

**- - BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICESBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Marv Knox, 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, 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. Hestey, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

May 5, 1987

87-69

**Six Die, Four Hurt
In Church Van Wreck**

OLATHE, Kan. (BP)—A church group outing to a Kansas City, Mo., amusement park ended in tragedy May 2 for Prairie Hills Southern Baptist Church, Augusta, Kan.

Six members of the 21-member group died when the van in which they were riding collided with the rear of a slow moving truck. Four other youths in the van were injured.

The van was traveling north bound on I-35 about 10 miles southwest of Olathe, Kan., when the accident occurred.

Those killed in the accident were James Gilcrest, 29, the church's youth director; William P. (Billy) Sims, 15 and Kelli A. McDaniel, 13, both of Augusta who were also members of Prairie Hills church. The other victims were Rhonda Kay Lacamp, 15, and Bryan L. Avers, 12, both of Rose Hill; and Jolene Nelson, 12, of Augusta.

Injured in the accident were Dena Olson, 13, and Joshua Bartel, 15, both of Augusta who were listed in critical condition at the University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kan. Both suffered fractures and abdominal injuries.

The other two injured girls were taken to Olathe Community Hospital. Shannon Perry, 11, of Augusta, was listed in good condition. Sonja L. Avers, 15, of Rose Hill was in fair condition.

Kansas highway patrol troopers said the van was second in a caravan of three vehicles traveling north bound on I-35. The lead car pull out to pass the flat-bed semi-trailer which was traveling at about 30 miles per hour, authorities said. Then the van driven by Gilcrest plowed into the back of the truck. Trooper Ron L. Saunders said the truck was apparently having mechanical difficulties. It's driver was not injured.

A third vehicle in the caravan was able to pull off the road safely. It's occupants were not injured.

Doyle Mendenhall, Prairie Hills pastor was flown to Olathe to help identify the victims. Identification was hampered at first because none of the victims had wallets on them.

The wrecked van belonged to Jim and Cindy Sims, parents of Billy Sims who died in the accident. Mr. and Mrs. Sims were in the third vehicle in the caravan which they also owned. Sims is a deacon in the Prairie Hills church.

The funeral for Gilcrest, who was originally from Liberal, Kan., was held May 4 at Dunsford Funeral Home, Augusta. A memorial service was held May 5 at First Southern Baptist Church of Liberal with burial in Liberal.

The group was en route to Christian family day at Worlds of Fun in Kansas City, Mo., when the accident occurred.

--30--

Professor Describes
Types Of Inerrancy

By Norman Jameson

Baptist Press
5/5/87

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—Southern Baptists are treading down a path already worn smooth by others as they struggle toward a mutual understanding of biblical authority, according to church historian Mark Noll.

--more--

Noll, professor of history/church history at Wheaton College, laid the opening parameters for about 1,000 participants in the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy sponsored by the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries. The conference is a direct response to the commitment the seminary presidents made last October to explore the scholarly aspects of the biblical authority question that has been at the center of the conflict among Baptists since 1979.

Noll briefly traced a history of inerrancy, mostly in America, that spans nearly a century. While Christians always have had the complete confidence in the Bible that inerrancy presupposes, the term "inerrancy" has come into use only in the last century, Noll said.

The adamant utilization of inerrancy as a descriptive term stems from a culture shaken by scientific assertions, he said. Previously, conservative Christians simply believed the Bible and felt no need to gather behind a scholarly defense.

But the "professionalization of academic life and the rise of the modern university" began to peck away at traditional understandings of Scripture, Noll said.

Still, conservatives were not galvanized to active defense of their view until other Christians began to accept new views, he said. Four views of inerrancy developed, Noll said, noting elements of all four views are present in the current Southern Baptist struggle.

The four positions of inerrancy, Noll explained, are those of the Princetonian Presbyterians, dispensational fundamentalists, "Baptists" and British evangelicals.

-- The Presbyterian view is that Scripture is free of error when the words "of the original autographs are ascertained and interpreted in their natural intended sense," Noll said, adding this view holds that "no apparent discrepancy in the Bible qualified as an error."

