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February 6, 1987

87-17

Trustees Authorize
New Bible Commentary

By Jim Lowry

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A new multi-volume Bible commentary reflecting the views of biblical inerrantists was approved during the semiannual meeting of Sunday School Board trustees Feb. 2-4.

In addition to the new commentaries, trustees approved a total of 15 recommendations, including new music publishing guidelines and a report on plans to provide adequate office and warehouse space for the board.

Board President Lloyd Elder said he was pleased with the cooperative spirit of the meeting in which trustees worked together to make responsive decisions.

With approval of the new Bible commentary, in response to a motion made by a messenger at the 1985 Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, the board will spend an estimated \$1.5 million to develop and publish the new product. Broadman division director Dessel Aderholt estimated the break-even point on sales would be approximately 200,000 volumes. The first volume is expected to be released in 1990.

The vote to publish the commentary came after the trustee Broadman publishing committee had recommended to trustees that no commentary be published. The committee cited extensive research which revealed a weak demand for another commentary set at this time and concerns by some respondents that a commentary would be divisive in the current climate in the denomination.

After hearing the report, however, several trustees said they felt such a commentary could have a healing effect on the controversy in the denomination.

Jodi Chapman of Wichita Falls, Texas, a member of the SBC Peace Committee, said during the discussion that publishing the commentary would speak a positive word to a lot of unhappy people in the denomination by being responsive to the grassroots people.

After several minutes of debate, trustee Joe Courson, pastor of Cinco Baptist Church in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., offered a substitute motion that the board proceed with haste to produce a commentary.

Two amendments were then voted to the substitute motion. The first, made by trustee Dean Mathis, pastor of Taylor Memorial Baptist Church in Hobbs, N.M., called for the commentary "to reflect a strong, scholarly defense of the traditional authorship of the biblical books, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and a presentation of an apologetic for Creationism in the introduction to Genesis."

The second amendment, by Roland Maddox of Memphis, Tenn., specified all writers who contribute to the commentary "hold to the position of inerrancy." The substitute motion and both amendments all passed by a wide majority.

In publishing the Bible commentary the board will employ the advice of the past five presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention, representatives of the six Southern Baptist seminaries, Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas and Mid-America Seminary in Memphis, Tenn., to find appropriate contributors.

Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder responded to the trustees by saying the agency will publish the commentary "in service to Southern Baptists. I think the decision to publish the commentary is a step forward in acting responsively to the denomination."

In another matter, publishing guidelines for the board's new Genevox Music Group also were approved unanimously. Discussion centered on whether guidelines are too broad regarding the types of music to be published and the choice of authors and composers.

Fes Robertson, director of Genevox, said the local church is the principal target for Genevox products, though attention may later turn to the home and devotional markets when opportunities and resources develop.

After extensive study by a special trustee committee and the administration, trustees authorized the administration to pursue development of a plan to provide for space requirements in downtown Nashville through the year 2000 AD and beyond. Instead of building a distribution center away from downtown Nashville, changes are anticipated in the board's present operations building, where renovation will better equip the board for faster delivery of materials.

A building with office and conference space is expected to be added by 1990 to house employees displaced by the improvements in shipping and warehouse areas. The decision included a recommendation to retain property purchased for the distribution center until renovations are successfully achieved at the downtown property.

Also approved was the authorization to relocate the book store in Fresno, Calif., to Los Angeles on or about Jan. 1, 1988.

The book store committee also responded to a motion referred to the board from a messenger at the 1986 SBC in Atlanta regarding the sale of Truth in Crisis, by James Hefley, in Baptist Book Stores and at the exhibit at the annual Southern Baptist Convention.

The recommended response, approved unanimously, said the book will be available in book stores and in SBC annual exhibits. New guidelines included in the recommendation state that all products to be considered for sale in SBC exhibits must be submitted to the book store division by April 1 each year for evaluation and to allow time to order stock.

Trustees also unanimously approved an average increase of 3.5 percent in the price of church literature, to be implemented beginning with the April 1988 quarter.

Three new products were approved by trustees.

