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Home Mission Board Tightens Hiring Policies On Divorce, Glossolalia

By Joe Westbury

ATLANTA (BP)--Individuals seeking missionary appointment by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board will have to submit to tighter guidelines concerning divorce and glossolalia following action by the agency's board of directors.

As a result of the new policy, divorced people rarely will be appointed or approved unless their divorce was based on "biblical rationale" as outlined by the board. That rationale was defined as being limited to cases of adultery or fornication and in instances of desertion or physical abandonment by a spouse.

The policy, adopted during the July 29 full board meeting, also states that no divorced individual will be considered for a pastoral role unless the divorce meets the biblical guidelines and the applicant has not remarried.

People now serving who have been divorced and remarried will remain in service. All missions personnel currently serving and divorcing or remarrying will be re-evaluated under the terms of the new policy.

Board member Don Aderhold, who presented the recommendation from the personnel committee, explained that the new guidelines also apply to spouses of missionary candidates since they also are appointed or approved in the hiring process. The policy makes no provision for candidates whose divorce was prior to their Christian conversion, he added.

The board action, which passed 48-20 on a roll-call vote, rewrites former policy that evaluated each instance of divorce on its own merit. For nearly two decades individuals have been employed, after evaluation, if their divorce did not impair their ministry.

Board member James Walters, pastor of First Baptist Church of Mobile, Ala., was one of a half-dozen directors who challenged the new policy and sought its defeat.

"Certainly I'm for the ideal, but I'm also concerned about the redeeming aspects of the gospel and the message that we are implying. Is divorce the unpardonable sin? Are we going to throw rocks or ropes" to people who have been involved in divorce? he asked the board.

New board member Olan Wills, pastor of Springhead Baptist Church in Plant City, Fla., countered by saying he was sympathetic to those who disagreed with the proposal but added, "We as pastors and Christians cannot go on sympathy but on God's word, and it says, 'Let him be the husband of one wife.'"

Jim Strickland, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Cartersville, Ga., challenged the biblical rationale by referring to Old Testament personalities Moses and King David who committed murder and adultery, respectively, but who God later used in leadership positions.

"Just which biblical material do we talk about and which do we leave out?" he asked.

Wanda Haworth, treasurer of Centertown Baptist Church in Centertown, Mo., noted there are numerous moral absolutes in Scripture but added: "Everyday probably most of us here break some of them. I urge the defeat of this because we live under a day of grace, not of law."

In other action, the directors approved a recommendation that will prohibit employment of missionary candidates who actively participate in or promote glossolalia, commonly known as "speaking in tongues."

The policy replaces a similarly worded recommendation that was tabled at the March board meeting because directors felt it was too broad in its referral to the modern charismatic movement and its "private prayer language."

Under the new policy, any current missions personnel who are appointed, approved or endorsed by the board and who become involved in glossolalia will be counseled by an HMB representative. Continued participation in glossolalia will result in termination of employment.

The new stance on glossolalia also applies to chaplains who, although not paid by the board, are endorsed by the Atlanta-based agency.

Strickland voiced lone opposition to the policy, challenging it due to a lack of definition of glossolalia which he felt would allow the motion to be misinterpreted in future years.

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HMB Directors Approve
Organizational Study

By Sherri Brown

Baptist Press
7/30/87

ATLANTA (BP)--A strategy planning task force to review ways to best reach America for Christ and a new staff position to coordinate abortion alternatives were approved by directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board during their July meeting.

The task force will be formed to review the Home Mission Board's organizational structure and to develop strategy to best reach the goals and objectives of the board.

"We will first review the current purpose and objectives of the Home Mission Board, then we will examine the organizational structure in respect to our major thrusts of church planting and evangelism, in keeping with Bold Mission Thrust," explained HMB President Larry Lewis after his first full board meeting since his election in April.

The group will consist of "about 20 people, including missiologists, church growth specialists, evangelists and some HMB personnel," Lewis said. Most will be Southern Baptists, although Lewis said he may name a few members outside the denomination.

Lewis expects the first meeting to occur in early fall. The committee will function for a year, with any major reorganization to occur after its final report is presented.

