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Reconciliation Requires
Humility, Chairman Says

By Dan Martin

ROANOKE, Va. (BP)--"Reconciliation requires honesty, humility and hope," Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee Chairman Charles Fuller said in a pre-Easter statement.

Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., made his comments in the wake of reports some elements of the SBC are "misusing" a Diversity Statement adopted by the 22-member convention-mandated group during its February meeting.

The Diversity Statement discusses "significant theological diversity" present in the six seminaries which is "reflective of the theological diversity within our wider constituency." It goes on to specify four areas of diversity: the historicity of Adam and Eve, the historicity of "every event" in Scripture, the authorship of books of the Bible and the miracles.

Then, it goes on to note the Peace Committee "is working earnestly to find ways to build bridges between those holding divergent views so that we may all legitimately co-exist and work together in harmony to accomplish our common mission."

Following the release of the statement, reports circulated some persons were using the statement as "proof" of the alleged liberalism within the SBC seminaries, which have been at the center of a seven-year battle within the 14.4-million-member denomination.

Others have expressed fear the statement is a "smoking gun" handed to more conservative elements in the denomination and will be used to "kill off" more moderate Baptists, particularly those who are employed by the denomination.

In his statement, Fuller said: "If Southern Baptists are going to be reconciled and be useful to the Lord, we must learn to handle our deliberations with care. The statement recently adopted by the Peace Committee serves as a glaring example.

"The statement is an honest attempt to do two things--to illustrate the reality of our theological diversity and to assert our conviction that it remains possible for Southern Baptists to do missions together and that we should seek necessary ways to do so.

"Reconciliation requires honesty, humility and hope. If someone's interest is to see us reconciled, he or she will handle every ingredient of that reconciliation with respect and responsibility.

"Surrender is the result of acquiescence. Reconciliation is the product of honesty handled with humility. It is times like these we discover who is capable of a spirit which is more than what might be expected of the unregenerate world."

Fuller also told Baptist Press he has appointed subcommittees to deal with political matters in the convention and negative designation of Cooperative Program funds, two items which will occupy much of the agenda of the next Peace Committee meeting, scheduled April 3-4, at the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport.

"Our agenda for the next meeting will devote Thursday afternoon, first to hearing reports and recommendations resulting from the updated response and the input provided by agency leaders and seminary presidents in conjunction with our committee visits," Fuller said. "Time will be provided Thursday night for subcommittee work and we need to devote Friday to discussion of politically-related issues in the denomination."

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After the committee adopted the Diversity Statement in February, Fuller said the attention of the committee will shift off theological issues and onto political issues. He said the political matters should be discussed as thoroughly as theological issues have been.

Fuller said the political issues subcommittee, to be chaired by Peace Committee Vice Chairman Charles Pickering of Laurel, Miss., will deal with several issues, including voter registration, voter irregularities, the powers of the president and ongoing political activities. Named with Pickering to the subcommittee are Jodi Chapman of Wichita Falls, Texas; Herschel Hobbs of Oklahoma City; John Sullivan of Shreveport, La.; and Ed Young of Houston.

To chair the committee to study the effects of negative designation will be Robert Cuttino of Lexington, S.C. Members are Christine Gregory of Danville, Va.; Albert McClellan of Nashville, Tenn.; Ray Roberts of Asheville, N.C.; and Daniel Vestal of Midland, Texas.

Fuller also said the subcommittee which visited Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., will not return to the campus. Controversy erupted over the interpretation of visitation guidelines when the subcommittee met with a campus organization, "The Conservative-Evangelical Fellowship," and did not meet with other student groups.

"We said we would wait on Southeastern to determine if they felt a return visit of the subcommittee would be appropriate," Fuller said. "I received word from President Randall Lolley, Academic Dean Morris Ashcraft and Trustee Chairman Charles Horton that 'in light of positive steps taken' they do not feel another visit will be necessary."

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Increased Missions Funding
Praised As Good News For SBC

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
3/21/86

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A move to channel 75 percent of the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program allocation budget into mission causes promises to strengthen the denomination both externally and internally, convention leaders predict.

Messengers to the SBC annual meeting this summer will vote on continuing to increase the percentage of the convention's budget that is allocated to missions.

They will consider a proposal to direct 66.86 percent (or \$90,931,400) of the 1986-87 Cooperative Program allocation budget to the convention's Foreign and Home Mission Boards. That amount reflects 69.88 percent of the SBC operating budgets, up from 69.64 the year before.

The mission-funding increase is a matter of "keeping faith" with Southern Baptists, says Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The impetus behind the missions increase lies in Bold Mission Thrust, the SBC plan to present the gospel of Jesus Christ to every person on earth by the year 2000. More specifically, it grows out of Planned Growth in Giving, the new 15-year stewardship growth emphasis.

Planned Growth in Giving asks Southern Baptists to increase the percentage of their gifts to their churches. It calls for churches to increase the percentage of their contributions to the Cooperative Program budget for financing worldwide causes. Cooperative Program funds are channeled through state Baptist conventions, which are asked to move toward sending 50 percent of their receipts to fund convention-wide causes.

