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Do Southern Baptists Want
Southeastern, Lolley Asks

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--During the next several months, Southern Baptists will wrestle with the question of whether they want a school like Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Randall Lolley told students and faculty at the opening convocation in late August.

Lolley, president of the Southern Baptist Convention-related institution, told the opening convocation in Southeastern's 37th anniversary year: "I predict over the next several months that a really new question will arise among Southern Baptists. Simply put, the question is this: 'Do Southern Baptists in the 1980s want a seminary like the one they founded in the 1950s?'"

"I honestly do not know the answer to that question. Nor do you. Nor does anyone else -- not yet. Not even Southern Baptists know the answer, partly because they have been asking other questions. But that is the question squarely put now to all of us," he said.

Lolley, who has been associated with the seminary 17 of its 37 years and its president 12 of those years, told the convocation it would be easier for him to see his theological alma mater die than to become "distorted into an institution that she has never been."

He said there is a "Southeastern way of doing theological education."

"Southeastern Seminary was born in the excitement of an idea whose time had come -- a free conscience, free church, free country way of doing theological education. Institutions, like individuals, have identities. These derive from the institution's birth, its heritage, surroundings, visions and values. Southeastern Seminary has an identity -- a discernible, historic 'theological chemistry' -- a distinctive way of doing theological education," he said.

Lolley said there are two crucial elements involved in the way Southeastern does theological education: Free and responsible theological education with the Bible at the center of the curriculum and Christian ministry as an expression of a believer's spiritual gifts and special calling.

Of the first, he said Article 12 of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement of 1963 is titled "Education," and cited the final words, "In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility."

"Within this happy blending, freedom will never bless until it is responsible, and responsibility will never benefit until it is free. At Southeastern we do not believe that we pay for the expansion of our minds by the contractions of our hearts. Nor do we subscribe to a theory of theological indoctrination wherein truth is determined always by majority opinion. We recall all too vividly that our Lord was crucified with the majority agreeing," Lolley said.

"Prophets do not ask permission -- in the name of prestige or their paychecks -- for the privilege to be prophets. Southeastern prefers to work on 'the prophetic edge' of our denominational enterprise. Thus our sense of outrage when that dimension is threatened. At this school we know that if we shackle a teacher today, we will shackle a preacher tomorrow.

"And in that process we will have increased to an alarming degree our prospect of shackling our prophets forever," he concluded.

Lolley said the Bible is at the heart of the curriculum at Southeastern. "At Southeastern the integrity of the Scriptures has always been affirmed," he said. "The Bible is truth -- period, exclamation point -- not question mark."

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At this school we have given our very lives to knowing the Bible and to interpreting its message for ourselves and others. We may not always agree on an interpretation (we are, after all, Baptists), but we do always agree on the authority and the integrity of the texts we seek to interpret."

Lolley also cited a portion of Article One of the Baptist Faith and Message Statement on scriptures, which says the "criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ."

"We do all our work at Southeastern under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is why we can afford to let our consciences be free. Our interpretations are not subject finally to the opinions of any other person living or dead. Jesus alone is the norm around which all our interpretations must coalesce."

On the second distinctive at Southeastern, Lolley said the idea includes the notion that Christian ministry involves all the people of God.

"In Christian ministry both the coaches and the players have gifts to express. Authoritarianism gives way to partnership. Cooperation replaces coercion. After all, the highest New Testament model for ministry in Jesus' name is servanthood," he said.

The president also maintained that Christian ministry is "gender neutral. God calls all the redeemed into ministry according to their gifts. Male and female alike are called. And God does not appear to care who gets the credit.

"No more can we look at young women in the 20th century and tell them they must become men before they can become ministers. For us that issue was settled at the Jerusalem Conference over 1900 years ago. The only credential necessary for Christian service is to be a Christian," Lolley said.

He said he believes the seminary has "consistently expressed the dream of its founders" since it was created at the 1950 SBC annual meeting in Chicago. "Many of them (the founders) are still alive, and I have asked them. They have told me so," he said.

