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March 11, 1987

87-35

Variety Of Baptist Leaders To Respond
To Inerrancy Conference Addresses

By Mark Wingfield

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Southern Baptists identified with both sides of the political spectrum in their denomination will share the platform at the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center May 4-7.

Twenty-nine Southern Baptists will participate in the national conference sponsored by the six Southern Baptist seminaries, said Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, in Fort Worth, Texas. Respondents include educators from both SBC and non-SBC schools and pastors espousing a variety of viewpoints on convention affairs.

Presidents of the six seminaries announced the conference Oct. 20, 1986, in their "Glorieta Statement" made to the SBC Peace Committee. Dilday said the conference is an attempt to resolve Southern Baptists' eight-year-old political and theological controversy.

The conference's 11 major addresses will be given by evangelical non-Southern Baptists who are considered authorities on biblical inerrancy, Dilday said.

"Those to address the plenary sessions are from the conservative evangelical world," Dilday said. "They come from denominations which have already struggled with this issue of biblical authority. They are convictional inerrantists but represent a wide diversity among themselves within that framework."

Two Southern Baptist leaders will respond to each of these addresses. "In the respondents we chose Southern Baptist leaders, looking both to those on the right and the left within our Southern Baptist constituency," Dilday said. "They are for the most part thoughtful pastors who have worthwhile contributions to make to our general theme."

Richard Land and James Carter will respond to "Biblical Inerrancy in Historical Perspective." Land is on leave from Criswell Center for Biblical Studies in Dallas to serve as special counsel on church and state relations for Texas Gov. Bill Clements. Carter is pastor of University Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas.

William Hull and Paige Patterson will respond to "What is Biblical Inerrancy?" Hull is provost at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. Patterson is president of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies.

Adrian Rogers and John Lewis will respond to "Parameters of Biblical Inerrancy." Rogers is pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and Southern Baptist Convention president. Lewis is pastor of First Baptist Church of Raleigh, N.C.

James Flanning and Ed Young will respond to "Inerrancy and the Divinity and the Humanity of the Bible." Flanning is pastor of First Baptist Church of Richmond, Va. Young is pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston.

Peter Rhea Jones and Rick Melick will respond to "Problem Areas Related to Biblical Inerrancy." Jones is pastor of First Baptist Church of Decatur, Ga. Melick is a professor at Mid-America Baptist Seminary in Memphis, Tenn.

Gene Williams and Frank Pollard will respond to "Implications of Biblical Inerrancy for the Christian Mission." Williams is president of Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Fla. Pollard is pastor of First Baptist Church of Jackson, Miss., and former president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.

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Also, SBC seminary professors will lead 15 small-group discussions on topics related to biblical inerrancy. Professors scheduled to participate are Robert Cate and Kenneth Eakin, Golden Gate; Fisher Humphreys, Terry Young and Joe Cothen, New Orleans; Hugh Wamble and Vernon Davis, Midwestern; Alan Neeley and Morris Ashcraft, Southeastern; David Mueller, Wayne Ward, William Hendricks and Lewis Drummond, Southern; Leo Garrett, Earle Ellis, Russ Bush and Bruce Corley, Southwestern.

Speakers for the plenary sessions are J.I. Packer, professor of historical and systematic theology at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada; Kenneth Kantzer, dean of the Christianity Today Institute, Wheaton, Ill.; Clark Pinnock, professor at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario; Millard Erickson, dean at Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; Mark Noll, history professor at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Ill.; and Robert Preus, president of Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dilday said addresses given at the conference will be published in two books. One book will contain addresses and responses from the plenary sessions. Lectures given by seminary professors during the small-group sessions will make up the second volume.

"Before the Southern Baptist Convention, there will be released a summary pamphlet wrapping up the conference and encouraging the distribution of the two books," Dilday said.

As of March 4, Ridgecrest had received nearly 600 reservations for the conference. The presidents anticipate attendance of more than 1,500 participants.