The designation of more Cooperative Program money to missions is a logical outcome of the process, Bennett notes.

The Executive Committee, which proposes the budget, "felt that if we were not faithful in designating more to missions, we would not be keeping faith with action taken at the 1983 convention, which mandated increased giving to missions," he explains. "Now, as Southern Baptists give money in their churches, larger amounts will go to what Christ asked us to do in the Great Commission--go into the whole world and tell others about him."

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"This move to 75 percent (for missions) will do a lot to encourage Southern Baptists to be supportive of our cooperative effort to reach this nation and the world," adds R. Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board. "I see it as an encouraging sign that will strengthen the whole approach to everything we're doing cooperatively, not just overseas but throughout the whole convention."

"It would be a dramatic increase in funding which would, of course, affect our ability to reach out to opportunities which now are far beyond our expectations," continues William G. Tanner, Home Mission Board president. "Every year we have from \$4 million to \$6 million in unfunded projects."

Mission needs which would be alleviated by increased mission allocations include:

--Appointment of more US-2ers, home missionaries appointed for two-year terms. "We have from three to four applications for every person we appoint," Tanner says. "These are people who already are screened and ready for the field."

--Application of more funds into the Foreign Mission Board's operating and capital needs budgets. "Through the last several years, we have had a declining amount of buying power per missionary," Parks reports. "The only way to continue to support sending missionaries has been to cut away from capital and then operating funds. But how much can you cut back in those areas before you have to hold back on appointment of missionaries?"

--Enlarge the number of church planters in the United States. "This is extremely important if we're going to reach the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 50,000 churches," Tanner says.

--Increase ministry in the world's cities. "The effort to make a measurable impact on the urban scene is going to call for dollars we just do not have," says Parks. "We hope for enough of an increase that we wouldn't have to cut back on other essentials to do this."

--Create "and actually fund" jobs for home missionaries. "That's all in personnel," Tanner notes, "but that's basically where we are--people reaching people."

--Share the gospel message in countries where missionaries cannot live. "Missionaries are in less than half the nations of the world," Parks says. "The challenge and opportunities demand some creativity. The program has been created and we have budgeted some resources, but we're going to need considerably more resources."

However increased funds sent to the mission boards are used, they necessarily will not go to the other 17 SBC organizations which depend on the Cooperative Program. Consequently, some or all of these smaller agencies and institutions will receive smaller pieces of the Cooperative Program pie. But that does not mean support for those agencies and institutions will decrease, budget planners maintain.

"Keep in mind the whole Planned Growth in Giving approach--to increase Southern Baptists' annual giving from \$3 billion to \$20 billion during the next 15 years," says Cecil Ray, national director of the emphasis. "The funding for other agencies not planned to receive a percentage increase will enjoy a marked increase in support" in terms of actual income.

"If churches have receipts of \$20 billion, and \$2.5 billion goes to world missions through the Cooperative Program, every aspect of Southern Baptist life can be increased," Bennett adds, noting smaller entities should receive enough funds to compensate for inflation and new staff needs even while they receive smaller percentages of the Cooperative Program.

"The cause of missions, as represented through the Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board, represents a whole movement rather than a single institution or agency," Parks insists. "As people recognize the convention is committed to supporting missions, it will challenge and excite people to say 'We'll give more of our money if the convention is going to send more to missions....' We'll reach a level to support all agencies more effectively."

"The most basic thing is not the amount of money or dollars," Tanner adds. "It's a new way of thinking about sharing not only substance but lives. As it causes us to re-evaluate our giving in money, we re-evaluate our time, talent and all we are."

Seminar Wrap-Up:

Concern For Children
Permeates CLC Seminar

By David Wilkinson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--While topics ranged from apartheid to pornography, a common concern for the spiritual and physical welfare of children and youth threaded its way through a national seminar on ethical issues.

More than 400 persons attended the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission conference on "Recovering Moral Values" held March 17-19 in Nashville, Tenn.

Tipper Gore, wife of Sen. Albert Gore Jr. of Tennessee, explained it was concern for her children which prompted her to organize a protest against the obscene excesses of contemporary rock music. She offered numerous examples of explicit lyrics, concert photos and album covers glorifying sexual violence, substance abuse and even satan worship.

Gore, a Southern Baptist, helped found the Parents Music Resource Center which monitors rock music. She emphasized she and her organization are not opposed to rock music per se but rather the "songs detailing explicit sex, violence, sado-masochism, incest, thrill-killing, rape and pro-suicide lyrics and images."

While such songs are part of a "frightening trend fueled by a minority of powerful artists," Gore also expressed concern about "heavy metal" rock music filled with hatred and despair.

Parents should be concerned because the average teenager listens to rock music between three and six hours daily, she said, urging parents to talk with their children about the music they listen to and the messages being communicated.