Adult Bible Study quarterlies for pupils and teachers will be available beginning in October 1989 in French to provide materials primarily for French Haitian churches in the U.S. and Eastern Canada.

Adult and pupil Sunday school quarterlies also will be available in Vietnamese in October 1989. The teacher's periodical will be free in both of these languages.

Open Windows cassette tapes also will be available beginning Oct. 1, 1988, for blind and visually impaired persons.

Trustees approved three other responses to referrals from recent Southern Baptist conventions.

One resolution regarding temperance lessons in curriculum materials was answered with the explanation that current plans call for dealing with what the Bible says about alcohol in 28 lessons between 1986 and 1989. Also, consideration is being given to an annual special emphasis temperance lesson for youth and adults.

Another resolution dealt with prayer for farmers and the third with involvement of blacks and other minorities in Southern Baptist Convention life. Responses to both resolutions listed examples of support by the Sunday School Board.

Lloyd Batson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pickens, S.C., was re-elected chairman of the trustees; Robert H. Bible, a layman from Morristown, Tenn., was re-elected vice chairman and chairman of the executive committee; and Lynn Moench, a layman from Nashville, was re-elected secretary of the trustees.

Sales for the board for 1985-86 were more than \$151 million, 2.5 percent above last year.

Wilkinson To Assume
Southern Seminary Post

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—David R. Wilkinson has been named vice president for seminary relations at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., effective Feb. 15.

Wilkinson, 32, has been director of news and information services for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission in Nashville, Tenn., since 1984.

Southern Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt said creation of the vice presidency position "emphasizes our commitment to relating effectively to the the seminary's numerous and diverse constituencies." Wilkinson will direct the seminary's communications program and will supervise placement and prospective student services and alumni relations.

"In considering several months ago the seminary's leadership needs in the broad area of public relations, David was the first person to emerge in my mind," Honeycutt said. "He brings a unique blend of professional expertise, denominational experience and Christian commitment that will enable us in new ways to fulfill our mission of equipping men and women for Christian ministry."

Wilkinson was Southern Seminary's director of communications for three years while pursuing a master of divinity degree before rejoining the staff of the Christian Life Commission in 1984. He previously had worked for the CLC from 1977 to 1979. He also has worked for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and Brotherhood Commission.

Wilkinson has won numerous awards for his writing and twice has received the Baptist Public Relations Association's Frank Burkhalter Award for excellence in religious journalism.

The Oklahoma native is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and Southern Seminary. He and his wife, Melanie, have one son, Micah David.

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Texas Laymen's Group
Calls For Arbitration

By Terry Barone

Baptist Press
2/6/87

DALLAS (BP)—A group of laypeople have called for an arbitration panel to hear grievances against Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

About 100 participants at a meeting of Laity for the Baptist Faith and Message heard a call for the "appointment of a non-aligned tribunal to hear evidences and render judgments" of what she called "slandorous assaults" on the seminary and its personnel.

The call was issued by Babs Morrison of Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, during a Feb. 3 meeting at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas.

During the formal program, neither Morrison nor others on the program gave concrete steps for achieving the task. After the meeting, she said the group is not sure who would be chosen to serve on such a panel. She did, however, suggest that "lawyers possibly appointed by the American Bar Association" could be used.

She added that the idea is in the "embryonic stage" but that "something needs to be done to try and solve the discord and provide harmony."

Morrison also said the group plans to explore the "conflict of interest" of Southern Baptists connected with Mid-America Seminary, Criswell College and Luther Rice Seminary -- all composed of Southern Baptist people but not formally affiliated with the convention -- who over the last eight years have been named to Southern Baptist boards, commissions and agencies.

Another program leader, John Baugh, a member of Second Baptist Church in Houston, said the idea will be taken "through the right channels of the convention so seminary personnel can be treated fairly."

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He added the group is not sure which channel of the Southern Baptist Convention to go through to get the tribunal in place. "Whatever we do," Baugh said, "we will play by the rules."