-- The dispensational or fundamentalist view, he added, divided history into a number of epochs, or dispensations, during which God was thought to offer salvation under different methods.

This is a view of strict literalism and rests "on a complete and entire confidence in the specific accuracy of Scripture to the last detail," Noll said. This view is not scholarly and considers the modern university "a place of danger."

-- The "Baptist" defense of biblical truthfulness, Noll said, makes less of detailed apologetical argument and more of a subjective inner experience. It gave more importance to "experience" with the living God than to knowing God through scholarship.

The dominant Southern Baptist theologian of the early 20th century, E.Y. Mullins, advocated such a subjective philosophy, saying, "Christian experience sheds light on all the unique claims of Christ."

"This perspective, when combined with the academic isolation of the South, meant that little attention would be given to the question of biblical inerrancy among Southern Baptists until well after World War II," Noll said.

-- The fourth group, British evangelicals, accepted "a trifle more" from modern biblical study but still condemned the naturalistic presuppositions that often underlie critical study of Scripture.

"They rejected unsupported evolutionism or the arbitrary rejection of the miraculous," Noll said. "Traditional views were far sounder than academic fashion indicated."

Although the "slippery slope" concept of a gradual slide into disbelief if one gives up a single traditional view of Scripture is held by some people, Noll quoted James Orr, a proponent of the British view, who called that position "suicidal."

"I do not feel that it is accurate to conclude that giving up traditional views of Scripture is the first mark of a slide into liberalism and unbelief," Noll said. "On the other hand, I do feel that attitudes toward Scripture have been very important. It simply is beyond dispute that denominations or other Christian institutions which have denied the full truthfulness of the Bible also have become less concerned about spreading the gospel to the lost, have wavered on the application of God's law to contemporary life and have temporized on the nature of God, the nature of Christ and the nature of salvation."

A second reality, as Noll expressed it, contained a caution for absolutist Southern Baptists. "Not all truly Christian efforts to preserve the full authority of the Bible have looked exactly the same," he said.

—30—

Southern Seminary Trustees
Affirm Glorieta Commitments

By David Wilkinson

Baptist Press
5/5/87

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees overwhelmingly approved a report detailing the response of the seminary faculty to commitments set forth last fall by the Southern Baptist Convention's six seminary presidents.

Meeting in annual session on the seminary campus, April 27-29, trustees voted 51 to 1 with two abstentions to approve a lengthy report detailing specific plans for implementation of the Glorieta Statement.

Last fall, during a prayer retreat attended by the SBC Peace Committee and leaders of all national convention agencies, the presidents of the six seminaries issued a statement which has come to be known as the Glorieta Statement and which set forth specific commitments related to resolving the crisis in the denomination.

The Statement includes three philosophical statements and seven commitments. The philosophical statements say Christianity is supernatural, the Bible is "not errant in any area of reality," and pledge to address "legitimate concerns" in the convention.

The commitments are related to fairness and balance in teaching and selection of faculty, compliance by faculty members to the seminaries' confessional statements and continued emphasis on spiritual growth, evangelism and missions on the seminary campuses.

Another commitment was to hold a series of three conferences on biblical inerrancy, biblical interpretation and biblical imperatives. The first was held May 4-7 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

In speaking to the report detailing the implementation of the Glorieta Statement, Southern seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt asked trustees to "examine the record and let the evidence speak for itself."

The report included a list of conservative scholars who have been invited to the campus as guest lecturers and visiting professors. "Conservative evangelical scholars have not been represented as fully as they should have, and we're moving to correct that imbalance," Honeycutt said.

In response to a question about adding full-time faculty members, Honeycutt emphasized that as positions become available the seminary "will be adding qualified scholars from differing perspectives."

Honeycutt also assured trustees the administration will continue to require all faculty to teach according to the Abstract of Principles, the seminary's 1858 statement of faith which is included in the school's charter and is signed by all faculty. "I have made it clear to the faculty that we will not support you if you deviate from the abstract," he said.