"The response I've received has been very positive, in fact enthusiastic," said Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

"As one pastor said, 'I've been wanting someone to explain what inerrancy really means for a long time. I'm so glad to have a chance to talk about it and learn something rather than just argue and criticize each other.'

"I think he has caught the spirit of the conference," Ferguson said. "That's exactly what the seminary presidents had in mind when we scheduled it."

Conference rates per person are \$148.75/single, \$110.50/double, \$101.80/triple and \$97.45/quadruple. Cost includes all lodging, meals and conference fees.

A deposit of \$12.75 should be sent to Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, Box 128, Ridgecrest, N.C. 28770.

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Supreme Court To Weigh
Religious Use Of Peyote

By Stan Haste

Baptist Press
3/11/87

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide if states may deny unemployment compensation benefits to workers who are fired for using the drug peyote in religious observances.

Two employees of an alcohol and drug abuse prevention and treatment center in Oregon were discharged after admitting they used the drug in ceremonies of the Native American Church. Alfred L. Smith and Galen W. Black, who agreed in writing to abide by the center's philosophy of total abstinence from alcohol and drugs as a condition of employment, nevertheless claimed federal law protected their use of peyote in religious ceremonies.

After their dismissals, Smith and Black applied for unemployment benefits, and, in separate proceedings, state referees agreed they were eligible. But Oregon's Employment Appeals Board reversed those findings, ruling the constitutional right to free exercise of religion did not protect Smith's and Black's right to ingest drugs in violation of Oregon law. The state then took the cases to court.

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Both a state appeals court and the Oregon Supreme Court sided with the fired workers, however, holding their free exercise right took precedence over the state's interest in controlling drug abuse. Oregon Solicitor General Virginia L. Linder then appealed to the nation's highest court to review the cases. The high court's March 9 notice that it has agreed to hear the cases presumably means the justices now will weigh those competing interests.

In her written appeal, Linder argued because the use of peyote — even in Native American religious ceremonies — is illegal in her state, "the denial of benefits cannot be viewed as any burden on religious freedom, or at most it must be deemed an insubstantial burden." Possession of peyote in Oregon is a criminal offense, punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Linder also noted a person convicted and sentenced to prison for using peyote in Oregon would be ineligible for unemployment benefits because he would be "unavailable for work."

But Suanne Lovendahl, an Oregon Legal Services Corp. attorney who represents Smith and Black, cited a 1978 federal law protecting American Indian religious practices and a separate drug control statute exempting peyote used in religious observances from a list of forbidden drugs.

Lovendahl also suggested Oregon law discriminates against the Native American Church. "The consumption of wine as a sacrament by a member of the Catholic faith is equally repugnant" to the Oregon treatment center's philosophy requiring abstinence, she wrote, suggesting a practicing Catholic would not have been fired.

The cases, which have been consolidated into one proceeding at the high court, will be argued during the court's 1987-88 term. (86-946, Employment Division v. Smith; 86-947, Employment Division v. Black)

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Missionary Reunites
Ferry Survivors

Baptist Press
3/11/87

BRUGGE, Belgium (BP)—Within hours after a British ferry capsized off the Belgian coast March 6, Southern Baptist missionary Robert Cochran was counseling and praying with survivors and helping reunite separated family members.

Cochran, from Mount Pleasant, Texas, and his wife, Debbie, from Hialeah, Fla., were watching television at their home in Brugge, Belgium, that evening when they learned of the ferry disaster off the nearby port of Zeebrugge. Rescue workers were transporting survivors to local hospitals, including the 950-bed Saint Jan Hospital in Brugge. Cochran contacted the hospital and offered his services as a volunteer chaplain.

"We assumed most of the victims would be English-speaking, and we could be a liaison, speaking both Flemish and English," Cochran said. The hospital accepted the offer.