Also during the meeting, Baugh called for a second "Glorieta Statement" from the SBC Peace Committee. The first such statement, issued at the Peace Committee's October meeting in Glorieta, N.M., was a document written by the SBC's six seminary presidents aimed at restoring harmony within the convention. Baugh said a second statement, aimed at alleviating power struggles in the SBC, would "effectively and rapidly" end the nine-year controversy.

Baugh said he believes the second statement must deal with the political power structure of the SBC presidency, changes in the format of meetings held prior to the annual session of the SBC and political practices over the past nine years.

Baugh said the presidential power base must be modified regardless of which side has elected a president. "As long as one group can bus in a sufficient number of messengers to make one vote -- to elect a president -- the chaotic conditions which have plagued our denomination will persist," Baugh said.

He also said the "format, content, spirit and timing" of the annual SBC Pastor's Conference must be altered. Baugh said the purpose of the meeting is to feed, challenge and inspire ministers to carry out God's work.

"But," he said, "the conference was politicized and it was used as a means of promoting a candidate for president. Since 1979, the spirit has deteriorated even further, and some perceive it as a political carnival."

Baugh also said a second Glorieta Statement must deal with the political practices of the last nine years "during which many lovely, gentle and defenseless persons have been wrongfully accused."

"We believe the Southern Baptist people will not tolerate the ongoing political misdeeds that have so severely damaged the credibility of our Christian witness," he added. He said the controversy could end at the SBC annual meeting in St. Louis in June with such a statement.

"We believe that those who continue to support the political practice of winner-take-all are exceedingly unwise, and they should be vigorously opposed for further service in convention offices. And that goes for both sides and all sides," he said.

In earlier meetings of his group, Baugh had called for the Southern Baptist Advocate, a journal supported by the more conservative faction of the convention, to cease publication. But in an interview, he said he sees no inconsistency in his earlier request and in resuming publication of the Laity Journal, a periodical produced by moderates.

The Advocate, he said, has not ceased to publish. The Laity Journal will be mailed to Texas Baptist pastors, he said.

Another leader of the organization, W. Dewey Presley of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, criticized the SBC Peace Committee. While praising the commitment of the Peace Committee, he questioned its closed meetings and its sealing of its records for 10 years, and he charged the committee has not dealt adequately with the political aspects of the SBC controversy.

He charged the "extremist fringe" will not allow the committee to deal with politics: It has become an appeasement committee. The extremist fringe plans to stonewall until the committee's final report and not disclose names and acts" of those who have led the political maneuvering.

This was the sixth in a series of meetings which began in the fall of 1986 by the group who describe themselves as "mainstream conservative Southern Baptists" who seek "the restoration of truth, integrity, mutual respect, trust and unity in Southern Baptist affairs."

The group also announced other topics to be discussed at future meetings, including "Conflicts of Interest," "Conspiracy of Silence," "The Tyranny of Biblical Interpretation to Replace the Priesthood of the Believer" and "The Introduction of Other Alien Doctrine Into Southern Baptist Life."

DOMs Discuss Genesis Commission,
Partnership Missions At Conference By Mark Wingfield and Scott Collins

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Differing opinions on how to do missions is not a new phenomenon, 54 associational directors of missions were told during a conference at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Feb. 2-4.

Southwestern's World Mission and Evangelism Center and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board sponsored the conference with the theme, "Differences Affecting Southern Baptist Missions." The missions directors discussed partnership missions, the newly formed Genesis Commission and the history of the "society" method of missions.

In the opening address, Justice Anderson, director of the mission and evangelism center, noted Baptists seldom disagree on the need for missions. Differences arise, he said, over "how to carry out missions."

But missions is the "only cement that can hold us together in our tremendous diversity," Anderson said. "This cooperative way has to be sustained in every generation." He warned "a historically illiterate generation has arisen that knows not this way. Other ways are being devised which are strangely reminiscent of past methods."

Leon McBeth, professor of church history at the Fort Worth, Texas, school, traced the history and concepts of one of those past methods -- the missions society. Societies appeal directly to individual churches for support.

McBeth listed advantages and disadvantages to the society method. "It does work," he said. "But the disadvantages greatly outweigh the advantages."