On the occasion of the beginning of the 37th academic year of the seminary, Lolley said: "I want to commit myself afresh -- as president -- to struggle with the question taking shape: 'Do we define here for the future of an institution embracing the Southeastern idea, making it fresh and distinct for the 1980s and 1990s, or do we distort here such an institution, making it embrace an idea it has never known?'

"If Southern Baptists desire a seminary in Wake Forest distinct and determinative for these days in our denomination -- one like the seminary detailed in the plan of action endorsed by trustees last March -- then this president will give every tick of his time and every millibar of his energy to producing that kind of institution.

"If, on the other hand, Southern Baptists desire a seminary ... different and destructive of the idea which this school has sought through its history to incarnate, then this president will not commit one moment of the time or one millibar of the energy he has left to producing that kind of school.

"I cannot and I will not do for Southern Baptists something that in my conscience is not 'as unto the Lord,'" Lolley said.

Southeastern Faculty
Affirms Mutual Support

Baptist Press
9/3/87

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--In its workshop prior to the opening of the fall semester, the 35-member faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary unanimously adopted a "Statement of Mutual Support."

The statement emphasizes the lordship of Christ as central to the work and lives of the faculty at the seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

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While not elaborating on its reference to "current circumstances in the Southern Baptist Convention," the statement calls attention to the faculty's "oneness of purpose and ... unity of fellowship." Faculties of the six Southern Baptist seminaries have been criticized for their theological views during the eight years of the theological/political controversy within the convention.

The statement also expressed a feeling that the members of the faculty have been "called to discipleship and ministry under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ." It goes on to say that the faculty members have a responsibility to freely express their understanding of God's call.

The complete text of the statement states:

"In the context of current circumstances in the Southern Baptist Convention, we, the faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, affirm our encouragement and support of one another as Christian professors, administrators and colleagues.

"As members severally of the one body of Christ, and of this faculty, we affirm our oneness of purpose and our unity of fellowship.

"We affirm our mutual support as we seek to be faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ and to our calling as Christian teachers, preachers, leaders and evangelists, recognizing our individual responsibility to express freely our understanding of God's calling and respecting the integrity of our various responses to divine leadership.

"As a body individually and jointly called to discipleship and ministry under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, we affirm our unity and mutuality in performing our corporate and specific duties and therefore pledge collegial support to each member of this faculty accordingly."

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CLC Abortion Conference
Explores Viable Answers

By Tim Fields

Baptist Press
9/3/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--More than 150 participants from 19 states at a two-day Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission conference on abortion explored ways to work together in combatting the problem of abortion and in ministering to the millions of people traumatized by the issue.

Participants heard eight addresses that explored biblical truths related to abortion, traced the history of the issue from the early church to the present and challenged Southern Baptists to become pro-active on the issue.

Workshops offered help in preaching on sanctity of human life, educating children about sex, establishing crisis pregnancy centers, working through public policy, caring for women facing crisis pregnancies and supporting state convention homes for children.

Bob Terry, editor of Word and Way, the newsjournal of the Missouri Baptist Convention, addressed the Bible's witness to life, telling participants: "The Bible begins by introducing God who is creator of life and the maker of mankind in his own image. If God's nature is the giver of life, to refuse that gift is to strike at the heart of God. Abortion is the refusal to accept God's gift of life.

"The Bible views life as beginning at conception," also citing a variety of Old Testament passages that indicate "God was at work in the creative process."

Turning to the New Testament, Terry said: "While it is true that no verse in the New Testament explicitly prohibits abortion, the direction of the New Testament as a book of life is clear. ... The Christian's responsibility is to help the helpless, to befriend the friendless, to defend the defenseless, to aid them in coming to God. Abortion is the antipathy of such actions, for abortion kills."

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While noting "the witness of the Christian community continues to be a witness to life," Terry acknowledged Southern Baptists are not unanimous in their views on abortion, particularly regarding exceptions to an outright prohibition against abortion. "Christians who think theologically and act in the best interest of their faith do disagree," he said. "Disputants on both sides use the Bible."