About 40 survivors, mostly British, were brought to Saint Jan that night. The number had about doubled by the next day. Throughout the night, the missionary and the hospital's Catholic chaplain worked their way through the emergency room and the wards. Cochran comforted and counseled survivors, prayed with them and tried to locate and match up separated relatives.

He encountered one British couple who had been separated from their adult daughter during the ferry's rapid capsizing. They had no idea whether she was alive or dead. "The Catholic chaplain and I found their daughter on the 14th floor" of the hospital, Cochran said. "She had abrasions and cuts and was hurt, but she was alive."

They brought the good news back to the couple, who were being interviewed by a TV news crew. Cochran relayed the message to the mother, who cried out to her husband on camera, "She's alive! She's alive!"

"We've seen that repeatedly on our (TV) channels coming out of Britain and also the Flemish stations," the missionary said. "It offered hope in the midst of all this tragedy. ... That's a meaningful thing to me."

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The Cochrans reunited several other family members by searching Saint Jan and other local hospitals. They also compiled a list of survivors at Saint Jan who were searching for missing relatives and delivered the list to the crisis center set up after the ferry tragedy.

But many survivors will never see loved ones again. By March 9, authorities had confirmed 53 deaths with 82 other passengers still missing and feared dead. Rescue workers saved 408 of 543 people aboard.

Cochran prayed with one distraught survivor who broke three ribs while saving his 4-month-old daughter, although the infant suffered a skull fracture. His wife is missing and presumed dead.

Cochran visited the man again March 8 and gave him books and Christian devotional literature. The man had been angry because the hospital would not release him to go to the local morgue to try to locate his wife's body. "He wasn't in a state to go," Cochran said. "(But) he calmed down and took my hand and said he appreciated very much our coming and ministering to him."

The missionary also prayed with a female survivor whose friend was hurled against a window when the ferry keeled over. As the compartment filled with water the woman desperately grasped her unconscious friend. "She held on and held on and held on ... and of course the water was extremely cold. Her friend was dragging her down and she was trying to hold her up. Finally she just had to let go of her friend," said Cochran.

Only two of the survivors brought to Saint Jan the first night were children. Cochran feared many of the dead and missing were children. "We have two small children, a 4-year-old and an 18-month-old," he said of his own family. "That hits us pretty hard."

The missionary suggested to authorities that a memorial service for the dead be held. The service took place at noon March 9.

Cochran, who hopes to continue a ministry to people he met during the tragedy, asked Southern Baptists to pray for the crew and passengers of the ferry.

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the third of a three-part series exploring the relationship between terrorism and religion.)

Terrorism Stymies
Christian Response

By Marv Knox

Baptist Press
3/11/87

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—How should a Christian in America respond to terrorism?

Newspapers and television newcasts chronicle the carnage of what seems to be random horror. For most people, especially Americans who have not witnessed terrorism in their own communities, the violence seems almost as remote and bizarre as it is horrible.

The common response is the Ostrich Syndrome — refuse to look, and maybe the whole mess will go away. Unfortunately, terrorism refuses to disappear. Its persistence begs the question: What can be done?

"There's no one answer," admits George Braswell, professor of world religions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He points to a Gordian knot of issues — religious, cultural, psychological, economic — that seems almost impossible to untie.

"Terrorism cannot be looked at rationally," adds Larry Braidfoot, director of Christian citizenship development for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "Almost by its nature it has an irrational motive, except by those who pursue it and think they can make certain points or achieve certain concessions."

That irrational aspect puts off most American Christians, Braidfoot notes: "Most of us think of it as something foreign to us. We think of it as a social problem to be controlled."

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But despite prevailing attitudes, observers of the world situation suggest some actions that can be taken by individuals and churches to improve the situation:

— Learn more about the situations involved.

If Christians in the United States were briefed about the religious and political dynamics of people in hotbeds of terrorism — such as Northern Ireland, Lebanon and India — and if Christians became sensitive to people in these regions, "it would affect the whole national attitude toward those people," predicts George Sheridan, regional interfaith witness coordinator for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"It's important, because the world is so entwined, close, small that people who care for world missions become more cosmopolitan and care for what goes on in the world," Sheridan stresses.