The society method "places missions outside the church" and "makes missions optional," McBeth added. "Societies tend to become more aristocratic than democratic. There is little room for a poor person in a society. It is vulnerable to control by powerful individuals.

"If you don't like the way things are going, you can form a society, and like Burger King, have it your way.

"History confirms that Baptists who have followed the denominational pattern have accomplished more for Christ than those who follow the society method," McBeth concluded.

Robert Baker, professor of church history emeritus, said formation of the Southern Baptist Convention was actually a "hybrid" between the ecclesiastical methods of the South and the society methods of the North.

"Not until the society methods were expunged did the Southern Baptist Convention make its spurt forward in missions," Baker said. "To go back to the old pattern of society and designated gifts would open a Pandora's box of ills for Southern Baptists."

In a panel debate on "contemporary additions" to missions, Anderson said formation of the independent Genesis Commission "reflects an ignorance of what our Foreign Mission Board has been doing for several years" in church planting.

Jack Redford, director of missions for Texas' Cisco Baptist Association, said a major problem of the Genesis Commission is its plan to subsidize national pastors to serve on foreign mission fields.

On the mission field, the Genesis Commission will be identified with Southern Baptists, he said, noting that when things go wrong with the new commission, the nationals will look to Southern Baptists for answers. "The heat is going to fall on the Foreign Mission Board to pick up the slack if the Genesis Commission falls apart," he predicted.

Ebbie Smith, professor of Christian ethics and missions, agreed, "When you start setting up more than one Southern Baptist work in a country, it is harmful to the work."

When nationals are forced to decide which of the Southern Baptist groups they will follow, it goes against the cooperative way, he said, explaining, "To cooperate means I'm going to cooperate no matter which way it goes."

Panelists also debated the value of partnership missions projects sponsored by state conventions and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Smith, who was a missionary to Indonesia, said the main problem with partnerships is the inability to train participants properly. Additionally, Americans lack understanding of Third World evangelism, he said.

This misunderstanding is seen when evangelists return to the United States and report a high number of decisions. Fishers of men shouldn't count converts as "keepers" until they have been baptized, Smith said. Baptists tend to "emphasize decisions and not disciples."

On the other hand, Daniel Sanchez, associate professor of missions, said partnership missions gives Baptists opportunities for involvement. "We've got some good news for our people," Sanchez said. "You can go and send."

Lonnie Quillen, missionary-in-residence, said, "God used partnership evangelism to change my life." Quillen was a pastor in Virginia for 18 years before he and his wife surrendered to foreign missions as a result of a partnership trip to Africa.

Carl Johnson, Foreign Mission Board vice president for finance, spoke in chapel during the conference. He said the most profound question he has been asked in his job is, "How much do you have to pay to be a missionary?"

Johnson said the question came from a small girl after hearing a missionary's testimony. The girl thought anything of such value as the missionary's joy must cost something.

That question parallels the misunderstanding of many adults about missions, Johnson said: "It is unreasonable to expect people to give to something they don't know anything about. We have a burden to translate and communicate missions to them."

Southern Baptists are "thirsting for more information about the Cooperative Program," Southern Baptists' unified budget, he said. "If we're not careful, we're going to have a generation of missions and giving illiterates."

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CORRECTION: The following changes need to be made in the SBC annual meeting program and accompanying story, mailed 2/3/87:

— In the 5th graf of the story, titled "SBC Messengers To Focus On Discipleship, Missions," substitute Sam Cathey of Oklahoma City for Ron Dunn of Irving, Texas.

— In the program, at 7:45 on Tuesday evening, the congregational singing will be led by Bob Woolley, not Robert Wesley. The title originally given is correct.

— In the program, the final four items on the Thursday afternoon schedule should be —

3:20 Stewardship Commission report, A.R. Fagan, president, Nashville, Tenn.

3:30 American Bible Society report

3:40 Business

4:30 Benediction, Joe McKinney, pastor, Gracemont Baptist Church, Tulsa, Okla.

Thanks,

Baptist Press
