guess I violated that request," he said.

Jerry Vines, who is on the Peace Committee and shares pastoral duties with Lindsay at Jacksonville's First Baptist Church, also spoke to the luncheon group. Vines denied knowledge of Fuller's request, but at the December meeting, said he saw no inconsistency in a member of the Peace Committee addressing a clearly partisan crowd. He added "moderate" members of the committee also are speaking out.

During the meeting in Jacksonville Lindsay announced Memphis pastor Adrian Rogers is the group's choice as candidate for president when the SBC meets in Atlanta in June. At this meeting, however, there was no mention of Rogers or of any political campaign.

The luncheon, instead, featured speakers who lashed at SBC "liberals" and what they characterized as "tactics...to deceive...and destroy our convention."

Bobby Welch, pastor of First Baptist Church, Daytona Beach, claimed the effort made during the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC in Dallas to replace nominees to the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committee was such a tactic.

Welch claimed the "tactics of the liberals" is to "use the standard convention system as long as you control it and it suits your own desires; but if you cannot control the system, tear it apart at all costs."

The Daytona pastor said the efforts of the "conservatives" to control the election of the SBC president is the way to rid the convention of liberalism. "You and I are going to be just as backwoods, ignorant as they make us out to be if we continue to sit around and pretend everything is going to work out wonderfully," he told the group. "I intend to get every conservative I know to Atlanta to vote for a conservative that will put an end to liberalism within our convention."

Welch said eradicating liberalism would be easy if denominational employees, Baptist journalists and college and seminary professors would "simply answer yes or no" to a list of theological questions concerning creation, biblical authorship, miracles and blood atonement.

"But that will never happen, because you would never get the liberals to answer," he said. "If a person will not give a straight answer to a straight question, that person is trying to deceive."

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
 Historical Commission, SBC
 Nashville, Tennessee

As part of the deception, Welch said, liberals hide behind "smoke screens" such as local church autonomy and the priesthood of the believer. "Undoubtedly they are now preparing to make their latest effort to divide our convention over the woman's role in the church," he charged.

Welch accused Kenneth Chafin, professor of theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., of making "the misleading and false statement that Jesus is not the only way to be saved" when Chafin appeared on The Phil Donahue Show last June. Houston judge Paul Pressler, an inerrancy leader, also appeared on the show.

"Our people may not have enough sense to get on The Phil Donahue Show and deny Jesus is the only savior," Welch said, "but they've got enough to stand in stores and markets and knock on doors, unashamedly saying... 'Jesus saves and he is the only way to the father.'"

Contacted after the rally, Chafin said Welch's statements violated both the "context and spirit" of the television show. "You don't take someone's view of evangelism from the last few minutes of the Donahue show," Chafin said. "I have not ever suggested there is any salvation apart from Jesus Christ," he continued. "These people know I designed all the evangelistic materials used in the 'Goods News America' simultaneous revivals.

After the meeting Welch said the election of the SBC president is crucial because of the "overwhelming likelihood" that one of the factions in the current controversy will leave the denomination. "Whoever is in the majority will direct the future of the convention," he said. "My belief is that conservatives need to stay in the majority so that we stay true to our founding fathers' historic roots."

In an earlier address to the rally, Bill Anderson, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Fla., cited six early Baptist theologians as evidence that biblical inerrancy is the historic Baptist position on Scripture.

"Some would suggest we need, or already have, a revised view of inspiration," Anderson said. "If that is the case, it cannot be said to be based on traditional Baptist theology."

Vines' address, the same he delivered at the Jacksonville meeting, outlined what he considered the denomination's theological problem, which he said the "uninformed or naive" would deny exist.

Vines criticized some Southern Baptist seminary and college professors who "rape" the faith of their students through liberal teaching. Vines did not name the professors referred to.

Quoting from "Called to Preach: Condemned to Survive," a new book by former Southern seminary student Clayton Sullivan, Vines said Sullivan blamed Southern seminary for destroying his belief in biblical fundamentalism and giving him nothing with which to replace it.

Sullivan, now associate professor of religion and philosophy at the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, when contacted by the Florida Baptist Witness, claimed Vines' selected quotations from the book "distorted his seminary experience.

"The book can be used by either side of the controversy," Sullivan said. "It depends on what part you want to quote."

Sullivan received bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from the seminary. After being pastor of a rural Southern Baptist church for five years, he left the pastorate.

"Southern seminary did a beautiful job of showing me the old-fashioned biblical fundamentalism did not hold water," he said.