In his report to the trustees, Honeycutt cited the "dynamic" spirit of renewal and spiritual growth on the campus illustrated by events such as the seminary's fall revival and week-long World Missions Conference. At the close of the missions conference, more than 100 students made public commitments to missions service.

—more—

Trustees also addressed criticisms of public statements by two members of the faculty. They unanimously approved a report from the board's academic personnel committee dealing with charges against ethics professor Paul Simmons for an article on abortion. In the article, written for a Baptist state paper, Simmons had expressed opposition to the proposed Human Life Amendment to the Constitution. After the article appeared several individuals wrote Honeycutt demanding that Simmons be fired.

After 2 long discussions, the committee adopted a statement that while the members were "not in unanimous accord with Dr. Simmons' position on abortion as reflected in the article, we do unanimously concur with President Honeycutt that there are no grounds for dismissal of Dr. Simmons."

During the full board meeting, trustees voted to add a sentence that the board "expresses its concern with Dr. Simmons' position and requests the president to encourage him to moderate his public involvement in this issue."

In the closing miscellaneous business session, trustees also debated at length a motion from the floor expressing disapproval of recent comments by church history professor E. Glenn Hinson. In an address at Catholic University in Washington, Hinson declared the opposing sides in the denominational controversy are "hopelessly polarized" and that division is now the best course.

After a vote to take a secret ballot was defeated overwhelmingly, trustees voted 25 to 22 against the motion.

In other actions, trustees:

-- Approved preliminary plans and cost estimates for construction of a campus center complex. The seminary will wait until all funds are either in hand or firmly committed before breaking ground on the \$12.6 million project, probably in the fall of 1988. The complex will include sports and recreational facilities, bookstore, cafeteria and banquet facilities, offices, conference rooms and a prayer chapel.

-- Adopted a 1987-88 operating budget of nearly \$13.6 million and a capital budget of \$400,000.

-- Approved a series of personnel recommendations, including several faculty promotions.

-- Re-elected Perry Webb Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Baton Rouge, La., chairman, and Fred Pfannenschmidt of Gibson/Pfannenschmidt Realtors, Louisville, Ky., secretary; and elected Sam McMahon Jr., president of Southeast Commercial Corp., Charlotte, N.C., first vice chairman, and George "Dub" Steincross, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Liberty, Mo., second vice chairman.

-- Adopted a three percent salary scale increase for faculty and administrative staff and authorized the administration to grant a one-time bonus equal to one step on the salary scale to faculty and administrative staff by taking funds from contingency reserves.

-- Adopted a resolution reaffirming the board's "commitment to peace and reconciliation within the Southern Baptist Convention" and pledging its "continued prayers for the Peace Committee."

-- Received copies of "Pathway to Peace," a one-page statement prepared by the Student Government Association in response to the crisis in the denomination. The appeal to peace and reconciliation was signed by hundreds of students during the week before the trustee meeting.

--30--

Southland Backs
Texas Lottery

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
5/5/87

DALLAS (BP)--"Texans for a Lottery" revealed recently their intention to spend about \$800,000 lobbying for a lottery and an additional \$400,000 for a grassroots referendum campaign in Texas.

--more--

Last week, the multi-million dollar Southland Corporation showed where part of that money is going when they publicly entered the gambling campaign, said Weston Ware, associate director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, the social action and moral concerns agency of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Southland Corporation began last week to use their 7-Eleven convenience stores in Texas to promote a petition drive in support of the "Lone Star Lottery." Playing on the "freedom of choice" slogan, the Lone Star Lottery is presented as a "freedom of purchase" issue.

Bill Fisher, lobbyist for the Texas-based Southland Corporation and chairman of Lone Star Lottery, also wrote individuals in many legislative districts asking them to urge legislators to choose the lottery as an alternative to additional taxes and cuts in services.

"It is interesting that the letter from Fisher provided no return address for Lone Star Lottery and that the material distributed in the 7-Eleven stores has an address in Austin but no identification as to who Lone Star Lottery is," said Ware.

The 7-Eleven promotional material contains several distortions and fails to tell the whole truth about a state lottery, Ware said.

"The 7-Eleven promotional piece claims that a lottery will bring in \$600 million a year to the state treasury. The truth is that it may be several years, or indeed never, before the state receives that kind of revenue from a lottery," he said.