The board also voted to establish a coordinator for alternatives to abortion ministries. The new position is in response to Southern Baptist Convention resolution approved in St. Louis that encouraged "the Home Mission Board to train churches for ministry in crisis pregnancy centers and residential care homes for pregnant women and children."

During his opening remarks, Lewis said, "It is not the purview of the Home Mission Board to speak on the morality and ethics of the abortion issue, but it is our responsibility to minister to those who are affected by it, born and unborn."

Part of the position description includes assisting state Baptist conventions, associations and churches in establishing counseling clinics that will provide alternatives to abortion.

The board also voted to provide \$60,000 a year for five years to assist five state conventions in the Northeast -- New York, New England, Pennsylvania/South Jersey, Maryland-Delaware and District of Columbia -- to establish a ministry training center for pastors and mission personnel.

As long as Home Mission Board funds are used, the board annually will review the work to assure evangelism and mission objectives are being met. They also will approve personnel chosen to direct the program.

Board members also discussed requesting additional funds from the SBC Executive Committee.

"A lot of people think 25 percent of (national) Cooperative Program funds go to the Home Mission Board and 50 percent to the Foreign Mission Board. But that figure has eroded away to less than 20 percent for the Home Mission Board," said Ralph Smith of Austin, Texas.

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The board, however, took no action, referring the matter to its administrative committee.

Clark Hutchinson, chairman of the board from Marietta, Ga., told board members he had requested their churches' Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions figures from the past two years.

Hutchinson admonished board members to be aware of the money their churches give to the annual offering: "We have a responsibility regarding our locale. I don't believe we are doing all we can do. I want you to take this personally."

In other business, the board voted to delete the position of director of financial resources, approved in 1983, which never was filled. Funds allocated for that position were made available for a new position -- associate director of the associational missions department in the evangelism section. The new position was approved in order to service the needs of the new emphasis on winning the cities to Christ.

The board also approved the formation of a marketing department, separating its function from the promotion department.

Three staff members were promoted and two new staff members were approved.

Fermin A. Whittaker, for 10 years director of the ethnic church growth department, was elected regional coordinator in the planning section. Whittaker, a naturalized U.S. citizen since 1967, is a product of home mission work in his native Panama.

Robert T. Mills, assistant director of Mission Service Corps since 1981, was elected MSC director.

J. Leon Boyd, associate director of the metropolitan missions department since 1984, was elected director of the rural-urban missions department.

John Mark Clifton, church starter strategist for Roswell Baptist Association in Roswell, Ga., was elected associate director of the church starting department.

Paul Stephenson, director/manager of chaplaincy at Scottsdale Memorial Hospital, in Scottsdale, Ariz., was elected director of hospital chaplaincy.

The board also approved for appointment four missionaries and six missionary associates. Also approved were 12 church planter apprentices, 29 mission pastors and nine mission pastor interns.

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Larry Lewis Installed As 15th
Home Mission Board President

By Joe Westbury

Baptist Press
7/30/87

ATLANTA (BP)--Larry Lewis was installed as the 15th president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board July 28 during a banquet attended by state and national denominational leaders and elected board employees.

More than 400 people attended the event at Atlanta's Colony Square Hotel where Lewis, who assumed the presidency June 1, was affirmed for his longstanding commitment to church starting and home missions.

The program featured testimonies by Robert Curtis, pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church of High Ridge, Mo., who recommended Lewis for the post; Troy Morrison, director of church-minister relations for the Alabama Baptist Convention in Montgomery and chairman of the search committee that selected Lewis; and Bob Banks, executive vice president of the board who was interim president.

Adrian P. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, delivered the challenge and spoke of the need for godly leadership in the nation, the denomination and the Home Mission Board.

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"I thank God for Larry Lewis because he began at the bottom of the denominational ladder and did yeoman's service," Rogers said as he related Lewis' experience as a church planter and mission pastor.

Rogers said it was not wrong to be ambitious if the motivation was for spiritual gain: "Jesus never told us not to be great, he taught us how to be great -- by becoming a servant to the world. To do less than your best is a sin against God."

The Memphis pastor then listed three kinds of evil that Christian leaders should avoid -- selfish priorities, sinful pride and sterile professionalism.

Lewis recounted that while he was considering the position and hesitating to accept the responsibility of leading Southern Baptist home missions efforts, he received spiritual encouragement from Scripture reading.