Family communication also was stressed by journalist Kenneth Wooden, who urged parents to "sit down on the rug" with their children and teach them about sex and how to avoid the various "lures" of child molesters.

Wooden, an investigative reporter for ABC's "20/20" and founder of the National Coalition on Children's Justice, spoke twice on the escalating problems of child molestation and how to prevent them. Drawing on hundreds of interviews with victims, their parents and their victimizers, Wooden painted a picture of horror which he charged is closely linked to satanism.

"Children are not being molested; they're being tortured," he said. "Molesters need to murder a child for sexual gratification. The only way they can become sexually aroused is to hear the screaming and yelling of little children. That is their centerfold."

Wooden described an international network of child molesters linked by a sophisticated computer system, newsletters and other publications. The severity and pervasiveness of the problem demands "moral outrage," he said. "It really is wrong if we do nothing."

Wooden's presentations were followed by an address by psychiatrist Tom Anderson, a Baptist layman from Columbia, Mo., who gave practical suggestions on what local churches can do about child abuse and neglect.

Concern for children also was evident in an address by the president of the Washington-based Children's Defense Fund. Marian Wright Edelman urged churches to join the fight against poverty, the "biggest single child killer in rich America 1986."

Edelman cited statistics that show one of five American children is poor. Two of three Hispanic children are poor and one of two black children is poor, she said, adding "Contrary to popular perception, particularly in the South, more than two of every three poor children are white.... Poverty is a problem that knows no racial lines."

Poverty, Edelman said, has contributed to the alarming problem of teenage pregnancies, noting a growing number of the 1.1 million teens who get pregnant each year are age 15 or under.

She recalled the tragic case of a pregnant 12-year-old. "This was not so shocking," she said. "The shocking part was that the grandmother in the case was only 24 years old."

Edelman urged parents and churches to educate children and youth about sex and to provide wholesome alternatives for their time and energy, saying, "The best contraceptives are hope, opportunity, strong moral values and providing youth a sense of importance of family life."

Similar advice was given by Sarah Cannon, better known as Grand Ole Opry Star Minnie Pearl. In the seminar's opening address, the 73-year-old country music legend praised her "godly mother and father" for the moral values they taught and lived, assuring the audience that moral values instilled in children at an early age by their parents will not be forgotten.

The call to Christian moral values was sounded by other speakers at the seminar who addressed a variety of contemporary social issues.

Philadelphia pastor Leon Sullivan warned of worldwide social and political upheaval which he said threatens the very existence of democracy.

The author of the "Sullivan Principles," guidelines adopted by corporations regarding business practices in South Africa, called for aid to the world's developing nations to enable people to help themselves. "The church must gear itself to a new mission—food and skills for the hungry now, not milk and honey in heaven but some ham and eggs on earth," he insisted.

Sullivan said he is "one of a minority in the world that believes apartheid can end without war.... But time is running out. Somehow, through the help of God, there must be found a way to build a bridge between the white and the non-white population in South Africa before havoc overtakes that country and further spills out over all of Africa and into the rest of the world."

The call for racial reconciliation was echoed by Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Recalling Martin Luther King's prediction of "dark and difficult days ahead" for the civil rights movement, Hooks reminded the audience, "from our viewpoint, the fight is far from over. If ever there was a time when we needed your help, it is now. I hope some of you will go back to your homes and see the fields are ripe unto harvest" for racial reconciliation, he said. "I believe we can do it best black and white together."

Stanley Hauerwas, Duke University professor of theological ethics, called on Christians to be active in the political process without falling into the trap of confusing democracy with Christianity. He said Christians must recognize their primary role is not to rule but to be faithful to Christ—a calling that will always keep them in the minority.

Hodding Carter III, former cabinet member under President Jimmy Carter and now a chief correspondent for the Public Broadcasting System, said American foreign policy must not resist the struggle for liberty in other parts of the world. "That creed which rallies others in country after country should not be rejected by its own creators," he said.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt outlined the biblical foundations for moral values in a world seeking "authentic and not autocratic" moral leadership. Honeycutt pointed to evidence of "moral heresy" which he said has been created by an inadequate theological understanding of the Word of God.

Theologian Ron Sider called for consistency in Christians' understanding of "pro-life" issues such as abortion, hunger and the nuclear arms race. Being pro-life "means letting the Author of Life set our agenda," he said. "It means saying no to right-wing ideological agendas that make freedom and family and the crusade against abortion more important than justice and nuclear disarmament. It means saying no to left-wing ideological agendas that do the reverse."

Norman Cavender, a Georgia Baptist layman and farmer, urged fellow Southern Baptists who are calling for a recovery of moral values in the nation and in the denomination to begin by "looking within." Criticizing super-church pastors and television evangelists who peddle the gospel "like cans of dog food and bars of soap," Cavender appealed for Christian integrity.

"Let us be steadfastly aware that it is a form of immorality to oppose the evil outside and condone the evil within," he said. "We will never recover morality in the world 'out there' until we are willing to recover morality 'in here'—in the ranks of Christianity."



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