Lone Star Lottery promoters also claim that a constitutional amendment to create a Texas lottery would prevent added taxation and prevent serious cuts in necessary state-funded programs.

"The truth is that lottery income in the first two years would alter neither the present necessity for cuts nor the need for an increase in taxes," Ware said.

"The most serious problem with the campaign is it fails to mention that the Southland Corporation hopes to receive a heavy share of the money brought in by the sale of lottery tickets," he continued. "One version of the proposed lottery legislation would provide that a minimum of six percent of the lottery tickets receipts would go to the retail stores where they're sold. Based on Lone Star Lottery's own \$600 million net figure to the state, that would mean \$90 million a year to retailers selling the tickets.

"Every citizen, corporation or organization has the right to petition state government, but with that right comes the obligation to be forthright as to one's vested interest in the matter on the petition. At the present, the only visible participants in the Lone Star Lottery are those corporations that stand to benefit from a legalized lottery in Texas."

Other corporations involved with Southland Corporation in the Lone Star Lottery promotion are SYNTTECH, GTECH and Control Date Corporation. According to Ware, all are heavily involved in lottery ticket production and electronic lottery machines, industries which will profit heavily from state operated lotteries.

**APTS Commission Approves Record
Budget For Commission And Seminary**

NASHVILLE (BP)—The Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Theological Seminary adopted a record budget and took note of the growing maturity of the educational programs of the institution during its annual meeting April 30.

Commission members approved a budget of \$300,950, most of which goes directly to American Baptist College of American Baptist Theological Seminary, a Black Bible school jointly sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.

Meeting later with an equal number of trustees from the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., the Southern Baptist commissioners also voted to adopt a record budget for the seminary. Gifts from National Baptists and tuition income are expected to provide the school with a record budget of \$886,552 for the 1987-88 academic year.

In his report to the commission, Secretary-treasurer Arthur L. Walker Jr. reported the institutional enrollment for the school year 1986-87 reached 162 students on campus and 611 students enrolled in the extension program.

Walker also noted the revenues transmitted to the activities of the seminary during the past year continued the practice of exceeding the amounts received through Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget receipts.

Kenneth L. Castleberry, pastor of Dalewood Baptist Church in Nashville, was reelected chairman of the seminary commission for 1987-88. Also re-elected were Marshall Gupton, pastor of Una Baptist Church, Nashville, vice chairman, and Roy D. Raddin, a director of associational missions in Greenville, Miss., recording secretary.

The 1988 meeting of the commission will be held April 28 in Nashville.

—30—

**For Marriage And Family's Sake,
Ministers Should Examine Values**

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
5/5/87

NASHVILLE (BP)—Ministers whose families suffer from schedule pressures need to examine their values, set personal work limits and differentiate between serving God and serving the church, a family enrichment consultant said during the National Conference for Ministers of Education.

Ken Jordan, consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department, said ministers need to recognize their families as worthy of quality time: "It's easy to become so enmeshed in the life of the congregation that we have no lives of our own. The greatest need in some ministers' families is the ability to say no."

While some issues make ministers' families different from others, their needs are the same as those of other families, Jordan said: "Ministers' families are more like than unlike others'. An emphasis on uniqueness of ministers' families is a disservice."

Jordan expressed hope that Southern Baptists can accept "the humanness and vulnerability of ministers' families so they can get personal, marriage and family help without being stigmatized. He said ministers need to learn to recognize real emergencies among church members' urgent requests that may infringe on personal time.

Ministers and their mates have "difficulty seeing each other for significant, regular, quality blocks of time and therefore have a high need for time alone together," he said. Ministers who "live church 24 hours a day" lose touch with their personhood and have difficulty "shedding their ministerial aura" to assume spouse and parent roles at home, he added.

"Marital dryrot" is the condition he said often occurs when there are no outward signs of problems, but there is no substance inside the marriage.

—more—

Ministers who "never have enough time" sometimes leave their mates and children out because they "confuse Christianity with church work," he noted.