"With that still, small voice, we hear with our heart, with our soul, God said to my mind and my heart, 'Don't try to understand it. Don't attempt to comprehend it. You simply can't figure it out. Just know that I am in it.'

"I say tonight that I never heard God speak to me more certainly or more clearly than he did that night. His voice was like a siren in my soul."

Lewis concluded by promising he would never begin his workday without first talking with God and seeking his direction and then giving him the glory for each victory.

Harold C. Bennett, president of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, delivered the commitment prayer at the conclusion of the evening.

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Mali President:
Pray For Rain

By Eric Miller

Baptist Press
7/30/87

BAMAKO, Mali (BP)--Although he is Muslim, Malian President Moussa Traore is asking Baptists and other evangelical groups to join people of his own faith in praying for rain, Southern Baptist missionary Larry Erwin said.

The western African nation is in its rainy season, but very little rain is falling. Light rain is dampening some areas and missing others, but in a normal rainy season, rains fall every other day, Erwin said.

"Over the next two to three weeks, if they don't get sufficient rain, the plants already in the ground are going to die because of the heat, and they're not going to be able to plant any more for a second crop," Erwin said shortly after meeting with drought officials in Bamako.

Mali was in a drought in 1984 and 1985, and Southern Baptist missionaries Norman and Beverly Coad led a grain distribution effort that fed 1.3 million people. Sufficient rain fell in 1986, but Erwin said: "One year of good rain does not end the drought. We're still in the drought that started a few years ago."

Maliens are grain eaters who tend to grow only enough food to last one year. A Malian meal often is a bowl of soup made of leaves, okra, a tomato and an onion. They make a mush from corn or sorghum and dip this in the soup.

When crops died in the 1984 drought, the Maliens observed cattle eating leaves from bushes. They boiled and ate these but got sick, Beverly Coad said. For the Maliens, owning livestock is like having money in the bank; they eat their cattle only as a last resort.

Maliens, after seeing grain distribution in 1984 and 1985, re-named the Baptist mission as "Makarikelaw," which means "the people who are so deeply moved by compassion when they see the suffering of others that they do all in their power to try to alleviate it."

"It is a witness," Coad said, "when you tell the Maliens, 'I have called my home office in the United States, and have asked our people to pray.' They don't take things like that lightly."

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Kaneubbe Personifies
Ministry To Indians

By Trennis Henderson

WINDERMERE, Mo. (BP)--Donning his Indian headdress and buckskin shirt, Victor Kaneubbe doesn't look much like the "typical" Southern Baptist Convention vice president.

But then, typical isn't a very apt description for any aspect of Kaneubbe's life and ministry.

A 66-year-old retired missionary pastor, Kaneubbe became the first American Indian elected to conventionwide office when he was chosen SBC second vice president in St. Louis this summer.

The Oklahoma-born Choctaw Indian was camp missionary for two Missouri Baptist Royal Ambassador camps at Windermere Baptist Assembly.

Privately acknowledging, "I'd rather wear my regular clothes," particularly in the sweltering mid-Missouri heat, Kaneubbe nodded toward a group of campers and added, "I wear the regalia because they like it, and it identifies me with Indians."

Being identified with Indians is a way of life for Kaneubbe. Reared in the Creek Nation capital of Okmulgee, Okla., he became a Christian at age 15 and made a commitment to full-time Christian service during his senior year in high school. While a student at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, he was on the staff of three Baptist churches, and was a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board student missionary for Indian work at First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City.

Those early experiences helped Kaneubbe realize "how far behind" most Indian congregations were in terms of trained leaders, organized programs and available resources.

"I felt like the white church didn't need me; the Indian church did," he noted. "So that's where I've spent my life."

Upon graduation from college, Kaneubbe became a full-time home missionary among the Indians. "The first three places I served, I started new work," he recalled. "Today you'd call (me) a church planter."

Before retiring the first of this year, Kaneubbe spent 37 years as a Southern Baptist home missionary, serving primarily in Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona. He also found time to be on the staff of Kirkwood Baptist Church in St. Louis in the mid-1950s and also did Indian mission work in Kansas and Mississippi.