Lindsay spoke only briefly to the luncheon meeting, but earlier, in the morning session of the evangelism conference, he too attacked the theology of "some" Baptist college and university professors who "plant the seed of doubt" in their students' minds. Lindsay said there is "documented proof" of the effects of such teachings and that the SBC Peace Committee will eventually reveal the truth.

Hobbs' Influence Continues
To Aid Baptist Bible Study

By Jim Lowry

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—Sometimes the mark of a man should be measured by the number of footprints he leaves instead of the depth of a few.

Herschel Hobbs is a theological giant among Southern Baptists who could number in the millions the lives he has touched through his ministry which spans nearly six decades.

As a preacher he holds the undivided attention of congregations in sermons sprinkled with illustrations, historical insights, humor and Greek interpretations. At 78, his handshake remains strong and his voice booms.

As a writer, his accomplishments are prolific. The former SBC president and chairman of the committee which wrote the Baptist Faith and Message, has written 111 books, including 62 consecutive quarterly volumes of Studying Adult Life and Work Lessons.

These weekly Bible study helps were first written informally by Hobbs because of requests from church members and shared on mimeographed sheets with teachers in First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, where he was pastor for nearly 24 years. On Wednesday nights Hobbs taught the teachers and officers from the lesson helps.

Word of the Bible study helps quickly spread among Southern Baptist churches, and requests soon followed for copies of Hobbs' materials. Hobbs and Wallace Parham, minister of education at First Baptist Church in 1968, contacted A.V. Washburn, head of the Sunday school department at the Sunday School Board and requested permission to share the mimeographed helps.

After permission was received, Hobbs said he expected 25 or 30 churches to ask for copies. Instead, copies were quickly being sent to some 250 churches to aid with the Bible study preparation of teachers using the then newly introduced Life and Work Series. One church was printing enough of the lesson helps to share with every church in the association.

Hobbs said the large number of requests necessitated stopping the mailing of the sheets because of copyright violations. When this was done, James L. Sullivan, then president of the Sunday School Board, and a classmate of Hobbs at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said he received a flood of letters asking for permission to receive the lesson helps. Sullivan then asked Hobbs if he would begin a crash program of preparation to be available to churches the next quarter and Hobbs agreed.

Since then, the popularity of Studying Adult Life and Work Lessons has increased until today quarterly sales of the 132-page booklet are more than 78,000.

At the time of his retirement in 1972, Hobbs said he received many requests to continue writing the lesson helps. He said he knew of no other way he could help that many people each week, so he decided to continue.

Every week Hobbs spends approximately two days preparing and writing one of the lesson units. To stay on schedule, he says he must do one each week, which means many are written in hotels and on airplanes as he travels around the country speaking to Southern Baptists.

All of Hobbs' writing is done by hand. He doesn't use a typewriter or dictating machine, primarily because of the convenience of being able to write whenever or wherever he wants. He said many times he is up in the middle of the night by a circulation problem in his leg, which is no real danger to his health, but interrupts his sleep. Frequently he sits down at the desk in his study when he is awakened and writes 30 or 45 minutes before returning to bed.

Even with the heavy writing schedule, Hobbs says, "It is a small price to pay to reach that many people every Sunday."

It is estimated that teachers and leaders who use Studying Adult Life and Work Lessons touch as many as two million people each week. Additionally, Hobbs writes a weekly column which is carried in several state Baptist newsmagazines. Hobbs said he receives comments of appreciation everywhere he goes, especially for the lesson helps.

For 18 years Hobbs was widely heard on radio as the Baptist Hour preacher, a work for which he received no pay. During that time he had an estimated audience of as many as 50 million people every week.

Hobbs resigned from the Baptist Hour in 1976 to devote more time to his writing. "I have a talent for writing and an obligation to develop and use it in the Lord's work. We have no abilities or talents that we can't take and serve the Lord.

"I spend more time on Studying Adult Life and Work Lessons now than on any other project," he said. "I continue because the unsaved will only be saved through hearing and believing His redemption. I am not just willing but happy to be part of what has developed into a giant opportunity to teach people who teach others," he said. "There is no way I could teach one million persons weekly, but I can help those who teach that one million."

Since his retirement, Hobbs said the greatest number of requests have been for him to teach and preach about doctrine.

"People are starving for doctrine," said Hobbs, who also is a member of the SBC Peace Committee. "Today, the average Baptist, especially a young person, doesn't know what Baptists are. We have reared a generation of Baptists who don't know who they are.

"Many of our pastors either do not know Baptist doctrine or do not know how to teach it or preach it," Hobbs said. "Our greatest need is for Southern Baptists to know what they believe."