Paul Jones, executive director of the Mississippi Christian Action Commission, traced beliefs of the early church on abortion and cited numerous early church documents that spoke out on abortion. In these writings, "abortion was unthinkable," he said.

Fred Loper, a national missionary for medical missions with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said while Southern Baptists "stagger under the revelation that millions of women choose to abort their babies each year," those numbers represent only the "visible tip of the iceberg." Abortion is fueled by widespread promiscuity prevalent in today's society, he said.

"It is here that our numbers quit giving us adequate insight into our times. They (numbers) tell us eloquently of the massive quantity of the sexual problem, yet they fail miserably to tell us the why of the problem," Loper added.

He noted nearly 55 million abortions are performed yearly worldwide, and he estimated about 1.5 million abortions will be conducted in the United States alone this year.

Yet despite the vastness of the numbers, Christians must avoid dealing with abortion merely by figures, Loper contended: "We cannot treat it (abortion) as an isolated phenomenon separate from teenage pregnancy or promiscuity or AIDS or the giant lack of sex education in our homes and churches. We must be perceptive and creative and fill in the gaps left by our abundant statistics."

Other evangelical groups face the same problem as Southern Baptists when it comes to agreement on abortion, a Southern Baptist seminary professor told participants. Joe E. Trull, associate professor of Christian ethics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, reviewed the positions of six evangelical theologians on abortion.

Evangelicals are against abortion on demand, yet are willing to justify abortion if the mother's life is in danger, Trull said. After those points, evangelicals, like Southern Baptists, have differing opinions about whether abortion can be justified in situations such as rape and incest, he added.

Robert Parham, an associate director of the Christian Life Commission responsible for abortion-related concerns, traced resolutions on abortion passed by the Southern Baptist Convention and Baptist state conventions between 1971 and 1987.

Parham said the 11 SBC resolutions and the 14 state convention resolutions in the past 16 years differ in that the state resolutions have not been as broad or restrictive as SBC resolutions.

"SBC resolutions express from the very first the belief that human life is sacred, including fetal life. The theological basis for such a belief is that human beings are created in the image of God," he said.

"SBC resolutions have changed over time. They have narrowed the exceptions for abortion from four in 1971 to one in 1980. They have broadened their focus from strict concern about abortion on demand in 1980 to concern about child abuse, infanticide, euthanasia, care for unwed mothers and alternatives to abortion in 1982 and 1984. They also have moved away from a largely polemical posture in the 1970s and early 1980s to a pro-active posture in 1987, reflecting more interest in acting than in arguing.

"We debate with white-hot intensity the exceptions of rape and incest while we ignore our general agreement that we need to do something about the other 97 percent of the abortions. If we exclude 10 percent on the far-right and far-left, we find that Southern Baptists are not far apart. We do have a common ground of agreement from which to act," Parham said.

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Two directors of church-sponsored crisis pregnancy centers described how their centers have provided counseling and alternatives to girls seeking abortions.

Jane Delaney, director of the crisis pregnancy center at First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, and Andy Merritt, director of the crisis pregnancy center at Edgewood Baptist Church in Columbus, Ga., observed the crisis pregnancy center movement is growing because it works.

Delaney said she has seen how abortion "has devastated the lives of women and those around them," noting no matter what the circumstance, abortion provides additional trauma.

Merritt urged Southern Baptists to take a greater stand and provide a voice for the "innocent that are being slaughtered" and women who are suffering as "a result of exploitation by abortionists."

Attorney Susie Hoeller said the U.S. Supreme Court giving a woman the right to an abortion throughout her entire pregnancy "has no foundation under the (U.S.) Constitution."

Hoeller, staff member of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and president of the Greater Dallas Right-to-Life Educational Foundation, presented a review of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision handed down Jan. 22, 1973.

Despite what most Americans believe, Roe v. Wade allows for abortions throughout the entire nine months of pregnancy, she said. States increasingly may regulate abortions with each successive trimester, but even at the end of the term, "the mother still has the right to an abortion on the grounds of her health," she noted.