The United States is home to an estimated 1.5 million Indians from more than 400 tribes, so Kaneubbe has never lacked a place to minister. Reflecting on more than 15 challenging years ministering through interpreters to Navajo Indians in New Mexico, Kaneubbe said, "If that's where you feel God wants you to be, then that's where you want to be."

Kaneubbe views his recent election as SBC second vice president as an additional opportunity for ministry. When he agreed to be nominated for the office, Kaneubbe said he and other ethnic leaders "felt like Southern Baptists would elect an Indian to the position." As the first American Indian elected second vice president, he joins a growing list of ethnics who have held that office in the past 25 years, including a Black, a Hispanic and a Korean.

Kaneubbe said he hopes such recognition will "encourage ethnics to participate more" in the life of the convention. "The more ethnics participate," he elaborated, "the more they'll be given an opportunity to serve."

Even before being elected to his SBC office, Kaneubbe was recognized for his work among American Indians. In 1985 he was elected to the inaugural two-year term as chairman of the new National Native American Southern Baptist Fellowship. He was re-elected to that post this year.

Among the priorities of the fellowship, Kaneubbe explained, are prayers for 400 Indians to be called to preach the gospel full time "and to stay with it no matter how discouraging it gets." Indian leaders also are praying for 1,200 new bivocational Indian pastors and 4,000 trained lay leaders.

Other priorities are to baptize 15,000 Indians -- equal to one-fourth of Indian Baptist churches' current membership -- and to start 450 new Indian congregations by the year 2000.

Kaneubbe said he believes the national fellowship "is going to make a difference in our Indian people being reached for Christ. I feel like it's the Indian people making these decisions and then getting behind them.

"I feel great about what is happening among Indian churches and missions and what the possibilities are. Our people are accepting the challenge. It's a great spiritual uplift."

As a convention officer, Kaneubbe's concerns go beyond Indian ministries, however. During speaking engagements in the coming year, he will point to the needs of the convention as a whole.

Stressing the need for Southern Baptist outreach and evangelism, Kaneubbe said questions must be raised about "the millions of non-resident members we don't even know where they are" and about SBC churches recording less than 400,000 baptisms annually "when we ought to have a million."

Insisting biblical stewardship also must become a convention priority, he added, "If we're going to do more, we've got to give more."

Kaneubbe's personal commitment to evangelism and stewardship is reflected in the records of First Indian Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., where he was pastor for more than 10 years prior to retirement.

During those years, the church membership grew from 45 to 225. During the same time, the congregation's Southern Baptist Cooperative Program budget giving grew from 5 percent to 18 percent of its own budget making it the largest per capita giving church to the Cooperative Program in metropolitan Phoenix.

Even in retirement, Kaneubbe anticipates remaining active in mission efforts. He said personal goals include starting at least two new Indian congregations in the Phoenix area -- one to reach Indian college students and another aimed toward area Navajos.

During his two weeks at Windermere, Kaneubbe shared his enthusiasm for missions with 156 boys attending camp.

"I hope they understand more about Indians" as a result of their camp experience, Kaneubbe said. "I also hope they understand the need for missions and the possibility of committing themselves to missions. We tie in to how we reach the Indian people and how the main object of it all is to reach them for Jesus."

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Baker Named To Religious
Anti-Pornography Alliance

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press
7/30/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--N. Larry Baker, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, has been named to the executive committee of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography.

The alliance is a coalition of U.S. religious leaders. The group's purpose is to oppose hard-core and child pornography, which are not protected by the U.S. Constitution.

Baker was recommended to the alliance by Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian P. Rogers, who formerly was on the organization's executive committee. Rogers and other members of the alliance met with President Reagan last year to express the group's concerns about pornography.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to join other American religious leaders in the effort to rid our society of a terrible evil that destroys the lives of countless children and wrecks the lives of families and individuals," Baker said. "I hope that my involvement will encourage other Southern Baptists to tackle the insidious evils of child pornography and hard-core pornography.

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"One thing is clear: Child pornography and hard-core pornography are not innocent forms of entertainment. They are destructive. RAAP is helping Americans in all walks of life to see that."

Baker said the alliance's goals closely parallel those of the Christian Life Commission in the agency's ongoing efforts to combat pornography.

"By working together with other religious groups, we as Southern Baptists can multiply our efforts to fight the evil of pornography and improve the health and welfare of this nation," he said.