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

Youth Leaders Discuss
Problems Of Teen Sex

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ARROWHEAD, Calif. (BP)--Representatives from 23 denominations and several youth organizations expressed both concern and hope at a meeting called in response to the growing problem of premarital sex among teenagers.

Persons who work with youth leaders and ministers met at Arrowhead Springs Conference Center in early January to explore ways for churches and families to deal with the social, psychological, physical, medical and spiritual problems related to youth and their sexuality.

Conference participants drafted a statement of concern which underscored "the biblical affirmation that sex is one of God's good gifts to humankind." It urged church leaders "to discover ways to create loving, supportive, accepting and forgiving relationships to guide young people in their home, church and educational environments."

The statement also noted that attention to the development of self-esteem and "wholesome relationships rooted in God's love and redemption" are "vital ingredients" in dealing effectively with teenagers' sexual problems.

National studies indicate that sexual activity among America's teenagers is increasing and that a growing number of young people are becoming involved sexually at an earlier age. According to one recent study, 80 percent of today's males and 67 percent of females are sexually active by age 19. Among these young people, half of the boys and 18 percent of the girls reported they first had intercourse at age 13 or younger.

"If we hope to reverse this alarming trend of teenage sexual activity, then focusing on high school kids and college young people is simply not enough," said W. David Lockard of the Christian Life Commission, one of the Southern Baptist participants at the meeting. "Parents and youth leaders in our churches must give increased efforts to the task of educating our early adolescent children about the biblical values related to sex."

The Arrowhead meeting was hosted by Christian author and speaker Josh McDowell and Here's Life Publishers.

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Texas Baptist Body
Reviews Constitution

By Toby Druin

DALLAS (BP)--The 34-member Texas Baptist Constitutional Review Committee held its organizational meeting last week, and while many concerns were aired, at least one concensus appeared to already have surfaced--given a choice between (1) relinquishing control of Texas Baptist institutions to avoid the problem of ascending liability and (2) maintaining control and assuming liability, the committee will choose the later.

The committee resulted from action at the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in San Antonio last November when a proposed slate of changes in the constitution and bylaws was approved by messengers but failed to get the required two-thirds majority.

Eleven changes were proposed, five dealing with terminology and grammar and the other six growing out of the report of a debt study committee concerned about a half billion dollars in debt existing or proposed by the institutions. The changes would have substituted the words "affiliated with" for "owned and controlled" in some portions of the constitution in an effort to insulate the convention from the problem of ascending liability--the convention being held accountable for insitutional defaults or lawsuits.

However, several messengers spoke against the changes, expressing fears that "affiliated with" would make it easier for an institution to sever its relationship with the convention.

The changes were approved by a 808 to 577 vote, short of the two-thirds majority needed for constitutional changes. Messengers subsequently approved a motion for a committee to reconsider the changes and any others deemed necessary and report to the 1986 convention in El Paso.

The executive board authorized the committee in December and named James Semple, pastor of First Baptist Church, Paris, chairman. The action authorizing the committee specified it to review only the essential changes, not to attempt to "rewrite the constitution."

The committee approved three more meetings of the full committee on Feb. 4, March 11 and May 6 when it hopes to complete its report to the executive board.

Semple told the committee he had received three letters and one telephone call, all from persons concerned about the recent Wake Forest University case in which trustees of the North Carolina school voted to become a self-perpetuating board, naming their own successors without input from the state convention.

D.L. Lowrie, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lubbock, and convention president, 1982-83, said messengers to the convention saw the debt study committee recommendations as a problem, but in trying to find a way to build protection for the convention jeopardized control. "If I have to make a choice on liability and control," he said, "I'll assume liability and keep control."

Dallas Baptist University President W. Marvin Watson said he felt control of convention institutions is what Texas Baptists want "and anytime that is questioned, it is doomed to failure."

David Slover, pastor of University Baptist Church, Houston, and chairman of the administrative committee which last year studied and recommended approval of that debt study committee recommendations, noted--as did others--at no time in the discussion of the proposals was separation of any institutions or a diminishing of control considered. In fact, he said, the debt approval process suggested was meant to strengthen the convention's control.

Roy Cole of Dallas, longtime legal counsel for the convention, noted that if control is maintained by the convention, it will have liability, but said in his opinion at this time, the problem of ascending liability is not a problem in Texas.

He added, however, that while he sees little difference in the terms "affiliated with" and "owned and controlled by," in Texas a charitable organization such as a Texas Baptist child care institution, a hospital or college cannot legally be "owned" by the convention; it can only be owned by the corporation under which it is chartered. It is the state which issues the charter and which required adherence to it, he said.

(BP)

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901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

LYNN MAY HO
HISTORICAL COMMISSION
901 COMMERCE
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

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