— Try to understand.

"The real test would be to try to practice empathy, discover what we would do ... in a similar situation," Braidfoot asserts.

Empathizing forces outsiders to "deal with the dignity of human life" in every situation, he explains, asking: "What would we have done if Nicholas Daniloff had not been released? What if the Ayatollah had executed those Americans? These pose very different problems."

— Seek alternatives to terrorism and to the conditions that breed terrorism.

"Responsible moral action may be to try to find a new alternative that has not been explored" for alleviating the suffering and/or hatred fueling a particular act of terrorism, Braidfoot says. Sometimes people can be helped by "opening up a new course of action."

He offers a scenario for the consequences of not seeking alternatives: "America will not be unaffected in the long run by a world that is starving. ... At a point in time they will come for our food. If they can't get it, acts of terrorism will be practiced to try to get us to share our wealth."

— Affirm non-violent resistance to social evil.

Americans witnessed successful non-violent methods of achieving social change during the civil rights movement, recalls Glenn Iglehart, Southern Baptists' former interfaith witness director and now state director of missions for New York.

Such models need to be supported because they apply appropriate action to achieve the desired results, he contends: "If you're serious about your standards, then how much force is appropriate to make your results come about? The cure for that is to determine a real rationale for what you do, then mutually challenge whether this activity is biblical, then apply the appropriate means to an end."

Non-violent methods often have achieved social change where violence has failed, Iglehart notes. This approach has preserved the integrity of the people involved, because it has not forced them to break governmental or spiritual laws.

Alternatives to current situations and non-violent approaches to reform can be affirmed in a number of ways, including public letters to newspapers and magazines, letters to the people pushing for change, letters to governmental and other public officials and, most specifically, individual practice of non-violence.

— Be realistic.

"You have to have very realistic expectations," Braidfoot cautions. "You have to be conscious about risk-taking. Be careful of provoking another group, nation or ruler (to react with terrorism) on another somewhat-related issue."

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Also, "some situations probably are just crazy — social pathology — and there's nothing you can do about it," he adds.

— Do not react blindly.

"One thing about dealing with terrorism is that you cannot resolve the problem by squishing the terrorists," Braidfoot says. "When there is that much energy, resolve and hatred, then when you move in — perhaps in other, less-discernable ways — it crops up again.

"Movements grow out of social conditions. If conditions remain unchanged, you've not solved the problem. Power will inevitably fill a vacuum. When there's a conflict of ideology and a voice is silenced, it is very likely there'll be another that picks up."

— Pray.

In the face of such an overwhelming problem, the most immediate weapon available to the individual Christian is prayer, observers say.

The "ordinary" Christian can pray for the terrorists as well as their victims, police and other officials whose job it is to protect the public from terrorists, leaders working to bring about change in conditions that lead to terrorism and those conditions themselves.

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Missionary From Brazil Killed
While Raising Mission Funds

Baptist Press
3/11/87

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--A pioneer Brazilian missionary to Portugal was killed in a bus wreck March 6 while raising funds for her country's Foreign Mission Board.

Herodias Cavalcante was traveling in Brazil, promoting the Brazilian Baptist counterpart of the Southern Baptist Lottie Moon offering, when she was killed, said Thurmon Bryant, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board spokesman. She was the sister of Alice de Oliveira, the lawyer who represents the three missions of the Foreign Mission Board in Brazil. Both women had traveled in the United States. In 1980 Cavalcante spent two months working with Portuguese-speaking people in Massachusetts.

Cavalcante had commented a few days before her death that she wanted to "die with her boots on promoting missions for Brazil," and "that's what she did," Bryant said.

She played a major role in starting Brazilian Baptist missionary work in Portugal. Cavalcante, one of the first Brazilian missionaries to Portugal, was retired.

Her funeral was held March 8 in Rio de Janeiro.

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