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Outreach Bible Study,
Evangelism Go Together

By Frank Wm. White

Baptist Press
7/30/87

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (BP)--Jesse Herron accepted Christ in a friend's home on a Monday night.

Curiosity first brought Herron to the Bible study eight weeks earlier. The comfortable surroundings along with an understandable presentation of the gospel made it possible for Herron to learn about Christ.

"I don't think I would have just walked into a church," Herron said.

But in his friend's home, the soft-spoken auto mechanic slowly nodded his head when Sharon Smith ended the session by asking Herron if he wanted the life they had talked about.

As Smith led Herron in a prayer to ask Jesus to forgive him of his sins and "enter his life," his wife and other friends in the room struggled to control their tears.

A few weeks earlier, his wife had prayed the same prayer. Herron was the last of the four participants in the outreach Bible study group to repeat the prayer and become a Christian.

Smith, minister of education at Lakeview Baptist Church in Tallahassee, Fla., and John Boone, pastor, believe the outreach Bible study materials are going to be crucial in pumping new life into their church.

The materials, called "An Invitation to Bible Study," have been available since October. The plan was designed by the Sunday school department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to reach non-Christians outside the church using more familiar language, said Mavis Allen, Sunday school program and design coordinator.

That approach convinced Boone that outreach Bible study was more than just another Bible study plan. He admits he was skeptical when Smith first brought in the materials.

When Smith asked Boone to teach the session one night when she was out of town, he briefly scanned the material to see what he needed to do. "I stopped and read it all. This is the best material we've got going," he said.

Now Boone and his wife, Sherrill, are considering starting an outreach Bible study group for high school students out of a concern for their high school daughter's friends.

Boone said the two groups Smith has led produced far more evangelistic results than the church's Wednesday night visitation program.

He points out the materials are not complex and can be taught by church members as well as staff members.

A teacher's edition provides discussion suggestions and resource materials. A student edition provides materials for the participants. A separate youth edition is available. Both follow a study of the Gospel of Luke.

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This summer the outreach Bible study concept and materials are being presented to as many as 5,000 college students attending student conferences at Glorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers.

"We will train the students and challenge them to return to their campuses and churches and conduct outreach Bible studies," said Bill Henry, manager of the program section of board's national student ministries department.

Outreach Bible study can be used on campuses, in apartment complexes, homes, community centers or any location non-Christians would be most comfortable.

Already, outreach Bible study has been used successfully by churches for evangelistic outreach or to help establish new work.

Church planters David and Betsy Draper used outreach Bible study as one of the first ways to get people interested in new work they are starting in the Beacon Hill area and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus in Boston.

A new mission in Surry, Maine, was begun with an outreach Bible study conducted in the town fire hall in October 1985.

While the materials are easy to use, getting a Bible study project started may not always be easy, Smith cautioned.

Once it is established, people will not necessarily attend with only one invitation. It may take several invitations and careful cultivation to encourage non-Christian people to attend a Bible study, she explained.

The SSB Sunday school department hopes the sessions will be started to reach the non-Christians. The goal for this year is 4,000 outreach Bible study groups using "An Invitation to Bible Study." By 1990, the goal increases to 10,000 outreach Bible studies sponsored by Southern Baptist Sunday schools.

"We're trying to find new ways to reach outside the church walls and reach the unsaved where they are," said Harry Piland, director of the Sunday school department.

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

Southern Baptist Develops
Sickle Cell Treatment

By Ken Camp

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7/30/87

DALLAS (BP)--Through 17 years of painstaking scientific research, Sunday Fadulu of First Baptist Church of Houston believes God has guided him toward a breakthrough in the treatment of sickle cell anemia.

"This has definitely been the work of the Lord," said Fadulu, who described himself as a product of Southern Baptist missions in Nigeria. "My objective always has been that the Lord would use this research to help the people with sickle cell anemia who need treatment."

Sickle cell anemia is an inherited condition, found chiefly among blacks, in which red blood cells become crescent-shaped due to defective hemoglobin. Fadulu, a professor of microbiology at Texas Southern University in Houston and adjunct professor at the University of Houston, and two colleagues have developed a drug that appears to alleviate all sickle cell symptoms and to lower the cholesterol level of recipients.