"The most fundamental ... error (of Roe v. Wade) is the court's failure to even seriously examine the biological evidence about when life begins and the unborn child's humanity on its own merits," she said.

In the closing address of the conference N. Larry Baker, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, pulled the themes of the conference together.

"Let the world know that we worship and serve the God who is full of compassion, and gracious and long-suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth," he said quoting from the Psalms. "Let the world know that we worship and serve the God who is father of the fatherless and protector of widows and is constant in his concern for the defenseless."

Baker concluded: "In the final analysis, the issue of abortion is a personal one. The power of the kingdom is always transmitted through people. A hand reaching out, a work spoken, a challenge raised, a cause championed, a ministry performed."

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Cooperative Program Aims
To Top \$130 Million Mark

Baptist Press
9/3/87

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptists' convention-wide missions budget should top \$130 million for the first time in 1986-87, according to predictions based on year-to-date receipts.

The Cooperative Program -- the unified evangelism, education and ministry budget supported by more than 37,000 Southern Baptist congregations -- received \$11,257,538 in August, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the convention's Executive Committee.

August receipts were up \$1,001,422 over the same period last year, for a gain of 9.76 percent, Bennett said. That brings the year-to-date total to \$120,150,803 at the end of 11 months of the fiscal year, for an annual gain of 5.51 percent, ahead of the current 3.9 percent U.S. inflation rate.

"I was extremely pleased with the continued year-to-date growth of the Cooperative Program," he said. "We are ahead of the consumer price index, and this moves us ahead in meeting some of our mission obligations for the year."

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Computer-generated predictions based on year-to-date figures indicate the current annual Cooperative Program total should reach about \$131 million, said Tim A. Hedquist, vice president for business and finance of the Executive Committee, the Southern Baptist organization that disburses the funds to 20 convention agencies, institutions and programs.

If the predictions hold true, the Cooperative Program will experience an annual increase of 5.5 percent over 1985-86 receipts of slightly more than \$124.2 million, Hedquist said.

A \$131 million 1986-87 Cooperative Program total would surpass the \$126.6 million first phase of the annual budget, providing operating funds for the participating convention entities. It also would provide \$4.4 million of almost \$5.9 million budgeted for capital needs of 12 agencies and institutions.

Unmet would be \$3.7 million for the second phase of the operating budget, which theoretically would be disbursed proportionately between the 19 primary beneficiaries.

A major factor in the Cooperative Program's annual total will be how quickly Baptist state conventions forward their end-of-month Cooperative Program checks to the Executive Committee, Bennett said. Books will close effective Sept. 30, a Wednesday and only three days after Southern Baptists' offerings will be collected by their churches, which will forward the Cooperative Program share to state conventions.

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Smith Moves Ministry
To Atlanta-Area Church

Baptist Press
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ATLANTA (BP)--Evangelist Bailey Smith is moving his family and offices from Fort Worth, Texas, to Atlanta.

The former president of the Southern Baptist Convention joined Rehoboth Baptist Church in Tucker, Ga., a suburb of Atlanta, Aug. 30. His offices officially will open Nov. 1 in Crescent Center Parkway near Rehoboth church.

Smith told the Christian Index, newsjournal of the Baptist Convention of the state of Georgia, "This is a big personal decision for me and my family. We have lived in the Texas-Oklahoma area all of our lives.

"But Rehoboth church made a heavy financial commitment to our organization -- \$40,000 per year indefinitely -- and I have many area crusades in the Atlanta vicinity throughout 1988. We are working closely with the Home Mission Board evangelism division and our family loves Atlanta."

Smith said about 8 staff members and their families will move to Atlanta, including executive director Paul Page, youth minister Rick Gage and ladies ministry director Debby Kennedy. Music director John McKay may remain in Fort Worth.

Smith said he hopes to build an evangelism center in Atlanta in the near future. Smith serves on the new board of directors of the PTL Club, as does Richard Lee, pastor at Rehoboth church.

Kennedy joined Rehoboth church the same day as Smith. So did Larry Lewis, new president of Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

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