He suggested marriage enrichment retreats as one possible solution to meeting needs of ministers and their mates. Additional suggestions for dealing with family needs included shifting values, reordering priorities, providing time for intimacy and taking planned stress breaks.

Jordan urged ministers to "take responsibility for your own lifestyle decisions."

More than 700 ministers of education and spouses attended the national conference sponsored by the Sunday School Board.

--30--

Jester Summers Helps Pioneer
Generation Of Children's Work

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
5/5/87

NASHVILLE (BP)—Some people call her a guiding light. Others agree she is a theologian in her own right. Both those who know her well and others who have benefitted from materials she has written know Jester Summers as a pioneer in children's Sunday school work.

If she could talk — or even write — Summers would downplay all the acclaims, said her husband, Ray, retired chairman and professor emeritus of religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. "She would be much too modest to admit what she has done."

Mrs. Summers' active involvement in Southern Baptist children's work was interrupted by a stroke and heart attack in December 1986. She is beginning to regain some speech ability, but her right side remains paralyzed, her husband said.

Typical of his optimism, Summers described a recent Broadman Press children's teaching tape by his wife as the 76-year-old writer's most recent tape — not her last.

"I'm not willing to give up hope yet that she will be back to writing," he said.

Mrs. Summers' career with children's Sunday school work began about 1950.

When Allene Bryant, a Southern Baptist Sunday School Board children's consultant, wanted to experiment with an open classroom concept for children, Mrs. Summers was ready to change from the lecture format for what then was called primary Sunday school.

Mrs. Summers, then a children's worker at Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, experimented with the new concept with the church's blessing.

Then when new curriculum materials were introduced with the open classroom concept, featuring small groups and Bible activities, Mrs. Summers was one of the first writers.

Retired Sunday school editor Delores Baker remembers enlisting Mrs. Summers in 1956 as a writer for the new graded materials introduced in 1959.

The curriculum design followed a plan and methodology Mrs. Summers had suggested as early as 1952 in a "Sunday School Builder" magazine article, Baker said.

"She and a few others were wise and courageous to try new methods. It was controversial at the time," Baker remembered.

Again when curriculum concepts were updated in 1970, Mrs. Summers was a pioneer in developing Broadman teaching tapes. She was an early writer of the tapes and continued to write the tapes until her stroke.

Her prolific writing has filled more than 30 feet of bookshelf space in the Summers' home with books and other materials for children and children's Sunday school.

--more--

More than a pioneer who helped shape children's Sunday school of the past 30 years, Mrs. Summers is "one of the most outstanding Bible scholars that we have," said Elsie Rives, manager of the BSSB Sunday school children's program section.

Mrs. Summers completed a master of theology degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, at the same time her husband did. "It didn't bother me when she made better grades than me in Hebrew and Greek, but it did when she made higher grades on her sermon outlines," the 77-year-old Bible scholar quipped.

She used the training for children's Sunday school work as a director, teacher, conference leader, writer and curriculum designer, Rives said. And she always has been a talent scout for new children's workers whom she trained to become full-time workers and curriculum writers.

Helen Price, minister of children at First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, said Mrs. Summers was her mentor.

Price started teaching children's Sunday school in 1971. Mrs. Summers then was a department director at the Waco church.

"She took me and molded me. She was always the guiding light for me. Now I can see the generosity of what she shared with me," said Price, who became a full-time minister to children five years ago.

Price is one of many children's workers who have been encouraged and assisted by Mrs. Summers. "She has been quite a stimulus to many people starting in children's work," said Jack Flanders, professor of religion at Baylor and former pastor of First Baptist Church of Waco.

"Her commitment to children is her life — that's just Jester," Flanders said.

—30—

Smith Sees Cooperation, Courage
Among Christians In West Africa

By Steve Barber

Baptist Press
5/5/87

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Cooperation and courage — often shown under primitive and dangerous conditions — characterized Baptists and other Christians met by Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith during a recent 19-day tour of Southern Baptist mission points in the West African nations of Togo, Nigeria and Liberia.

In Togo, where Southern Baptist missionary work is relatively new, Smith visited the remote Moreton area where two concrete-and-steel bridges have provided access and mission opportunities in a section of the country that previously was cut off from the outside world during the six-month rainy season.

"I was extremely impressed by what I saw in this area of Togo," Smith said, adding two agricultural missionary families — Jerome and Joann Ethredge and Michael and Marsha Key — are being assisted in their efforts by volunteers from North Carolina, which is a partner in foreign missions with Togo.

The volunteers come in contact with Togo people in surrounding villages first-hand. Using equipment provided by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, they have drilled more than 90 wells for fresh water where previously only contaminated water was available.

"The significant thing is that, in every one of those villages, a church has sprung up. The evangelistic opportunities have been, and continue to be, rather phenomenal," Smith said.

In recent weeks, the North Carolina volunteers have sent in work forces for two-week periods. These have been followed by evangelistic forces that work in the same area for the next two weeks.

Local culture and customs still present a challenge to Christian witness, however, as the villagers continue to farm with little more than small, hand-held shovels, raising mostly corn and cassava, a root vegetable similar to a potato, Smith said.

—more—

Chieftains serve as the highest authority in the villages and as a "father figure" in more ways than one, since polygamy is more the rule than the exception, he added.

Even so, Smith rated the missionary results as "fantastic," with many professions of faith in Christ recorded since the partnership began two and one-half years ago. Some 400 volunteers have participated so far.

Meanwhile, the courage of convictions on the part of Christians was obvious during Smith's travels in Nigeria, where believers were recovering from a "burning rampage of Muslim radicals" March 8-10. The uprising resulted in the torching of Christian churches and businesses.

—30—

(Barber is special materials editor for the SBC Brotherhood Commission.)

Every Day A Full One
For Hispanic Pastor

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
5/5/87

DALLAS (BP)—For Eddie Gonzales, the work day begins at 5 a.m. and doesn't end until the hymn of benediction is sung at one of the four West Texas towns where he holds services.

Gonzales is pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista, Eastland in Texas, but that's just where his job description begins. He is a full-time maintenance worker at a local bank. He is Bible study leader and preacher at satellite missions in Albany, Cisco and Gorman. And if all goes well, he may start a preaching point in nearby Ranger.

"I've worked it out so that every day I have some kind of Bible study to lead or preaching to do," he said.

Gonzales works from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. each weekday, from 2 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and several hours on Saturday at his bank maintenance job. He spends from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in visitation and in preparation for Bible studies and worship services.

Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services are conducted at Primera Iglesia Bautista in Eastland. Sunday and Thursday evenings are devoted to the mission of First Baptist Church of Albany. Monday evenings are spent in a Bible study sponsored by Calvary Baptist Church in Cisco, and Tuesday evenings are given to a similar Bible study sponsored by First and New Hope Baptist churches in Gorman.

"On Fridays, I try to work with the young people," said Gonzales. He feels a special need to minister to them, realizing many come from families that are traditionally and culturally Catholic but are not personally committed to Christ.

Gonzales himself was the son of Catholic migrant farm workers. He became a Christian at age 12 when he went to church at the invitation of his public schoolteacher in Stamford, Texas.

"After school was out, he invited several of us to go to Vacation Bible School at Avoca Baptist Church. There I heard the gospel presented clearly. I had never heard it that way before," he said. "I gave my life to Christ."

As a teenager, Gonzales surrendered his life to the ministry after working as an interpreter for several Rio Grande River ministry projects sponsored by West Central Baptist Association in Texas. He eventually attended Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary in San Antonio, Texas, as an ethnic missions scholarship recipient.

The River ministry, Hispanic seminary and the ethnic missions scholarship program all are supported by Texas Baptists' gifts through the Cooperative Program unified budget and the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions. This year, Texas Baptists are seeking to raise \$5,555,555 for the state missions offering.

In 1982, Cisco Baptist Association and Harmony Baptist Church in Eastland started Primera Iglesia Bautista, and Gonzales was called as mission pastor.

—more—

"Primera was started with the future in mind. Eastland is at the center of several little towns, and the idea was to draw people from all those towns," said Gonzales. Eastland is centrally located in a 120 square-mile area known to local residents as "the Microplex" because of the large number of small towns.

"There is a critical need for trained Hispanic leadership to reach a particular segment of rural, low-income Hispanic folks in West Texas," said L. Gerald Edwards, Texas Baptist church extension field consultant. "The strategy at Eastland was to use one trained pastor to provide sustained leadership at a central missions base, to start several satellite works and to bring the satellite units together periodically for worship at the central facility."

The plan is to develop local lay leadership for the satellites over a three- to five-year period, he explained.

Currently on Sundays, Primera sends out three vans to bring people from Cisco, Gorman and Albany to the church building in Eastland. Primera's facilities are being filled to capacity, but plans are being made to build a larger building.

Primera, which now is self-supporting, averages about 70 people in Sunday school and more than 80 in worship services at the central facility. About 50 people attend worship services and 34 go to Sunday school at Albany. Both Cisco and Gorman attract about 25 people each week to weeknight Bible studies.

In 1986, Gonzales reported 54 professions of faith in Christ and recorded 13 baptisms. In the first quarter of 1987, there have been 12 professions of faith and six baptisms.

"Right now we're training prospective leaders in Albany," said Gonzales. "I'd like to start another preaching point in Ranger, but leaders need to be trained to take over the work in Albany first. There just aren't any more days left in the week for me to start another work."

—30—

State Editor Appeals
For Recovery Of Freedom

By Susan Shaw

Baptist Press
5/5/87

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—An emphasis on "conformity above cooperation" threatens the Baptist heritage of freedom, Southern Baptist journalist R.G. Puckett warned.

Puckett, editor of the Biblical Recorder, weekly newspaper for North Carolina Baptists, addressed issues of freedom during denominational heritage week at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

"People can believe a lot of things and be Baptist," Puckett said. "They cannot believe some things and still be Baptist. But there is no way they can be Baptist without believing in freedom."

The structure of the Southern Baptist Convention has provided cohesiveness that has allowed Baptists to work together while respecting individual freedom and local church autonomy, Puckett stressed. The system worked well for more than 130 years, but "sharp shifts" from that model have occurred during the past decade, he added, noting, "The structure is not flawed, but it has been abused."

Puckett identified a series of recent events that he said underscore the gravity of the denomination's crisis:

— The SBC Home Mission Board's dismissal of its first search committee for a new chief executive and its refusal to provide church pastoral assistance in the future to ordained women serving in Southern Baptist churches.

— The narrow election of N. Larry Baker as executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission and subsequent threats that he will be fired at the commission's next meeting in September.

—more—

— A one-vote margin by trustees of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., to add a woman to the theology faculty.

— Formation of the Genesis Commission to plant churches in other countries, including places where Southern Baptist foreign missionaries are now serving.

— Formation of the Southern Baptist Alliance, a "non-political" organization created by moderate-conservatives in response to recent events.

— Debate and narrow election of Al Shackelford by the SBC Executive Committee to succeed W.C. Fields as director of Baptist Press.

— The decision by the SBC Foreign Mission Board to drop the requirement that missionary appointees complete at least part of their seminary training at a Southern Baptist seminary.

While the conflict continues, Puckett contended, the real issues are not liberalism or the authority of the Bible. "Southern Baptists believe in the Bible and trust it," he said.

He listed four issues as the major concerns: freedom to interpret the Bible under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the lordship of Jesus Christ above all things, freedom of the local church to minister and worship as it sees fit and the role of women in ministry.

Freedom, he said, is a common theme in each of those issues, and "for a true Baptist, freedom is never negotiable."

—30—

CORRECTION: In (BP) story, Public Affairs Committee New Members Are Proposed, mailed 4/29/87, please make the following correction in the 22nd graf:

Albert Lee Smith is a member of First Baptist Church of Birmingham, not Southside church as written.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

CORRECTION: In (BP) story, Trustees Nominated For Boards, Executive Committee, mailed 4/28/87, please make the following correction under Sunday School Board listing, fourth graf:

Sam Simmons, not Sam Simmonds as written.

Thanks,
Baptist Press