Fadulu traces both his interest in science and his Christian commitment back to his childhood in Nigeria. Although his grandfather had been a tribal chieftain involved in traditional religions, Fadulu's father and mother were converted to Christianity as a result of Southern Baptist missionary efforts. His father graduated from a Baptist college and seminary in Nigeria and then became headmaster of a Baptist school.

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While studying at a Baptist high school in Nigeria, young Fadulu was influenced both spiritually and educationally by his missionary teachers.

"I can remember praying for science teachers to come to our school, and three came to teach biology, chemistry and physics my last year in high school," he said. "Then I prayed hard that I would be able to further my education."

Fadulu attended Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Okla., graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1964. He then earned a master's degree and a doctor of philosophy degree in medical microbiology at Oklahoma University.

While studying hematology at OU, Fadulu conducted research on the therapeutic effects of the "chewing sticks" that are used for oral hygiene in the equatorial regions of Africa. His original intent was to determine if microorganisms in the plant killed germs in the mouth.

In the process of his research, Fadulu succeeded in isolating and extracting compounds from the plants that alleviate symptoms of sickle cell anemia when administered orally in concentrated form.

"The quantity of the active ingredients in the chewing sticks is so small a person would have to chew a house full of trees in one day to get the same results," he said.

The drug already has proven successful in the first round of clinical trials, and Fadulu expects to see it test marketed in northern and central Africa, India, Saudi Arabia and possibly Latin America within six months. Pending U.S. Federal Drug Administration approval, the drug could be available in the United States within 18 months.

Although various hurdles in the past 17 years have been discouraging, Fadulu said the support of fellow Christians and the assurance that he was in God's will have kept him working.

"My Sunday school class at First Baptist Church has been a tremendous source of inspiration to me. They are like my second family, and their prayers have helped me overcome obstacles," he said.

Already, Fadulu's work has attracted international attention, and he has received numerous invitations to present his findings. He considers these speaking invitations opportunities to testify of God's power.

"I tremble when called on to do this, but once I get up, I feel a tremendous surge of power and confidence. I know it is the Lord who has brought me to this point. That is something scientists often don't want to admit. They're reluctant to believe anything that cannot be examined. But I am completely confident that this has been the work of God."

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Seminary Receives 300-Year-Old
Handlettered Copy Of Koran

By Mark Wingfield

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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A 300-year-old handlettered copy of the Koran has been placed on permanent loan in the A. Webb Roberts Library of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The book belongs to Larry Keilberg of Wichita Falls, Texas, who purchased it from a Muslim in Chad for the equivalent of \$40.

The Koran is the sacred scripture of Islam. The prophet Mohammed said the book's contents were revealed to him over a period of 20 years in the seventh century.

An exact date has not been placed on the Southwestern Seminary copy. Three people with knowledge of the Muslim faith have examined the manuscript and estimate it to be between 300 and 700 years old.

The text is written in Kufic, a language predating modern Arabic, said Ben Rogers, seminary archivist. However, scribes continued to use Kufic rather than Arabic to copy the Koran because of the script's beauty, he said.

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Ink decorations of various designs appear throughout the text. The three colors of ink used in the manuscript were perhaps made by boiling pomegranate skins, Rogers said.

Paper in the book is handmade, with at least two different watermarks. "The pages appear to have been rolled much like dough by a rolling pin, creating the rounded edges," he said.

Keilberg obtained the manuscript in 1973 while working as a pilot for an oil company in Chad. Wichita Falls Pastor Morris Chapman recommended Keilberg should donate the book to Southwestern, where it could be used in the study of ancient religions.

The Koran is an important book for seminary students to understand, said Finlay Graham, guest professor of missions and a missionary in the Middle East for 40 years.

Muslims claim to have 1 billion followers, Graham said, noting, "We need to become acquainted with their teachings so we can approach them with the gospel in a realistic way."

Graham said in working with Muslims he uses the Koran as a basis for dialogue. They "claim that the Koran they have is an exact copy of that which is at the throne of God, and they revere it so much," he said, pointing out portions of the Koran can be compared with the Old Testament and New Testament.

"Looking at it from their point of view," Graham said of Southwestern's document, "we have something that is of a rare nature."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary